

**TOGETHER**



March 16, 2021

## Conference of Presidents addresses concerns about the Equality Act

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Some have been asking about the potential impact of the proposed federal Equality Act on Christian churches and religious organizations, including our own synod. The Equality Act was first passed by the U.S. House of Representatives in 2019 but was not adopted by the U.S. Senate at that time. It was passed again by the House of Representatives on Feb. 25, 2021, and may well be introduced into the Senate in the near future.

The Equality Act seeks to make sexual orientation and gender identity a protected class, just like one's biological sex, under our nation's current federal non-discrimination laws. As a church we do not express opinions on purely political matters. However, the concern in this case is that aspects of the Equality Act could make it very difficult for the church to carry out its mission and could jeopardize our religious freedom to preach and teach God's Word faithfully.

At this point, there is much we don't know. For one thing, it is not known when or if the Senate will discuss the Equality Act, although it could be at any time. For another thing, if the Senate should pass the Equality Act, it is not known what specific restrictions would be imposed on Christian churches and institutions or what the result will be when legal firms appeal to the courts in regard to religious freedom concerns.

This concern is due to the fact that in its present form the Equality Act appears not to provide for religious exemptions. It is possible, therefore, that identifying certain types of behavior as sinful could be considered unlawful hate speech under the provisions of this act. It could result in the loss of our tax-exempt status. It could also affect the ability of our colleges to receive federal funding for scholarships, grants, and loans for their students. There are several other ways in which carrying out our normal daily operations as churches and schools could potentially be affected in regard to things like facilities, health insurance policies, and sports programs.

Our entire focus as a Christian church is to proclaim God's law and gospel in order to convict people of sin and to assure people of forgiveness through the sacrificial death of Christ our Savior. We recognize that the only way for people to have an appropriate view of any situation of life, including matters of sexual identity, is to know and believe in Jesus. As a result, we do not believe that seeking to prevent a law from coming into existence will change anyone's heart. We also do not make it our goal to simply change anyone's external behavior. Further, we do not in any way condone behavior that shows hatred or disrespect to any individual. Such behavior is also sinful.

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Our desire and responsibility, however, is to continue practicing our faith in humility and love, as we share with ourselves and others what God says in his Word for our eternal good. As individual Christian citizens, you may well exercise your citizenship by contacting your U.S. senators to express any concerns you may have. We encourage all of you to pray that, if the Equality Act should become law, no aspect of the law will be allowed to compromise our ability to share God's Word freely. In other words, pray that religious exemptions be maintained, as has been the constitutional right the Lord has allowed us to enjoy for many years. While the Bible does not guarantee that right, it has been a blessing that we have cherished. If that should not be the case, then we further encourage your prayers that the Lord would give us the boldness and courage to be faithful to him, no matter the earthly consequences, as we work together as brothers and sisters in Christ to continue to carry out our Savior's mission. The work of God's kingdom will always move forward.

We will certainly keep alert to further developments and communicate those when appropriate.

God, have mercy on us and give us your peace, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Serving with you in Christ,  
WELS President Mark Schroeder 

## LWMS announces plans for 2021 convention

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**T**he Lutheran Women's Missionary Society (LWMS) announced via Facebook Live on March 7 that its 2021 convention, originally planned for June 24-27, 2021, in Sharonville, Ohio, will be virtual again this year.

"We've been doing a lot of praying and brainstorming, and we came up with a solution for this year," said LWMS President Cynthia Natsis. "We have decided as a board that our 2021 convention . . . will have to be virtual again this year. We came to that decision because of many different circumstances, COVID-19 being the biggest one, of course." She continues to say that, at the time of the announcement, Ohio had gathering restrictions limited to 300 people and it's uncertain how that would change by June.


"We are excited to try our hand at another virtual convention. We have some exciting speakers," says Natsis. From Home Missions, Rev. Allen Kirschbaum, Spirit of Life, Caledonia, Mich., and Rev. Ryan Kolander, Palabra de Vida, Detroit, Mich., will be presenting. Gary and Beth Evans from the Central Africa Medical Mission, which is marking 60 years of service this year, will be talking about their work in Africa. From World Missions, Rev. Stephen Wiesenauer will share about the gospel work in East Asia. Additional workshops are also planned.

All videos will be posted June 24-27, 2021, on the LWMS convention website, which can be found by visiting [lwms.org](http://lwms.org). View the entire announcement at [fb.com/LWMS.WELS](http://fb.com/LWMS.WELS). 

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