



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

Dear Siblings in Christ,

This letter introduces the proposed social statement *Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Lutheran Call to Action*, called for by the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly (CA09.06.31).

As a task force, we have been honored to serve the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America through this process. For many of us, it has been a life-changing experience. As a group, we came from very different contexts, with diverse and sometimes conflicting experiences and viewpoints. Over six years, we have worshiped and prayed together. We have listened and learned. We have laughed and cried. We have argued and rejoiced, together. We have devoted our time and energy to studying issues related to gender justice and to the feedback we received from ELCA members.

At the end of such a journey, we are delighted to present this proposed text, which is strongly endorsed by every voting member of the task force. On its crucial convictions and commitments, we have come to a shared understanding, even while each of us might like to phrase terms or emphasize elements differently. We are satisfied that it represents a biblically grounded and faithful contemporary Lutheran witness around issues of gender justice in light of God's living Word of Law and Gospel.

As Lutherans, we believe that through grace we are freed to serve the neighbor. This task force set out to hear what the neighbor needed when it came to matters related to sexism. As a result, this document speaks to the ways the sin of sexism works through individuals and institutions to separate people from God. The proposed statement speaks to how this sin harms particularly women and girls but also people of all genders. It explores how sexism intersects with many factors, such as racism, poverty, and ability, to hurt people in unique ways based on their identities. At the same time, it draws hope from and lifts a call to action grounded in God's faithful resolve that all people flourish and have abundant life.

In response to calls from readers for clarity and depth, the proposed statement comes in a dual format, similar to Martin Luther's Small and Large Catechisms. The "Short Statement" encapsulates all the convictions and commitments in 40 articles. For those who want a deeper explanation, the "Full Statement" provides a preface and conclusion and elaborates on each article.

Though this document was written by the ELCA Task Force on Women and Justice: One in Christ, we want to recognize gratefully the many voices it holds. Those voices include so many of you who attended listening events and hearings and those who sent in feedback on the study and draft social statement. We believe the Holy Spirit was present in each of our meetings and also spoke through each of you.

Thank you for taking the time to study the proposed statement carefully. We ask you to prayerfully consider how you are being called to respond to it. Our dearest hope is that through it we all will hear the Holy Spirit's call to action. For more information and resources, please visit [ELCA.org/womenandjustice](https://www.elca.org/womenandjustice).

On behalf of the ELCA Task Force on Women and Justice: One in Christ, blessings and peace.

Bishop Viviane Thomas-Breitfeld and Dr. Brad Wendel, co-chairs

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