



South-Central Synod of Wisconsin

"[Jesus asked]: 'Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?' He said, 'The one who showed him mercy.' Jesus said to him, 'Go and do likewise.'" (Luke 15:36-37, from Jesus' Parable of the Good Samaritan)

"I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes beheld my unformed substance." (Psalm 139:14-16a)

Bishop Joy Mortensen-Wiebe, along with the members of the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin's Reconciling in Christ¹ team, write today out of deep concern for the struggles faced by our 2SLGBTQIA+² community, and particularly for our transgender siblings in humanity.

Recent executive orders and related actions seek to deny the personhood and existence of transgender people in the United States, by way of denying them necessary health care, excluding them from the armed forces, and banning female transgender athletes from participating in school sports teams that align with their gender identity, to name but three examples. As a result, fear is spreading amongst our transgender and non-binary neighbors: what new wounds will be inflicted on their identity and ability to live freely in the days to come?

As Christians of the Evangelical Church in America (ELCA), we believe that all human beings, including our transgender and non-binary neighbors, are created in the image of God. Our call, poured out on us in the water and Word of our baptism, compels us to work to ensure that each person can experience the wholeness and abundance of God. We believe that families who have transgender and non-binary youth matter and belong in the church. We support efforts to make our communities safe spaces for all people.

We live in a world of nuance and reject that we are being forced into binary classification. Further, we reject any attempt to erase the identity or existence of our transgender neighbors.

We reject the scapegoating of some of the most vulnerable people and even, at times, trying to falsely portray them as a threat.

Finally, we reject the notion that supporting our transgender and 2SLGBTQIA+ neighbors is a political or partisan issue. Rather, this is not an "issue" at all, but is recognition that there is an attack on our fellow human beings, who are as deserving of access to health care, a sense of peace and well-being, the ability to serve in the military or in any other profession, as any other citizen and human being. This is, quite simply, a matter of morality. Those affected are our neighbors, coworkers, friends, and members and leaders in our congregations and ministries – those Jesus calls us to love, to show mercy to, to treat with dignity and compassion, and to work alongside of for the sake of the gospel.

May we answer that call through our continued support for our transgender siblings in faith and the entire 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

In Christ,
Bishop Joy Mortensen-Wiebe
The SCSW Reconciling in Christ Team

¹The Reconciling in Christ program works to "ensure the welcome, inclusion, celebration, and advocacy for people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions; work for racial equity and commit to anti-racist work and support the national program [of Reconciling Works]." Visit <https://www.reconcilingworks.org/ric/becomeric/> to learn more.

²2-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, + additional ways individuals choose to self-identify