

Resolution 2008-6

Resolution on the History of Lutheran Students, Lutheran Church Bodies, and Lutheran Unity in the United States of America and Actions

LSM-USA acknowledges the following:

At the 2007 National Gathering, LSM-USA was given the task to study and discuss a formal alignment with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and document the history of Lutheranism and Lutheran unity in America.

In 1922, the Lutheran Student Association of America (LSAA) was formed and began work with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS) fraternity, Gamma Delta in the 1960s. The LSAA and Gamma Delta agreed to disband in 1968 to form the Lutheran Student Movement in the United States of America (LSM-USA); but not all Gamma Delta chapters disbanded.

After the formation of LSM-USA, cooperative campus ministry began between the LCMS and the other Lutheran church bodies, but disagreement over theology and the study of the Scripture brought forth division within the LCMS and between the LCMS and other Lutheran church bodies. Lutheran Student Fellowship (LSF), a student organization within the LCMS, formed as a result of these differences.

In 1987, LSM-USA feared that work with the LCMS was at an end,¹ because the formation of the ELCA severed the formal institutional relationship with the LCMS in campus ministry, yet individual cooperative ministries continued to exist until recent years. Shortly after its formation, the ELCA placed LSM-USA under the Division for Education (later Division of Higher Education and Schools, and now Vocation and Education) within its churchwide structure for funding and staffing purposes. The ELCA began funding LSM-USA as if it were a program in its Division for Education. Additionally, the ELCA began paying for the LSM-USA intern position, which now encompasses more responsibilities than just LSM-USA under the new title of Program Assistant for Youth and Young Adult Ministry. Though funded as a program of the ELCA, both the ELCA and LSM-USA have never affirmed a formal relationship.

LSM-USA has continued to strive for the unity of all Lutheran church bodies through its legislation; however, institutionally, only the ELCA continues to put forth gratitude and support. In 2004, the LCMS requested that LSM-USA no longer be invited to its youth gatherings. In 2007, the LSM-USA national council agreed to not pursue a presence at future LCMS gatherings. Recent surveys in both 2004 and 2007 have shown that the majority of members and nearly all participating campus ministries identified with the ELCA.

Therefore, be it resolved that LSM-USA:

(1) Establish a formal relationship with the ELCA asking of the ELCA to in kind do the same through whatever means possible to preserve its present **student-led, Christ-driven** structure;

- (2) Send letters of gratitude to current church officers and staff;
- (3) Express gratitude to *all* past and current supporting church bodies in future actions;
- (4) Search out new ways to strive for Lutheran unity outside of institutional boundaries by working with the Lutheran Student Fellowship (LCMS), individual WELS campus ministries, and pan-Lutheran social ministry organizations;
- (5) Continue to be a welcome place for *all* students, regardless of background and/or denominational affiliation;
- (6) Continue to support the work of Lutheran Campus Ministry; and
- (7) Create a formal document recording its rich history.

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Notes:

¹1987-1 Resolution for Regional Boundary Changes

- ❖ “Thirdly, despite the state efforts of LSM to remain pan-Lutheran, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod has begun its own student organization. Unfortunately, most of the membership of LSM from here on will be from congregations within the ELCA. LSM will receive no support from the LCMS in any way and the Council feels that now is the best time to align with the ELCA.”
- ❖ “WHEREAS National Lutheran Campus Ministry will have its duties assumed by the Division for Education of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; and”
- ❖ “WHEREAS the Division for Education will be the sole supporter of the Lutheran Student Movement, emotionally, spiritually and financially particularly through the nine Regional Centers for Mission, and”
- ❖ “WHEREAS despite the efforts of LSM to remain pan-Lutheran, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod has begun its own student organization, thereby severing its ties with LSM; and”
- ❖ “WHEREAS the majority of student support will be from congregations within the ELCA,”