

Draft of a Social Statement on Civic Life and Faith
Final Survey Responses
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Overview

The Evangelical Church in America (ELCA) is currently preparing a social statement on the topic of civic life and faith. As a means for ELCA-wide feedback, ELCA members and leaders were invited to read the online Draft of a Social Statement on Civic Life and Faith. They then had the opportunity to provide feedback in several ways: through emails, hearings across the country, and an online survey. This report summarizes the results of the survey. The draft and survey were posted in both English and Spanish in January 2024, and the survey was closed on October 6, 2024. This report includes all the online and paper responses.

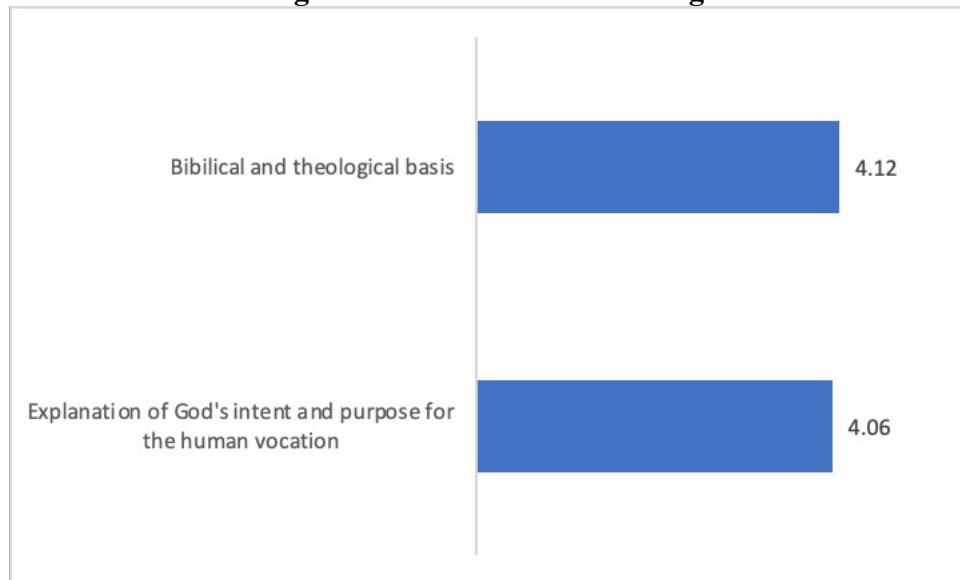
Survey Results

The social statement draft is divided into six sections, and the survey asked participants to answer questions about each section. There were also several demographic questions at the end of the survey. A total of 315 participants completed the survey. (See Appendix A for a complete set of frequencies.)

Section I Responses: Fundamental Teaching: God's Activity Toward Well-being Through Civic Life

In response to Section I, participants were asked to rate how well the section presented the biblical and theological basis for a Lutheran view on God's work and purpose in civic life. Using a five-point rating scale where 1 = "not at all" and 5 = "very," about 73 percent of the participants felt it was presented "well" or "very well" (ratings of 4 or 5), with an average rating of 4.12. (See Figure 1.) Participants were also asked to rate how clear the explanation was in Article 3 about God's intent and purpose for the human vocation. About 72 percent of the participants felt it was "clear" or "very clear" (ratings of 4 or 5), with an average rating of 4.06.

Figure 1: Section I Mean Ratings



Each section had two open-ended questions where participants had the option to type in their own comments. Responses to the open-ended questions were coded to find common themes. (See Appendix B for a complete list of comments.)

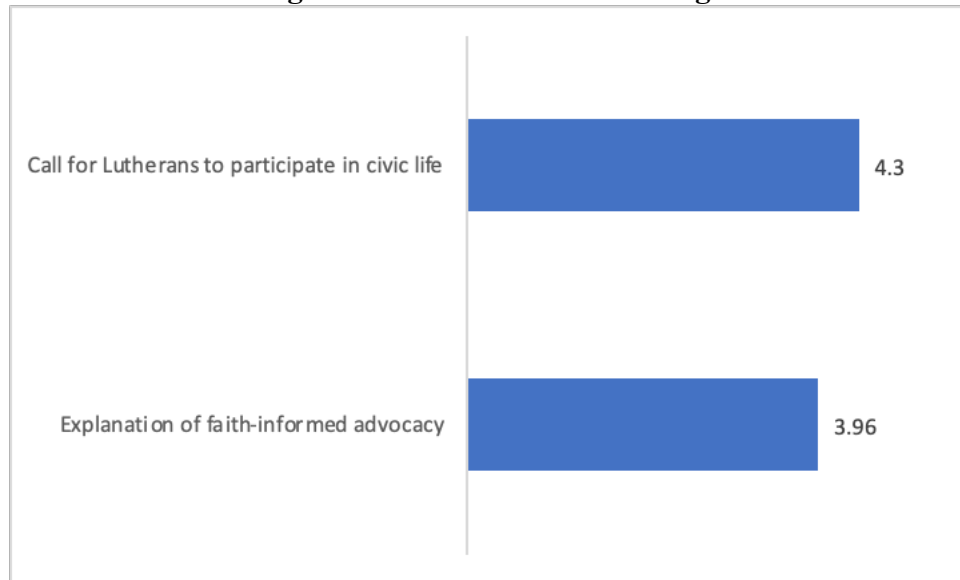
The first open-ended question asked participants if there was one idea they would add to the section. A total of 63 comments were coded for this question. Of those comments, the most common was “the ELCA should focus on the Gospel and avoid taking political positions” (11%). A few participants recommended “define the term 'political being' in line 28,” while others felt “lines 49 to 54 seem vague, and need an explanation of the left and right hand” (both 10%). A few participants suggested “tone down/simplify the language to reach a wider audience,” and others said “lines 20-22 need to clarify the common good” (both 8%).

The second open-ended question asked participants if there was one idea they thought could be deleted from the section. A total of 57 comments were coded for this question. Of those comments, the most common was that it is “too long” (21%). Several participants suggested deleting “the whole statement” (14%). A few participants felt “the language is too formal” (9%), and others felt “in line 28 'and necessarily political beings' is too strong for some people who prefer to attend church and separate politics” (5%). A few participants suggested deleting “lines 29 to 30, the false dichotomy that collectively we influence policy and individually we do acts of caring” (5%). Others felt “all social justice phraseology and sinfulness should be deleted” (5%).

Section II Responses: The Calling to Robust Civic Participation

In Section II, participants were asked to rate how thoroughly the section presented the call for Lutherans to participate in civic life, using the same five-point rating scale described above. About 78 percent of the participants rated it as “thorough” or “very thorough” (ratings of 4 or 5), with an average rating of 4.30. (See Figure 2.) When participants were asked to rate how helpful they found the explanation of faith-informed advocacy, about 68 percent rated it as “helpful” or “very helpful” (ratings of 4 or 5), with an average rating of 3.96.

Figure 2: Section II Mean Ratings



For the first open-ended question in Section II, participants were asked if there was one idea they would add to the section. A total of 40 comments were coded for this question. Of those comments, a few participants felt the section should add “Jesus and biblical teaching” (13%). Others suggested “in Article 16, lines 895-896, ‘faith-rooted’ is vague, use ‘biblically-based on the life of Jesus’” (8%). A few participants suggested adding “community organizing (not just advocacy) and the development of deeper webs of relational connection as a core commitment of our calling to civic participation” (8%). A couple participants would like a “clear, more succinct statement,” while others suggested “in Article 10, lines 82-84, use more inclusive language about the Divine” (both 5%). Others suggested “in Article 15, acknowledge the difficulty of having political conversations in our extremely polarized culture” (5%). A couple participants would add “in line 822 and 902, make it clear that churches helping the homeless must work with the community to avoid issues,” while others suggested “Article 11, line 87, needs more detail about how the liturgy prepares us to join God’s work” (both 5%). Finally, a couple participants would “add ‘chaplains’ in line 1000 for all levels of society need (state and local)” (5%).

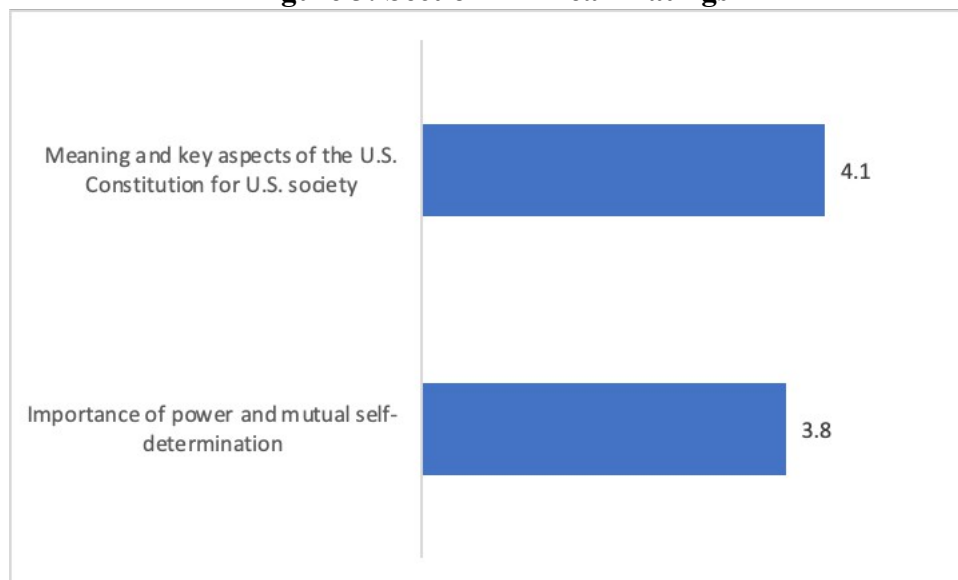
The second open-ended question asked if there was one idea participants thought could be deleted from the section. There were a total of 39 comments coded for this question. Of those comments, the most common was “the whole thing” should be deleted, while others felt the section was “too long and too wordy” (both 18%). A few participants suggested deleting “Article 18” (10%). A couple participants suggested “Article 16 urges coalitions of like minded people. I don’t think ‘like-mindedness’ exists and would encourage the church to build coalitions of diversely minded people for common purpose” (8%). A couple participants suggested “in Article 15, line 111, the use of God’s ‘left hand’ is arcane and unnecessary” (8%).

Section III Responses: An Assessment of the U.S. Constitutional Form of Government

In Section III, participants rated how well the section assesses the meaning and key aspects of the U.S. Constitution for U.S. society, using the same five-point rating scale described above. About 73 percent of the participants felt the section assessed it “well” or “very well” (ratings of 4 or 5), with an average rating of 4.10. (See Figure 3.) When asked to rate the how helpful the discussion was of the importance

of power and mutual self-determination as key principles, about 63 percent of the participants rated it as “helpful” or “very helpful” (ratings of 4 or 5), with an average rating of 3.80.

Figure 3: Section III Mean Ratings



Similar to previous sections, the first open-ended question asked if there was one idea participants would add to the section. A total of 42 comments were coded for this question. Of those comments, the most common response was “in lines 163-164, simplify and clarify mutual self-determination” (19%). A few participants said the section needs “a clear, more succinct statement” (10%). Others said the section “needs more discussion of the importance of caring for the most vulnerable members of the community” (5%). A couple participants suggested adding “Jesus and biblical precepts,” and “lines 158-159 need more examples of the criteria for assessment” (both 5%). Others would add “the Supreme Court has seized power it was not granted and created immunity and decisions that were never intended” (5%). A couple participants suggested “in Article 21, rewrite it so people can understand without having to re-read it,” while others said, “in Article 25, include the questions in the long version” (both 5%).

When asked if there was one idea they think could be deleted from this section, there were a total of 37 comments coded. Of those comments, the most common response was “the whole thing, stay out of politics” (22%). Several participants suggested removing “line 194, is not a 'Christian nation,' this is an historically fallacious statement” (19%). A few participants suggested deleting “line 155, the reference to 'troubled restlessness’” (11%), while others felt the section was “too long and repetitive” (8%). A few participants suggested “in line 151, define 'political authority,’” while others suggested deleting “Article 26” (both 8%).

Section IV: Religion and the First Amendment

In Section IV, participants were asked to rate how well the section explored the relationship between the First Amendment and religion, using the same five-point rating scale described above. About 79 percent of the participants felt the section explored it “well” or “very well” (ratings of 4 or 5), with an average rating of 4.25.

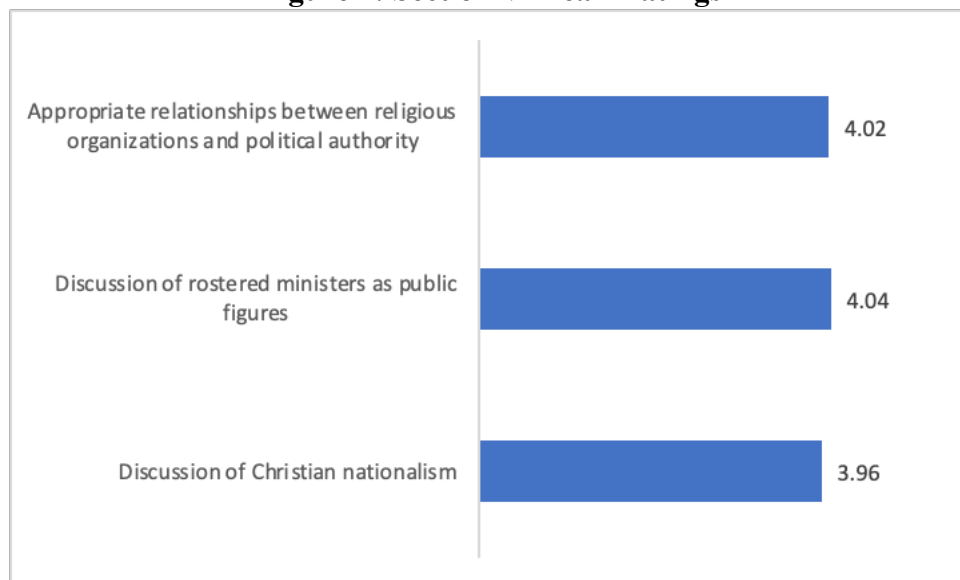
For the first open-ended question in Section IV, participants were asked if there was one idea they would add to the section. A total of 34 comments were coded for this question. Of those comments, several participants felt “line 210 needs to explain the 'two main traditions' of interpretation” (15%). A few participants suggested “in Article 28, define 'non-establishment,’” while others suggested “Article 31 needs more clarity; make a clear thesis that states people of faith may bring their religious convictions to public life” (both 12%). A couple participants suggested “a clear, more succinct statement,” while others questioned “in Article 28, why does the ELCA take no position?” (both 9%). A couple participants suggested adding “Jesus/biblical precepts,” while others commented “in lines 1455-1461, provide examples of what's permissible and what isn't” (both 6%).

The second open-ended question asked if there was one idea participants thought could be deleted from the section. There were a total of 20 comments coded for this question. Of those comments, the most common was “it's too long” (20%). A couple participants suggested “move Article 29 to an earlier part of the document” (15%), while others suggested deleting “all of it” (10%).

Section V: Describing the Constructive Relationships of Religious Organizations and Political Authority

In Section V, participants were asked to rate how clear the explanation was of the appropriate relationships between religious organizations and political authority, using the same five-point rating scale described above. About 70 percent of the participants felt it was “clear” or “very clear” (ratings of 4 or 5), with an average rating of 4.02. (See Figure 4.) Next, participants were asked to rate the helpfulness of the discussion of rostered ministers as public figures in Article 35. About 70 percent felt it was “helpful” or “very helpful” (ratings of 4 or 5), with an average rating of 4.04. When participants were asked to rate the helpfulness of the discussion of Christian nationalism in Article 37, about 67 percent rated it as “helpful” or “very helpful” (ratings of 4 or 5), with an average rating of 3.96.

Figure 4: Section V Mean Ratings



Similar to previous sections, the first open-ended question asked if there was one idea participants would add to the section. A total of 34 comments were coded for this question. Of those comments, the most common responses were “in Article 35, add language that each rostered minister speaks with their own conscience as private citizens,” and “Article 37 seems to offer broad generalities and is too simplistic” (both 12%). A couple participants suggested adding “Jesus,” while others suggested “move this section more towards the front of the document” (both 6%).

When asked if there was one idea they think could be deleted from this section, there were a total of 37 comments coded. Of those comments, the most common response was “in Article 37, lines 282-288, you contradict your own teaching by classifying people into a category because they believe a certain way” (27%). A few participants suggested “remove Article 36,” while others felt the “negative tone seems to attack others” (both 11%). A couple participants suggested removing “Christian Nationalism scare tactics; they are ridiculous and one-sided,” while others suggested deleting “the whole document” (both 8%). Finally, a couple participants said, “I react strongly against Article 35, regarding rostered ministers. I worry that official ELCA teaching is being elevated to the level of Scripture and the Confessions” (8%).

Section VI: Addressing Selected Contemporary Concerns in Civic Life

In Section VI, participants were asked to rate the helpfulness of this section on contemporary concerns in civic life, using the same five-point rating scale described above. About 66 percent of the participants felt it was “helpful” or “very helpful” (ratings of 4 or 5), with an average rating of 3.90. (See Figure 5.) Next, participants were asked to rate the usefulness of the discussion of financial contributions to political campaigns in Article 42. About 64 percent felt it was “useful” or “very useful” (ratings of 4 or 5), with an average rating of 3.87.

Figure 5: Section VI Mean Ratings



For the first open-ended question in Section VI, participants were asked if there was one idea they would add to the section. A total of 42 comments were coded for this question. Of those comments, the most common response was “corporate money does not belong in politics. Citizens United must be overturned legislatively so that all votes of human beings are counted equally and fairly” (17%). Several participants suggested “define the Doctrine of Discovery” (10%). Others felt “Article 46 should be moved closer to the beginning of the document,” and the section needs a “clear, more succinct statement of the ELCA's position” (both 5%). A couple participants suggested “in Article 40, recognize the difficulty yet urgency of seeking constructive, helpful and honest debate” (5%). Others felt that “there should be an additional article addressing this country's history of slavery, the persistence of institutions that disadvantage and/or discriminate against people of color, and our need for advocacy for black and brown people” (5%). A couple participants suggested “in Article 47, talk about how the church can be a source of healing with regards to polarization and political hurt,” while others suggested “in Article 45 the term 'Indian' is a historical mislabeling and should be avoided. 'Native Peoples' would cover all three mentioned groups” (both 5%). Finally, a couple participants would add “in Articles 39 and 40, Luther's 8th commandment and love your enemies” (5%).

The second open-ended question asked if there was one idea participants thought could be deleted from the section. There were a total of 39 comments coded for this question. Of those comments, the most common were “Article 41, censorship is wrong,” as well as “delete Article 42 about limiting campaign contributions” (both 13%). A few participants said “the whole thing” should be deleted, while others commented “this addresses contemporary issues, should a social statement be more timeless?” (both 10%). A couple participants suggested “in Article 41, lines 314-317, change to 'all media,' not just social media,” while others felt it was “too long and has too much jargon” (both 8%).

Overall Questions about the Draft

The last section asked participants to rate how helpful they found the draft in thinking about civic life from a faith perspective, using the same five-point rating scale described above. About 70 percent of the participants rated the draft as “helpful” or “very helpful” (ratings of 4 or 5), with an average rating of 3.98.

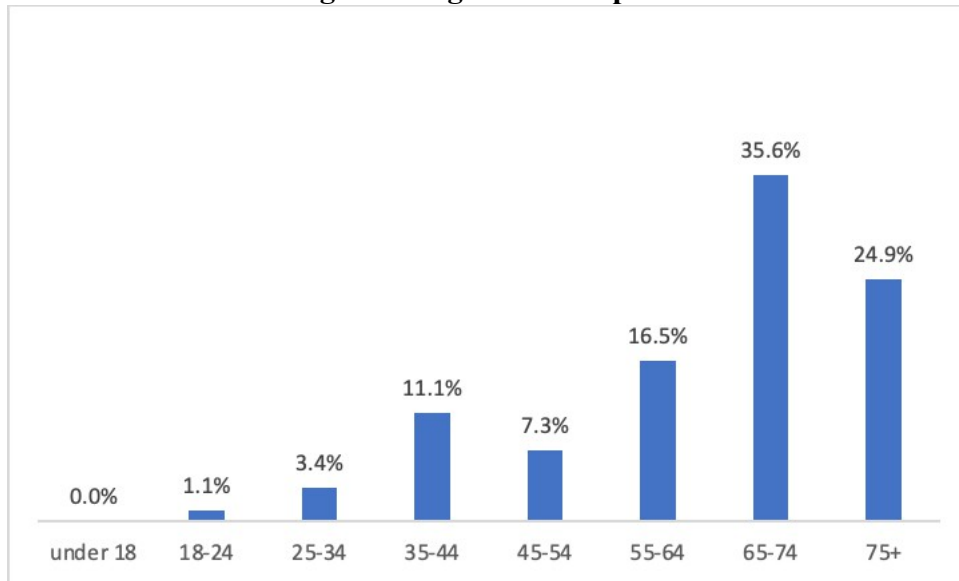
The final open-ended question asked participants if there was anything else they thought the social statement should explore that was not covered in the draft. A total of 84 comments were coded for this question. Of those comments, the most common response was “it should be shortened and simplified” (25%). On the other hand, many participants felt the draft was “very thorough and comprehensive, and well done” (11%). Several participants suggested adding “how to operationalize the social statement in our everyday life and faith” (11%), while others suggested “more use of the Confessions and Scripture” (10%). A few participants suggested “stay away from putting people into classes and passing judgment” (5%).

Demographic Questions

The survey concluded with several demographic questions to give us a picture of who participated in the survey. When asked how they identify, half of the participants chose “man” (51%), with about 42 percent choosing “woman.” About one percent of participants chose “non-binary,” and seven percent preferred not to answer.

When asked their age, the large majority were 55 years or older (77%). (See Figure 6.) One percent of the participants were 18 to 24 years old, three percent were 25 to 34 years old, 11 percent were 35 to 44 years old, and seven percent were 45 to 54 years old.

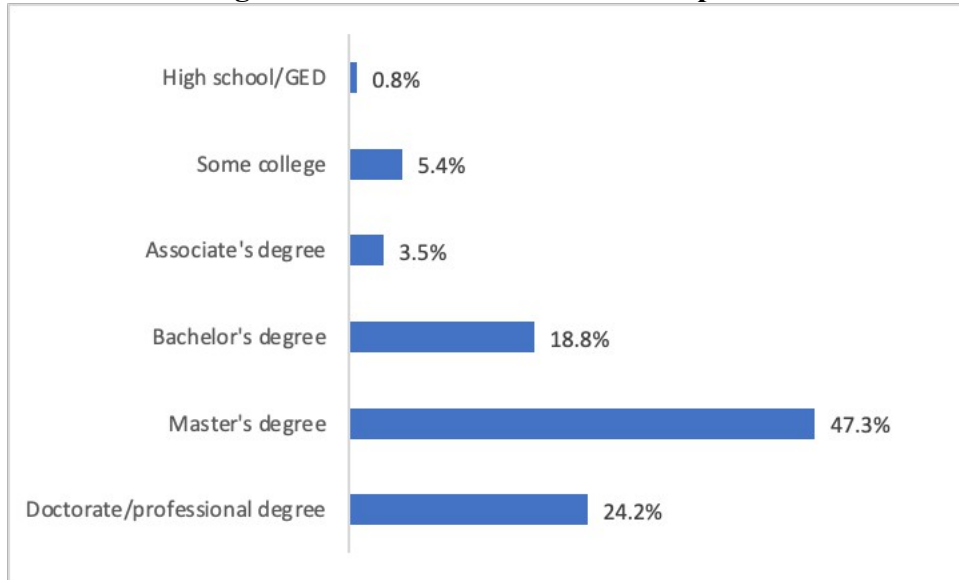
Figure 6: Age of Participants



As for race or ethnicity, the large majority identified as White (88%). About eight percent of participants identified as “other,” with two percent choosing “multiracial.” Five participants identified as African American/Black (2%), two participants identified as Latino/Hispanic (1%), and one participant identified as American Indian/Alaska Native (1%).

We next asked participants to indicate their highest level of academic achievement. The large majority of participants had a Bachelor's degree or higher (90%). (See Figure 7.) About one percent of the participants had a high school diploma or GED. About five percent of the participants chose “some college,” and another four percent had an Associate's degree.

Figure 7: Education Level of Participants



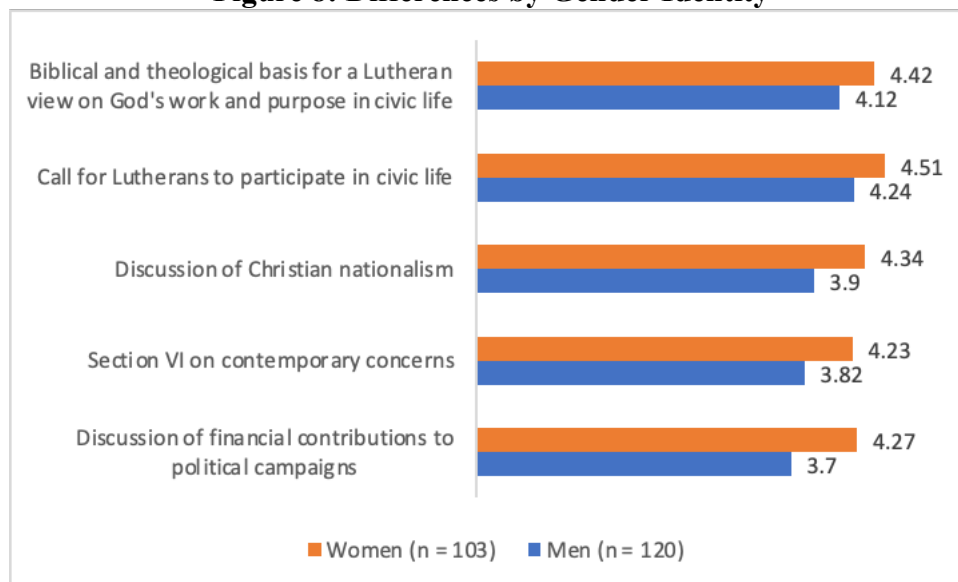
Finally, we asked if participants were rostered leaders or lay people. Most of the participants were lay members and/or participants in a congregation of the ELCA (48%). About 26 percent were Ministers of Word and Sacrament, with about one percent Ministers of Word and Service. About nine percent of the participants chose “other,” and most listed they were responding on behalf of a group or they were seminarians. About 16 percent of the participants did not respond to this question.

Differences by Gender Identity, Age and Roster Status

We examined the rating scale questions and compared the responses of women and men to look for significant differences. Due to the small number of participants who identified as “non-binary,” those responses were not included in this analysis. In addition, a large number of participants (52) did not answer the question, so they were also not included in this analysis. For those who identified their gender, there were significant differences for several of the questions. (See Figure 8.) Interestingly, women gave higher ratings compared to men for all of the questions that had significant differences.

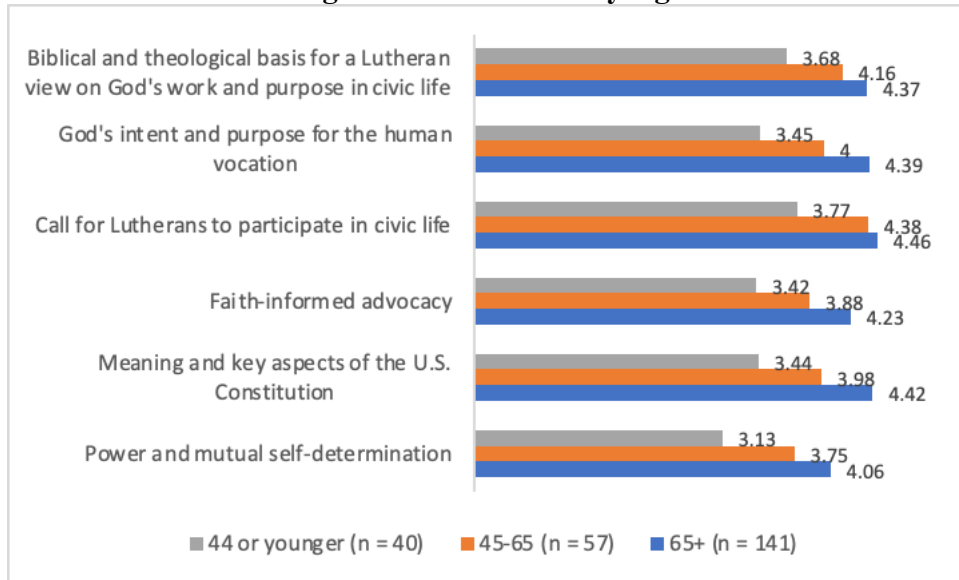
Women gave higher ratings for how well Section I presented the biblical and theological basis for a Lutheran view on God's work and purpose in civic life. In addition, women gave higher ratings for how thoroughly Section II presented the call for Lutherans to participate in civic life. Women also rated the discussion of Christian nationalism in Article 37 as more helpful, as well as Section VI on contemporary concerns in civic life. Finally, women felt the discussion of financial contributions to political campaigns in Article 42 was more useful compared to men.

Figure 8: Differences by Gender Identity



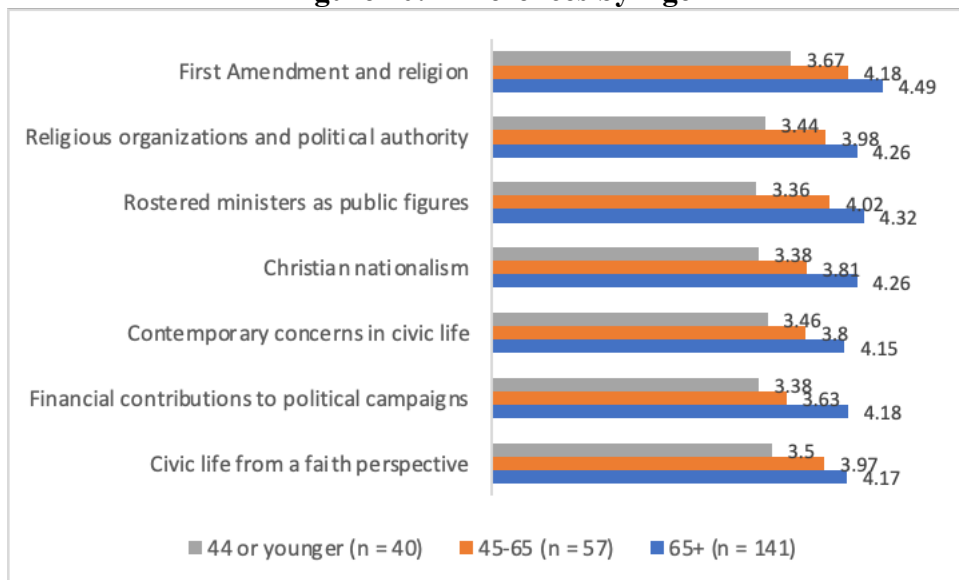
Next, we compared age groups to look for possible differences. Three age categories were created: 44 or younger, 45 to 64, and 65 or older. Similar to gender identity, many of the participants (54) did not answer this question. For those who indicated their age, there were significant differences for all of the rating scale questions. Older participants (65 or older) had the highest average ratings, while the youngest age group (44 or younger) had the lowest average ratings. (See Figure 9.) Older participants gave higher ratings for how well Section I presented the biblical and theological basis for a Lutheran view on God's work and purpose in life. Participants aged 65 or older also gave higher ratings for the clarity of the explanation about God's intent and purpose for the human vocation in Article 3. In addition, older participants gave higher ratings for how thoroughly Section II presented the call for Lutherans to participate in civic life. Older participants also rated as more helpful the explanation of faith-informed advocacy in Article 16. In Section III, participants aged 65 or older gave higher ratings for how well the section assessed the meaning and key aspects of the U.S. Constitution for U.S. society. Older participants also rated as more helpful the discussion of the importance of power and mutual self-determination as key principles in Article 21.

Figure 9: Differences by Age



In Section IV, older participants gave higher ratings for how well the section explored the relationship between the First Amendment and religion. (See Figure 10.) Participants aged 65 or older also gave higher ratings for the clarity of the explanation of the appropriate relationships between religious organizations and political authority in Section V. In Article 35, older participants felt the discussion of rostered ministers as public figures was more helpful than younger participants. Older participants also rated the discussion of Christian nationalism in Article 37 as more helpful. For Section VI, older participants gave higher ratings for the section on contemporary concerns in civic life and the discussion of financial contributions to political campaigns in Article 42. Finally, older participants found the draft more helpful in thinking about civic life from a faith perspective compared to younger participants.

Figure 10: Differences by Age



We also looked at the roster status of participants to compare responses. Rostered ministers included both Ministers of Word and Sacrament and Ministers of Word and Service. Similar to gender and age, a large number of participants (51) did not answer this question. For those who indicated their roster status, there were no significant differences found comparing the ratings between rostered and lay participants.

Summary and Conclusions

Overall, the responses to the draft of the social statement on civic life and faith were positive. All of the rating scale means were 3.80 or above on a five-point scale. When participants were asked to rate how helpful they found the draft in thinking about civic life from a faith perspective, the average rating was 3.98 out of 5.

There were several common themes found throughout the comments to different sections of the draft. First, many participants commented that the church should focus on the Gospel and not be involved in politics. On the other hand, many felt the draft was very thorough and well done. Others commented that the draft should be shortened and the language simplified to reach a wider audience. In Section III, several participants felt the discussion of mutual self-determination could be simplified and clarified. This topic also received the lowest mean rating of all the rating scale questions. Several participants would also like more guidance on how to operationalize the social statement in their everyday life and faith.

The demographic characteristics of the participants were very similar to the overall characteristics of ELCA members. About 77 percent of the participants were 55 or older, and 88 percent identified as White. Most participants were highly educated, with 90 percent earning a Bachelor's degree or higher. About 48 percent of the participants were lay members of an ELCA congregation. The participants represented 218 different zip codes, concentrated mostly in the upper midwest and northeast of the United States. (See Appendix C for map.)

There were many differences by gender identity, with women giving higher ratings than men. In addition, older participants gave higher ratings than younger participants for all of the rating scale questions. However, no significant differences were found when comparing rostered and lay participants.

Appendix A
 Frequencies: Research Survey
 Draft of a Social Statement on Civic Life and Faith
 Final Report (N = 315)¹

Section I: Fundamental Teaching: God's Activity Toward Well-being Through Civic Life

1. In Section I, how well did the section present the biblical and theological basis for a Lutheran view on God's work and purpose in civic life?

1-not at all	2	3-somewhat	4	5-very	Don't know	Mean
4.8	6.1	11.9	22.9	50.2	4.1	4.12

2. In Article 3, how clear is the explanation about God's intent and purpose for the human vocation?

1-not at all	2	3-somewhat	4	5-very	Don't know	Mean
5.8	6.9	11.7	23.0	48.8	3.8	4.06

3. *(Optional)* Is there one idea you think should be added to this section? (Please reference a line number if possible for each suggestion.) (See Appendix B for comments.)

4. *(Optional)* Is there one idea you think could be deleted from this section? (Please reference a line number if possible for each suggestion.) (See Appendix B for comments.)

Section II: The Calling to Robust Civic Participation

5. In Section II, how thoroughly did the section present the call for Lutherans to participate in civic life?

1-not at all	2	3-somewhat	4	5-very	Don't know	Mean
4.0	2.9	12.3	18.8	59.1	2.9	4.30

6. In Article 16, how helpful did you find the explanation of faith-informed advocacy?

1-not at all	2	3-somewhat	4	5-very	Don't know	Mean
6.5	7.2	15.2	22.5	45.7	2.9	3.96

7. *(Optional)* Is there one idea you think should be added to this section? (Please reference a line number if possible for each suggestion.) (See Appendix B for comments.)

8. *(Optional)* Is there one idea you think could be deleted from this section? (Please reference a line number if possible for each suggestion.) (See Appendix B for comments.)

Section III: An Assessment of the U.S. Constitutional Form of Government

9. How well does Section III assess the meaning and key aspects of the U.S. Constitution for U.S. society?

1-not at all	2	3-somewhat	4	5-very	Don't know	Mean
6.0	6.0	11.2	22.5	50.9	3.4	4.10

¹ All numbers are shown as percentages unless otherwise indicated.

10. In Article 21, how helpful is the discussion of the importance of power and mutual self-determination as key principles?

1-not at all	2	3-somewhat	4	5-very	Don't know	Mean
8.6	10.0	16.0	20.8	42.0	2.6	3.80

11. *(Optional)* Is there one idea you think should be added to this section? (Please reference a line number if possible for each suggestion.) (See Appendix B for comments.)

12. *(Optional)* Is there one idea you think could be deleted from this section? (Please reference a line number if possible for each suggestion.) (See Appendix B for comments.)

Section IV: Religion and the First Amendment

13. How well does Section IV explore the relationship between the First Amendment and religion?

1-not at all	2	3-somewhat	4	5-very	Don't know	Mean
3.8	4.9	9.4	23.8	54.7	3.4	4.25

14. *(Optional)* Is there one idea you think should be added to this section? (Please reference a line number if possible for each suggestion.) (See Appendix B for comments.)

15. *(Optional)* Is there one idea you think could be deleted from this section? (Please reference a line number if possible for each suggestion.) (See Appendix B for comments.)

Section V: Describing the Constructive Relationships of Religious Organizations and Political Authority

16. In Section V, how clear is the explanation of the appropriate relationships between religious organizations and political authority?

1-not at all	2	3-somewhat	4	5-very	Don't know	Mean
5.7	5.0	15.3	26.1	44.1	3.8	4.02

17. In Article 35, how helpful is the discussion of rostered ministers as public figures?

1-not at all	2	3-somewhat	4	5-very	Don't know	Mean
7.2	4.5	13.6	22.0	47.7	4.9	4.04

18. In Article 37, how helpful did you find the discussion of Christian nationalism?

1-not at all	2	3-somewhat	4	5-very	Don't know	Mean
11.1	6.9	11.1	12.2	54.6	4.2	3.96

19. *(Optional)* Is there one idea you think should be added to this section? (Please reference a line number if possible for each suggestion.) (See Appendix B for comments.)

20. *(Optional)* Is there one idea you think could be deleted from this section? (Please reference a line number if possible for each suggestion.) (See Appendix B for comments.)

Section VI: Addressing Selected Contemporary Concerns in Civic Life

21. In Section VI, how helpful is the section on contemporary concerns in civic life?

1-not at all	2	3-somewhat	4	5-very	Don't know	Mean
8.7	5.9	15.4	22.5	43.9	3.6	3.90

22. In Article 42, how useful was the discussion of financial contributions to political campaigns?

1-not at all	2	3-somewhat	4	5-very	Don't know	Mean
8.9	7.0	16.7	19.0	44.6	3.9	3.87

23. *(Optional)* Is there one idea you think should be added to this section? (Please reference a line number if possible for each suggestion.) (See Appendix B for comments.)

24. *(Optional)* Is there one idea you think could be deleted from this section? (Please reference a line number if possible for each suggestion.) (See Appendix B for comments.)

Overall Questions about the Draft

25. How helpful did you find the draft in thinking about civic life from a faith perspective?

1-not at all	2	3-somewhat	4	5-very	Don't know	Mean
10.1	4.3	14.3	19.0	50.8	1.6	3.98

26. Is there anything else you think the social statement should explore that was not covered in this draft? (See Appendix B for comments.)

Questions about You

27. Gender:

- 41.8 Woman
- 51.0 Man
- 0.4 Non-binary
- 6.8 Prefer not to answer

28. Age:

- 0.0 under 18
- 1.1 18-24
- 3.4 25-34
- 11.1 35-44
- 7.3 45-54
- 16.5 55-64
- 35.6 65-74
- 24.9 75 or older

29. Race/Ethnicity:
- 1.9 African American/Black
 - 0.0 African National/African Caribbean
 - 0.4 American Indian/Alaska Native
 - 0.0 Arab/Middle Eastern
 - 0.0 Asian/Pacific Islander
 - 0.8 Latino/Hispanic
 - 1.5 Multiracial
 - 87.8 White
 - 7.6 Other
30. What is your zip code? (See Appendix C for zip code map.)
31. Highest level of academic achievement:
- 0.0 Less than high school
 - 0.8 High school or GED
 - 5.4 Some college
 - 3.5 Associate's degree
 - 18.8 Bachelor's degree
 - 47.3 Master's degree
 - 24.2 Doctorate or professional degree
30. Are you:
- 26.0 A Minister of Word and Sacrament
 - 1.3 A Minister of Word and Service
 - 47.9 A lay member and/or participant of a congregation in the ELCA
 - 8.6 Other
 - 16.2 No response

Appendix B
 Frequencies: Comments
 Draft of a Social Statement on Civic Life and Faith
 Final Report (N = 315)

Section I: Fundamental Teaching: God's Activity Toward Well-being Through Civic Life

3. Is there one idea you think should be added to this section?

Comment	n = 63
The ELCA should focus on the Gospel and avoid taking political positions	11.1% (7) ²
Line 28, define the term “political being”	9.5% (6)
Lines 49-54, seems vague; need to explain left and right hand	9.5% (6)
Tone down/simplify the language to reach a wider audience	7.9% (5)
Lines 20-22, clarify common good	7.9% (5)
Add biblical texts/Jesus	6.3% (4)
Need to ensure that all defined words are underlined and those that are underlined have been defined	4.8% (3)
Discussion about how these theological concepts can be carried out in everyday life	4.8% (3)
What are some examples of sin in civic life	4.8% (3)
Article 3, add discussion of how vocation is given to the Christian in baptism	4.8% (3)
More on distinct Lutheran perspective and Confessions	3.2% (2)
Line 29, better definition of power	3.2% (2)
Article 7, add that the work we do on earth is penultimate, that only in the eschaton will civic life be perfected	3.2% (2)
Add African Americans and inclusive congregations, support of LGBTQIA+	3.2% (2)
Line 459, “knowledge, wisdom, power” need more definition	1.6% (1)
Line 46, not everybody is clear that both Law and Gospel are found in the Old Testament as well as the New Testament	1.6% (1)
Add an example in Article 7	1.6% (1)
We need another public constitutional convention to give “we the people” actual meaning	1.6% (1)
Article 9 (lines 69-75), add an explicit condemnation to aspects of the Lutheran (and Christian) tradition that are contrary to the spirit of the article (ex. Christian Nationalism)	1.6% (1)
Lines 483-4, says “three estates” but four are named, “government, church, family and economy”	1.6% (1)
Each section has to stress seeking truth and the importance of voting	1.6% (1)

² Numbers shown in parentheses represent the number of participants who wrote each comment.

Comment	n = 63
Lines 24 and 46, add that church has a moral responsibility to use its power	1.6% (1)
Article 5, unpack what you mean by repentance	1.6% (1)
Article 9, to work humbly with God (Micah 6:8) must include welcoming and acknowledging the ideas	1.6% (1)

4. Is there one idea you think could be deleted from this section?

Comment	n = 57
Too long	21.1% (12)
The whole statement	14.0% (8)
Language too formal	8.8% (5)
Line 28, “and necessarily political beings;” this is too strong for some people who prefer to attend church and separate politics	5.3% (3)
Lines 29-30, false dichotomy that collectively we influence policy and individually we do acts of caring	5.3% (3)
All social justice phraseology and sinfulness should be deleted	5.3% (3)
Line 53, the word “restless” doesn't make sense	3.5% (2)
Lines 483-484, the 3 estates, but the next line adds “economy” as a fourth estate	3.5% (2)
Line 412, inaccurate use of the biblical Hebrew term “shalom”	3.5% (2)
Line 491, delete word “regulations”	3.5% (2)
Line 58, I'm troubled by the claim that the Gospel “urges.” The Gospel promises and gives.	3.5% (2)
Line 29, delete the word “power”	3.5% (2)
Line 42, I find the reference to the 10 Commandments confusing	1.8% (1)
Better explanation of the conflict between Articles 5 and 9	1.8% (1)
Lines 59-61 describe a slippery slope because of human sin	1.8% (1)
Revise the word “horrendous”	1.8% (1)
Line 33, talking about sin as human brokenness; find a better way to discuss it	1.8% (1)
Article 9 seems to be speaking out of both sides of its mouth; let's acknowledge the wisdom of Christianity	1.8% (1)
Lines 71-72	1.8% (1)
Article 1 is useless in today's climate; define who ELCA Lutherans are	1.8% (1)
Line 37, weak argument	1.8% (1)
Line 111, “left hand” is confusing without explanation	1.8% (1)
Lines 69-70, “must include welcoming...ideas, values, contributions...of all”	1.8% (1)

Section II: The Calling to Robust Civic Participation

7. Is there one idea you think should be added to this section?

Comment	n = 40
Jesus/biblical teaching	12.5% (5)
Article 16 (lines 895-896), “faith-rooted” is vague; use “biblically-based on the life of Jesus”	7.5% (3)
Community organizing (not just advocacy) and the development of deeper webs of relational connection as a core commitment of our calling to civic participation	7.5% (3)
A clear, more succinct statement	5.0% (2)
Article 10 (lines 82-84), use more inclusive language about the Divine	5.0% (2)
In Article 15, acknowledge the difficulty of having political conversations in our extremely polarized culture	5.0% (2)
Lines 822 and 902, make it clear that churches helping homeless must work with community to avoid issues	5.0% (2)
Article 11 (line 87), need more detail about how liturgy prepares us to join God's work	5.0% (2)
Line 1000, add “chaplains” for all levels of society need (state and local)	5.0% (2)
There should be some limits placed in the section to avoid partisan political action	2.5% (1)
Confusing as to what “faith-based,” “faith-informed,” “faith-rooted” advocacy means	2.5% (1)
Line 128, phrase “concern for the neighbor and the common good...” should be applied consistently throughout document	2.5% (1)
Line 968-972, “no nation, constitution or government can have our ultimate loyalty,” add “or church”	2.5% (1)
In Article 15, consider the priestly as well as prophetic callings and the relationship between the two	2.5% (1)
Brief exposition of the use of “congregation, this church, and The Church” would be helpful	2.5% (1)
In Article 17, why limit to Jesus? Paul used overly political language to describe God, Jesus and himself	2.5% (1)
Lines 99-100, need specific examples of the gifts we can bring	2.5% (1)
Article 19 could be better clarified, especially the last sentence about self-determination vs. sharing power	2.5% (1)
Information on what Christians should expect from a candidate and questions we should consider prior to voting	2.5% (1)
How can we bring elected officials that do God's work with their hands to meet congregations	2.5% (1)
Article 17, talk more about the lordship of Christ	2.5% (1)

Comment	n = 40
Line 124, the question form seems insufficiently assertive; just say “Jesus was political”	2.5% (1)
Article 13, “religion can create divisions...or” would replace “or” with “and” to be less polarized	2.5% (1)
Article 15, “It is part of this church's work under the left hand of God...”; clarify if you mean the work of individual Christians or the assembly	2.5% (1)
The common good is ambiguous	2.5% (1)
Line 129 refers to political partnerships not being proper for the church; partnerships with other churches should be encouraged	2.5% (1)

8. Is there one idea you think could be deleted from this section?

Comment	n = 39
The whole thing	17.9% (7)
Too long, too wordy	17.9% (7)
Article 18	10.3% (4)
Article 16 urges coalitions of like minded people. I don't think “like mindedness” exists and would encourage the church to build coalitions of diversely minded people for common purpose.	7.7% (3)
Article 15 (line 111), use of God's “left hand” is arcane and unnecessary	7.7% (3)
Article 19, use another word instead of shenanigans	5.1% (2)
Lines 895, 921, 924; unclear why certain words are underlined or in bold	5.1% (2)
Social justice	5.1% (2)
Article 12 (lines 780-785)	2.6% (1)
Line 121, delete “in a polarized political world”; this is in conflict of the belief and respect for diversity of opinions	2.6% (1)
Lines 138-140 should reference right use of power	2.6% (1)
Remove lines 124-127	2.6% (1)
Article 11, this can muddy the waters of the purpose of the church, which is a place where the Word is preached and the Sacraments are rightly administered	2.6% (1)
Lines 621-622 make problematic claims about the 10 Commandments	2.6% (1)
Article 11, “law and gospel” change to “the living Word of God” because that's Jesus, which is greater than the intellectual dichotomy of law and gospel	2.6% (1)
Your statement that Jesus was politically murdered. It was the church, which could not kill a person, that petitioned the ruling entity to kill Jesus.	2.6% (1)
Use of the term “Lord”; offensive since it is terminology used to refer to slave masters	2.6% (1)

Section III: An Assessment of the U.S. Constitutional Form of Government

11. Is there one idea you think should be added to this section?

Comment	n = 42
Lines 163-164, simplify and clarify mutual self-determination	19.0% (8)
A clear, more succinct statement	9.5% (4)
Need more discussion of the importance of caring for the most vulnerable members of the community	4.8% (2)
Jesus/biblical precepts	4.8% (2)
The Supreme Court has seized power it was not granted and created immunity and decisions that were never intended	4.8% (2)
Lines 158-159, more examples of the criteria for assessment	4.8% (2)
Article 21, re-write so people can understand without having to re-read it	4.8% (2)
Article 25, include the questions in the long version	4.8% (2)
Self-determination does not seem to be a Lutheran theological position because of the ongoing issue of sin	2.4% (1)
Line 194-195, The U.S. Constitution must be understood in the context of religious wars that consumed Europe during the 17 th and 18 th centuries	2.4% (1)
Line 160, clarify power in “the principal criterion used to assess governmental and political authority is whether it increases power”	2.4% (1)
Christian Nationalism is defined, needs to be underlined	2.4% (1)
Too much use of the word “power”	2.4% (1)
Line 156, better definition of the term “appropriate”	2.4% (1)
Lines 1089 and 1171, specific examples of “criterion of fostering plurality”	2.4% (1)
How does one find common ground with folks that oppose my thinking	2.4% (1)
Article 20 (line 151), change “protects” to “intends for”	2.4% (1)
Article 25 is confusing, coercive action and the positive production of power for its people?	2.4% (1)
Difficult to distinguish the earlier and “later First Amendment to the Constitution”	2.4% (1)
Article 28, what are the 2 main traditions?	2.4% (1)
Line 180, expand and strengthen understanding of the systemic racism embedded in our governing documents	2.4% (1)
Define priesthood of all believers	2.4% (1)
Lines 138-139, is this stating that the ELCA now has a “canon law” that is mandatory for participation in the church?	2.4% (1)
Line 1264 could include Madison's argument for religious pluralism from Federalist No. 10	2.4% (1)

Comment	n = 42
Line 196 must clearly state that even if other churches erroneously hold the position that we are a Christian nation, they are in error	2.4% (1)
Switch Article 25 and 26	2.4% (1)

12. Is there one idea you think could be deleted from this section?

Comment	n = 37
The whole thing, stay out of politics	21.6% (8)
Line 194, is not a “Christian nation”; this is an historically fallacious statement	18.9% (7)
Line 155, the reference to “troubled restlessness” might better be understood as a “mindful relationship” or “intentional balance”	10.8% (4)
Line 151, define “political authority”	8.1% (3)
Article 26	8.1% (3)
Too long, repetitive	8.1% (3)
This section seems a bit out of place and maybe unnecessary	5.4% (2)
Article 21, the first half is confusing	5.4% (2)
Article 21, drop self-determination, it is not a Christian ethic	5.4% (2)
Article 23 (line 128), delete the sentence “was deeply flawed since the enfranchised people in the 1700's were white males.” This is wrong to assume negative intent.	2.7% (1)
Line 1394, to quote “non-sectarian Protestantism”; better to include the Roman Catholic church as well	2.7% (1)
Article 23 is offensive. It is wrong to judge the past by present progress.	2.7% (1)

Section IV: Religion and the First Amendment

14. Is there one idea you think should be added to this section?

Comment	n = 34
Line 210, explain the “two main traditions” of interpretation	14.7% (5)
Article 28, define “non-establishment”	11.8% (4)
Article 31, more clarity, make a clear thesis that states people of faith may bring their religious convictions to public life	11.8% (4)
A clear, more succinct statement	8.8% (3)
Article 28, why does the ELCA take no position?	8.8% (3)
Jesus/biblical precepts	5.9% (2)
Lines 1455-1461, provide examples of what's permissible and what isn't	5.9% (2)
It seems a missed opportunity to speak about paradox as a key element of our Lutheran tradition	2.9% (1)

Comment	n = 34
This idea of “church and state” has confused many people for years	2.9% (1)
Lines 1401-1403 expand	2.9% (1)
Need to call out more formally the Supreme Court bending law to favor personal freedom as a card to propagate one form of Christian Nationalism	2.9% (1)
Lines 260-262 should include greater specificity and recognize what the government currently does well	2.9% (1)
Freedom of speech needs to be addressed	2.9% (1)
Rise in book banning by Christian Nationalists	2.9% (1)
Line 1396, use “religionist” instead	2.9% (1)
Line 1630, need much more robust statement on rostered leaders' use of social media when they represent themselves on social media as rostered leaders	2.9% (1)
Line 227, civic life to “accommodate” a religious practice that violates civil law; change violate to “challenge”	2.9% (1)
More emphasis on the First Amendment	2.9% (1)

15. Is there one idea you think could be deleted from this section?

Comment	n = 20
It's too long	20.0% (4)
Article 29, move to an earlier part of the document	15.0% (3)
All of it	10.0% (2)
This could be merged and simplified with the previous section	5.0% (1)
Delete Article 26, there is no such thing as a “Christian Nation.” We have a nation with Christians in it.	5.0% (1)
Articles 33 and 34 seem redundant	5.0% (1)
Article 28 (lines 1391-1397), I am surprised that the ELCA is OK with civil government promoting “non-sectarian Protestantism.” It seems not to recognize Catholic, Jewish, Muslim and other non-Protestants.	5.0% (1)
Article 35 should be deleted or rewritten to better reflect the various gifts rostered ministers bring to a civic life discussion	5.0% (1)
Lines 201-237, consolidate and clarify	5.0% (1)
Article 30, we forget that the Government deemed the church as non-essential	5.0% (1)
Lines 225-227 are easy to misapply; anti-abortion laws for all?	5.0% (1)
Line 227, eliminate the word “violate”	5.0% (1)
Lines 1457-1458, “negative” not the best word choice as it implies exceptions to the law are negative rather than merely an exception or something that is different from the practiced norm	5.0% (1)

Comment	n = 20
Put this section in an appendix but don't tell us how we have to view our Constitution. What you are asking is for Lutherans to get more involved in civic matters.	5.0% (1)

Section V: Describing the Constructive Relationships of Religious Organizations and Political Authority

19. Is there one idea you think should be added to this section?

Comment	n = 34
Article 37 seems to offer broad generalities, too simplistic	11.8% (4)
Article 35, add language that each rostered minister speaks with their own conscience as private citizens	11.8% (4)
Jesus	5.9% (2)
Move it more towards the front of the document	5.9% (2)
Lines 286-287, Project 2025 erroneously employs a quotation from Bonhoeffer focusing on cheap grace as an argument for Christian Nationalism. The blatant twisting of religious definitions to meet Christian nationalist goals must be called out.	2.9% (1)
Provide guidance for churches and congregations regarding participation in the electoral process	2.9% (1)
Article 37 (lines 1667-1712), the discussion of Christian Nationalism would fit better in Section VI as one of the contemporary concerns in civic life	2.9% (1)
Article 35 could be even more explicit and include rostered ministers' need to avoid any mention of support for or against any political figure	2.9% (1)
Line 1639, the importance of neutrality needs to address the rise of authoritarianism	2.9% (1)
Lines 1549-1550 confusing	2.9% (1)
Christian Nationalism is a threat to our church, our country and the world. We can only stop this at the voting booth and by cleaning the judicial system of biased jurists who are bending the law to propagate the notion of Christian Nationalism.	2.9% (1)
Line 273, instead of “how to vote” change to “which candidate to vote for”	2.9% (1)
Article 33, emphasize that we are called to take action (not remain silent) Proverbs 31:8-9	2.9% (1)
Add something that would articulate what it means to be a “public” official or servant, particularly an elected office	2.9% (1)
Line 283 change “it” to “Christian Nationalism” for clarity	2.9% (1)
Article 34 (line 1575), I disagree that advocating for specific legislation crosses appropriate boundaries. I participate with Bread for the World, and I think their “Offering of Letters” advocating for specific legislation is proper and important.	2.9% (1)
Reference Jim Wallis' work on Christian Nationalism to give people further resources	2.9% (1)

Comment	n = 34
Article 39, replace “give and take” with “respectful dialogue”	2.9% (1)
Line 269, rostered “leader” should be changed to “minister”	2.9% (1)
More specific examples of Christian Nationalism and more about its history	2.9% (1)
Article 34, add public services/businesses must be available to all regardless of color, sexual orientation, etc.	2.9% (1)
People do not need to practice religion if they don't want to	2.9% (1)
“Article 37a” expanding on the dangers of Christian Nationalism, based on solid studies, such as “Jesus and John Wayne” by Kristin Du Mez	2.9% (1)
Line 261, replace the word “goods” with values or principles. Human rights and economic justice are not goods.	2.9% (1)
Lines 1602-1603, we should make the social statements and messages more authoritative to congregations	2.9% (1)
Lines 280-289, also need to address Progressive Christianity and Christian Marxism	2.9% (1)

20. Is there one idea you think could be deleted from this section?

Comment	n = 37
Article 37 (lines 282-288), you contradict your own teaching by classifying people into a category because they believe a certain way	27.0% (10)
Remove Article 36	10.8% (4)
Negative tone seems to attack others	10.8% (4)
Christian Nationalism scare tactics; they are ridiculous and one-sided	8.1% (3)
I react strongly against Article 35 regarding rostered ministers. I worry that official ELCA teaching is being elevated to the level of Scripture and the Confessions.	8.1% (3)
The whole document	8.1% (3)
Too long	5.4% (2)
Article 34, use of the word “should” could be strengthened to words like “must,” “cannot,” “will.”	2.7% (1)
Article 36, why neutrality? Should not individuals use church teachings to discern what representative or what institution is best at fulfilling our religious teachings?	2.7% (1)
Article 37 (lines 281-289), Yes, Christian Nationalism should be condemned, yet what might be a better way of defining this?	2.7% (1)
The discussion of Christian Nationalism should be avoided. It's a large term that isn't adequately defined.	2.7% (1)
Delete Article 32 except for lines 1522-1527. Those lines could be reworded to summarize the whole section.	2.7% (1)

Comment	n = 37
Addressing Christian Nationalism is crucial. But it feels like an abrupt shift like the paragraph was just stuck into this section for a lack of a better place to put it.	2.7% (1)
Lines 1863-1867, would drop a reference to a particular media platform. All media platforms are guilty to a degree.	2.7% (1)
Line 262, should remove “and the like.” I suggest the word “social justice” be added and other similar words from other ELCA social statements.	2.7% (1)

Section VI: Addressing Selected Contemporary Concerns in Civic Life

23. Is there one idea you think should be added to this section?

Comment	n = 42
Corporate money does not belong in politics. Citizens United must be overturned legislatively so that all votes of human beings are counted equally and fairly.	16.7% (7)
Define Doctrine of Discovery	9.5% (4)
Article 46 should be moved closer to the beginning of the document	4.8% (2)
A clear, more succinct statement of the ELCA's position	4.8% (2)
Article 40, recognize the difficulty yet urgency of seeking constructive, helpful and honest debate	4.8% (2)
There should be an additional article addressing this country's history of slavery, the persistence of institutions that disadvantage and/or discriminate against people of color, and our need for advocacy for black and brown people.	4.8% (2)
Article 47, talk about how the church can be a source of healing with regards to polarization and political hurt	4.8% (2)
Article 45, the term “Indian” is a historical mislabeling and should be avoided. “Native Peoples” would cover all 3 mentioned groups.	4.8% (2)
Articles 39 and 40, Luther's 8 th Commandment and love enemies	4.8% (2)
Article 42, should add a note to the “reasonable limits on campaign contribution” to explain what does not work according to ELCA/Christian vision and what (how much) is reasonable.	2.4% (1)
Jesus	2.4% (1)
Freedom to support who you want; “we the people”	2.4% (1)
In the short version this section feels like “pot shot” statements	2.4% (1)
In discussing integrity of both candidates and media, it would be helpful to address what voters and consumers seek. It's documented that sensationalism and violence increases viewership.	2.4% (1)
Add trans and related matters and women's rights	2.4% (1)

Comment	n = 42
Article 44, add a footnote that identifies the current preferred terminology/capitalization for indigenous people	2.4% (1)
Article 42, the last sentence should include “timely disclosures prior to each election”	2.4% (1)
What seems to be happening at many levels and arenas of governmental councils and boards has to do with trying to circumvent various laws and regulations	2.4% (1)
Article 42, should pastors contribute financially to political campaigns?	2.4% (1)
Use more specific examples; can a Christian join strike walks in support of occupations, families facing injustice?	2.4% (1)
Article 42 could come earlier	2.4% (1)
More about how Doctrine of Discovery was embraced by the Christian faith as a way to convert people to Christianity. How is the church also responsible for this?	2.4% (1)
Global warming	2.4% (1)
Article 41, Lutherans have a Christian responsibility to educate themselves in civic life	2.4% (1)
The ELCA should not support any campaign for office	2.4% (1)
Article 43, a call to our publicly elected officials to have dispositions of humility and openness to hear and believe constituents when they are told they have acted fallibly	2.4% (1)

24. Is there one idea you think could be deleted from this section?

Comment	n = 39
Article 41, censorship is wrong	12.8% (5)
Delete Article 42 about limiting campaign contributions	12.8% (5)
The whole thing	10.3% (4)
Addresses contemporary issues, should a social statement be more timeless?	10.3% (4)
Article 41 (lines 314-317) change to “all media,” not just social media	7.7% (3)
Too long/too much jargon	7.7% (3)
Line 333, remove “good of all” as governmental laws, regulations and policies in a pluralistic society may not benefit all citizens equally. Use “promote the general welfare” or “foster the common good” instead.	5.1% (2)
Article 44 seems out of place	5.1% (2)
Line 343, American Indians; should we be using this term?	5.1% (2)
Line 298 “Hyper-partisan polarization is rampant.” This judges that one is wrong and the other is right.	2.6% (1)
Article 44, the last sentence; it lets the legislative bodies off the hook. We can listen and we can also respond.	2.6% (1)
The word “robust” is overused	2.6% (1)

Comment	n = 39
Lines 363 and 365, the references should be to citizens, not to residents	2.6% (1)
It does not speak for our members	2.6% (1)
Lines 1897-1898, this is an advocacy of de facto censorship	2.6% (1)
I object to a church denomination dictating political views	2.6% (1)
Section 42 calls for legislative action, political involvement?	2.6% (1)
I am struggling to see this as one document. It would be better shared as a “teaching series.”	2.6% (1)

Overall Questions about the Draft

26. Is there anything else you think the social statement should explore that was not covered in the draft?

Comment	n = 84
It should be shortened and simplified	25.0% (21)
Very thorough and comprehensive, well done	10.7% (9)
How to operationalize the social statement in our everyday life and faith	10.7% (9)
More use of the Confessions and Scripture	9.5% (8)
Stay away from putting people into classes and passing judgment	4.8% (4)
Disappointed that the subject of protecting God's creation somehow excludes protecting the lives of the defenseless unborn	3.6% (3)
Delete the whole statement	3.6% (3)
More emphasis on the role of media, social media and the rampant misinformation, omissions and flat out lies	2.4% (2)
There was a general lack of enthusiasm for the call to engage in civic life	2.4% (2)
Jesus said the most important law is to love others as you want to be loved	2.4% (2)
Slavery, Jim Crow era, systemic racism in America, reparations	2.4% (2)
Lost religions because of the dominance of Christian people	2.4% (2)
Change the order of the sections; put the later sections first as they are more readable and engaging	2.4% (2)
The importance of these discussions taking place in churches	2.4% (2)
What should the ELCA do in light of Lutheran history and complicity with Nazism to actively oppose current efforts to institutionalize hate and violence?	2.4% (2)
Article 47, for “robust civic participation” need to address the people whose basic needs aren't being met and may not have the wherewithal to robustly participate	1.2% (1)
Article 42, add an evaluation of gerrymandering	1.2% (1)

Comment	n = 84
Make a version for young adults	1.2% (1)
Should the ELCA take a position on members' responsibility to vote, and/or other voting rights topics?	1.2% (1)
There is too much negative definition (i.e., line 687 would do well to articulate the contributions Christians are called to make, and later to articulate what is the responsibility of rostered leaders as well as limitations)	1.2% (1)
A more detailed explanation of how Christian Nationalism is idolatry	1.2% (1)
Separation of church and state has been good for centuries, should apply now as well	1.2% (1)
The last section on the problems faced by indigenous people and our action to correct this deserves its own statement	1.2% (1)
Treatment of the “common good” continues to be very poor	1.2% (1)
Article on government not swaying groups to commit violence or criminalizing positions that disagree with government officials	1.2% (1)
There should be a section that speaks about cooperation between Christianity and other world religions and how that relates to civic engagement	1.2% (1)

Appendix C Map of Participants' Zip Codes

