

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Alternative church fellowship for traditional Lutherans to be formed; 1,200 to gather in Indianapolis for Lutheran CORE convocation Sept. 25-26

Lutheran CORE (Coalition for Reform) will be gathering Lutherans from throughout the United States and Canada Sept. 25-26 in Indianapolis to begin the process of creating an alternative church fellowship for Lutherans who continue to uphold traditional marriage and who are unwilling to support the changes in church teaching and policy on marriage and homosexual behavior approved by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in August.

So many Lutherans are planning to come to Indianapolis that organizers have had to move the event to Holy Spirit Parish at Geist. The Roman Catholic church building seats twice as many people as the previous site, Christ the Savior Lutheran Church. Both churches are in the Indianapolis suburb of Fishers, Ind. Lutheran CORE leaders were forced to close registration Sept. 14 when registration reached 1,200 people because of space limitations.

“It is wonderfully ironic that Lutherans who started 500 years ago as a movement to reform the Roman Catholic Church would now return to a Catholic Church to re-form themselves,” said the Rev. Mark Chavez of Landisville, Pa., director of Lutheran CORE.

“This is an exciting and hopeful time for confessional Lutherans in North America,” said the Rev. Paull Spring of State College, Pa., chair of the Lutheran CORE Steering Committee. “In the past couple weeks we have received an incredible outpouring of support for Lutheran CORE’s ministries and plans for the future. People and churches are joining at a rate with which we can barely keep pace.”

A proposed constitution will be considered that will transform Lutheran CORE from a “coalition for reform” to a “coalition for renewal.” This action is more than a name change. It is a change in focus from efforts to reform the ELCA to an effort to enable traditional Lutherans to work together whether within or outside of the ELCA.

“We intend to initiate a process that we hope will lead to a reconfiguration of North American Lutheranism,” said Spring, the retired bishop of the Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod. “The convocation is for all who care for the future shape of orthodox Lutheranism.”

“We are not leaving the ELCA. The ELCA has left us,” said Chavez. “Lutheran CORE is continuing in the Christian faith as it has been passed down to us by generations of Christians. The ELCA is the one that has departed from the teaching of the Bible as understood by Christians for 2,000 years.”

“This disagreement is not about sex. It is about the source of authority in the ELCA. The assembly’s sexuality decisions have opened the eyes of people to the biblical and theological crisis in the ELCA,” said Chavez. “We have no objection to the Confession of Faith in the ELCA constitution. The ELCA says that the Bible is the source and norm of its faith and life, but the actions of the ELCA Churchwide Assembly have shown that the ELCA does not practice what it says it believes.”

The Indianapolis event will focus on conversation around the theme “What after Minneapolis?” a reference to the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly Aug. 17-23 in Minneapolis which voted to change ELCA teaching and policy to affirm same-sex relationships and to allow pastors and other rostered leaders to be in those relationships in spite of the Bible’s teaching on marriage and on homosexual behavior.

The convocation will open with reflections on the “What After Minneapolis” theme by the Rev. Kenneth Sauer of Columbus, Ohio, and Ryan Schwarz of Washington, D.C. Sauer is the retired bishop of the Southern Ohio Synod and former chair of the ELCA Conference of Bishops. He serves on the Lutheran CORE Advisory Council. Schwarz is a member of the Lutheran CORE Steering Committee and was runner-up for ELCA Vice President at the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly.

Bishop Spring will present a vision for the future of Lutheran CORE to the convocation. In a Sept. 4 letter to supporters, he said, “Our goal and vision for Lutheran CORE is a re-forming and a renewal of our coalition. With God’s help, we intend to be:

- ✚ A confessional and confessing movement, rooted in Scripture, creeds, and confessions, open to all Lutherans in North America.
- ✚ A churchly community, grounded in Word and sacrament and congregational mission.
- ✚ A free-standing synod, carrying out synodical ministries, apart from the ELCA.
- ✚ An umbrella group for other Lutheran reform movements.
- ✚ A coalition of synods, congregations, individuals, and reform movements both within and outside the ELCA.”

The convocation will consider a resolution that would “initiate conversations among the congregations and reform movements in Lutheran CORE and with Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ and other compatible churchly organizations, leading toward a possible re-configuration of North American Lutheranism, whether through existing or newly created structures.”

Lutheran CORE is a coalition of pastors, lay people, congregations and reforming groups that seeks to preserve the authority of the Bible. Lutheran CORE seeks to be a voice for the solid, faithful core that is the majority of ELCA members, pastors, and congregations. More information is available at www.lutherancore.org.