

CORE Connection

News from Lutheran CORE

September 2009

Lutheran CORE hosts convocation Sept. 25-26 in Indianapolis to plan ways for faithful in ELCA to work together in future

Lutherans from throughout the United States will gather Sept. 25-26 in suburban Indianapolis to discuss and plan ways for confessional Lutherans in the ELCA to work together in the months and years to come.

Lutheran CORE (Coalition for Reform) is sponsoring a Convocation Friday and Saturday, Sept. 25-26, at Christ the Savior Lutheran Church in Fishers, Ind., which will consider possible responses to the biblical and theological crisis in the ELCA.

The convocation 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.

Other speakers include the Rev. Paull

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Lutheran CORE leaders renounce ELCA decisions to endorse gay marriage and to allow pastors to be in same-sex relationships

Leaders of Lutheran CORE (Coalition for Reform) expressed both great distress and firm resolve over the Aug. 21 decisions by the ELCA Churchwide Assembly to endorse gay marriage and to change ELCA standards to allow pastors and other rostered leaders to be in committed same-sex relationships.

Lutheran CORE leaders are calling on faithful Lutherans to meet in Indianapolis in September to begin an expanded ministry that draws faithful ELCA congregations and members together. They are also encouraging ELCA members and congregations to direct finances away from the ELCA churchwide organization to faithful ministries within and outside of the ELCA.

“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,” said the Rev. Paull Spring of State College, Pa., chair of Lutheran CORE.

“I am saddened that a Lutheran Church that was founded on a firm commitment to the Bible has come to the point that the ELCA would vote to reject the Bible’s teaching on marriage and homosexual behavior. It breaks my heart,” said Spring. “But I am not crushed down nor in despair. For one thing, we now have clarity. We now know where the ELCA is going, and we have a strong sense of where God

is leading us. Then, too, we know that we are not alone. We have each other. The tireless efforts of our faithful supporters at the Churchwide Assembly, too many to name, underscore how we are ‘surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses,’” the retired bishop said.

“The assembly has voted to remove the ELCA from the universal Christian consensus on marriage and homosexual behavior. Lutheran CORE intends to remain faithful to the clear teaching of Scripture and the consistent teaching of the Christian Church worldwide and throughout time,” said Ryan Schwarz of Washington, D.C., a member of the

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ELCA breaks faith with its members and Christians worldwide

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Lutheran CORE Steering Committee, who was runner-up in the election for ELCA Vice President.

“The ELCA Confession of Faith says that Scripture is ‘source and norm’ of the church’s faith and life, but this assembly has shown that the ELCA is willing to violate what it officially says it believes about the Bible,” Schwarz said. “It is appalling that ELCA leaders brought these proposals to a vote. The church should not be voting on whether or not to follow the teaching of the Bible.”

“Luther’s stand was on the Word of God and sound reason. He was not convinced then, and we are not convinced now. We just voted out the Word of God, sound reason, and the good orders of creation,” said the Rev. Jaynan Clark of Spokane, Wash., president of the WordAlone Network. The WordAlone Network is one of the renewal organizations that make up Lutheran CORE.

“When God said, ‘I Am Who I Am,’ He meant it. It’s not I am who you want me to be or who you remake me to be. God and His Word are the authority over all of faith and life. It’s not up for a vote,” she added. “And He always gets the last word.”

ELCA has broken faith with its members and with Lutherans worldwide

“We are confident that most ELCA Lutherans uphold biblical standards for marriage and sexuality in spite of decisions made by this assembly,” said the Rev. Mark Chavez of Landisville, Pa., director of Lutheran CORE.

“These decisions have damaged the ELCA’s relationship with our partner churches in the Lutheran World Federation. The Anglican Communion is in the process of splitting apart because of the actions of The Episcopal Church. The ELCA seems unconcerned about a similar effect on the LWF,” Chavez said. “These decisions have also hurt the ELCA’s ecumenical relationships with Roman Catholics, Orthodox, and most Protestant Churches.”

Faithful Lutherans to gather in Indianapolis Sept. 25-26

Lutheran CORE leaders are hosting a gathering for Lutherans who uphold the authority of the Bible for the church’s faith and life Sept. 25-26 in Indianapolis. “Lutheran CORE intends to help those in the ELCA who uphold the authority of Scripture to find a way to remain faithful Lutherans by maintaining basic Christian teaching as revealed in the Bible,” Chavez said.

“We are encouraging individuals and congregations to join us in Indianapolis to discuss what the future for faithful Lutherans in the ELCA might look like and how faithful congregations and individuals can work together,” Spring said. “It is crucial that those ELCA Lutherans who uphold the authority of Scripture work together. We need each other. We urge people to come to Indianapolis.”

“We intend to gather the largest possible body of faithful Lutherans so that we might collectively plan a united common future. For that reason it is important that congregations and individuals not make hasty decisions about their future in the ELCA,” Spring added. “We want to work

together to do what will be best for all of us and for the continuation of faithful Christian teaching.”

Lutheran CORE leaders also said that they are renouncing their recognition by the ELCA as an Independent Lutheran Organization that officially relates to the ELCA. “We can no longer in good conscience participate in this relationship with the offices in Chicago,” Spring said.

Congregations and members are encouraged to direct financial support away from ELCA

Lutheran CORE leaders are inviting faithful Lutheran congregations and individuals to direct funding away from the national church body because of the decisions made by the assembly. Lutheran CORE will participate in and support faithful ELCA ministries, but cannot support ELCA ministries that reject the authority of God’s Word.

“It is important that congregations and individuals continue to provide financial support beyond their congregations, but the actions of this assembly will make many of our members question whether they can support the ELCA churchwide organization,” said the Rev. Erma Wolf of Brandon, S.D., vice chair of the Steering Committee.

“As Martin Luther said, ‘Our consciences are captive to the Word of God.’ We cannot support this departure from God’s Word,” said Chavez. “Congregations and individuals should continue to support local synods and synodical ministries where those institutions remain faithful to biblical teaching,” he added.

Lutheran CORE working toward reconfiguration of Lutherans

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Spring of State College, Pa., the retired bishop of the Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod and chair of the Lutheran CORE Steering Committee, and the Rev. Mark Chavez of Landisville, Pa., director of Lutheran CORE and vice president of the WordAlone Network.

Bishop Spring will present a vision for the future of Lutheran CORE. 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.

"In addition, we intend to initiate a process that we hope will lead to a reconfiguration of North American Lutheranism," Spring said.

"This is an exciting and hopeful time for confessional Lutherans in North America," said Spring. "I am glad to

report that 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."

"During the Churchwide Assembly and after we have made connections with important leaders of other Lutheran groups in the ELCA and beyond. We are most encouraged by these responses," he added.

Lutheran CORE plans to strengthen and expand its mission and ministry. A constitution will be considered as part of the formal organization of Lutheran CORE.

The proposed constitution will be posted at Lutheran CORE's website. Spring asks that people be in contact with him prior to Sept. 16 if they have suggestions for revisions to the text of the constitution.

The Steering Committee also has proposed four resolutions to direct the work of Lutheran CORE for 2010:

✚ That those currently serving on the Lutheran CORE Steering Committee retain their offices for one year, until an election at the 2010 convocation.

✚ That the Steering Committee be authorized to prepare and implement a fiscal plan for Lutheran CORE for the calendar year 2010; and that the Steering Committee prepare a proposed fiscal plan for the year 2011, for action at the 2010 convocation.

✚ That the Steering Committee be directed to begin implementing the provisions of the constitution

beginning October 1, 2009.

✚ That the Steering Committee be authorized to 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; and that the Steering Committee present a report and recommendations to the 2010 convocation of Lutheran CORE.

"We want all who care for the future shape of orthodox Lutheranism to attend the convocation," Spring said.

"We anticipate a large attendance at our convocation. If the registrations keep pouring in at the present rate, we will have to re-locate the convocation site to another church near Fishers that has a much larger facility," Spring said.

If changes need to be made they will be announced on Lutheran CORE's website. The hotels listed on the registration brochure are conveniently located for either church so no one will need to make changes in their accommodations

Registration forms for the convocation are available at www.lutherancore.org. Cost is only \$25 per person and includes dinner on Friday evening.

"Thank you for all your prayers and encouragement in the past month. I look forward to our time together at Fishers with great hope and in the confidence that God's Spirit will guide and lead us," Spring said.

Lutheran CORE leaders respond to ELCA assembly 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 Aug. 19 decision by the ELCA Churchwide Assembly 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, receiving a 66.67 percent vote — exactly the two-thirds majority required for adoption.

“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. Paul 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 the Rev. Jaynan Clark of Spokane, Wash., president of the WordAlone Network. WordAlone is

one of the reform movements that make up 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 replaced the Bible’s word on marriage for this radical ‘new 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.”

“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.”

Join the conversation!

What after Minneapolis?

What does the future hold for those in the ELCA who uphold the authority of Scripture?

How can faithful Lutherans work together given the ELCA actions on sexuality?

Lutheran CORE 2009 Convocation

Sept. 25-26

Christ the Savior Lutheran
Fishers, Indiana
(suburban Indianapolis)



www.lutherancore.org

United Methodists make clear that ELCA decisions do not mean pastors serving UMC churches may be in same-sex relationships

Leaders of The United Methodist Church are distancing their church from the Aug. 21 decision of the ELCA Churchwide Assembly to allow ELCA pastors to be in same-sex relationships.

“The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America’s acceptance of pastors in same-sex relationships does not pave the way for noncelibate gay clergy to serve in United Methodist churches,” the church announced in an Aug. 26 news release.

The ELCA assembly’s vote to change clergy standards came a day after the assembly approved a full-communion relationship with the UMC, raising the question among United Methodists of whether practicing homosexual Lutheran pastors would be permitted in United Methodist pulpits.

“Leaders of both churches said Aug. 26, however, that The United Methodist Church’s ban on noncelibate gay clergy is unchanged,” the release states.

“Our Book of Discipline on that subject did not become null and void when they took that vote,” said Bishop Gregory Palmer, president of the United Methodist Council of Bishops. “It still applies to United Methodist clergy.”

The 2008 United Methodist General Conference, the denomination’s top policy-making body, upheld its decades-old policy that homosexual practice is “incompatible with Christian teaching” and that “self-avowed practicing homosexuals are not to be certified as candidates, ordained as ministers or appointed to

serve in The United Methodist Church.”

Michael Trice, ELCA associate executive for Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations, said the full communion agreement “did not compromise” United Methodist ministerial standards.

If clergy in “same-gendered, long-term relationships in the ELCA . . . want to serve in a United Methodist Church, The United Methodist Church can say we are sorry but that does not fit our protocols,” Trice said.

On Aug. 20, the ELCA Churchwide Assembly voted to enter into full communion with The United Methodist Church. The pact was approved by the 2008 United Methodist General Conference.

Please support Lutheran CORE during this critical time

Lutheran CORE is planning to re-form and renew its coalition for the future.

“Contributions for Lutheran CORE will be greatly appreciated at this time. If we are to re-form ourselves as a confessional movement, Lutheran CORE will need a significant increase in ongoing financial support for our work,” said the Rev. Paull Spring, chair of Lutheran CORE. Lutheran CORE intends to be:

✦ A churchly community, grounded in Word and sacrament and congregational mission.

✦ A free-standing synod, carrying out synodical ministries apart from ELCA.

✦ An umbrella group for other Lutheran reform movements.

✦ A coalition of synods, congregations, individuals, and reform movements both within and outside the ELCA.

Gifts may be given online at www.lutherancore.org or may be sent to:

Lutheran CORE
2299 Palmer Drive, Suite 220
New Brighton, MN 55112-2202

Please make checks payable to the WordAlone Network and indicate Lutheran CORE on the memo line.

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Please copy and share
this newsletter widely.

Ryan Schwarz of Lutheran CORE tells assembly of two imperatives for ELCA in vice president election address

The following address was given to the ELCA Churchwide Assembly by Ryan Schwarz as a part of the election process for Vice President of the ELCA on August 22.

Schwarz, a member of the Lutheran CORE Steering Committee from Washington, D.C., was runner-up in the election for ELCA Vice President.

I am deeply honored by those who have nominated me to this office, and I am grateful for the opportunity to speak with you again.

I am going to speak about two imperatives — matters which I believe that the entire ELCA, including the next Vice President, must face in the coming years for the sake of the Gospel and the Lutheran witness.

First, I believe that the ELCA must wrestle with the question of the relative priority of the Great Commission in the life of this church. Christ's mandate to "go and make disciples of all nations" in Matthew 28 was not a suggestion, not merely a good idea — it was and is a command to all of us.

I applaud the focus on mission-mindedness that has been lifted up in this assembly. However, since the ELCA was formed 21 years ago, the number of annual new mission starts has declined by 50 percent and the number of missionaries in the field has declined by more than 60 percent.

At the same time, the ELCA's emphasis on other priorities, such as our public church activities, seems to

have grown so much that it eclipses our primary mission, the one given to us by Christ, in focus if not in actual expenditure. How can this be?

Moreover, it must be said and understood that our decisions this week on sexuality will make mission with and to many minority and immigrant communities profoundly more difficult.

From a mission-minded perspective, it appears that the peripheral has become central and the central has become peripheral.

For the sake of the transformative Gospel of Jesus Christ, the congregations, pastors and laypeople of the ELCA must examine our relative priorities, and decide once again to make the main thing the main thing. We need to walk the walk in how we spend our resources and time, and not merely talk the talk on mission.

Secondly, I believe that we face a reality that this church is deeply divided, and not just over matters of human sexuality. Indeed, I believe that sexuality is simply the issue that has brought our deeper divisions into focus.

I believe that we are not of one mind as to how we read and interpret Scripture.

I believe that we are not of one mind as to the proper role of human experience, reason, and the tradition of the church in the interpretation of Scripture.

And finally, while we all say in good faith that we acknowledge and are committed to the Authority of Scripture, I am convinced that we do not even agree on the meaning of that phrase.

What does it mean to say that Scripture is the only source and norm of our faith and life, as our constitution says? What does it mean to say that we are committed to the Word of God as both Law and Gospel?

So often we hear these terms in our discussions and debates, and yet I have become convinced that we are more often than not talking past each other.

For the sake of the transformative Gospel of Jesus Christ, the congregations, pastors and laypeople of the ELCA must face these divisions, wrestle with them, and ask ourselves whether they can be resolved, how they might be resolved, and what are the implications and consequences.

As you heard me say yesterday, I am one of those who believes that this church seriously erred in the decisions made this week. I grieve those decisions, and the potential consequences for our church.

My prayers are with the ELCA and all of those who, like me, are grappling with the implications of this week's decisions for the life of this church, and for their calling to communion and service in it. For today, all I can say is that I appreciate the opportunity to speak. Thank you.

Assembly decisions will hurt church relationships

The following statements from leaders of Lutheran churches around the world and of other Christian churches show the significant implications of the decisions of the ELCA Churchwide Assembly to affirm same-sex sexual relationships and to depart from biblical teaching on marriage and homosexual behavior.

Archbishop Wilton Gregory
U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops
Chairman of the Committee for
Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs

Our unity in Christ is always a gift before it is our shared task. But this unity is fragile, much like the infant Christ who is cradled in the arms of his holy Mother. This week the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America faces a set of decisions that may have weighty consequences for the unity of your own church and for its relationships with the Catholic Church and other Christian bodies. At stake are the teachings of Scripture and Tradition that safeguard the noble purposes of human sexuality and the fundamental meaning of marriage, which is a reflection of God's covenant with us in Christ. Our prayer for you, as brothers and sisters who journey with you in hope, is that you remain open to the Holy Spirit who binds our consciences to truth, biblical truth that echoes through the ages. At the ecumenical service in New York City on April 18, 2008, Pope Benedict XVI asserted that without this adherence to Holy Scripture, "our communion with the Church in every age is lost — just at the time when the world is losing its bearings and needs a persuasive common witness to the saving power of the Gospel (cf. *Rom* 1:18-23)."

President Gerald B. Kieschnick
Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

The decisions by this assembly to grant non-celibate homosexual ministers the privilege of serving as rostered leaders in the ELCA and the affirmation of same-gender unions as pleasing to God will undoubtedly cause additional stress and disharmony within the ELCA. It will also negatively affect the relationships between our two church bodies. The current division between our churches threatens to become a chasm.

This grieves my heart and the hearts of all in the ELCA, the LCMS, and other Christian church bodies throughout the world who do not see these decisions as compatible with the Word of God, or in agreement with the consensus of 2,000 years of Christian theological affirmation regarding what Scripture teaches about human sexuality. Simply stated, this matter is fundamentally related to significant differences in how we understand the authority of Holy Scripture and the interpretation of God's revealed and infallible Word. . . .

We recognize that many brothers and sisters within the ELCA, both clergy and lay, are committed to remaining faithful to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, are committed to the authority of Holy Scripture, and strongly oppose these actions. To them we offer our assurance of loving encouragement together with our willingness to provide appropriate support in their efforts to remain faithful to the Word of God and the historic teachings of the Lutheran church and all other Christian churches for the past 2,000 years.

ELCA Hispanic Pastors
Florida-Bahamas Synod ELCA

We have received with profound sadness the ELCA Churchwide Assembly decision of passing a Social Statement on Human Sexuality which significantly changes the historical teaching and practice of the Church on Sexuality. We have also read with great disappointment and grave concern the changing of our ministry standards, allowing non-celibate homosexual pastors, associates in ministry, diaconal ministers, and deaconesses to serve as rostered leaders in the ELCA.

We, Hispanic ELCA rostered leaders of the Florida-Bahamas Synod, REPUDIATE these new policies, declaring them to be incompatible with Christian teaching, the tradition of the Christian Church, and our consciences. As Martin Luther did in his own day, we reject the idea that ANY human being, prelate, council, or Assembly, can rightfully vote to invalidate the teachings of Holy Scripture.

It is clear to us that the ELCA has decided to stop recognizing the Authority of the Bible, presenting a different and diluted Gospel not in accordance with the teaching of the Scriptures (*Galatians* 1:6-10). Therefore, we RENOUNCE the decision of the Churchwide Assembly and will continue to uphold the clear Biblical standards for marriage, family, and sexuality.

May God have mercy on His Church.

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Assembly rejected LWF church pleas to uphold biblical teaching

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The Rev. Francis Stephanos

The Rev. Yadesa Daba

The Rev Itefa Gobena

Presidents Emeritus - Ethiopian
Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus

We the three presidents emeritus of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (5.5 million members, the largest Lutheran church body in Africa and the fastest growing Lutheran church in the world) have been following the development of your deliberations on human sexuality and ministry policies with deep prayer and in the spirit of our global Lutheran communion. . . .

In these historic days we have been deeply alarmed by the direction you are choosing to take. Thus we have to inform you with a heavy heart that we are deeply saddened and dismayed by the decisions you are taking at the ELCA Churchwide Assembly in Minneapolis regarding human sexuality. We see it as a defiant departure from the Biblical truth and from our global Evangelical Lutheran tradition. Our position based on the Word of God is and will continue to be that marriage is between one man and one woman.

Human behavior and practices may change over times but the holy and inspired Word of God will never change. We are therefore urged in the spirit of our long standing companionship to express our deep concern and resentment to these assembly decisions coming down in the form of social statement, ministry policies and practices.

Bishop Elisa Buberwa

North-Western Diocese of Evangelical
Lutheran Church in Tanzania

In February 2004, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT) bishops met here in Bukoba. One of the major topics we discussed was that of Human Sexuality. Our Bukoba Statement speaks strongly against theories and systems which condone homosexual practices. We do so on the basis of the Bible and Christian Tradition. One of the key sentences in the statement says (translation from Kiswahili):

“We want it noted that legalizing, permitting or accepting homosexual systems and practices, is to undermine the marriage institution, which is a fundamental pillar of a healthy society; hence, that amounts to violation of God’s law which institutes marriage.” (Section 3.4.2.2 of Bukoba Statement).

In the next section, homosexual systems and practices are believed to violate natural human ethics and to be disrespectful to God’s creation.

The statement notes, however, that homosexual people in society are dear sisters and brothers. They should not be discriminated against or oppressed, but rather be loved and cared for pastorally. . . .

If the Churchwide Assembly votes in favor of, say, permitting pastors to bless same-sex unions and permitting bishops to ordain theologians who are actively homosexual in the practice; you can be sure, this is going to impact negatively on our (ELCA and ELCT) relationship.

Bishop Nicholas Tai

Evangelical Lutheran Church
of Hong Kong

This matter is also of great importance for us in Asia. Of special concern is the question of homosexual union blessings and the acceptance of ordained clergy in homosexual relationships. A decision to accept these two practices would be a source of profound embarrassment for the Lutheran Church in Asia.

Such a decision on the part of the ELCA would affect our companion relationships, as homosexual practice is regarded as sin in the vast ecumenical community in Asia.

Secondly, we live in a morally and ethically shaped society. Non-Christians as well as Christians regard homosexual behavior as immoral. If the Church accepts and practices homosexual behavior, it will be a big stumbling block for the vast majority of 1.3 billion Chinese, who need the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Thirdly, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong regards homosexual practice as a sin and expressly states this in our discipline handbook. If the ELCA accepts such practices, it will be quite an embarrassment to explain to our members why our companion Church allows something which goes against the clear biblical norms of our own Church. We, as part of the Lutheran Communion, could not escape the accusation that the Church is listening to the modern culture rather than to the clear teaching of the Word of God. Prayers we need in this moment of crisis.