



Report on Implementation of *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* (2009)

The 2011 Churchwide Assembly voted [CA11.03.06h]:

To receive with gratitude the memorials of the South Dakota, Metropolitan Chicago, Metropolitan New York, and Metropolitan Washington, D.C. synods, related to the social statement *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*;

To acknowledge both the sorrow and joy resulting from the decisions of the 2009 Churchwide Assembly;

To decline to reconsider this social statement; and

To request that the report to be prepared for the November 2012 meeting of the Church Council on the implementation of this social statement also be provided as information for the 2013 ELCA Churchwide Assembly.

In preparation for the November 2012 meeting of the Church Council, the Office of the Presiding Bishop prepared this response:

The Office of the Presiding Bishop acknowledges that the report on the implementation of the social statement on *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* was received and approved by the ELCA Church Council at the April 2012 meeting. (CC12.04.19c) We recommend that the full report received at that meeting be forwarded to the 2013 ELCA Churchwide Assembly as information.

At its November 2012 meeting, the Church Council voted [CC12.11.44j]:

To receive the response from the Office of the Presiding Bishop;

To forward the [following] report on the implementation of the social statement, *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*, received in the April 2012 meeting of the Church Council to the 2013 Churchwide Assembly; and

To request the secretary of this church to inform the synods of this action.

Churchwide Assembly Actions

Responses from units to Church Council

April 2012

Social Statement *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* Implementing Resolutions (CA09.04.17) YES-695; NO-285

1. To embrace as a church our legacy of a rich theological tradition that proclaims God's gracious love expressed in Jesus Christ as the basis of our salvation, hope, and unity, and to call upon members of this church on this basis to commit themselves to finding ways to live together faithfully in the midst of disagreements;
2. To call upon this church to affirm the various studies created for the "Journey Together Faithfully" series as resources for ongoing deliberation and discernment, and to direct the program unit for Church in Society to maintain their availability as long as demand continues;
3. To request the Office of the Presiding Bishop to explore the feasibility of developing liturgical resources for use by rostered leaders, individuals, and families at the time of divorce;
4. To encourage Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, to consider developing education curricula with particular attention to the needs of children, middle school, high school youth, and their parents for understanding Christian values and making responsible choices;

5. To recognize that organizations like Women of the ELCA, Lutheran Men in Mission, Lutheran Youth Organization, and campus ministries foster and support friendships; to encourage them to lift up and celebrate the value of strong friendships and to support the formation of voluntary associations for nurturing them;
6. To call upon all congregations, pastors, and other rostered leaders to reach out in welcome to all in accord with previous Churchwide Assembly actions as reaffirmed by the 2005 Churchwide Assembly [CA05.05.18], and to assist members to understand what it means to be hospitable to all in the name of Christ regardless of sexual orientation;
7. To call upon the ELCA to amend the eligibility provisions of the ELCA Pension and Other Benefits Program, consistent with the policies of this church;
8. To call upon this church to encourage the availability and funding of comprehensive sex education programs in public schools, as well as in Lutheran private schools;
9. To affirm the 2001 ELCA Message “Commercial Sexual Exploitation” and its continuing value for the mission and ministry of the ELCA;
10. To call upon this church’s advocacy and corporate social responsibility ministries to support and advocate measures consistent with this social statement;
11. To express appreciation for the work being done by the churchwide organization, synods, institutions, and congregations to prevent sexual harassment and misconduct; to encourage strengthening these efforts by all expressions and ministries of this church; and to ensure the availability of effective resources for dealing with sexual misconduct and sexual harassment within this church;
12. To call upon teaching theologians, bishops, pastors, diaconal ministers, associates in ministry, deaconesses, educators, and others to continue to extend theological and biblical reflection as well as theoretical and practical understanding of human sexuality through intellectual discourse, moral deliberation, continued research, discussion, and writing;
13. To recognize that the ELCA has adopted a strategy that will guide its response to the HIV and AIDS epidemic, and to call upon all units and expressions of this church to support that strategy;
14. To call upon all congregations, synods, early childhood education centers, elementary and secondary schools, colleges and universities, seminaries, campus ministries, outdoor ministries, social ministry organizations, public policy advocacy ministries, and all churchwide units to carry out the substance and spirit of this statement; and
15. To call upon Church in Society and other appropriate churchwide units to oversee a process of implementation and accountability for this social statement and to report on implementation to the Church Council in early 2012.

Responses from the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit

The Congregational and Synodical Mission (CSM) unit, in consultation with many of the following units and organizations, provide the following responses to the implementing resolutions.

Mission Development

Training for the prevention of sexual misconduct is provided during Mission Developer Training for new developers entering the field. It is an expectation that all developers attend. Mission Developer Training is offered twice a year.

Worship

Currently, there are prayer resources for families and individuals facing divorce included in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship: Pastoral Care*. A larger conversation about whether or not this church ritualizes divorce would need to take place before the development of such liturgical resources.

Advocacy

ELCA Advocacy Ministries and the Corporate Social Responsibility Consultant have addressed policy issues consistent with this statement including hate crime, workplace and partner benefits legislation. Commercial Sexual Exploitation (ref. item 9), including its economic and cultural aspects, is a continuing advocacy priority addressed by international, domestic, U.N. and corporate responsibility portfolios.

ELCA Advocacy Ministries and the Corporate Social Responsibility Consultant have written issue briefs raising the profile of the HIV and AIDS Strategy and addressing its policy implications. The Corporate Social Responsibility Consultant and International Policy Director take leadership positions in coalitions addressing funding for education and

access to medical treatment, drugs, and long-term care. The Assistant to the Director of the U.N. Office is leading an ELCA Inter-Unit Planning Team related to the 2012 International AIDS Conference in Washington, D.C.

Response regarding the HIV and AIDS Strategy

A team was formed to fully engage the strategy. The team is composed of churchwide staff from Mission Advancement, Congregational and Synodical Mission, Global Mission, and staff from the Women of the ELCA. We continue to focus on the three goals and have joined with our partners domestically and globally in creating our response to halting the spread of HIV through effective prevention, treatment and care; eliminating stigma and discrimination; and reducing the conditions of poverty and marginalization that contribute to the spread of HIV. In a ten-year period, we have committed to spend 10 million dollars as part of our overall response to this continuing crisis.

Response from Campus Ministry

Campus ministries across the country continue to foster and support strong friendships among undergraduate and graduate students. They also continue to carry out the substance and spirit of the social statement on human sexuality. One regional coordinator shared the story that at a recent quadrennial review at the University of Michigan, students who have faced the pain of being rejected by other faith communities because of their sexual identity dared to “darken the door” at Lutheran Campus Ministry/Lord of Light because they advertise themselves as a Reconciling in Christ community. She reports that “they couldn’t say enough good things about the welcome they have received” from that campus ministry community.

Response from Schools

Elementary schools and preschools operated by ELCA congregations continue to offer quality education in sexuality as part of instruction in health.

Response from Augsburg Fortress, Publishers

General Guidelines

At [Augsburg Fortress](#) and our ecumenical division, [sparkhouse](#), we are committed to creating resources to assist with conversation and learning around Christian values and making responsible choices through age-appropriate language, images, questions, and activities. We use different development and editorial filters/criteria based on our expertise with each end-user age/stage group. For children and youth, our filter includes respecting and honoring diversity so that each child feels they (and their family) are included and loved members of God’s family.

[Spark Sunday School](#) and [Spark Family](#)

We do not address issues surrounding human sexuality in an explicit way in the Spark curriculum or Spark Family. We do reflect respectful, healthy, and diverse family relationships when we are depicting families in text and in pictures.

[Herewestandconfirmation.org](#)

Exploring the Commandments: Part 2 references the sixth commandment and healthy attitudes toward sexuality and relationships. There are no topics on the News Feed that specifically reference this.

[re:form](#) Confirmation and Youth Resources

Three sessions relate directly to sexuality/decisions: Is it a sin to think about sex? How do I stop doing things I know I shouldn’t do? Is divorce a sin?

Future

We are open to developing a curriculum in the future that focuses specifically on issues of Christian values and responsible choices.

Response from Lutheran Men in Mission (LMM)

For LMM, assisting men to build strong, healthy friendships is at the heart of our work. A part of our mission is to provide safe spaces for men to develop meaningful relationships. Of the many things we do to promote this, two stand out:

- 1) We have developed the I-Go model for older and middle-aged men to develop friendships, especially with younger men. Identify, Invite, and Invest. Identify a younger man in your life, invite (a cup of coffee, a beer . . . to spend some time together) into friendship and invest time in him.
- 2) Our One Year to Live retreat creates the safest of places for men to honestly open up and begin to develop life changing relationships.

Response from Portico Benefit Services

In 2010, Portico Benefit Services (ELCA Board of Pensions) amended plans contained within the ELCA Pension and Other Benefits Program to treat eligible same-gender partners the same as a spouse to the extent possible under each plan and as permitted by federal law.