



April 22, 2010

Bishop Michael Burk
SE Iowa Synod of the ELCA
P O Box 3167
Iowa City, IA 52244

Dear Bishop Burk,

RE: St. Mark's Lutheran Church study of its relationship with the ELCA

Blessings and greetings from your brothers and sisters of St. Mark's Lutheran Church. We continue our mission to reach out to those who do not know the love of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. As we have known for years, our facilities limit those we can serve. After a very successful capital appeal last year, we have begun construction that will more than double our church's square footage and will include a second worship center. We invite you to visit us at any time to see the work on the project.

As a result of last year's ELCA's church-wide assembly, St. Mark's study and discussions of the assembly and our annual meeting, this year our church council is leading a study of St. Mark's relationship with the ELCA. There are five broad categories we will study over the course of this year. A copy of the specifics topics for each category is attached. Those topics are:

- † Bible & Theology
- † Culture / Emotion (surrounding this issue within our congregation)
- † Denominations Issues / Support
- † Social / Perceived Issues
- † Structure / Process/ Data (regarding how we will handle this as a council/congregation)

Our objective is to sort through the facts, fiction, opinions and suppositions about the ELCA while re-affirming St. Mark's beliefs. How do the beliefs of the ELCA compare to other Lutheran denominations? How do St. Mark's needs and beliefs match and support the ELCA and/or other Lutheran denominations? What Lutheran affiliation(s) best serves St. Mark's vision for the future and mission to serve our Lord?

As you can appreciate, we could study these topics for years, but we have our sites set on leading our congregation through this process by the end of 2010. Congregational members are regularly attending council meetings. We will have many forums and members of the congregation are invited to participate in every aspect of the study.

We believe our study can only improve our understanding of the Word of God. As such, we welcome and want you and the staff of the Southeastern Iowa Synod of the ELCA to join us in our study. We'd like to discuss what resources you recommend and how to effectively engage the synod in our study process.

We are also including a copy of the type of information we will collect on each topic. The research on the topics, developed with the assistance of interested congregational members, (using an "affinity diagram" exercise) will not necessarily lead to "answers" and a unified point of view. However, we're convinced we will have a better understanding of different perspectives on the topics. Like any relationship, differences are often healthy and necessary. But there are some differences, yet to be defined, that may be intolerable and may require exploring other arrangements. We are approaching our study with an open mind and ask the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

We ask for your prayers and support. After you have had a chance to digest this letter, we will arrange a meeting to discuss next steps and the SE Iowa Synod's participation.

Blessings and Yours in Christ,

Christopher J. Lindell
Church Council President

Pastor Perry Fruhling
Senior Pastor

cc: Church Council Members

attachments: ELCA Relationship study affinity topics
topic research collection form