

CORE Connection

News from Lutheran CORE

October 2008

More than 500 add names to Open Letter on sexuality

More than 500 ELCA lay members and pastors have added their names to the Open Letter calling for major revisions to the *Draft Social Statement on Human Sexuality* being considered by the ELCA.

“We are very pleased with the significant response to the Open Letter,” said the Rev. Paull Spring of State College, Pa., chair of the Lutheran CORE Steering Committee.

“We hope that many more people will add their names to the Open Letter in time for us to include them in the list of signers that will be presented to the sexuality task force, the Conference

of Bishops, and the Church Council.

“The letter expresses the observations of several prominent Lutheran scholars and church leaders in a way that is accessible to all church members,” said Spring, the retired bishop of the Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod.

“We want to help members of ELCA congregations to be able to understand the significant theological issues involved in this draft and to be able to respond to the draft.”

ELCA members are invited to add their names to this Open Letter as a

part of their response to the sexuality draft social statement.

The Open Letter was originally signed by the 11 members of the Lutheran CORE Steering Committee and the 18 members of the Lutheran CORE Advisory Council. The list of additional signers is posted online at www.lutherancore.org.

You may request that your name be added to this open letter by sending a request with your name and address to info@lutherancore.org. You may also send your request to: Lutheran CORE; 2299 Palmer Drive, Suite 220; New Brighton, MN 55112.

Last chance to respond to ELCA sexuality draft is Nov. 1

Members of ELCA congregations have less than a month left to respond to the *Draft Social Statement on Human Sexuality*. Lutheran CORE encourages ELCA members to submit a response to the draft statement by the Nov. 1 deadline.

The first draft of the social statement was released in March. You may request a copy by calling 1-800-638-3522, ext. 2996. A response form is provided in the draft document. Links to the draft and to the ELCA’s online response form are available online at Lutheran CORE’s website.

Lutheran CORE has provided resources to assist ELCA members as they respond to the draft statement. Links to detailed reviews of the draft

statement and to other helpful documents on human sexuality are available at www.lutherancore.org in the marriage and family educational resources section.

An Open Letter calling for major revisions to *Draft Social Statement on Human Sexuality* was prepared by Lutheran CORE. ELCA members are encouraged to add their names to this Open Letter as a part of their response to the draft social statement.

The Task Force for the ELCA Studies on Sexuality is scheduled to meet Nov. 7-8 to review responses to the draft statement and to consider changes to the document. They will provide a report to the ELCA Church Council’s Nov. 14-17 meeting.

On Thursday, Feb. 19, the Task Force will release its proposed text of an ELCA social statement on human sexuality and its recommendations on whether the ELCA should change its teaching and policy to allow pastors and other rostered leaders to be in same-sex sexual relationships.

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 27-29 meeting.

Lutherans Concerned responds to ELCA sexuality draft

Lutherans Concerned / North America — the organization advocating change in Lutheran teaching and practice regarding same-sex sexual activity — is asking the ELCA to remove language that affirms traditional Christian teaching on marriage from a proposed social statement on human sexuality.

Lutherans Concerned released its response to the ELCA *Draft Social Statement on Human Sexuality* on Sept. 16. Its response noted that changes to language supporting the traditional and biblical teaching on marriage are “the most important changes to be made in the Draft Social Statement.”

Lutherans Concerned asks that language in the draft that defines marriage as “a structure of mutual promises between a man and woman blessed by God” (*Lines 1005-1007*) be changed to state that marriage has

“historically been understood as” between a man and a woman.

Lutherans Concerned also asks that the affirmation in the draft that “This church recognizes the historic origin of the term ‘marriage’ as a life-long and committed relationship between a woman and man, and does not wish to alter this understanding” (*Lines 1151-1153*) be changed. Instead it recommends an acknowledgment that “many” ELCA congregations provide marriage and blessing services for same-gender couples.

The 10-page response, notes areas where Lutherans Concerned supports the language of the draft social statement and areas where the organization asks for language that would support its understanding of same-sex sexual activity.

Lutherans Concerned asks that any language affirming or acknowledging

biblical and traditional Christian teaching on homosexual behavior or acknowledging traditional pastoral responses to people with homosexual orientations be rejected.

Regarding Lines 1137-1149 of the draft, Lutherans Concerned notes, “These lines seem to suggest that this church acknowledges or accepts forms of counseling or care that would lead people to deny or change their sexual orientation. . . . To advocate ‘repentance and celibacy’ for same-gender-oriented people is not an appropriate pastoral response.”

Lutherans Concerned also asks the Task Force for ELCA Studies on Sexuality to recommend changes to ELCA policy that would permit pastors and other rostered leaders to be in same-sex sexual relationships.

The Lutherans Concerned response is available online at www.lcna.org.

Lutheran CORE affirms Christian teaching on marriage

Lutheran CORE continues to affirm traditional Christian teaching on marriage — as a covenant of faithfulness between one man and one woman — as taught in Scripture and maintained by the Church throughout the centuries.

Lutheran CORE rejects suggestions from Lutherans Concerned that the ELCA should change its teaching and practice regarding marriage and regarding same-sex sexual activity.

Lutheran CORE works to uphold the authority of the Bible as the primary source and norm of the Church’s proclamation, faith, and life, in conformity with the Lutheran

Confessions and the Constitution of the ELCA.

The Open Letter from Lutheran CORE regarding the sexuality draft states: “We are very supportive of portions of *Draft Social Statement on Human Sexuality*. We support the affirmation of marriage as a lifelong covenant of faithfulness between one man and one woman and as the most appropriate place for physical intimacy. We appreciate the concern expressed about cohabitation, promiscuity, premarital sex, and our sexualized society and its many victims. We support the call for pastoral care and compassion for all people. . . .

“*Draft Social Statement on Human Sexuality* fails to acknowledge the Scriptural prohibitions of homosexual behavior in both Old Testament and New Testament. It also fails to recognize the 2005 ELCA Churchwide Assembly decision to ‘continue to respect the guidance of the 1993 statement of the Conference of Bishops’ which clearly stated 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.’ We respectfully request that you acknowledge both the teaching of Scripture and the content of Christian tradition regarding homosexual behavior.”

Lutheran CORE Steering Committee discusses vision for future

The Lutheran CORE Steering Committee discussed the future role Lutheran CORE will play in the ELCA at its Sept. 23 meeting at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Abington, Pa. (suburban Philadelphia).

The Steering Committee discussed and reviewed the first draft of "A Vision for the Future," an action plan for the ongoing ministry of Lutheran CORE. This plan was developed by an August summit meeting of leaders of partner reform movements and the Steering Committee in Indianapolis.

The vision draft contemplates a significant expansion of the ministry and role of Lutheran CORE in coming years, and lays out specific paths that might be followed depending on the actions of the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly.

The next step for the draft is for Lutheran CORE's partner reform movements and Advisory Council to review the draft.

Lutheran CORE is a coalition of individuals, congregations, and reform movements within the ELCA. The Steering Committee provides leadership for the coalition.

Other Steering Committee actions included:

- ✚ Reviewed a plan for display tables at 2009 synod assemblies developed by Lutheran CORE Congregations and Pastor Mark Braaten.

- ✚ Continued to plan for the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly in Minneapolis and for steps necessary to prepare for the assembly.

- ✚ Voted to receive a new partner organization as a part of Lutheran CORE. Article VII, the new partner organization, is a cluster of congregations and pastors in Orange County, California (Pacifica Synod).

- ✚ Received the new Lutheran CORE brochure. The brochure is available online at www.lutherancore.org.

- ✚ Asked the Lutheran CORE Advisory Council to consider the meaning of "status confessionis" at its March 2009 meeting. The Advisory Council is a group of theologians and pastors who provide theological guidance for Lutheran CORE.

The next meeting of the Steering Committee will be Jan. 27 at Upper Arlington Lutheran Church in Columbus, Ohio.

'A Different Gospel - Christianity at Risk'

"A Different Gospel—Christianity at Risk" is the theme of the 2008 WordAlone Network Fall Theological Conference. The conference will be held Nov. 9-11 at Redeemer Lutheran Church in Fridley, Minn. Speakers will examine the "different gospel" being proclaimed by some in the ELCA and in other denominations and contrast it with the true Gospel.

Episcopal Bishop C. FitzSimons Allison will address the different gospel that has led to such tragic decline and division within The Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion. In his second presentation, Bishop Allison will address the notion of human free will before God, which has made Anglican and Lutheran theology susceptible to another gospel.

ELCA Pastor Scott Grorud will speak about the different gospel often heard within the ELCA.

The corrosive impact of the different gospel on the ministry, mission and vitality of ELCA churches and the potential for rupturing ecumenical relationships and relationships with other Lutheran churches in the world will be discussed.

A variety of workshops will be offered including workshops with the keynote presenters and others on WordAlone Network ministries.

The WordAlone Network is one of the renewal movements that are a part of Lutheran CORE. For more information on the conference go to www.wordalone.org

Arizona forum to feature Braaten

The Rev. Dr. Carl Braaten will address "Theological Issues Challenging the ELCA" at an open forum at 7 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 14, at La Casa De Cristo Lutheran Church, in Scottsdale, Ariz. The forum is sponsored by Lutheran CORE.

Dr. Braaten is a prominent Lutheran theologian and is the author of numerous books and articles. He is also a member of the Lutheran CORE Advisory Council.

Lutheran CORE Steering Committee member Ryan Schwarz will also address the forum.

For more information, please call 480-948-1234, extension 1106.

Resources available to help in responding to sexuality draft

Lutheran CORE has provided resources to assist ELCA members as they respond to *Draft Social Statement on Human Sexuality*.

Links to these detailed reviews of the draft statement and to other helpful documents on human sexuality are available at www.lutherancore.org in the marriage and family educational resources section:

✚ An Open Letter to the Task Force for ELCA Studies on Sexuality and the ELCA Church Council and Conference of Bishops.

✚ Lutheran CORE's summary response to *Draft Social Statement on Human Sexuality*.

✚ Open Letter to the ELCA sexuality task force and the ELCA bishops about the *Draft Social Statement on Human Sexuality*" by the Rev. Dr. Stephen Hultgren.

✚ A Response from Lutheran CORE to *Draft Social Statement on Human Sexuality* by retired ELCA bishops Kenneth Sauer and Paull Spring.

✚ "A Critique of the *Draft Social Statement on Human Sexuality*" by the Rev. Dr. Carl E. Braaten.

✚ "A Sexual Ethic for Teletubbies, or Lutherans Embrace a Formless World" by Dr. Robert Benne.

✚ "Personal Reflections on and Recommendations Regarding *Draft Social Statement on Human Sexuality*" by the Rev. Dr. J. Jeffrey Zetto.

✚ "Some Critical Observations on the Use of Scripture in the ELCA *Draft Social Statement on Human Sexuality*" by the Rev. Dr. Stephen Hultgren.

✚ "The Use of Scripture in the *Draft Social Statement on Human Sexuality*" by the Rev. Dr. Walter F. Taylor Jr.

✚ "What Are They Talking About?" two reviews of *Draft Social Statement on Human Sexuality* by the Rev. Jonathan Jenkins.

✚ "A Pastoral Letter on the Continuing Discussion in the ELCA Concerning Homosexuality" by the Rev. Tom Renquist.

✚ "Some Questions and Answers about the ELCA Sexuality Discussions."

✚ "Keeping Faith" — arguments that support upholding the biblical norms for sexuality.

✚ "New Testament on Homosexuality: Denying God's Purpose" by the Rev. Dr. Walter F. Taylor Jr.

✚ "The Bible and Sexual Boundaries" by the Rev. Dr. Craig R. Koester.

✚ "Law and Sexual Behavior" by the Rev. Dr. Gerhard O. Forde.

✚ "The Normative Character of Scripture for Matters of Faith and Life: Human Sexuality in Light of Romans 1:16-32" by the Rev. Dr. Gerhard O. Forde.

✚ "Is Orientation the Issue?" by the Rev. Dr. James H. Burtness.

✚ "Is it lawful to marry?" by the Rev. Philip Nesvig.

✚ "The Authority of Scripture in the 'Homosex' Debate" by the Rev. Dr. Robert A. J. Gagnon.

✚ "How Bad Is Homosexual Practice According to Scripture and Does Scripture's Indictment Apply to Committed Homosexual Unions?" by the Rev. Dr. Robert A. J. Gagnon

✚ "The Bukoba Statement" by the Bishops of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania.

✚ "Sexuality: Some Common Convictions," ELCA Church Council Message (1996).

✚ "Vision and Expectations — Ordained Ministers in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America."

✚ "Sex, Marriage and Family," A Social Statement of the Lutheran Church in America (1970).

✚ "Human Sexuality and Sexual Behavior," a Social Statement of The American Lutheran Church (1980).

✚ "Teachings and Practice on Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage," a Social Statement of The American Lutheran Church (1982).

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2299 Palmer Drive, Suite 220
New Brighton, MN 55112

The Rev. David J. Baer, editor
editor@lutherancore.org

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