

# NEWS RELEASE

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## Leaders of Lutheran groups meet, pledge cooperation and support

by Betsy Carlson, WordAlone editor

MINNEAPOLIS, MN - Leaders of Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ, Lutheran CORE and the WordAlone Network met jointly in a Minneapolis suburb in mid-January to discuss and coordinate their ministry to individuals and churches seeking biblical, confessional, Lutheran teaching and practice.

The three groups were founded over the past 15 years because the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has been moving away from accepting the Bible as its final source of authority in decision making.

This trend away from the Bible's authority was seen most recently in the ELCA's August 2009 assembly votes to accept committed homosexual relationships and to allow practicing homosexuals to serve as ordained and professional lay ministers, according to confessional Lutherans.

(Confessional Lutherans accept the Bible as the sole, divine source and norm for all Christian teaching and endorse the 1580 Book of Concord—the statement of Lutheran doctrines—as being accurate interpretations of Holy Scripture. The Bible repeatedly condemns sexual relationships outside of a marriage between one man and one woman.)

Some ELCA members and churches are leaving the denomination because of this drift from the authority of the Bible. Others are staying in the ELCA but are protesting the assembly votes, some by withholding financial giving.

William Drew, chair of the WordAlone Board of Directors, Spokane, Wash., noted the three confessional groups discussed during their meeting a cohesive approach to address the needs of Lutherans seeking faithful ways to move forward in a reconfigured North American Lutheranism.

WordAlone is changing its direction from having worked to renew the ELCA for almost 15 years to serving confessional individuals and churches, whether they stay in or leave

the ELCA, by providing educational resources, pastoral care, fellowship opportunities and teaching by confessional theologians.

“The LCMC Board of Trustees very much appreciated the opportunity to sit down with the board of WordAlone and with the working group from Lutheran CORE,” said the Rev. William Sullivan, LCMC service coordinator, Canton, Mich. “What emerged from the meeting was a strong consensus that we all share the same goal of a Word-centered, mission-driven Lutheran presence in North America. All agreed that each group has a particular niche to fill in the years ahead.”

LCMC, constituted in March of 2001, is an association of 297 Lutheran congregations in eight countries and 38 states, working together to fulfill Christ's Great Commission to go and make disciples of all nations. Since August, 2009, LCMC's ranks have swelled by 74 congregations departing the ELCA.

Ryan Schwarz, the chair of Lutheran CORE's Vision and Planning Working Group, Washington, D.C., said, “We were particularly pleased to find consensus that Lutheran CORE and LCMC are ‘fraternal twins’ traveling on ‘parallel tracks,’ with both benefitting greatly from the contributions of WordAlone. We look forward to the prospect of substantial cooperation in mission and ministry with LCMC, and continued collaboration with WordAlone, as we move forward.”

He added, “WordAlone was instrumental in the founding of both LCMC and Lutheran CORE, and its varied ministries are critical to Lutheran CORE's efforts to catalyze a reconfiguration of North American Lutheranism.”

At its annual meeting in 2010, Lutheran CORE intends to constitute a new Lutheran church body and to reorganize the ongoing ministry of Lutheran CORE as an independent federation of confessional centrist Lutherans both within and outside of the ELCA, Schwarz said. The recent meeting included the first formal discussions between leadership of LCMC and Lutheran CORE.

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