

The ELCA Social Statement Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust

Lord of Life Lutheran Church
February 21, 2010

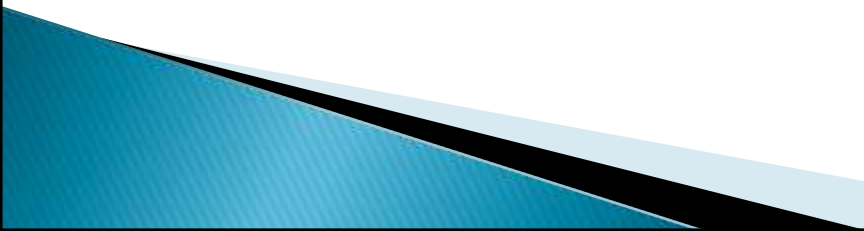
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What is a Social Statement?

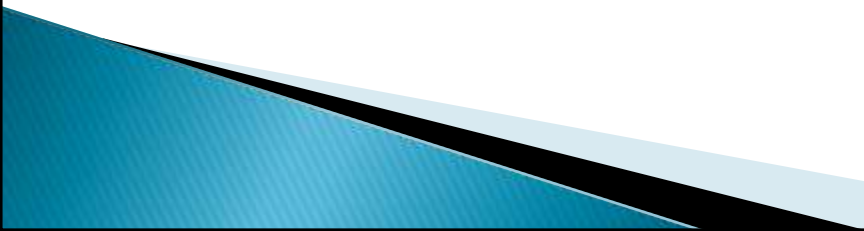
“Social statements are important means by which the ELCA addresses social concerns and carries out its active participation in society. They are theological and teaching documents that assist the ELCA and its members in forming judgments but also govern institutional policy in terms of its witness as public church. ”*

*FAQs for Human Sexuality :Gift and Trust as amended in April 2009 pg. 1



How is a Social Statement Used?

- ▶ By ELCA as a whole

- On matters related to this church's social responsibility, they govern church policy and state the official position of this church.
 - It is expected that ELCA-affiliated agencies and institutions will develop policies and practices consistent with the principles and directives of social statements.
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How is a Social Statement Used?

▶ By the Local Congregation:

- As theological & teaching documents:
 - for moral deliberation, conversation and study together in community
 - to assist ELCA members in forming their own moral judgments on particular social issues
- Expected that a congregation's policies and practices will be consistent with the principles and directives of social statements.

How does a Social Statement Come to Be?

- ▶ **A topic is adopted by:**
Synods or program committee for Church in Society Unit →
Church Council → Churchwide Assembly
- ▶ **Development Stage – Study Process**
 - Church in Society Unit oversees the study process
 - Task force/study group named
 - **Determine means for broad participation**
 - Study document or draft provided 18 mo. prior to CWA
 - Synods receive preliminary studies and drafts
 - The Church Council and Conference of Bishops review
- ▶ **Adoption of a Social Statement**
 - Church in Society Unit → Church Council → CWA
 - Synods receive proposed statement
 - Only CWA assembly may approve/adopt (2/3 vote)

Brief History of Social Statement on Human Sexuality

- 2001 CWA authorized a churchwide study on matters related to homosexuality and ministry and authorized the development of a social statement on human sexuality.
- 2002, 2003 *Journey Together Faithfully Parts I & II* were published & responses collected
- 2005 ELCA Church Council authorized an extension until the 2009 CWA for consideration of the social statement on human sexuality
- 2006 *Free in Christ to Serve the Neighbor: Lutherans Talk about Human Sexuality* was made available & responses collected
- 2007 CWA directed the task force to specifically address and make recommendations to the 2009 CWA on changes to any policies that preclude practicing homosexual persons from the roster of this church.
- 2008 Draft social statements were release, synod hearings held
- 2009 Proposed statement was released, CWA Assembly adopted *Human Sexuality: Gift & Trust* by 2/3 majority vote, also adopted Recommendations on Ministry Standards

ELCA Social Statements (year adopted)

- ▶ Abortion (1991)
 - ▶ Church in Society (1991)
 - ▶ Death Penalty (1991)
 - ▶ Economic Life (1999)
 - ▶ Education (2007)
 - ▶ Environment (1993)
 - Health and Healthcare (2003)
 - Peace (1995)
 - Race, Ethnicity & Culture (1993)
 - Sexuality (2009)
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What's in the social statement?

- ▶ Addresses the question: *How do we understand human sexuality within the context of Jesus' invitation to love God and love our neighbor (Romans 13:9-10, Galatians 5:14)*
- ▶ Recognizes that faithful people can and sometimes will come to different conclusions about what constitutes responsible action.

3 Foundational Premises:

- 1) Grounded in key Lutheran principles:
 - Scripture as the living Word of God
 - Justification by grace through faith on account of Christ
 - The Lutheran vocation to serve the neighbor in the midst of daily life.
- 2) Our model of right relationship is God's absolutely trustworthy faithfulness to God's promises and to God's people.

3 Foundational Premises:

3) Human sexuality is not limited to what is private or individual, but is profoundly shaped by cultural forces and practices. Part of the calling of this church is to evaluate social forces and social structures in light of what is good for the neighbor.

What's in it?

- ▶ Addresses broad scope of issues including:
 - Marriage
 - Family
 - Children
 - Divorce
 - Sexuality outside of marriage
 - Friendship
 - Healthy Body Image
 - Sexual abuse
 - Global sex-trade exploitation
 - Commodification of the body
 - Professional misconduct
 - Social structures that support relationships & enhance trust

Recommendations on Ministry Policies

- ▶ Fulfillment of 2007 CWA mandate to the Task Force for ELCA Studies on Sexuality to “address and make recommendations on changes to any policies that preclude practicing homosexual persons from the rosters of this church.”

Ministry Policies: 4 Resolutions

1. ELCA commit itself to bear one another's burdens, love the neighbor, and respect the bound consciences of all.
2. ELCA commit itself to finding ways to allow congregations *that choose to do so* to recognize, support and hold publicly accountable lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships.
3. ELCA commit itself to finding a way for people in such publicly accountable, lifelong monogamous, same-gender relationships to serve as rostered leaders in the church.
4. Implementation within ELCA policies

Helpful Websites

- ▶ www.wndsynod.org/resources/toolkit.html
 - ▶ www.elca.org/faithfuljourney
 - ▶ www.elca.org/socialstatements
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