

CORE Connection

News from Lutheran CORE

Thursday - August 20, 2009

Lutheran CORE leaders respond to ELCA action adopting social statement overturning biblical teaching on marriage and sexuality by one-vote margin

Leaders of Lutheran CORE (Coalition for Reform) expressed profound sorrow over the decision Wednesday, by the Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to adopt a social statement on sexuality which overturns biblical teaching on marriage and homosexual behavior. The social statement was approved by a one-vote margin.

“We mourn the decision by the Churchwide Assembly to reject the clear teaching of the Bible that God’s intention for marriage is the relationship of one man and one woman,” said the Rev. Paull Spring of State College, Pa., chair of Lutheran CORE. “It is tragic that such a large number of ELCA members were willing to overturn the clear teaching of the Bible as it has been believed and confessed by Christians for nearly 2,000 years.”

“We are disappointed that this social statement has caused such a deep division in the church,” added Spring, the retired bishop of the Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod. “For this social statement to pass by only one vote shows how deeply divided the ELCA is and will continue to be.”

“It is appropriate that we call this a ‘social’ statement for we have just swapped society’s statements and

trends for God’s Word and teaching,” said Jaynan Clark of Spokane, Wash., president of the WordAlone Network, a member reform movement of Lutheran CORE.

“Even more distressing than the passage of the social statement is the fact that the assembly majority would not even listen to debate on many of the proposed amendments to the social statement that would have affirmed biblical teaching and the historic teaching of the Christian Church,” said Ryan Schwarz of Washington, D.C., a member of the Lutheran CORE Steering Committee.

“This is a sad day for Lutherans in the United States. I am disappointed that so many voting members were willing to overturn the Bible’s teaching,” said the Rev. Erma Wolf of Brandon, S.D., vice chair of the Lutheran CORE Steering Committee. “The ELCA is a very divided church. This decision divides us even more. It is going to be very hard for faithful Lutherans to support the ELCA when the ELCA is willing to reject the clear teaching of Scripture.”

Lutheran CORE leaders will be working to defeat further proposals which would allow ELCA pastors to be in committed same-sex relationships and would permit the blessing of

same-sex unions by the church. The assembly will begin consideration of these proposals on Thursday. A vote is scheduled for Friday.

“We are grateful for the many faithful Lutherans who have stood with us in confessing the teaching of Scripture on marriage and on homosexual behavior. We call on all those in the ELCA who want to continue to uphold the authority of Scripture in the church to work together even more closely in the days and years ahead,” said Bishop Spring. “It is tragic that ELCA leaders thought it possible to bring this proposal to a vote. The church should not be voting on whether or not to follow the teaching of the Bible.”

Lutheran CORE is hosting a convocation Sept. 25-26 in Indianapolis for ELCA members who affirm the authority of Scripture to gather together to discuss the implications of the decisions of the Churchwide Assembly and what the future might hold for them and their congregations.

Lutheran CORE is a coalition of pastors, lay people, congregations and reforming groups that seeks to preserve the authority of the Bible in the ELCA. Lutheran CORE seeks to be a voice for the solid, faithful core that is the majority of ELCA members, pastors, and congregations.

Young voting member is a sign of hope at assembly

A 17-year-old voting member is attracting attention and arousing hope at the ELCA Churchwide Assembly. John Hoyum, 17, of Bainbridge Island, Wash., has shown himself to be an articulate spokesman for biblical teaching on sexuality.

"I just try to be a witness," Hoyum said. "I've had people tell me they appreciated my comments in the hearing on the social statement," Hoyum said.

The high school junior attracted attention at one of the hearings on the proposed sexuality statement. "I asked the task force members why it is that the Bible passages on homosexuality were not addressed in the social statement," he said.

"It didn't make sense to me that they didn't address the Scripture passages that speak on homosexuality. Even if

they wanted to dispute what Paul says, why didn't they dismantle his argument against it. They just ignored it."

Hoyum said some voting members have been surprised that as a young person that he supports biblical teaching about sex. "I think I'm unique among people my age in taking a traditional view of sexuality . . . Many people my age don't see any problem with promiscuous sex."

"I've had people tell me it's interesting that you take the traditional position. I've been thanked by some voting members," he said. "I've been respected (by people on both sides of the debate) so that's good. . . . I've received a great deal of support from Lutheran CORE."

Hoyum said that he was surprised by some of the debate at the assembly.

"I'm realizing that the church is a lot more liberal than I thought it was," he said. "I can't count the number of times I've heard people falsely use the Bible. I thought, as confessional Lutherans, we were better than that."

"When I go back to my congregation I'm going to have a hard time explaining this because of what's going on," he said. "My church is more traditional."

Hoyum expressed concern over proposed changes in ELCA teaching and practice on sexuality: "It's disheartening. I don't want to see my church make the wrong decision. It's going to create immense challenges for bishops and pastors who dissent."

Hoyum is the son of Ron and Lori Hoyum. Ron Hoyum is an assistant to the bishop in the Southwest Washington Synod

Exodus International and concert are tonight

Nate Oyloe of Outpost Ministries will speak at 7:30 p.m. Thursday as part of Lutheran CORE's evening offerings at the Churchwide Assembly.

Outpost Ministries is an affiliate of Exodus International that ministers to those who struggle with same-sex attractions with the forgiveness and love of Jesus and helps them to live faithful lives.

"Outpost was formed to meet the needs of men and women who have made a decision to break away from the gay life," its website explains.

A concert of country music by "Rebecca's Well," from Holy Cross

Lutheran Church in Maple Lake, Minn., follows the Exodus International presentation Thursday.

This is the second of three evening presentations for those attending the assembly hosted by Lutheran CORE (Coalition for Reform). The evening events are in Room M101BC on mezzanine level of the convention center. All are welcome.

Friday's session is a panel discussion with the leaders of Lutheran CORE on the significance of the decisions of the Churchwide Assembly. This is also an opportunity to discuss efforts within the ELCA to uphold the authority of Scripture.

Lutheran CORE

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

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