

LOCKRIDGE GRINDAL NAUEN
P.L.L.P.
ATTORNEYS AT LAW

100 Washington Avenue South, Suite 2200
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA 55401-2159
TELEPHONE (612) 339-6900
FACSIMILE (612) 339-0981

Suite 301
660 Pennsylvania Avenue, S.E.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20003-4335
TELEPHONE (202) 544-9840
FACSIMILE (202) 544-9850

December 11, 2001

Board of Trustees
Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ
c/o Hon. G. Barry Anderson
13979 Eveleth Court
Apple Valley, MN 55124-4411

Re: *LCMC's Status as a "Lutheran Church Body"*

Dear Board of Trustees:

This responds to your question concerning whether Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ ("LCMC") is a "Lutheran church body," as that term has been relied upon recently by persons affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America ("ELCA"). Apparently, the ELCA may take the position that LCMC is not a Lutheran church body. Assuming this is, in fact, the position held by the ELCA, then the ELCA is incorrect.

To begin with, LCMC clearly is a church body in the sense that it is an organized entity having as its purpose the carrying out of a host of traditional functions of a Christian church. LCMC is incorporated under Minnesota law and has adopted Articles of Incorporation, a Constitution, and Bylaws. At their core, these documents express convictions of Christian faith and intentions to act as a church body. See, e.g., LCMC Bylaws at §§ 3.02 - 3.03 (describing various tasks to be undertaken by LCMC to serve and support member congregations). Furthermore, LCMC's Articles of Incorporation specifically provide that it is "organized and shall be operated exclusively for the promotion of religious purposes contemplated by Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code."

With respect to the issue of whether LCMC is a Lutheran church body, we can find no ELCA document that conceivably could govern or control the disposition of this issue defining what is or is not "Lutheran." Nor can we find any authority vesting the discretion to define what is or is not Lutheran under these circumstances with the ELCA. However, in an article posted on its web site entitled *Roots of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, the ELCA states that it, "along with other Lutheran churches, can trace its roots directly to the Protestant Reformation that took place in Europe in the 16th century" led by Martin Luther. In a separate article also posted on its web site entitled *Some Brief Definitions for Christianity and Lutheranism*, the ELCA describes how Lutherans share a belief in:

. . . the basic principles of theology and practice espoused by Luther, such as ***Sola Gratia, Sola Fide, Sola Scriptura***:

- We are saved by the **grace of God alone** -- not by anything we do;
- Our salvation is through **faith alone** -- we only need to believe that our sins are forgiven for Christ's sake, who died to redeem us;
- The **Bible is the only norm** of doctrine and life -- the only true standard by which teachings and doctrines are to be judged. (Emphasis in original).

It should go without saying that, by the ELCA's own measures, there is no question that LCMC is "Lutheran." Indeed, LCMC's Constitution expressly adopts each of these basic theological principles. See Constitution § 2.02 and 2.03.

We hope this responds to your question concerning this issue. Please do not hesitate to contact either Ted Grindal or me if you should have additional questions or concerns. Thank you again for the opportunity to be of assistance to LCMC.

Best regards,

LOCKRIDGE GRINDAL NAUEN P.L.L.P.

Eric C. Tostrud

ECT/rmm

c: H. Theodore Grindal

A copy of the signed original of this letter is available upon request from:

LCMC
2299 Palmer Drive Suite 220
New Brighton MN 55112-2464