

## Resolution 2019-1: A Resolution Opposing “Conversion Therapy”

1 **WHEREAS**, the Scriptures teach that human beings are created in God’s image (Genesis 1:27)  
2 and that humans are “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psalm 139:14); and  
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4 **WHEREAS**, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) recognizes that “while there  
5 is still much to be learned about the biological complexity of human beings, we have come to  
6 understand that this complexity suggests a variety of sexual orientations and gender identities”  
7 (ELCA Social Statement on Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust, p. 28); and  
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9 **WHEREAS**, “in the name of the God who creates every human being out of love, this church  
10 teaches human dignity is God’s gift to every person and that the commitment to universal rights  
11 protects that dignity,” and further believes that “the time is right for more Christians to enter  
12 public conversation and take action to safeguard the dignity due to all children of God” (ELCA  
13 Social Message on Human Rights, pp. 2-3); and  
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15 **WHEREAS**, “conversion therapy” refers to dangerous and discredited behavioral, cognitive,  
16 and psychoanalytic practices aimed at changing an individual’s sexual orientation or gender  
17 identity; and  
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19 **WHEREAS**, “conversion therapy” means any practice by a mental health practitioner or  
20 mental health professional that seeks to change an individual's sexual orientation or gender  
21 identity, including efforts to change behaviors or gender expressions or to eliminate or reduce  
22 sexual or romantic attractions or feelings toward individuals of the same gender; and  
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24 **WHEREAS**, “conversion therapy” does not include counseling that provides assistance to an  
25 individual undergoing gender transition, or counseling that provides acceptance, support, and  
26 understanding of an individual or facilitates an individual's coping, social support, and identity  
27 exploration and development, including sexual-orientation-neutral interventions to prevent or  
28 address unlawful conduct or unsafe sexual practices, as long as the counseling does not seek to  
29 change an individual's sexual orientation or gender identity; and  
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31 **WHEREAS**, some 700,000 lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) people  
32 have been subjected to “conversion therapy” at great risk to their emotional, psychological, and  
33 spiritual well-being; and  
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35 **WHEREAS**, LGBTQ youth continue to be harmed by the assumptions behind the use of so-  
36 called “conversion therapy” and, as a result, suffer from increased incidence of depression,  
37 anxiety, self-harming behaviors, and suicide; and  
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39 **WHEREAS**, “conversion therapy” is condemned as ineffectual and harmful by the World  
40 Psychiatric Association, the American Medical Association, the American Psychiatric  
41 Association, the National Association of School Psychologists, the American Psychological  
42 Association, the American School Counselors Association, the American Association for  
43 Marriage and Family Therapy, the American Counselors Association, the National Association  
44 of Social Workers, the American Academy of Pediatricians, and countless medical and mental  
45 health professional organizations worldwide; and

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**WHEREAS**, several states, including New Jersey, California, Oregon, Illinois, Vermont, New Mexico, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Nevada, Washington, Hawaii, Delaware, Maryland, New Hampshire, New York, and The District of Columbia, have enacted legislation prohibiting the practice of “conversion therapy” and protecting youth and vulnerable adults from this practice; and

**WHEREAS**, the practice of “conversion therapy” disrespects God’s fearfully and wonderfully made creation and fails to safeguard the dignity due to all children of God;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Saint Paul Area Synod, in assembly, condemn the practice known as “conversion therapy” and support measures intended to prohibit the practice and protect all persons from its practice; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Saint Paul Area Synod, in assembly, call upon its congregations and its members to oppose the practice of “conversion therapy”; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Saint Paul Area Synod, in assembly, urge its bishop (or designee) to make the synod’s position on this matter known throughout the synod and to the public at large.

Because this resolution is consistent with the governing documents of the Saint Paul Area Synod and addresses an issue of general concern to the Saint Paul Area Synod, the Reference and Counsel Committee recommends adoption of this resolution.