



THE ARCHBISHOP
EV. LUTH. CHURCH OF FINLAND
PO BOX 60 - FIN-20501 TURKU
TEL. +358-2-279 7031 FAX +358-2-279 7002

11.1.2010

Kyrklig samling
kring Bibeln och bekännelsen
Rev. Yngve Kalin
Hålsjövägen 32
S-511 68 HYSSNA
Sweden

Dear representatives of Kyrklig Samling
kring bibel och bekännelsen,

Thank you for your letter on Nov. 26, 2009, regarding the Christian understanding of marriage. We understand your concern about the decision of the Church of Sweden on the so called gender neutral marriage. I as the Archbishop have also articulated my regrets about it in Finland. Our Church has a different line-drawing in this matter: marriage is not only a civil order but a special union between one man and one woman instituted by the Creator.

This common Christian conviction is clearly expressed and affirmed in the doctrinal and liturgical sources of the the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. In the official wedding order of our church we pray for example: *"God, heavenly Father, you created people male and female and gave them marriage as a gift and a task. Bless NN and NN who bind themselves to each other today in marriage. Or in other prayer: "Heavenly Father, in your love you have instituted marriage and called this man and woman to live according to your word. Help them to love each other just as Christ loved the church."* Furthermore, in a short homily for the spouses it is said: *"Dear NN and NN and you who attend this wedding! God himself has set up marriage in the dawn of creation. Our Lord Jesus Christ has emphasized the value of marriage by saying, 'What God has joined together, let no one separate'."*


In the light of this, the decision of the Swedish General synod considerably changes the Christian doctrine on anthropology and marriage.

Especially unfortunate are also the ecumenical tensions this decision has caused especially in the Communion of the Porvoo Churches and among the churches of the Lutheran World Federation. Yet, we think it's important to carry on with discussion also in difficult matters. Regarding the question about ordained ministry, we follow in our church the principles of the Porvoo Declaration, the Lutheran World Federation and the paragraphs of our church order.

Our Lutheran bishops published last year a book called "The Gift of Love. The Bishops' address about family, marriage and sexuality". According to the Bishops (p. 68) marriage is understood as "*a special installation of God through which He donates His blessing. ... When a man and a woman are joined together, this is a union which 'God has united'.*" The Swedish translation is published in the internet under the title "Kärlekens gåva – Biskoparnas uttalande om familj, äktenskap och sexualitet".

In March 2009 the committee named by the Bishops' Conference published its' report on the argumentation concerning the discussion about registered same-sex partnership. *Also this report is available in the internet under the title "Kyrkan och registrerad parnterskap"*. In February 2010 The Bishops' Conference will give its statement about the report to the General Synod which will be held in May 2010.

Yours in Christ



+Jukka Paarma
Archbishop of Turku and Finland