



MEMO

TO: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

FROM: Dr. Gerald B. Kieschnick, President

SUBJECT: Protecting Marriage as Instituted by God

DATE: October 24, 2003

Dear Friends in Christ:

This letter brings to your attention the Federal Marriage Amendment, currently under consideration by the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives in Washington, D.C. Please read further to learn more about the reason for my encouragement of your support for this very important amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

It's no secret that many of the traditional values, moral absolutes and standards of decency we as Christians hold dear or take for granted are under constant attack in our increasingly secular, permissive society. The latest institution so besieged and jeopardized is that of the holy estate of marriage.

Perhaps you already know that "same-sex marriage" is the law of the land in Belgium and the Netherlands, and that Canada, judging from a recent court decision in Ontario, may be leaning that way. Also, a pro-homosexual-marriage case pending in Massachusetts might conceivably have a domino effect in other states.

Incredible as it seems, if current trends and momentum continue, the day may be coming when the legal definition of marriage in our country is changed forever—when "marriage" becomes whatever people want it to be, involving whatever sexes and configurations of "spouses" are desired.

This, clearly, is not acceptable—not to those who believe, teach and confess God's plan for marriage and families as outlined in His Word.

Let it be said, as it has been said many times, that God loves all people, including homosexuals. So does the church, not least The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, which has a history of concerned, heartfelt outreach to homosexuals.

At the same time, let it also be said that the church cannot accept or approve homosexual activism sympathetic to the agenda of redefining marriage as we have always known it.

Whereas some church bodies currently are torn on the issue of whether to recognize or even bless same-sex unions, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has no equivocation on the matter. There are no gray areas in our church body on this topic. There is no compromise or accommodation on what the timeless, traditional concept of marriage has always meant.

As a church, we are of one mind that “homosexual unions come under categorical prohibition in the Old and New Testaments” (Lev. 18:22, 24; 20:13; 1 Cor. 6:9-20; 1 Tim. 1:9-10), and that “in the beginning, the blessed Trinity instituted marriage to be the life-long union of one man and one woman” (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:4-6—quoted material taken from Res. 3-21, “To Affirm the Sanctity of Marriage and to Reject Same-Sex Unions,” 1998 Synodical Convention).

It is our belief that marriage is not a man-made institution but a divine one. As such, it cannot be changed or manipulated. Its definition, by God’s design and decree, is not negotiable. Marriage can only be what it always has been—the union of a man and a woman in a life-long, loving relationship.

This is not just Christian thinking, an attempt to foist Christian morality on a modern, diverse, “progressive” society. Marriage at all times and in all civilizations (with the disastrous exception of polygamy and other failed anomalies) has always joined a “bride” and a “groom” (gender-specific terms)—who are then “wife” and “husband,” “mother” and “father,” of the family. The institution of marriage is trans-cultural, trans-religious, and trans-historical. To tinker with its meaning, to change the fundamental vocabulary of what “marriage” has meant throughout the history of the world, is to eat away at the edges of our society. It is to threaten the very center and cornerstone of that society—the family unit—through which society is continued and new life comes into being.

An LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) document states, “When it is not necessary for the church to speak, it is necessary for the church not to speak” (“Render Unto Caesar . . . and Unto God, A Lutheran View of Church and State,” 1995). Throughout the years, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, guided by the classic Lutheran doctrine of the two kingdoms, has taken this advice to heart, rarely offering opinions on issues in the civil or legal realm for which the Scriptures give no clear-cut guidance on how Christians are to think or act.

On the other hand, in the words of that same CTCR document, “There are times when the Scriptures speak so clearly and directly to a particular issue that it is possible and may even be necessary for the church to take a corporate stance on it.” Abortion and euthanasia are two such issues on which the Synod has found it necessary to take a public stand. So, too, now, in my opinion, must we make our voices heard in defense of traditional, heterosexual marriage.

Marriage is so foundational to the created order of man and woman, it is so intrinsic to the very fabric of society and the essence of life itself, that we can ill afford to look away when others, after thousands of years, suddenly try to recast its sacred meaning.

The same convention resolution cited several paragraphs above encourages all Missouri Synod Lutherans to “give a public witness in word and deed to heterosexual marriage as an estate to be held in honor by all and kept inviolate” (Heb. 13:4; 1 Thess. 4:2-5). One important way of doing this is by supporting the Federal Marriage Amendment now being considered in the U.S. Congress.

The Federal Marriage Amendment to the U.S. Constitution would state, in part: “Marriage in the United States shall consist only of the union of a man and a woman.”

Let me urge you to support this amendment by contacting your senators and Congressional representatives to express your sentiments and encourage those officials to debate and vote accordingly. If you do not know the phone numbers, mailing or e-mail addresses of your senators and representatives, you can find them at www.senate.gov and www.house.gov.

Finally, for a broader treatment on the threat to traditional marriage in our country, and for more information on and the full text of the Federal Marriage Amendment, I invite you to read an open letter from Dr. James Dobson of “Focus on the Family.” You can access this letter by going to <http://www.family.org/docstudy/newsletters/a0027590.html>

May God grant us, our church and others of like mind the wisdom and courage to safeguard traditional marriage in the United States of America.

Thank you . . . and God bless you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gerald B. Kieschnick". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "G" and "K".

Dr. Gerald B. Kieschnick, President
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod