

# CORE Connection

News from Lutheran CORE

Tuesday - August 18, 2009

## Assembly rejects two-thirds majority for ministry standards

The ELCA Churchwide Assembly voted 584-436 Monday night to reject a proposal that would have required a two-thirds majority to change ELCA teaching and policy to allow pastors to be in same-sex relationships.

The assembly rejected appeals from voting members including five synod bishops that a two-thirds majority would serve the unity of the ELCA.

“A two-thirds vote would indicate how seriously and carefully we have addressed this topic,” the Rev. Larry Wohlrabe, bishop of the Northwestern Minnesota Synod, told the assembly.

“Right now this church requires of us a higher standard,” said the Rev. Callon Holloway, bishop of the Southern Ohio Synod.

Leaders of Lutheran CORE expressed disappointment in Monday’s decision. “I am very disappointed that the voting members seem willing to let basic Christian teaching be overturned by a simple majority vote of a tiny percentage of ELCA members,” said the Rev. Steve Shipman of Lock Haven, Pa. “Such a decision would lack any legitimacy both ecumenically and among our members.”

“The assembly seemed intent on achieving a particular legislative objective rather than considering the wider implications of the action on the ELCA and on the global Christian community,” said Ryan Schwarz of Washington, D.C.

“It is a shame that the assembly intends to make such a serious decision by a majority margin. It shows utter disregard for most of the rest of the Christian Church,” said the Rev. Mark Chavez, director of Lutheran CORE.

## Debate on proposed sexuality statement begins today

The ELCA Churchwide Assembly will begin discussion and debate on the proposed social statement on human sexuality today.

The Tuesday morning session will include a one-hour “Committee of the Whole.” This is a time for discussion of the social statement proposal without the parliamentary procedure of a normal assembly session.

Lutheran CORE is calling for the defeat of the proposed statement because it overturns Biblical teaching on marriage and sexual behavior.

“In reality this debate is not about sex. It is about the source of authority in the ELCA. The ELCA claims that the Bible is the source and norm of its

faith and life. The sexuality proposals are based on a different source and norm. They reject the clear teaching of Scripture and seek consensus on a different basis,” said Ryan Schwarz of Washington, D.C., a member of the Lutheran CORE Steering Committee. “The question is whether the ELCA practices what it says it believes.”

“A Christian church does not vote on matters that are integral to the faith of the Church. Christians don’t vote on the Trinity, the Incarnation, or the two natures of Christ, we just believe and confess them as the faith of the Christian Church that we have received from generations of Christians before us,” said the Rev. Paull Spring of State College, Pa., chair of Lutheran CORE.

“The Churchwide Assembly has no authority to be voting on these matters,” said Spring of the retired bishop of the Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod. “The constitution of the ELCA says that the Bible is the source and norm of the church’s faith and life. A church assembly does not have the authority to overturn what the Bible clearly teaches about marriage and about homosexual behavior.”

“The sexuality proposals show a tremendous arrogance. ELCA leaders think we can do whatever we want in our teaching about sexuality regardless of what the Bible teaches and what Christians around the world and throughout time have consistently taught,” said Spring.

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## ELCA's relationships with Lutherans worldwide will be damaged by adoption of social statement

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“Consideration of these proposals threatens the ELCA’s relationship with our partner churches in the Lutheran World Federation. Church leaders from Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe have already written letters stating that approval of the sexuality proposals would greatly damage the ELCA’s relationship with their churches,” said the Rev. Mark C. Chavez, director of Lutheran CORE. “These proposals will also severely damage the ELCA’s relationship with Roman Catholics, Orthodox, and most Protestant Christians.”

“The ELCA has already been damaged significantly just by presenting the sexuality proposals to the Churchwide Assembly. And the damage will be compounded no matter what the

assembly decides,” Chavez said. “A Christian church has no business voting on whether the Bible is relevant to the faith and life of its members.”

Respected theologians and church leaders say the proposed social statement would overturn Biblical teaching as it has been understood by Christians for nearly 2,000 years.

“No church has the authority to overturn the Word of God that protects sexual relations by placing them properly in the structure of marriage, and establishes marriage as being between male and female,” said the Rev. Erma Wolf of Brandon, S.D., vice chair of the Lutheran CORE Steering Committee. “When any church finds itself accommodating its teachings to the ways of the culture, that church is in trouble.”

## Voting members will stand with L-CORE

There was a standing-room-only crowd at two planning sessions Monday for those who are willing to work with Lutheran CORE to uphold Biblical teaching on marriage and sexual behavior within the ELCA.

“We are pleased with the significant number of people who are willing to work with us and to stand faithfully on the Word of God,” said the Rev. Mark Chavez, director of Lutheran CORE. “We hope that even more people will stand with us on the authority of Scripture this week.”

All voting members and visitors who are willing to work together to uphold Scripture’s teaching on sexuality will meet nightly this week. Tuesday’s

meeting is at 8:15 p.m. Tuesday in Room M101BC on the mezzanine level of the Convention Center.

Lutheran CORE is a coalition of individuals, congregations, and reform movements in the ELCA. Lutheran CORE’s members and participants represent the vast middle of American Lutheranism, spanning geographical regions, vocations, and political viewpoints.

We are united by our common commitment to the authority of Scripture in the life of the ELCA. Lutheran CORE seeks to be a voice for the solid, faithful core that is the majority of ELCA members, pastors, and congregations.



### Tuesday

7:15 a.m. - Devotions - 204AB

8:15 p.m. - Lutheran CORE supporters meet - M101BC

### Wednesday

7:15 a.m. - Devotions - 204AB

7:30 p.m. - Prof. Robert Gagnon Presentation - M101BC

9:00 p.m. - Lutheran CORE supporters meet - M101BC

### Thursday

7:15 a.m. - Devotions - 204AB

7:30 p.m. - Nate Oyloe - Outpost / Exodus International - M101BC

8:15 p.m. - “Rebecca’s Well” Concert - M101BC

9:15 p.m. - Lutheran CORE supporters meet - M101BC

### Friday

7:15 a.m. - Devotions - 204AB

7:00 p.m. - Panel Discussion on implications of Assembly - M101BC

9:00 p.m. - Lutheran CORE supporters meet - M101BC

### Saturday

7:15 a.m. - Devotions - 204AB

8:00 p.m. - Lutheran CORE supporters meet - M101BC

*204AB is Lutheran CORE HQ on the second floor of Convention Center.*

*M101BC is on the mezzanine level.*