

## **Biblical Theology**

### **Understanding Biblical Authority**

- \*What Bible passage do we hold as paramount in defining who we are as people of Christ?
- \*Are stories in bible true?
- \*Jesus view of scripture
- \*Biblical Authority
- \*Literalistic Interpretation of the Bible
- \*Bible interprets Bible – not mass interpretation
- \*Does the ELCA put too much faith in human wisdom vs. God's word as Truth?
- \*ELCA view on Prophecy
- \*How to properly interpret the Bible
- \*Changing to gender-neutral terms for God
- \*Did Jesus say what Bible says he did?
- \*Are there timeless truths or is everything relative?
- \*Bound Conscious
- \*ELCA – historic critical method of viewing scripture

### **Lutheran Theology**

- \*Theology and how the Bible is interpreted in a modern world
- \*What unusual or “non biblical” teachings are put forth by our seminary faculty?
- \*Can we be faithful to the Bible and stay in the ELCA?
- \*Understanding exactly what the ELCA stands for to our faith
- \*Is ELCA following Lutheran “founders” theology?
- \*ELCA's stance on universalism
- \*Content and Curriculum of seminaries

### **Miscellaneous**

- \*What's biblical? What's not?

## **Culture/Emotions**

### **Emotions**

- \*Is it possible to find a “perfect” match
- \*Emotions high on both sides of the issue.
- \*Differing of position of ELCA and position of pastoral staff.
- \*Feeling of the congregation
- \*What do all members want/desire
- \*How do you decide what level of disagreement means to leave the larger group
- \*traditions
- \*Pressure for successful look at ELCA – from both sides
- \*Is this the best time for change?
- \*Are we putting too little/too much emphasis on what relationship means?

### **Culture**

- \*What biases do our pastors bring to this issue?
- \*Mistrust of established organizations
- \*Anti-intellectual culture
- \*Far right and far left views on the issues at St. Marks.
- \*Anti- institutional bias
- \*How does staying in the ELCA affect St. Marks staff?
- \*Poor understanding of ELCA mission and function
- \*Being a welcoming church to all
- \*Acceptance of all without judgment

## Denominational Issues/Support

### Support

- \*Support – for our missionaries and International efforts
- \*St. Mark's lack of financial support for ELCA
- \*Where is our money being spent?
- \*Support and content of materials and programs
- \*How many ELCA congregations have stopped contributing to ELCA?
- \*Does ELCA care about St. Marks?
- \*Support for congregations working together individually
- \*Youth support in programs and education
- \*Over representation of clergy and academics in governance
- \*Rich history and long relationship
- \*ELCA allows freedom of choice which is best for St. Marks
- \*What do we lose by leaving the ELCA?
- \*Long term plans of ELCA

### ELCA vs. LCMC

- \*What are differences between the ELCA and LCMC?
- \*LCMC very similar to ALC and LCA before merger
- \*Issue of being in ELCA and LCMC at the same time -what does it mean?
- \*What kinds of issues should determine whether we leave the denomination?
- \*What would be the full implications of leaving our denomination?
- \*ELCA's position on dual-affiliation to Lutheran congregations
- \*Past relationship with ELCA
- \*What do ELCA and LCMC have in common?
- \*What youth program does the ELCA support?
- \*Mission Projects – Does St. Marks now choose which one to support/give to?
- \*What does ELCA do for current missionaries?

### Issues

- \*St. Marks not really connected to ELCA but is connected to Willow Creek
- \*Is there really an issue – ELCA allows differences
- \*What does ELCA do for St. Marks?

- \*How does St. Marks handles issues /differences with ELCA
- \*St. Marks needs to be more involved at the synod and above level
- \*ELCA has similar mission/focus as St. Marks
- \*The ELCA has too much bureaucracy and therefore too much overhead costs
- \*Lack of funding for national body
- \*How will St. Marks be held accountable without the ELCA?

## Social/Perceived

### Issues

- \*How can we prove the ELCA is wrong about universalism?
- \*What are the ELCA's real thoughts on how you attain salvation?
- \*ELCA's true biblical stance on issues
- \*ELCA's views on abortion
- \*Lack of support for SWIA synod ELCA
- \*Same-Sex Relationships
- \*Will we be known as welcoming all with another affiliate?
- \*Is there really an issue – ELCA allows differences

### Controversial Issues

#### Social

- \*ELCA's policy on abortion
- \*ELCA's support of same gender marriage
- \*Where ELCA stands on the issue of abortion
- \*What political issues is the ELCA tackling and why
- \*ELCA's support of Israel
- \*ELCA's political positions
- \*Governance is determining Social Issues
- \*Pastoral personnel feelings cloud and filter into congregation

#### Perceived Controversial Issues with ELCA / Sexuality

- \*ELCA makes political statements that polarize
- \*LCMC makes polarizing statements
- \*Called to common mission is against article 8 of Augsburg Confession
- \*ELCA is top down organization...Power/Control
- \*ELCA has negative view of contemporary worship
- \*Call to common mission
- \*Has the ELCA embraced universalism?
- \*ELCA's position on Israel
- \*ELCA seminaries teaching unorthodoxy
- \*Support of Abortion

- \*Allowing homosexuals to pastor congregations.
- \*St. Marks right to accept/reject pastors
- \*Differences over appropriate level of social action
- \*ELCA against Federal Marriage Amendment
- \*What does the bible teach regarding sexual boundaries/ethics?

## **Structure/Process/Data**

### **Accurate Data**

- \*Truthful data/facts – not personal viewpoints
- \*How do we know what the “real” ELCA stance on issues is?
- \*Does St. Marks have a clear vision of what we believe /teach?
- \*What is the ELCA church going to do today and in the future?
- \*ELCA beliefs in print that can be viewed by anyone
- \*What are other synods doing with those that don't agree with homosexuals?
- \*What will happen to church grounds/buildings with decision? - what claims does ELCA have to the building?
- \*What education and teaching are pastors getting from the seminaries?
- \*How many people in our congregation are concerned about the ELCA?
- \*How many other congregations have aligned with other Lutheran bodies?

### **Process**

- \*The call of pastor – of position on non-rostered pastor
- \*What level will determine need to leave ELCA?
- \*How would St. Marks call pastor without ELCA?
- \*When will congregation make the final decision?
- \*If we vote to leave the ELCA – we won't get 2/3 of the vote needed
- \*Can we realistically have a dual affiliation with LCMC and ELCA?
- \*What is St. Mark's next step?
- \*Pastor's education – what seminaries are acceptable?
- \*Need to research all other affiliations plus/minus's
- \*Need to have ELCA speak to issues presented with no assumptions

### **Structure**

- \*How do we ensure that all points of view are heard?
- \*How do we resolve theological differences within the congregation?
- \*Why is it important that we study this?