

CORE Connection

News from Lutheran CORE

Special Edition

February 19, 2009

ELCA Task Force proposals affirm same-sex relationships, reject Bible's teaching and views of majority of members

Lutheran CORE leaders urge rejection of ELCA task force recommendations

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America released proposals Thursday, Feb. 19, that seek to change Christian teaching on homosexuality and would permit pastors to be in same-sex sexual relationships. The proposals from the Task Force for ELCA Studies on Sexuality also go against the views of a significant majority of the members of the 4.7-million member denomination.

In response, leaders of Lutheran CORE (Coalition for Reform) announced Thursday that they will work to defeat the proposals that ask the ELCA to depart from biblical teaching on sexuality and to change its standards to allow pastors to be in same-sex sexual relationships.

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.

"These recommendations mark a significant departure from the church's commitment to Scripture as the source and norm of its faith and life," said the Rev. Paull Spring of State College, Pa., chair of the Lutheran CORE Steering Committee. "The proposals make reference to Lutheran themes and Lutheran

theology but forget one of its cornerstones: 'Sola Scriptura' (Scripture alone)."

"The proposal for change in standards for clergy departs from the clear teaching of Scripture," said Spring, the retired bishop of the Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod. "There are some good things in the social statement, but at significant points the statement needs to be revised and amended. We intend to work together with faithful Lutherans throughout the ELCA to amend the statement. We also intend to work for the defeat of the proposals for blessing and ordaining practicing gay and lesbian persons."

"When any church finds itself accommodating its teachings to the ways of the culture, that church is in trouble," said the Rev. Erma Wolf of Brandon, S.D., vice chair of the Lutheran CORE Steering Committee. "In these documents the ELCA would accommodate itself to the demands of our culture that the desires and needs of individuals trump everything else. The exceptions become the rule, until finally there are no rules. That movement is happening in a number of areas, including human sexual relations. But 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."

The proposal neglects to offer any biblical and normative teaching on several areas of sexuality including homosexuality because it says there is no consensus in the ELCA.

"Since when is consensus the norm for deciding what's right and wrong?" asked Wolf. "The social statement says there shouldn't be cohabitation, but then winks at it," she added.

"The task force recommendations will disconnect the ELCA from God's Word in the Bible, which clearly says that all sex outside of marriage is sin, and disconnect it from all who uphold the biblical norm — most ELCA members, and most of the Christian churches on earth," said the Rev. Mark C. Chavez of Landisville, Pa., director of Lutheran CORE .

"The task force wants the ELCA to take the same tragic missteps as other Protestant denominations in North America that have said same-sex sexual relationships are OK for some," Chavez added. "The membership losses in those denominations range from 30 to 50 percent. If the task force's recommendations are approved, the ELCA's membership losses, now more than 10 percent, will also climb."

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Lutheran CORE leaders respond to task force recommendations

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"I am disappointed that the proposed actions lead us down the same road which is creating turmoil and dissension in so many of our sister churches," said the Rev. W. Stevens Shipman, pastor of United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Lock Haven, Pa. "Every study indicates that a large majority in our churches and in our society do not endorse and cannot accept the blessing of same-sex sexual relationships. Even in California, the people have spoken, but a determined minority keeps thwarting their will."

"God loves all people, and I oppose every form of discrimination. But I cannot ask God's blessing on behaviors which God does not bless, and I cannot accept a position that abandons the clear teaching of Holy Scripture," said Shipman, secretary of the Lutheran CORE Steering Committee.

The proposals make much of the idea of conscience-bound positions making reference to Martin Luther's famous statement before the Diet of Worms in 1521: "Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason . . . I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not retract anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. I cannot do otherwise. Here I stand, may God help me."

"In its emphasis on conscience, the task force forgot that Luther was not talking about his right to his own opinion. He was declaring his commitment and allegiance to the Word of God," Spring said. "It is

exactly the opposite of the task force's idea of conscience as one's personal beliefs. They are encouraging the strange notion of a bound conscience as nothing more than individualism."

"What these documents miss in talking about the bound conscience is that the conscience of a Christian is bound by the Word of God. This is especially true when that Word is hard to hear, when God speaks against what we think is a really good idea. No matter how much we want to think otherwise, the Bible clearly says that sex outside of marriage is not a good idea," said Wolf.

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"What the task force is saying with its notion of the bound conscience is that there are no moral absolutes. They're saying that what's right or wrong is basically up to each individual to decide," said Ryan Schwarz of Washington, D.C., a Lutheran CORE Steering Committee member. "If this is to be the teaching of the church, then how can I raise my daughters in the church and teach them what's right and what's wrong?"

The task force recommends "structured flexibility" be incorporated into the ELCA's structure so that individual synods

and congregations would "be free to act according to their convictions" in setting their own standards for clergy.

"The notion of respecting the bound consciences of ELCA members, congregations and synods is an impossible balancing act," said the Rev. Scott Grorud, pastor of the 2,400-member Faith Lutheran Church in Hutchinson, Minn., and a member of the Lutheran CORE Steering Committee.

"These are proposals for organized chaos," said the Rev. Paul Ulring, pastor of the 5,700-member Upper Arlington Lutheran Church in Columbus, Ohio., and a member of the Lutheran CORE Steering Committee.

"In the end the task force proposals are synodical option by another name. As Lutheran CORE has already said, synodical option will gravely damage the ELCA," said Spring.

Lutheran CORE leaders wrote an Open Letter in December on synodical option which notes that "Synodical option is not a real compromise at all. Its adoption would force synods and congregations to agree that there are multiple biblical teachings on these matters. Synodical option would represent a real change in the teaching of our church. Even those synods and congregations that might not agree with this change would be forced by synodical option implicitly to accept the notion that Scripture is not clear on this subject."

"If the ELCA is to continue as one church, it must have one Office of Ministry, one roster of pastors, and

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ELCA task force makes recommendation on ministry policies

By *ELCA News Service*

The 15-member Task Force for ELCA Studies on Sexuality released Thursday, Feb. 19, a “Report and Recommendation on Ministry Policies” for the professional leadership of the church.

On the basis of study and “listening to this church,” members of the task force developed a report and recommendation for the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly — the church’s chief legislative body — to consider as regards the church’s current policy.

For Lutheran pastors and other professional leaders in the ELCA, the church requires that sexual intimacy “be within the context of marriage.” The church understands marriage as between a man and a woman. Gay and lesbian Lutherans serve as ordained ministers in the ELCA but are expected to abstain from engaging in same-gender sexual intimacy.

The report focuses on changing the policy that “ordained ministers who are homosexual in their self-understanding are expected to abstain from homosexual sexual relationships” — as stated in the ELCA’s “Vision and Expectations” for ordained ministers. The same expectation is expressed in policies for professional lay leaders of the church.

The task force’s report also highlights areas of disagreement and agreement among ELCA members regarding current policy. Some members of the ELCA support continuation of the policy, and some members advocate for change. Lutherans have asserted “their positions with varying degrees

of certainty,” the report said.

The task force acknowledged that there is neither “a consensus — a general agreement — nor any emerging consensus” either within the ELCA or within other faith communities in North America, according to its report. The task force stated that ELCA members “must seek a common way to live and serve in the midst of disagreements.”

“Through careful listening to this church and to one another other, task force members share a sober appreciation for the depth of disagreement on this matter. We also share a longing for church unity,” said the Rev. Peter Strommen, Shepherd of the Lake Lutheran Church, Prior Lake, Minn., and task force chair. “Our hope is that a way can be found to live in the unity of the gospel amidst our differences.”

The task force recommended that a process begin with the churchwide assembly, “declaring its intention about what it wants to do,” according to the report. It proposed four steps to be taken consecutively. If the assembly agrees to the first, then the second, third and fourth would be considered only if the preceding steps have been approved.

The first step asks the assembly whether it is committed “to finding ways to allow congregations and synods that choose to do so to recognize, support, and hold publicly accountable lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships,” said the report.

The second step asks the assembly whether it is committed to finding a way for Lutherans in committed,

same-gender relationships to serve as ELCA professional leaders — clergy, associates in ministry, diaconal ministers and deaconesses.

If steps one and two are accepted, step three asks the assembly to commit to implementing steps one and two “in such a way that all this church bear the burdens of the other, love the neighbor, and respect the bound conscience of any with whom they disagree.” According to the report, “decisions about policy that serve only the interests of one or another group will not be acceptable.”

Step four presents a proposal for how the ELCA could move toward change “in a way that respects the bound conscience of all,” said the report. The fourth step is different from the previous steps in that it is “not simply a commitment in principle, but makes a specific recommendation for flexibility within existing structures and practices of this church to allow for people in publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships to be approved” for professional service in the ELCA, stated the report.

The task force’s report and recommendation on ministry policies completes a directive from the 2007 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to address and make recommendations on changes to policies that preclude Lutherans in committed, same-gender unions from the ELCA’s professional rosters.

The 2001 assembly directed the church to study homosexuality with reference to two topics — the blessing of same-sex unions and the

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ELCA Task Force releases 'Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust'

By *ELCA News Service*

The 15-member Task Force for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) Studies on Sexuality released Thursday, Feb. 19, *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* — a proposed social statement on human sexuality.

The 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly — the chief legislative body of the church — is expected to consider the social statement for adoption as an official statement Aug. 17-23 in Minneapolis.

The proposed statement addresses a spectrum of concerns relevant to human sexuality from a Lutheran perspective. It responds to the question: "How do we understand human sexuality within the context of Jesus' invitation to love God and love our neighbor?" If adopted by the assembly, the social statement will assist the ELCA in its moral deliberation, govern its institutional policies and guide the church's public advocacy work.

While the document does not offer once-and-for-all answers to contemporary questions about sexuality, it "seeks to tap the deep roots of Scripture and the Lutheran theological tradition" for Lutherans to discern what is "responsible and faithful action," according to the proposed statement.

The document contains sections on key Lutheran principles, trust and human sexuality, social structures that enhance trust, sexuality and trust in relationships, sexuality and social responsibility, and a series of resolutions to incorporate the statement into the mission and

ministry of the ELCA.

"Sexuality has to do with relationships, and God has made us relational beings," said the Rev. Rebecca S. Larson, executive director, ELCA Church in Society.

"The underlying question of this social statement, therefore, is what makes right relationship. Our model is God's unfailingly, trustworthy relationship with people and creation. No human relationship can thrive without trust. The social statement therefore considers all human relationships and social structures in light of what fosters trust, commitment and protection for those who are vulnerable," she said.

The call for trust is woven into the proposed statement's discourse about marriage, same-gender relationships, family and children, commitment in relationships, adult cohabitation, society, public ministry and more.

On the topic of marriage the document states that the historic Christian tradition and the Lutheran Confessions recognize marriage as a covenant between a woman and a man. In recent decades the church has begun to understand "in new ways" the need of same-gender couples who seek relationships of "lifelong companionship and commitment as well as public accountability and legal support for those commitments," it says.

The proposed statement acknowledges that "consensus does not exist" among ELCA members on how to "honor" committed same-sex relationships. The statement reflects differing conclusions on the basis of biblical and theological interpretation.

Some members believe homosexuality is a sin in their understanding of biblical teaching and natural law, and some members believe homosexuality "reflects a broken world in which some relationships do not pattern themselves after the creation God intended."

Some Lutherans believe same-gender relationships are to be "honored and held to high standards and public accountability" but do not equate these relationships with marriage, and some believe that same-gender relationships are to be held to the same "rigorous standards, sexual ethics and status as heterosexual marriage," said the statement.

Despite the varying viewpoints, the church encourages all people to live out their faith with "profound respect for the conscience-bound belief of the neighbor," said the proposed statement.

The document calls on congregations to be safe places for children and youth, and it calls for education on human sexuality for children and youth.

"Degrees of physical intimacy should be carefully matched to degrees of growing affection and commitment," stated the document. For this reason, the document calls the church to oppose "non-monogamous, promiscuous or casual sexual relationships."

The statement addresses the topic of the value of friendship, adult cohabitation, and Lutheran opposition of sexual exploitation within and

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Proposed social statement says ‘consensus does not exist’

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outside the church. It also asks that justice for women in church and society continue to be an important dimension of Lutheran response.

“When approved, *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* will be the 10th social statement of the ELCA,” said Larson. “All social statements are developed through at least a five-year process in a broadly participatory way.”

“Human sexuality infuses all of life from the time we are born until the time we die. It is also social. Economics, business and advertising, social roles, medicine and science are all relevant to human sexuality and the ways we act in relationship to others. How to use this gift in a way that honors God and serves the neighbor is a critical issue, particularly in this culture,” Larson said.

A draft of the social statement was given to ELCA members in March 2008 for study, review and feedback.

Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust “reflects what the task force heard from this church in response to the draft social statement,” said Larson.

“The theological section has been both focused and expanded. The role of God in creation and the role of law in our lives has been made more prominent. There is more material on how Lutherans approach social ethics from a perspective of faith. The order of the sections has been changed to deal with the intersection between the individual and social aspects of human sexuality,” she said. “Also, it is 1,000 words shorter.”

Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust completes a directive from the 2001 Churchwide Assembly to develop a social statement on human sexuality.

The task force also released a “Report and Recommendation on Ministry Policies” to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly regarding the professional leadership of the church on Feb. 19. This document completes a directive from the 2007 assembly to address and make recommendations on changes to policies that preclude Lutherans in committed, same-gender relationships from the ELCA’s professional rosters.

The proposed social statement and the report and recommendation on ministry policies are two separate documents. They are open to review by the ELCA Church Council — the church’s board of directors — and will be considered by the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly.

The proposed ELCA social statement, *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* is available online at www.elca.org/faithfuljourney.

57 percent of ELCA members oppose change in church teaching

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one set of expectations for pastors and other rostered leaders throughout the ELCA. Without a common roster of pastors and common expectations for pastors and other rostered leaders, it would be very difficult for pastors to move from one synod to another. Such an approach would effectively divide the ELCA into 65 separate church bodies — each with its own standards for clergy and its own clergy roster. The interdependent relationship between the churchwide, synod, and congregational expressions of the ELCA requires one standard for clergy throughout the ELCA,” the Open Letter states.

Responses to a 2004 study on homosexuality showed that a significant majority of ELCA members (57 percent) opposed change to accepted Christian teaching on homosexual behavior. Only 22 percent of ELCA members favored change in church teaching to allow for the blessing of same-sex unions or the ordination of individuals in committed same-sex unions.

The 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly (Aug. 17-23, 2009, in Minneapolis) will decide whether to adopt the proposed changes in church teaching and practice. Adoption of the proposed social statement requires a two-thirds majority. However, the

ELCA Church Council is recommending that a simple majority be enough to change standards to allow pastors to be in same-sex relationships.

A proposal to allow bishops to grant individual exceptions to church policy to allow pastors to be in same-sex relationships was rejected by the 2005 ELCA Churchwide Assembly.

For more information on Lutheran CORE go to www.lutherancore.org.

The proposed statement, ministry recommendations and other information about the ELCA are available at www.elca.org.

Lutheran CORE resolutions ask for two-thirds majority

Lutheran CORE has produced model resolutions to help ELCA Synod Councils and Synod Assemblies to ask that a two-thirds majority be required to change church teaching and policy to allow pastors and other rostered leaders to be in same-sex sexual relationships.

The resolutions must be proposed locally following the rules for your synod. We encourage you to work with others in your area to bring these resolutions to your Synod Council and Synod Assembly.

At its Nov. 15-17 meeting, the ELCA Church Council voted to delete a proposed rule which would have required “any motion to come before this Churchwide Assembly regarding changes in this church’s current policy and practice for the rostering of ordained ministers, diaconal ministers, associates in ministry, and deaconesses shall require a two-thirds vote by the assembly for adoption.”

The two-thirds majority requirement was a part of the rules of procedure recommended by the ELCA Church Council’s Constitutional and Legal Committee. The Church Council voted 19-10 to delete the two-thirds majority requirement.

The model resolutions from Lutheran CORE ask that the two-thirds majority recommendation to change standards for pastors and other rostered leaders be reinstated in the rules of procedure for the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly.

The resolution for Synod Councils asks the ELCA Church Council to reinstate the two-thirds majority recommendation. The ELCA Church Council will meet March 27-30 and

could restore the two-thirds majority rule at that time.

The resolution for Synod Assemblies memorializes the ELCA Churchwide Assembly to add the two-thirds majority requirement to its rules of procedure. The 2009 Churchwide Assembly will adopt its rules of procedure and could add the two-thirds majority requirement at that time.

The resolutions note that a two-thirds majority vote is usually required for major decisions including the adoption of an ELCA social statement and for amendments to the ELCA constitution and bylaws.

They also note that a decision to change church teaching and policy to

allow pastors and other rostered leaders to be in same-sex sexual relationships holds the potential to be very divisive in ELCA synods and congregations and to cause both membership and financial losses for synods and congregations.

A super majority vote — such as a two-thirds majority — would require an overwhelming majority of Churchwide Assembly voting members to make such a significant change to church teaching and practice.

The 2007 Churchwide Assembly voted “to direct the Task Force for ELCA Studies on Sexuality specifically to address and to make recommendations to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly on changes to any church policies that preclude practicing homosexual persons from the rosters of this church.”

The task force released a report and

recommendations paving the way for change in church teaching and policy to allow pastors and other rostered leaders to be in same-sex sexual relationships on Thursday, Feb. 19.

Given the divisive nature of these proposals, a two-thirds majority to make a significant change in church teaching and policy would be best for the sake of the unity of the ELCA.

Lutheran CORE’s model resolutions are online at www.lutherancore.org.

Ministry Policy Recommendations

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“ordination, consecration and commissioning of people in committed, same sex unions.” It also asked the church to develop a social statement on human sexuality.

Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust — the proposed social statement developed by the task force — was also released Feb. 19. The proposed social statement and the report and recommendation on ministry policies are two separate documents.

The documents are open to review by the ELCA Church Council — the church’s board of directors — when it meets in Chicago March 27-30, and they will be considered by the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly, Aug. 17-23, in Minneapolis.

The task force’s “Report and Recommendations on Ministry Policies” is available at www.elca.org/faithfuljourney.

It's not too late to affect ELCA sexuality decisions

ELCA members still have two opportunities to shape the social statement text and the content of recommendations regarding standards for pastors and other rostered leaders that will be considered by the 2009 Churchwide Assembly.

The ELCA Church Council will decide the form of the proposals that will be considered by the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly and may edit the proposed social statement and other Task Force recommendations.

Synod Councils may respond to the Task Force recommendations and offer advice to the ELCA Church Council through resolutions prior to

the council's March 27-30 meeting.

ELCA bishops will meet March 5-10 and may respond to the social statement text and recommendations on ELCA rostered leader standards.

ELCA members are encouraged to communicate with their synod council members and synod bishop about the text of the social statement and about whether the ELCA should change its standards for pastors and other rostered leaders.

On Thursday, April 2, the social statement text recommended by the ELCA Church Council will be released online. The Church

Council's policy recommendations will also be released that day.

ELCA Synod Assemblies have the opportunity to respond to the Church Council's recommended social statement text and its recommendations regarding standards for pastors and other rostered leaders through memorials and resolutions.

Lutheran CORE will provide possible resolutions for synod councils to send to the ELCA Church Council and possible resolutions and memorials for Synod Assemblies to address the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly. Recommended resolutions will be available at www.lutherancore.org.

Please support the ministry of Lutheran CORE

Lutheran CORE is planning extensive ministry leading up to and during the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly. These efforts will result in significant expenses.

We are counting on those who remain committed to the Bible as the inspired

Word of God and the authoritative source and norm of the Church's proclamation, faith, and life to continue to support Lutheran CORE as ELCA members must respond to those who are asking the church to change its teaching and policy on human sexuality.

Lutheran CORE is a coalition of individuals, congregations and reform movements 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.

Lutheran CORE is grateful for your prayers and support. As a grassroots organization, we are constantly looking to partner with those who wish to work together for positive reform in the ELCA.

Please join us and work with us in your congregation and synod. We can

provide resources and help connect you with others in your synod who share our goals.

We are grateful for the number of ELCA congregations that are including Lutheran CORE in their budgets or taking special offerings for Lutheran CORE.

Lutheran CORE depends on financial support from those who share our commitment to work for positive reform in the ELCA. You may give online at www.lutherancore.org or send gifts to:

Lutheran CORE
c/o WordAlone Network
2299 Palmer Drive, Suite 220
New Brighton, MN 55112-2202

Please make checks payable to the WordAlone Network and indicate that your gift is for Lutheran CORE on the memo line.

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Please copy and share
this newsletter widely.

Position Affirming and Upholding Current Policies

Dissenting Position 1 from the Report and Recommendation on Ministry Policies from the Task Force for ELCA Studies on Sexuality offers an option to the ELCA Churchwide Assembly rather than the adoption of the report's proposed significant changes in church teaching and policy that would affirm same-sex relationships and would permit ELCA pastors and other rostered leaders to be in same-sex sexual relationships.

Dissenting Position 1 is reprinted below:

Dissenting Position 1

Affirming and Upholding Current Policies

Four reoccurring themes surfaced frequently throughout the years the task force has worked together. These themes—a divided church, biblical interpretation, lack of consensus and conscience bound individuals—were experienced on the task force, written in the reports and evident throughout the written responses sent to the task force. Regrettably, this dissenting position reflects these realities both within the task force as well as the struggles throughout the ELCA.

All members of the task force affirm welcoming all people into the life of this church, including those whose sexual orientation is to people of the same gender. Likewise, all denounce violence and discrimination against those who are homosexual. All support some fundamental social benefits such as joint ownership of property and the ability to make medical decisions for another. All affirm pastoral care for everyone to

whom pastors and congregations minister, all of us sinners. This pastoral care is to be offered with humility and confession, seeking God's grace, mercy, and will for our lives. Nevertheless, all cannot agree that homosexual unions are a natural form of sexual expression to be honored and publicly affirmed on a level equal to a heterosexual marriage.

Because this church is divided and lacks consensus regarding both the ordination of non-celibate homosexual individuals and the blessing of same-gender unions, to recommend broad change in the present policies in the absence of consensus is extremely unwise and unfaithful. There may come a day in which a new consensus based on God's Word might mandate a change in teaching and practice as was seen with slavery and women's ordination. Or, over time, this church might find that its resolve grows even stronger to maintain its foundational core beliefs such as with the authority of Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16), justification by faith alone (Romans 3:28), and the primacy of Christ (Acts 4:12). Lack of consensus does not mandate a radical change, in fact, it argues for the opposite: a respite.

Because the ELCA is not the whole church and because the ELCA has no identity apart from the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church, we cannot ignore or disregard the ecumenical church or the rest of the Lutheran World Federation and their positions on sexuality and moral standards for those called to serve in the ministry. Nor can we ignore or disregard the Scriptures and the 2000-year teaching of the Church concerning human sexuality as God's

good gift in the created order. Rather, in faithfulness to the Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we are to maintain unity with others committed to the Church's teaching on sexuality until the Church is convinced by Holy Scripture and clear reason to change this teaching.

Given the lack of unanimity among task force members, this dissenting position is offered:

✚ Affirm and uphold the current policies of the ELCA as stated in *Vision and Expectations* and *Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline*.

✚ Affirm the pastoral guidance of the 1993 Statement of the ELCA Conference of Bishops, that "there is basis neither in Scripture nor tradition for the establishment of an official ceremony by this church for the blessing of a homosexual relationship." However, pastors within their local contexts are to "provide pastoral care for all to whom they minister."

✚ While the actions of future Churchwide Assemblies cannot be bound by the current assembly, we call upon this church to observe in good faith a ten-year moratorium on all matters concerning the blessing of same-sex unions and the rostering of practicing homosexual people until that time when a strong consensus might be reached.

