

# NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Mark Chavez (717) 898-0801  
info@lutherancore.org

## **Lutheran CORE leaders respond to release of draft ELCA sexuality statement**

Leaders of Lutheran CORE responded Thursday, March 13, to the release of the “Draft Social Statement on Human Sexuality” for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Lutheran CORE is a coalition of pastors, lay people, congregations and reforming groups that seeks to preserve the authority of Scripture in the ELCA.

“It is important to recognize that this is the first draft of a social statement on sexuality,” said the Rev. Paull Spring of State College, Pa., chair of the Lutheran CORE Steering Committee. “We encourage ELCA members to study the draft and to take the time to submit responses to the Task Force supporting areas where the statement is strong and suggesting ways that the statement can be improved.”

“There is a lot in the statement that can be affirmed, but there are some glaring theological errors here,” said Spring, the retired bishop of the Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod.

“The draft statement would change the definition of marriage by implication. This is a cause of great concern,” Spring said. “Lutherans have traditionally defined marriage as ‘a lifelong covenant of faithfulness between a man and a woman.’ The statement calls marriage a relationship of love and trust between two people. From this perspective, the statement opens the door to supporting same-gender committed relationships.”

“Lutherans have traditionally addressed sexuality biblically by starting with creation and noting that God created humans male and female. The draft statement seems to have avoided those biblical passages and that perspective of human sexuality,” Spring explained. “There is a surprising absence of procreation as a purpose of marriage,” he added.

“While I appreciate the work and the dedication of the members of the task force in writing this draft, I must express my profound disappointment at the weakness of this statement,” said the Rev. Erma Wolf, vice chair of the Lutheran CORE Steering Committee. “However, I strongly encourage people across the ELCA to read this statement and to submit their responses to the task force. This statement, if passed, will be the basis for teaching and for future policies in this area. The task force needs to hear from the congregations and the baptized people of God in order to have a statement that will truly serve the mission of the church in boldly following her Lord, Jesus Christ.” Wolf is associate pastor of the Brandon-Split Rock Lutheran Parish in Brandon, S.D.

Lutheran CORE has prepared a 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. The resource is available online at [www.lutherancore.org](http://www.lutherancore.org).

The first draft of the social statement is available online at [www.elca.org/faithfuljourney](http://www.elca.org/faithfuljourney). This draft was prepared by a church task force and is the result of a seven-year study process. The draft released on Thursday is awaiting response and input from church members.

Following an eight-month period of input from members of ELCA congregations, a second draft of the statement will be prepared. The revised draft is scheduled to be released in February 2009. The Task Force will also release its recommendations on whether the ELCA should change its policy to permit persons in same-sex sexual relationships to serve as pastors and other “rostered leaders” in the ELCA in February 2009.

The 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly (Aug. 17-23, 2009, in Minneapolis) will decide whether to adopt an ELCA social statement on human sexuality.

ELCA social statements are to explain what the ELCA understands to be Scripture's teaching and faithful Christian responses to a given topic. They are intended as teaching statements addressing the members of ELCA congregations to help them in their own ethical decision-making. Social statements also shape the activities of ELCA organizations as they address social issues through church policy and efforts to influence government action.

For more information on Lutheran CORE go to [www.lutherancore.org](http://www.lutherancore.org).