

## **Lutheran CORE Response to Draft Social Statement on Human Sexuality**

*Lutheran CORE offers this resource to help members of ELCA congregations to participate in the process leading to an ELCA Social Statement on Sexuality and to enable them to better understand some of the questions on human sexuality that will be considered at the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly. We encourage all ELCA members to submit responses to the “Draft Social Statement on Human Sexuality” by the November 1, 2008, deadline.*

*This response highlights some of the formal responses to “Draft Statement on Human Sexuality” by ELCA pastors and scholars in a straightforward way to make it accessible to all ELCA members. Links to the more detailed reviews of the draft are available online at [www.lutherancore.org](http://www.lutherancore.org).*

### **Affirmations of *Draft Social Statement on Human Sexuality*:**

- Marriage is affirmed as a covenant of faithfulness between one man and one woman.
- Marriage is affirmed as the most appropriate place for physical intimacy.
- The important role of the family is affirmed.
- Analysis of dominating influence of advertising and the media in our culture.
- Analysis of our current sexualized society and its many victims.
- Call for pastoral care and compassion for all people.
- Concern for cohabitation, promiscuity, and premarital sex.
- Spirit of civility and moderation in draft’s approach to human sexuality.

### **Suggestions for improvement of *Draft Social Statement on Human Sexuality*:**

- Affirm human sexuality as a part of God’s created order for the world.
- Affirm marriage as God’s intention for humanity “from the beginning of creation” (Mark 10:6-9, Genesis 2:24).
- Affirm marriage as the touchstone around which Christian sexual ethics are elaborated.
- Affirm procreation as one of the chief purposes of marriage.
- Affirm the role of the Ten Commandments in sexual ethics, especially the Sixth Commandment (See 1996 ELCA Message, “Sexuality: Some Common Convictions” for an example of this).
- Affirm the value of the traditional family while also recognizing other family structures.
- Affirm that all are sinners who are justified by grace through faith. But also recognize that God justifies sinners rather than justifying sins.
- Allow Scripture to function as *source* of the statement’s teaching on sexuality by moving clearly from biblical interpretation to practical application in dealing with issues of marriage, family, and sexuality.
- Allow Scripture to function as *norm* of the statement’s teaching on sexuality by clearly affirming biblical norms for sexuality and sexual behavior.
- Consider the role of ELCA social statements to provide a framework for ethical decision making by ELCA

members. Write in a way that most church members can understand and apply to their lives.

- Draw content more directly from Scripture — both Old Testament and New Testament.
- Draw content more directly from traditional Christian interpretation of Scripture and the Christian moral tradition.
- Draw content more directly from the ELCA Church Council’s 1996 message, “Sexuality: Some Common Convictions.”
- Draw content more directly from the social statements of The American Lutheran Church and Lutheran Church in America (the ELCA’s predecessor churches).
- Maintain a consistent definition of marriage throughout the draft.
- Maintain the relationship of the two great commandments from Jesus: love for God and love for neighbor (Mark 12:29-31). The command to love God first and entirely makes it clear that love for others is more than affirming all of their behaviors.
- Note the difference between forgiveness and acceptance. God forgives sinners and accepts them. God’s acceptance of sinners does not mean that God accepts sins.
- Provide a clearer application of the first use of the Law — how God orders the world.
- Recognize Scriptural prohibitions of homosexual behavior in both Old Testament and New Testament.
- Recognize that Jesus’ teaching on sexuality includes affirming woman and man as created in the image of God, upholding marriage, and the law of God he inherited from Jewish tradition, which gives the basic form and content to the sexual ethics he teaches and sometimes sharpens.
- Recognize the 2005 ELCA Churchwide Assembly decision to “continue to respect the guidance of the 1993 statement of the Conference of Bishops.”

### **Concerns about *Draft Social Statement on Human Sexuality*:**

- The most common concern raised by pastors and scholars is that the draft confuses the role of Law and Gospel in addressing human sexuality. The Lutheran tradition places sexuality within the doctrines of creation and the Law. God uses the Law to order the world and to reveal our sinfulness. The draft attempts to place sexuality within the saving work of Christ, the Gospel. Incarnation and justification are key to understanding salvation, but creation and God’s Law shape Christian understandings of sexuality and ethics. Christ’s birth, death and resurrection are intimately connected with providing salvation and not with sexual morality.
- Pastoral Care in the Lutheran tradition is understood to be a personal address that is based on God’s Word of both Law and Gospel. The draft seems to view pastoral care as merely affirmation and support.
- The use of “trust” as the central ethical principle for human relations in marriage and family life is confusing. Love would be a better Christian principle. Trust is a more passive quality in which one person allows his or her being to be dependent on the trustworthiness of another. Love is a more active principle that moves outward toward the other.
- The use of the category of trust in social relationships and institutions is confusing.
- The draft seems confused and disjointed. It is not always easy to discern how one theme leads to another.
- The draft lacks internal consistency.
- The draft seems to intentionally distance us from our biblical heritage — especially from the Old Testament.