

**Testimony of Pastor Jared Carson  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) Lutheran Pastor  
Before the North Dakota Senate  
In Opposition to House Concurrent Resolution 3013**

2/25/25

Honorable Members of the North Dakota Senate,

I write today as an ordained pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), standing in opposition to House Concurrent Resolution 3013. As a faith leader, I have the responsibility and privilege to guide my congregation and community in accordance with both the teachings of Scripture and the principles of justice enshrined in our nation's Constitution. The resolution under consideration threatens the rights of same-sex couples to marry, and in doing so, it strikes at the very heart of both my faith and my understanding of constitutional law.

First, I turn to Scripture to offer a theological foundation for my support of same-sex marriage. Though there are disagreements in the broader Christian tradition, Lutheran theology—centered on grace, love, and justice—compels me to affirm the right of same-sex couples to marry in the eyes of God and the Church.

**Galatians 3:28 (NRSV)** – “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.”

This passage speaks powerfully to the unity and equality that all believers have in Christ. The love that binds us together is not conditioned on gender, race, or status. As such, when two people—regardless of gender—are committed to loving one another and sharing their lives in marriage, they should not be denied that sacred union in the eyes of the Church or the state.

**Mark 12:29-31 (NRSV)** – “Jesus answered, ‘The first is, “Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.” The second is this, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” There is no other commandment greater than these.’”

Love is the central commandment of our Christian faith. To withhold the opportunity for loving couples to be legally united is a violation of the call to love one another. Same-sex couples, like all couples, should have the opportunity to live out this commandment fully in their relationships, including marriage.

Second, from a legal perspective, the right to marry is a constitutionally protected right for all citizens, including same-sex couples. The United States Supreme Court, in its landmark decision *Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015), affirmed that same-sex couples have the right to marry under the Constitution. This ruling is grounded in principles of equal protection and due process under the 14th Amendment. To attempt to overturn or limit this ruling through legislation such as

HCR 3013 would not only violate the constitutional rights of same-sex couples, but it would also infringe upon the free exercise of my faith as a pastor, as well as the rights of other clergy who wish to solemnize marriages for all couples, regardless of gender.

As a pastor, I am called to serve all people, to extend the love and grace of God, and to marry those who seek the blessings of God in their union. Same-sex couples, like all couples, deserve the dignity and respect that comes with marriage—both as a legal right and as a sacred covenant before God.

Additionally, North Dakota faces a workforce shortage. Policies that exclude or discriminate against LGBTQ+ individuals and same-sex couples do nothing to enhance our communities. Rather, they drive skilled workers and families from our state, leaving North Dakota less competitive in attracting talent and fostering growth. It is clear that fostering inclusivity and support for all people is crucial for the success of our state and our economy.

Finally, on a deeply personal note, I have friends and family members who have received the protection and blessing of same-sex marriage. The thought of removing this right from those I love and care for fills me with sadness and anger. The harm such resolution would cause is real, not just to the couples affected, but to the communities that thrive on love, commitment, and mutual respect.

I urge the North Dakota Senate to stand for justice, equality, and love by voting No on HCR 3013. To take away the rights of same-sex couples is morally wrong, unconstitutional, and a violation of the free exercise of my faith as a pastor. Please do not allow this harmful resolution to pass.

Sincerely,  
Rev. Jared Carson  
ELCA Lutheran Pastor, Grand Forks, ND