

Statement of three President Emeriti of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus regarding human sexuality decisions made by the ELCA Churchwide Assembly currently meeting in Minneapolis.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with the Churchwide Assembly,

We the three president emeritus of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (5.5 million members, the largest Lutheran church body in Africa and the fastest growing Lutheran church in the world) have been following the development of your deliberations on human sexuality and ministry policies with deep prayer in the spirit of our global Lutheran communion. We have a very deep appreciation for the seriousness and diligence of ELCA and our other partner churches in grappling with this challenging social and cultural issue of these days. Thus our earnest prayer would continue to be with you.

The historic companionship between the ELCA and our church, EECMY, bears witness to our mutual commitment to each other deeply grounded in our biblical faith and Lutheran identity. Therefore in this difficult time our people in and out of the country are fasting and praying that you will remain true to our common faith, tradition and joint evangelical mission.

In these historic days we have been deeply alarmed by the direction you are choosing to take. Thus we have to inform you with a heavy heart that we are deeply saddened and dismayed by the decisions you are taking at the ELCA Churchwide Assembly in Minneapolis regarding human sexuality. We see it as a defiant departure from the Biblical truth and from our global Evangelical Lutheran tradition. Our position, based on the word of God, is and will continue to be that marriage is between one man and one woman.

Human behavior and practices may change over times but the holy and inspired word of God will never change. We are therefore urged in the spirit of our long standing companionship to express our deep concern and resentment to these assembly decisions coming down in the form of a social statement, ministry policies and practices.

Please know that as shepherds of God's flock we love all people of God and pray that the Lord may forgive all our sins and guide all of us through his everlasting word of God.

Sincerely,

President Emeritus the Rev. Francis Stephanos
President Emeritus the Rev. Yadesa Daba
President Emeritus the Rev. Itefa Gobena
August 21, 2009