**Resolution #1**

**Resolution Regarding Marriage Equality in Maryland**

**WHEREAS,** the Governor and Legislature of the state of Maryland on March 1, 2012, enacted the Civil Marriage Protection Act, extending legal protection for civil marriage to all couples in the state of Maryland; and

**WHEREAS,** the ELCA recognizes that “while Lutherans hold various convictions regarding lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships, this church is united on many critical issues,” including the need to “support legislation and policies to protect civil rights and to prohibit discrimination in housing, employment, and public services” (*Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* [*HS:G&T*],p. 19); and

**WHEREAS,** this synod has congregations and individual members who live and/or worship in Maryland, some of whom “conclude that marriage is also the appropriate term to use in describing... same-gender couples entering into lifelong, monogamous relationships” and that “such accountable relationships provide the necessary foundation that supports trust and familial and community thriving;” *(HS:G&T*,p*.* 18); and

**WHEREAS**, this synod has congregations and individual members who live and/or worship in Maryland who, regardless of their beliefs in general about same-gender relationships, “do not equate these relationships with marriage” (Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust [HS:G&T], p. 20);

**WHEREAS,** in stating that any religious official or congregation may choose not to officiate or participate in a marriage ceremony in violation of their conscience or free exercise of religion, the Civil Marriage Protection Act provides the means by which each congregation and individual member of this church located in Maryland may legally carry out the practices which they have faithfully discerned are the most appropriate response to the ELCA's call to “welcome, care for, and support same-gender couples and their families” (*HS:G&T*, p. 19); and

**WHEREAS,** this synod includes “different understandings and practices within its life as it seeks to live out its mission and ministry in the world” as a way to honor the “conscience-bound beliefs” of each member of this church **“**with humility and deep respect” (*HS:G&T*, p. 19); therefore be it

**RESOLVED**, that the Delaware-Maryland Synod encourages its congregations to study the Civil Marriage Protection Act, as enacted by the Maryland legislature, prior to the anticipated referendum in the General Election of 2012; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, that the Delaware-Maryland Synod shall offer at least three public forums prior to the beginning of Early Voting (October 27, 2012), providing members of our faith communities the opportunity to study together the issues involved in light of the ELCA Social Statement, *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, that the Delaware-Maryland Synod requests that the synod bishop issue a pastoral letter offering his guidance prior to the anticipated referendum.

**Sponsors**

The Rev. Ryan W. Roberts Mr. Brad Schlegel Mr. John Carter

The Rev. Stacy Marsh The Rev. Dale Dusman The Rev. Thomas Davison

The Rev. Breonna Roberts Ms. Marion Malcolm Mr. Don Zimmerman

Mr. Gene Miller Church Council, St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Baltimore

The Rev. Teresa Langdon