

# *The Way Things Look From Here...*

Pastor Vern Christopherson  
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## **At the annual meeting in February the Zumbro Church Council presented a recommendation for the congregation:**

*We affirm the need to have intentional conversation around the issue of human sexuality and other pressing concerns so that we are better prepared to address these issues in the future. In the interest of church unity, at this time we recommend that Zumbro Lutheran Church refrain from taking any congregational vote(s) in response to the 2009 ELCA human sexuality decisions.*

The intention of the recommendation was to encourage the congregation to have constructive dialog about homosexuality and other social issues, but without taking any votes at this time. The day will come when we need to decide where we stand on the ELCA decisions, but we feel it is just as important to search for common ground and mutual respect in the process. "Church unity" is no small thing, but it certainly doesn't mean that we will see eye-to-eye on every issue.

The brief conversation at the annual meeting was a good example of constructive dialog. A number of people spoke to the issue of human sexuality. Some encouraged us to see this as a matter of social justice. Others asked for open-mindedness and tolerance because of family members who happen to be gay. Still others urged us to listen to the divergent voices of the congregation.

The church council is taking the lead in this area. The council talked about human sexuality briefly in February and will return to the topic in April. The goal is to determine a plan for going forward—to have "intentional conversation" in a number of ways—and to eventually get to a point where we as a congregation make some decisions.

One of the first opportunities for Zumbro is a book study that I will be leading in April and May (starts April 12). We'll be reading a book by Methodist minister, Adam Hamilton, called *Seeing Gray in a World of Black and White*. In the book, Hamilton argues for a "radical center" that moves beyond the tired debates of conservatives and liberals in an effort to find common ground.

I'm not suggesting that Hamilton will solve all our problems. And I'm not saying you'll agree with everything in the book. The goal of the class is more modest: to take a deeper look at some of the many issues that have divided Christians over the years—the Bible, science, evolution, world religions, hell, abortion, homosexuality, war, and politics. The question is: In the midst of these divisions, can we find a unifying center in something other than complete agreement about them?

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These conversations won't be easy, but hopefully they will be mutually upbuilding. We have much to learn and benefit from one other in the Body of Christ, especially those who might think differently than we do. I'd like to believe that, in a badly divided world, a church that finds a constructive way to wrestle with these issues together might set a powerful example for the culture around us. I invite you to join me and the other members of Zumbro on a journey of conversation and discovery.

I close with a favorite prayer of mine from the LBW: "Lord God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen" (p. 153).

*Pastor Vern*