



St. Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran Church
"A welcoming family, encouraging lives of service to Christ."

612 South College Road
Wilmington, NC 28403
Phone 910-791-4582 Fax 910-791-2078
www.stmatthewsch.org

12 April 2024

Dear Ms. Haywood,

This is in response to your letter of April 2, 2024, denying St. Matthew's Lutheran Church congregation's 3rd request to disaffiliate from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).

As the most recently elected president of this congregation, I have reviewed all the letters and other correspondence beginning in September 2021 between St. Matthew's and the NC Synod concerning our three requests for disaffiliation. I do not believe it necessary to reiterate the reasoning and arguments of either side contained in the numerous pieces of correspondence; both sides have made clear their positions.

Please indulge me for a few moments to provide a little of my background. In my professional life as a career military officer and post military employee in the defense industry I worked many years in the contracting field. I say this only to inform you that my inclination and practice is to "read the contract" and other governing documents to guide me in executing my responsibilities and actions.

As to this current issue of disaffiliation I have found little as guidance or governance, other than the constitution that both St. Matthew's and the NC Synod are bound by. That constitution is very specific in process, which we now have followed during three attempts at disaffiliation. There are no other circumstances or dictates of quid pro quo in the constitution or anywhere else I have discovered that would require any negotiation, remediation, or forfeiture of any assets to be granted disaffiliation.

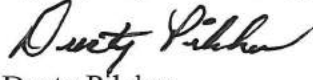
While the North Carolina Synod Council can say yes or no, to continue to deny unreasonably is to retain a worshipping community that has properly and repeatedly expressed its will to be released by the NC Synod as have scores of other NC Synod churches since 2009.

Recently, I read on-line Bishop Smith's article on polity and process in his Reflections section. In that article he states, "When one joins an ELCA congregation, one is not presumed to have thus signed on to every ELCA social statement, or statement by the synod, or Presiding Bishop." While that may be true, one could argue there are some social statements, or practices and policies resulting from those social statements, that are so differently interpreted by others as to be anathema to one's conscience. Identity by association becomes not only undesirable but requires disassociation. Yes, we have been reminded that individuals have the option of leaving a congregation. This is not the solution for the 100% of St. Matthew's members who recently voted to disaffiliate.

As a Lutheran community of faith, we continue our history of proclaiming Christ crucified through Word and Sacrament in joyful service to God and our neighbor.

Respectfully, we ask that the NC Synod just let us leave, without consideration, and align with another Lutheran denomination. If the synod council cannot respect the decisions of the St. Matthew's congregation, we will continue to request disaffiliation out of deep conviction that we are being faithful to the Lord God and to the ELCA Confession of Faith.

Again, very respectfully,



Dusty Pilcher
President

Cc: Rev. Dr. Samuel D. Zumwalt, Sr. Pastor St. Matthew's Lutheran Church
Bishop Timothy Smith, NC Synod ELCA
Rev. Christina Auch, Chair, Disaffiliation Committee, NC Synod Council

As a Lutheran community of faith, we continue our history of proclaiming Christ crucified through Word and Sacrament in joyful service to God and our neighbor.