



**INTRODUCTION TO AFFILIATIONS TASK  
FORCE REPORT FROM CALVARY'S  
CONGREGATION PRESIDENT**

March 16, 2010

The document that follows is a Report and Recommendation of a task force consisting of former Calvary congregation presidents appointed to help the council and congregation in its consideration of Calvary's affiliation options. It is a thoughtful and detailed document, and I encourage everyone to read the entire report to gain a better understanding of the reasoning behind the recommendations.

Please note that this is a recommendation and not a decision of Calvary's council or congregation. It is expected that the council will consider approving the recommendations in this report at a meeting in April and possibly sending those recommendations to the congregation for a special congregational meeting in May.

Calvary cannot make any changes to its constitutional affiliation with the ELCA without a 2/3 vote of the congregation on two separate occasions.

I would like to share a heartfelt thank you from the congregation to the ten men and women who served on this task force. While they came to the issues surrounding Calvary's affiliations from vastly different perspectives, they somehow - with the help of the Holy Spirit and constant prayer from so many here at Calvary - found a way to come to a unanimous recommendation.

We thank God for their service.

I am confident that we as a Calvary congregation can address these difficult and potentially divisive issues with the same level of respect, love and faithfulness as the members of this task force did.

Jeff Johnson  
Congregation President  
Calvary Lutheran Church of Golden Valley

**CALVARY AFFILIATIONS TASK FORCE**  
**REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS**  
**MARCH 16, 2010**

**THE WORK OF THE TASK FORCE**

**Appointment of the Task Force**

At its meeting on December 1, 2009, the Council of Calvary Lutheran Church of Golden Valley decided to appoint a Task Force to study Calvary's affiliations. The appointed members of the Task Force, all of whom are former Presidents of Calvary, are:

Lois Bergquist	Roy Johnson
Barb Griffin	Phil Lindau
Karl Cambronne	Gary Scharmer
Richard Graversen	Dayton Soby
Mick Lee	Mal Wigg

Congregation President Jeff Johnson and Senior Pastor Steve Dornbusch served as ex-officio non-voting advisory members of the Task Force. The Task Force elected Dayton Soby as Chair.

The specific direction given by the Council to the Task Force was:

The council hereby appoints a task force to study the issue of Calvary's current major affiliations and potential major affiliations (hereinafter "Task Force") and report its findings and possible recommendations back to the council at its March 2010 meeting.

**Background**

The Task Force recognizes the conflict arising from the 2009 ELCA Church-Wide Assembly. For those persons who are aware of and engaged in the controversy leading to the Church-Wide Assembly vote in August, 2009, division appears to be irreconcilable.

Those persons who are opposed to the Assembly action generally cite an absence of biblical affirmation for gay or homosexual relationships and affirm the traditional Lutheran view that normative sexual relationships are between one man and one woman within the confines of marriage.

Those who are heartened by the decision of the Assembly maintain that sexual orientation is not a matter of choice, and that it is a trait people are born with, and consequently the church has no place condemning homosexuals in committed life-long relationships or relegating such persons to a secondary status in the Lutheran church.

Regardless of which position individual Calvary members have, the Task Force recognizes that these positions are heartfelt and no person should attribute evil to or condemn those who have a position different from their own.

### **Divisions Within the ELCA and Calvary**

The issue of finding a way for persons in publicly accountable, life long, monogamous, committed, same gender relationships to serve as rostered leaders of the church was considered at the Church-Wide Assembly in 2009 and resulted in a very closely divided Assembly (55%-45%). Similarly, Calvary's vote to withhold benevolence to the ELCA at its annual meeting in October 2009 reflected a similar division (54%-46%).

The members of this Task Force all care deeply for each and every member of the Calvary congregation and each and every non-member who worships, studies, prays and serves with us. Being divided greatly saddens us and we are committed to finding ways to address this division.

### **Actions of the Task Force**

The Task Force met and discussed the issues together on eleven occasions, and also held four additional meetings as described in the next paragraph. The Task Force first decided which affiliations it was willing to explore, and decided upon the four described below. The Task Force then prepared four detailed lists, as follows:

- #1 – Questions to be asked of Lutheran CORE, LCMC, and ARC;
- #2 – Issues to be reviewed by the Task Force relative to possible affiliations with those 3 organizations;

- #3 – Questions to be asked of the ELCA;
- #4 – Issues to be reviewed by the Task Force relative to affiliation with the ELCA.

During January and February, each of the affiliations studied by the Task Force sent a representative to meet with the Task Force and discuss the issues in public meetings attended by members of the congregation. Each was questioned at length. Each interview was audio recorded and posted on Calvary's website. At those interviews, certain information was distributed. (Information regarding each of these organizations can be found at their respective web sites, which are [www.elca.org](http://www.elca.org), [www.lutherancore.org](http://www.lutherancore.org), [www.lcmc.net](http://www.lcmc.net), and [www.allianceofrenewalchurches.org](http://www.allianceofrenewalchurches.org) .)

### **Adult Forums**

On Sunday, February 7, 2010, the former President of Luther Seminary, Professor David Tiede, spoke at three Adult Forums. He explained the process leading to the decision of the ELCA Church-Wide assembly last August and the decisions that were made.

On March 8, 2010, four faculty members from Luther Seminary with different views of the issues facing Calvary offered their insights on how their respective positions were developed through Scripture.

The Task Force has thoroughly discussed the issues raised and is now reporting its findings and recommendations to the Church Council as requested.

### **FINDINGS**

1. Calvary Lutheran Church of Golden Valley is a fellowship committed to leading ALL people into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ.
2. Calvary is a Lutheran congregation and should continue to be a Lutheran congregation. If and when the Calvary constitution is amended, the fact that Calvary is and shall be a Lutheran congregation should be made even clearer than it already is.
3. Calvary is a congregation which is Biblical, confessional, and missional.
4. Calvary needs to focus on its mission of leading all people into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ and not be distracted by divisive political and social issues which do not go to the heart of our faith.

5. Calvary is a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America ("ELCA") and the Minneapolis Area Synod of the ELCA ("Synod"), as required by the constitution of Calvary. Having reviewed this relationship in detail, it is concluded that there are problems with the current relationship, which are stated below, only one of which pertains to the sexuality issue. However, since it is the sexuality issue which has resulted in the creation of this Task Force, we are focusing on that issue first.
6. Our understanding of LUTHERAN heritage begins with a positive focus on our Lord Jesus Christ, Scripture and Grace, which are the elements of faith that unite us as LUTHERANS. Calvary should always be a congregation that teaches God's Word of both Law and Gospel, but should not focus its message or ministry on a categorization of sins.
7. We Lutherans confess that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," Romans 3:23. "There is no one righteous, not even one," Romans 3:10. We are all justified by God's grace alone, through faith in Jesus Christ, Ephesians 2:8.
8. There are shifts in contemporary cultural opinion that are at odds with a traditional theological view of a normative sexual relationship being between one man and one woman.
9. The ELCA in Assembly in 2009 has given individual congregations and synods the ability to alter current ordination standards and the existing prohibition of blessing same-sex unions.
10. The actions of the ELCA at the 2009 Church-Wide Assembly have resulted in serious theological disagreements among people of faith in the ELCA and at Calvary relative to the correct interpretation of Scripture and the relevance of personal experience in interpreting Scripture.
11. Many members of Calvary disagree with the decisions of the ELCA National Assembly regarding sexuality, some on Scriptural grounds, some because they believe the ELCA should not be making social and political decisions for its members, and some because they believe that bringing the issues to a vote was highly divisive, splitting the church and adversely affecting finances, ministries, and relationships.
12. A majority of Calvary members expressed dissatisfaction with the ELCA by voting to discontinue funding to the ELCA at the annual meeting in October, 2009.
13. Regardless of opinions regarding normative sexual relationships, Calvary and its members desire to welcome everyone, including homosexuals, and to proclaim to ALL the saving grace of Jesus Christ, and therefore Calvary

must declare that all people are welcome at Calvary regardless of sexual orientation, gender, race, national origin, economic status, political views, or any other characteristics whatsoever.

14. Issues regarding homosexuality will continue to be the subject of disagreement among members of Calvary and among Lutherans generally.
15. There are many important subjects that are central to our ministry of bringing people into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ, and sexuality is only one of them.
16. The Task Force recognizes institutions, by their very nature, reflect a composite of views held by their members. The conduct of any institution will usually upset some or all of its members at some point during its existence. That reality is nothing more than a reflection of human frailty.
17. The relationship between the ELCA and Calvary is complex. Issues have been arising in this relationship ever since the ELCA was created by merger in 1988.
18. We honor our long and important relationship with the ELCA and its predecessor bodies to which Calvary belonged, the American Lutheran Church ("ALC"), and, before that, the Evangelical Lutheran Church ("ELC"). Many of our members value highly this history and tradition, and are very loyal to the ELCA. They have been baptized, confirmed, married, worshipped, raised their families, and served in congregations of the ELCA, and they have been led into a closer relationship with Jesus Christ in those congregations. They remember that Calvary was started as a mission congregation of the ELC. Their families and friends worship in ELCA congregations throughout the country. They are proud of being a part of the ELCA fellowship of about 4.6 million Lutherans and about 11,000 congregations, about 900 of them in Minnesota. Their pastors were educated in ELCA seminaries. Many have attended ELCA colleges. They have received services from ELCA healthcare, social service, and other organizations. Many have served on the boards, been employed by, served as volunteers, and supported financially the hundreds of organizations related to the ELCA, many of which are among the finest and most successful of their type. They treasure these relationships.
19. The ELCA, through its national organization and its synods, carries out some very important functions, including supporting congregations in many ways, which support is especially critical for smaller congregations, carrying out ministries on behalf of all congregations, and providing opportunities for fellowship, support, and ministries among congregations,

pastors, staff members, and related institutions. The ELCA carries out hundreds of ministries in our community, our region, our nation, and the world pursuant to its interpretation of the Great Commission and the Great Commandment. Calvary has supported, does now support, and will in the future support many of these ministries as part of Calvary's mission. Calvary honors and respects the many good people doing good things through the ELCA.

20. We have important disagreements with the ELCA regarding a number of actions that the national organization and/or the Synod have taken, including:
  - (a) its actions relative to the sexuality issues, for the reasons stated in paragraph 11;
  - (b) its aggressive ecumenism, resulting in the adoption of another denomination's ordination requirements, to the effect that ELCA pastors must be ordained through the historic episcopate of the Episcopal Church in order to be a pastor on the ELCA clergy roster, except in exceptional circumstances, which requirement, we believe, is contrary to the Lutheran confessions, causes significant problems of conscience for those seeking to be ordained for call to Calvary and other ELCA congregations, and has caused very significant division within the ELCA;
  - (c) its emphasis on formulating and advocating numerous political and social positions, which, we believe, has gone beyond the scope of the mission of the church, is disrespectful of sincere Christians who hold other political and social views, causes alienation and divisiveness within the ELCA, and wastes time, energy, and resources (for example, at ELCA synod conventions which, instead of focusing on how to share the good news of Jesus Christ in the world, have acted more like the platform committee of a political party or political action group), and, in general, distracts our church away from keeping the "main thing" the "main thing;"
  - (d) its tendency to become more hierarchical and bureaucratic, resulting in disrespect to the independence of Calvary, to Calvary's lay leaders and pastors, and to Calvary's ministry decisions, and, in general, resulting in divisiveness within the ELCA;
  - (e) its emphasis on regulation of congregations, when its emphasis should be on support of congregations, which tends to stifle the efforts of Calvary and other congregations to carry out their

ministries as they are inspired to do, and, again, creates divisiveness;

- (f) its claim of authority over the affairs of Calvary, a non-profit corporation under the laws of Minnesota, and other congregations, that it does not have;
  - (g) its general failure to create a proper alignment of mission, vision, strategy, human resources, and financial resources, and positive relationships with its constituency, resulting in an enterprise that an objective business consultant would not characterize as a successful enterprise, and resulting in a failure to keep the "main thing" the "main thing."
21. Calvary is a member of the ELCA. Such membership is required by Calvary's constitution. This legal membership has become problematic for Calvary, as described in the following paragraphs.
  22. Calvary, as a constitutional and legal member of the ELCA, becomes identified with ELCA decisions, most notably its decisions with respect to sexuality, and Calvary is criticized by both members and non-members, and even blamed, because of these decisions. The ELCA's decisions are not Calvary's decisions, but they are the same in the minds of many people. Many members have threatened to leave Calvary if Calvary does not terminate its membership in the ELCA. Many other members have threatened to leave Calvary if it does terminate its membership in the ELCA. Some non-members have stated that they cannot join Calvary if it is a member of the ELCA. We did not ask for this controversy and do not want it, and it is a huge distraction from our ministry. It is extremely divisive. It may have many negative consequences to Calvary, to its members, and to members' relationships with other members and members who leave. Furthermore, we anticipate that the ELCA will continue to make decisions that are likely to divide our members, result in further controversies, and perhaps necessitate additional task forces that we members of this task force strongly desire to avoid. The reality is that when the ELCA sneezes, Calvary catches a cold.
  23. The church council asked this task force to study the issue of potential affiliations, and we have done so diligently. However, on January 19, 2010, the General Secretary of the ELCA issued his legal opinion which stated that "although an express prohibition does not exist, the governing documents of this church do not authorize congregations to join an additional church body. It is clear that a congregation cannot meet the

criteria and expectations for congregations as specified in the governing documents of this church if it affiliates with another church body." We do not agree with either his legal analysis or his conclusion. Furthermore, we do not understand why the ELCA can affiliate with numerous non-Lutheran denominations but its congregations cannot affiliate with other Lutheran bodies. Our task force chair presented an appeal to our Synod Bishop, who forwarded it to the General Secretary, but a clear response was received that "dual affiliation is not allowed." We believe that Calvary has a right to consider whether dual or multiple affiliations are appropriate and beneficial for Calvary and for Calvary's mission outreach, and that Calvary should do so.

24. The relationship between Calvary and the ELCA, and even the ALC before the merger, has often been contentious. Calvary has been advised from time to time that its constitution is not in compliance with ELCA requirements, because it does not contain provisions giving the ELCA the degree of control over Calvary affairs that the ELCA desires. Now Calvary has been told that it cannot pursue dual affiliations although it wants to do so. While the ELCA urges respect for "bound conscience," Calvary's pastors and lay leaders have often felt that the respect for "bound conscience" has not been extended to them by the ELCA's national organization and the Synod. The ELCA and the Synod have respected Calvary's mission efforts while being critical of Calvary's independence. Calvary's pastors and lay leaders believe that Calvary should be a partner in ministry with the national organization and the Synod, but have often felt that the national organization and the Synod prefer a relationship more in the nature of a parent-child relationship, and these pastors and lay leaders have often felt that some people in the ELCA at all levels and in many places see them as somehow suspect because they are from Calvary. We fear that the actions taken and contemplated by Calvary may lead the ELCA to consider expulsion, a process that would be very uncomfortable and distracting for both parties, and it would be in the best interests of both the ELCA and Calvary to avoid such a process.
25. Many experts on church affairs believe that denominations have served their purpose and are moving toward extinction at varying speeds. While a denomination may be successful if it transforms itself and focuses on its core mission, we have not observed that the ELCA is doing so. We do support reform in the ELCA, and encourage the LIFT Task Force in its critical mission, but we are too realistic to be very hopeful. Our task force believes that Calvary should simply choose to no longer tinker with the machinery of denominationalism.
26. It is not the desire of this task force to "leave" the ELCA. It is the desire of this task force to move to a new relationship with the ELCA, a new

- paradigm of partnering and cooperating in ministry, in which both Calvary and the ELCA can be more comfortable. It is our desire to move away from the identification with ELCA issues, the contentiousness, the distractions, the divisiveness, and the damages to ministry which are resulting from the constitutional and legal tether between Calvary and the ELCA. It is our desire to enable Calvary to move ahead with its mission of bringing people into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ, which mission has included, does now include, and should in the future include, support of ministries of the ELCA national organization, the Synod, and the many organizations related to the ELCA. We believe that these objectives can be achieved by terminating Calvary's constitutional and legal "membership" in the ELCA.
27. We believe that severance of the constitutional and legal tether to the ELCA will enable reconciliation within our congregation. We do not believe that termination of legal membership is "leaving" the ELCA or that it is a decision to have no further "affiliation," which terms have ambiguous legal meanings. We do believe that our affiliations, whatever they are, should be aligned with our mission. We no longer would need to debate the ELCA's positions on sexuality or anything else because they would not be Calvary's positions. At the same time we can support the ELCA ministries we want to support and we can have a more constructive relationship with the ELCA and the Synod.
  28. This new relationship could be created by deleting Article IV of the Calvary constitution and replacing it by a simple provision to the effect that Calvary shall be a Lutheran congregation, by deleting or modifying any other constitutional provision referring to the ELCA, by explicitly terminating the legal relationship to eliminate any possible ambiguity about the effect of the constitutional amendment, and by enacting a resolution stating the congregation's direction to continue to support ELCA ministries and institutions as Calvary determines pursuant to normal governance process. The constitutional amendments and the legal termination would be accomplished through the constitutional process, which requires a two-thirds vote at two separate meetings. The congregation resolution requires a majority vote at one meeting.
  29. Instead of sending \$100,000 from Calvary's benevolence budget directly to the ELCA or the Synod this year, as it did last year, Calvary has allocated up to \$50,000 from its annual budget to ten church-related organizations, some of which are related to the ELCA, and \$35,000 to support three new ethnic congregations started by the ELCA, and is holding \$15,000 in reserve for similar ministries. In addition, Calvary's benevolence budget for the current year allocates \$116,000 to ELCA-related organizations and congregations, plus an estimated \$75,000 of

"hunger funds" to ELCA/Lutheran World Relief. Calvary is also receiving contributions from its members designated for the ELCA and is forwarding them to the Synod, and it appears that the amount contributed directly to the Synod in that manner may exceed the total amount contributed directly to the Synod last year. It is contemplated that Calvary will continue to receive and forward such contributions.

30. We have reviewed the effects on pastors and staff of a termination of membership in the ELCA. We have received clear assurance from the ELCA Board of Pensions that all covered employees of Calvary, and any future employees who are eligible under Calvary's personnel policies, will remain covered by the pension plan and the insurance benefit plans, thus eliminating a major concern of the task force. Calvary pastors will not be permitted to remain on the ELCA clergy roster, but all Calvary's full-time pastors have informed us that they are either not on the roster now, will resign from the roster regardless, are willing to leave the roster because they plan to complete their careers at Calvary, or are otherwise willing to leave the roster.
31. The divisions in the Lutheran Church today will likely lead to organizational changes in the ELCA and all of the other Lutheran organizations that are working with former ELCA churches, including LCMC, ARC and CORE.
32. Calvary should be open to considering relationships with any national Lutheran organization which allow Calvary to flexibly address the changing ministry needs of the local church.
33. It is recognized that all of the potential affiliations studied by the Task Force are comprised of individuals striving to conduct their activities in a manner reflecting the love of Christ.
34. The actions of all four affiliations studied by the Task Force (CORE, LCMC, ARC and the ELCA) benefit, in one way or another, the mission of Calvary, bringing people into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ.
35. An "affiliation" with one of these organizations would generally mean providing Calvary benevolence to such organization in furtherance of its ministries. Secondly, it may also occasion the need for Calvary staff and members to work with those organizations on a direct basis.
36. We do not make any recommendation as to whether or not Calvary should join any other church body, but we do recommend that Calvary should not do so right away. We believe that Calvary can carry out its ministries effectively as an independent Lutheran congregation. Calvary should

monitor the development of the various potential Lutheran affiliations and then decide the nature and extent of any relationship that may be appropriate for Calvary. Any decisions relative to desired relationships should be made by the council or the congregation consistent with normal governance process. Pastors, staff, and lay leaders should be encouraged to pursue informal relationships with any of these affiliations which might enable Calvary to carry out its ministries.


### **RECOMMENDATION**

The Task Force recommends that Calvary Lutheran Church of Golden Valley take the following actions:


- 1)** Amend the Calvary constitution by deleting Article IV, which relates to the ELCA legal relationship, and deleting or appropriately modifying any other reference to the ELCA.
- 2)** Amend the Calvary constitution by adding as a replacement Article IV a provision stating "This congregation shall be a Lutheran congregation."
- 3)** Resolve to continue to support ELCA ministries and organizations in furtherance of Calvary's mission as may be determined in Calvary's normal governance process.
- 4)** Resolve to welcome gay and lesbian persons to worship with this congregation and to become members, both by public statements and by tangible actions which encourage their participation in the life of Calvary, and further, resolve to find ways for this congregation and its members to meet all persons where they are in their life journeys with grace, forgiveness, love, and support, consistent with the admonition of Jesus to "feed my sheep," John 21:15-17.

- 5) Encourage the ELCA to consider creating alternative forms of affiliation with the ELCA other than the constitutional affiliation model currently in use.

**THE PRECEDING FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ARE ADOPTED UNANIMOUSLY BY THE AFFILIATIONS TASK FORCE AS OF MARCH 16, 2010, AT GOLDEN VALLEY, MINNESOTA.**


  
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