

For Immediate Release: Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod, ELCA

Michael Rinehart, bishop (281) 873-5665

Bishop Mike Rinehart to Speak at Salem of Welcome

As part of Salem Evangelical Lutheran Church of Welcome's discernment process, Bishop Michael Rinehart will speak on October 6, at 7:00 p.m., after taking the first of two votes required to disaffiliate with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Bishop Rinehart will talk about the advantages and disadvantages of being part of a large, open denomination.

This visit is part of Salem Welcome's constitution. After taking a first vote to disaffiliate to get the question on the table, the congregation consults with the synod before taking a second vote. Salem will also use this time to consider other Lutheran bodies. There are over two dozen Lutheran splinter groups in the U.S. that have broken off of the two largest Lutheran bodies in the U.S: the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, ELCA (elca.org) or the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, LCMS (lcms.org). Most splinter groups do not allow women to be ordained pastors.

Salem Welcome is considering joining Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ, LCMC (lcmc.org), which has 447 congregations in 40 U.S. states, or the newly formed North American Lutheran Church, NALC (thenalc.org) which has 17 congregations, two of which are in Texas. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has over 10,000 congregations. NALC was just formed this year. LCMC was formed in 2000, when the ELCA voted to enter into full communion with the Episcopal Church USA.

"Schismatic behavior, that is division, is the disease of the Lutheran movement," said Bishop Rinehart. "Sadly, it is part of our DNA. If someone doesn't like this or that decision, they form their own church. The line between a small denomination and cult is becoming too thin for my taste." A list of nearly 40 Lutheran bodies can be found at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lutheran_church_bodies_in_North_America.

The forum with Bishop Rinehart will be held at Salem Welcome's sanctuary, 13636 FM 109.