



## ELCA - SOUTHEASTERN SYNOD

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### A PASTORAL LETTER OF DISCLOSURE

August 8, 2006

Dear Rostered Colleagues of the Southeastern Synod,

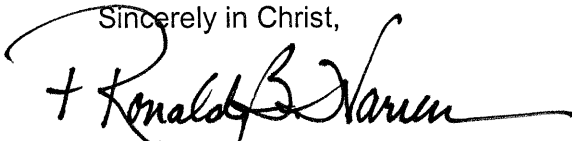
After a lengthy process of prayerful discernment, today I filed charges against The Rev. Bradley E. Schmeling, presently serving as pastor of St. John's Lutheran Church, Atlanta, GA. Pastor Schmeling has admitted to me that he is in violation of ELCA "Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline..." for ordained ministers. Specifically, Pastor Schmeling disclosed to me that he is in a sexual relationship with an adult male. He has declined my requests for his resignations from his call to St. John's Lutheran Church and the ELCA clergy roster.

When a synod bishop files charges against a pastor, the action begins the church's formal process which leads to a hearing by a Discipline Hearing Committee (DHC). The DHC receives evidence, listens to witnesses and eventually determines what actions should be taken. For example, if a DHC finds that a pastor is not in compliance with ELCA "Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline..." the committee has the authority to remove a pastor from the ELCA roster for ordained ministers. For more detailed information, see Chapter 20 of the ELCA Constitution (<http://www.elca.org/secretary/constitutions/index.html>).

An ELCA bishop does not have the authority to unilaterally remove any ELCA pastor from the ELCA roster. For this reason, it is necessary to submit this matter to the ELCA disciplinary process. This is an internal church proceeding and does not involve the civil courts.

With the filing of charges, I do not intend to make any further comments about the case until the DHC renders its verdict and course of action. Please remember in intercessory prayer Pastor Bradley Schmeling, his loved ones, St. John's Lutheran Church, and those of us who will be involved in the discipline hearing process.

Sincerely in Christ,

  
Ronald B. Warren  
Bishop