

**Welcome & Inclusion Statement**  
**First Lutheran Church, Columbia Heights, MN**  
**Approved by the Church Council, 09/27/2022**

**Welcome & Inclusion Statement**

**First Lutheran Church strives to be inclusive and welcoming to everyone in our church, our community, and our partner organizations. We seek to connect and serve our neighbors wherever they are on their faith and life journey. We aim to support people of every race & culture, age & ability, family structure & economic status, and every sexual orientation & gender.**



**Purpose of a Welcoming and Inclusion Statement**

Over the last few years we have had several requests to clarify our stance as to whether our church supports the LGBTQ community. We have had specific requests from gay and transgender parents of our After School program, several LGBTQ youth and parents in our church, gay and transgender parents from our tenant, Marigold Preschool. We also regularly are in conversation with LGBTQ community members looking for a local church.

Our staff tell people that we support LGBTQ families and couples in our church. But we would like this stance to also come from the church council and congregation.

Our website currently says

*May I attend with my LGBTQ+ partner or family member? Will we/he/she/they be welcome?*

*Yes! We invite individuals and families to attend as you are. Feel free to let us know your name and pronouns so we can properly address you.*

However this statement was not voted on by the council. It was drafted by the church staff as part of a larger redesign of our church website.

This statement on our website only states that *LGBTQA+ people “are invited to attend as you are.”* It does not say that we support their family configuration or support LGBTQ affirming theology. It also does not indicate if LGBTQ people are supported to be hired or take leadership positions in the church.

This is an issue because many people have reported being hurt and misled by churches that have invited LGBTQ people to come to their church. But later churches have denied LGBTQ people leadership positions on the board, council, and worship teams.

As a staff we believe it is not the intention of First Lutheran to mislead, exclude or hurt people based on their sexuality, race, class, marital status, or gender. We hope this statement would make clear what we believe are our lived values.

Last year, the church council affirmed the need for a conversational process, which would lead to an inclusion statement to be voted on by the Council and congregation. However, with COVID to navigate, they did not feel they could pass it late in the session.

The staff has reviewed the statement that follows this introduction, which was drafted based on the welcome statement from our neighboring church, Nativity Lutheran in St. Anthony Village.

We would advocate that the council approve this statement and then bring it to the full congregation at the January 2023 annual meeting to vote on.

Nathan Roberts, and affirmed by the Board of Hospitality and Outreach  
Rachel James, and affirmed by the Board of Children, Youth and Family

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### **Next Steps:**

We will use this statement to hold at least two listening sessions this fall, and present the statement for congregation consideration and approval at the January 2023 Annual Meeting.

Rev. Bonnie Wilcox