Faith, the Church, and the World: How ELCA Members See the Connections

Results from Surveys Conducted by the
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Office for Research, Planning and Evaluation
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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Summary of Findings

Introduction. In Fall, 1988, the ELCA's Office for Research, Planning, and Evaluation (ORPE) surveyed a random sample of ELCA members (13 years old or more), and a parallel sample of pastors currently under call, on their views about the social role of the church (both the local congregation and wider expressions) and the connections between faith and social issues. This summary describes the key findings.

Methods and cautions. The report describes the methods used in the research. The major caution that one should bear in mind is that the results mainly reflect the views of the more active members, and do not represent marginal members very well. A non-methodological caution should also be borne in mind: that the views of ELCA members and pastors are very important, but should not in themselves determine the stance of the ELCA.

Voluntarism. "Voluntaristic" views are those which stress the importance of individual conscience and unconstrained decisions: that social issues are addressed by persuasion, transforming individuals, living well in one's one-to-one relationships, and serving individuals in need. About one-third of ELCA members are strongly voluntaristic, and another one-third are moderately voluntaristic. These perspectives appear to inform views about church social action, making some kinds especially unacceptable and casting doubt on the whole idea of the church having a *corporate* social witness.

Dualism. "Dualistic" views are those which impose strict separations between spiritual and material issues, or between the church and everyday life, in the name of keeping religious and secular spheres distinct. Such views, which would tend to make connections between faith and social or political issues impossible, are less prevalent than voluntaristic ones; about one-fifth of ELCA members consider only "spiritual" issues to be religiously relevant, and a somewhat greater proportion tend to think of the life of faith primarily in relation to the church.

Social issues and congregational life. A significant minority (one-fifth to one-third) of lay members are worried about conflict if congregations deal with controversial issues, or want congregations to be concerned with nurturing their members rather than the outside world. The majority, however, are open to more wholistic approaches.

Congregational social ministries and advocacy. In general, a variety of kinds of congregational activism are accepted as appropriate, but with varying levels of enthusiasm. The more traditionally "religious" activities, and those which seek to transform or serve *individuals*, are the ones with the most support.

Trust and credibility of the ELCA. In general, trust and credibility are quite high; an overwhelming majority of members, for instance, find that coverage of social issues in *The Lutheran* is balanced and fair.

Majoritarian determination of social stances. An overwhelming majority of ELCA members feel that the church's social statements should reflect the views of a majority of its members. A majority of pastors disagree with this perspective, however, indicating potential for conflict.

Circumstances under which church social action is approved and disapproved. A "vignette" approach allows comparison of the degree to which church social action is approved, depending on the *actor* (the person or group within the church taking action), the *action* taken, the *issue* the action addresses, and the *position* (liberal, conservative, or "neutral") taken on the issue. The results show that the actor does not matter and the action matters only a little, with the more confrontational actions less approved. The issue matters substantially, but there is no clear patterning as to what kind of issues members want and do not want the church to address, except for somewhat unfavorable reactions to addressing foreign policy questions. Actions which take no position are favored over those in which *either* a liberal or a conservative one is taken; among pastors, taking a liberal position is regarded more favorably than taking a conservative one.

Differences among different kinds of lay members. Differences depending on economic, demographic, and religious characteristics are usually not significant and consistently weak; subgroups of ELCA members simply do not differ much. There is a slight tendency for the less privileged members (those with lower income or less education) to be more favorable to church social action and to connecting faith to social issues.

Pastor views. Pastors are much more favorable to connecting faith to political issues, and to church social action, than lay members. This holds on almost every issue.

Relationships between lay and clergy views in the same congregation. There is essentially *no relationship* between lay and clergy views in a given congregation; that is, it is *not* the case that more liberal pastors tend to serve more liberal congregations, or vice versa.

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There are disagreements within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) about the extent and ways in which individual Christians ought to connect faith to contemporary social and political questions, and what the role of the church in our society ought to be. These issues could be called "meta-issues," in that they raise questions which are different and in a logical sense prior to specific political issues. For instance, before we consider, as individual Christians, whether our religious principles are more in accord with capitalism or socialism, with intervention or non-intervention in Central America, we need to decide whether it is legitimate, appropriate, and possible to derive our personal views about economic systems or foreign policy from Christian faith. Before we advocate that the church take a position either for or against abortion remaining legal, we need to decide whether it is appropriate for the church to be addressing the issue of abortion at all. *(The term "substantive issues" will be used to refer to issues like abortion, foreign policy, and economic systems, differentiating them from meta-issues.)* Of course, views on meta-issues are likely to be intertwined with people's differences on substantive issues. If there is a vote at a church assembly on a resolution condemning American policy in Central America, it will be hard to tell whether the people who vote "no" favor American policy, feel that the church should not be expressing views on foreign policy, or both. Still, many people in the church say explicitly that they have objections in principle to the church taking *any* position--even one they might agree with personally--on political issues. When they say this, they are telling us that they are speaking to meta-issues, not substantive issues. Some might see this as a rationalization, but that should not be assumed.

In the fall of 1988, the ELCA explored grassroots views on these meta-issues, using *Lutherans Say...*, an ongoing program of mail surveys of ELCA lay members and pastors. These surveys are sent to a random sample of ELCA lay members, drawn in such a way as to give every baptized member who is 12 years old or more an equal chance of selection, and to a parallel sample of active ELCA pastors (whether in congregational or other kinds of call). A third sample consists of all pastors serving the congregations (which were randomly selected) from which the lay respondents were chosen; having this supplementary sample of pastors allows us to examine the relationships between lay and clergy views in the same congregation. The survey reported on here was the second in the series; the first included questions on demographic and economic characteristics and church participation, so this information was available on almost all the respondents to the present survey. Altogether, 1784 respondents completed this survey, 855 from the lay sample, 559 from the main pastor sample, and 370 from the supplementary pastor sample. The responses from the two groups of pastors are very close on most questions, and so they are combined for most

of the analysis; except where otherwise noted, results given for pastors are from the combined samples.[1]

This report includes four appendixes. Appendix A shows the exact wording of each question on the survey, and the exact proportion of respondents from the lay and main pastor samples who gave each possible answer to each question. *(Note that pastors in the supplementary sample are excluded from this appendix, and on occasion this means that the figures given in the text are slightly different from those in Appendix A. Also, Appendix A includes don't know and no opinion answers from Questions 1 and 2 in the percentaging, while these are excluded in calculating the figures used in the text.)* Appendix B shows how we formed a set of "indexes" or dimensions on which respondents were scored in order to summarize their views on recurrent issues. Appendix C describes the raw materials used in the vignettes analyzed later in this report, and Appendix D discusses the statistical measures used in the report and analysis.

All differences reported between groups of respondents (lay versus pastors, young versus old, etc.) are statistically significant at the .05 level, which means that a difference as great as that observed would have occurred by chance only one time in twenty. Further details on the methods used in the study are available from the Office for Research, Planning and Evaluation.

One caution of a non-statistical nature: these data should not be taken to define what stance the ELCA *should* take. As the church, we try to be faithful to God's call as best we can discern it, rather than passively following the views of a majority as discovered in surveys like this one. On the other hand, the voices of lay members of the church are one important witness to God's call, and deserve to be listened to with care and respect.

The *Lutherans Say...* sample was drawn very carefully, but non-response introduces biases, since those who complete and return their questionnaires are different from those who do not. After completion of the fieldwork for the first *Lutherans Say...* survey, we carried out a telephone survey of a sample of non-respondents. We discovered, not surprisingly, that we got disproportionately low response from youth and the very old, divorced people, and marginal members. Weights to compensate for these biases were calculated and used; however, the weighted and unweighted results on questions about attitudes turned out to be essentially the same. After completing the second *Lutherans Say...* survey--the one reported on here--we did another analysis, comparing those among the respondents to the first survey who did and did not complete the second. We found that the same patterns continued and intensified; for instance, marginal members are even less represented now than they were in the first survey. This means that the results reported here probably paint a quite accurate portrait of the views of our more active members, but only partly represent the views of other members. In one sense, this is not a major problem for a survey on the topics dealt with here, since it is the active members who are likely to notice and agree with or object to the role the church plays in our society.

The response rate to the first *Lutherans Say...* survey was 64.2 percent. The number of respondents completing the second questionnaire was 75.4 percent of the number completing the first one, producing a response rate for the second survey of 48.4 percent based on the entire set of eligible respondents at the inception of the survey program.

Furthermore, to be *effectively* faithful, the church is badly in need of knowing the perspectives of its members. If an unpopular stance must be taken, it is far better to know in advance that the stance will be unpopular and what the objections are likely to be, so that they can be addressed from the outset. If leaders wish to change the minds of members, they need to know what ideas members currently hold. Such knowledge, however, is no substitute for theological and ethical discernment.

I
Social issues and the faith of the individual Christian

Why would a Christian connect or not connect faith to views on social and political issues? There are, of course, theological answers to this question, but our concern in the survey was to find out where rank and file members and pastors stand. What beliefs and values do they hold which make them more or less likely to make connections? We approached this question in two ways. First, based on other research (including depth interview studies) we formulated a series of issues bearing on whether one can and should connect faith to the issues of our day. This set of questions was intended to get at underlying assumptions--expressing a kind of practical or applied theology--which underlie people's willingness to make connections. Second, we asked questions about what people hope for out of their connection to the church. Neither set of questions deals with the issue of the extent to which people actually make connections between faith and politics, but instead with the issue of whether one can and should make such connections. Even in this limited area, they provide a preliminary reconnaissance, rather than definitive answers.

The practical theology issues we put before the respondents took the form of eleven dilemmas. Each dilemma consisted of a pair of statements, both of which (we hoped) would have some appeal, but which were in serious tension with each other. We asked respondents to choose the one they agreed with more, even if they agreed with both to some extent. In the case of each dilemma, one answer was designed to represent the perspective more conducive to making a high level of connections between faith and politics. That we were successful in framing real dilemmas is suggested by the fact that the respondents came down lopsidedly on one side on only one of the eleven items.

What were the issues raised by these items? Most of them fall into two main groups; these are groups defined somewhat theologically, by the researchers, in the course of designing the questions, but the pattern of responses as revealed by a factor analysis indicates that this grouping also reflects the way in which the respondents organize their views.

Voluntarism. The first group concerns a dilemma which could be termed "voluntarism": to what degree we focus on uncoerced individuals acting separately, as opposed to more corporate means of dealing with the world. When people take a strongly voluntaristic position, connections between faith and social problems have a private cast, and the power of faith to support attempts to grapple with the systemic problems of our society is diminished. The dilemmas, or pairs of statements, in this group are:

As individual Christians, we are mainly responsible for living ethically in our one-to-one relationships.
As individual Christians, we should each put a lot of time into trying to improve our society.

Except in extreme situations, we should use persuasion (setting a good example and appealing to persons' consciences) rather than laws to make society better.
It's often necessary to use laws to make society better.

To have a better society people just have to learn to act better toward each other.
To have a better society requires changes in public policy and how our society is organized.

The church should deal with poverty mainly by helping people in need.
The church should work to change society so that there will be fewer poor people.

In each pair, the voluntaristic answer is the first. On the first dilemma, both lay and clergy respondents divide about equally; on the second, three out of eight in both groups take the voluntaristic position. On the last two, however, there are large differences between clergy and lay views, with the laity much more voluntaristic. On the third dilemma, 62 percent of the lay respondents, but only 28 percent of the clergy, take a voluntaristic position; on the fourth one, 42 percent of the laity but only 19 percent of the clergy are voluntaristic.

The lay members who made a choice on all four dilemmas divide into three groups of roughly equal size: those who took the voluntaristic side on three or four of the dilemmas, those who took the voluntaristic side on two and the non-voluntaristic side on the other two, and those who took the non-voluntaristic side on three or four of the dilemmas. Of the clergy, on the other hand, nearly two-thirds took the non-voluntaristic side on three or four of the dilemmas. In short, the clergy are predominantly non-voluntaristic, while the laity hold mixed views, with nearly half tending more toward than away from a voluntaristic perspective. These lay sentiments merit serious consideration. The non-voluntaristic alternative in each pair is not radical or extreme, and yet it is rejected almost half the time. Furthermore, there is a significant minority--conceivably, a disproportionately vocal one--of lay respondents who are quite voluntaristic.

The meaning of these findings depends partly on the theories one holds about social structure and social change. According to what could be called a sociological perspective, there are social phenomena which are not just the sum or result of individual behaviors and characteristics. For instance, the skills, decisions, and perseverance of individual members of the labor force may well determine who, at any moment, is employed and unemployed, but do not determine the unemployment rate: if twice as many people are unemployed this year than were a year ago, that is not because individual workers have become less skilled or less interested in working, but because of larger changes in the functioning of the economy. If this perspective is true, then a good society requires not only individuals who behave well, but also social structures which work to create well-being. In a sociological perspective, also, social change is seen as coming about more as a result of the efforts of social movements and the effects of forces having no consciousness (the workings of the international market, changes in technology increasing longevity, etc.) than of the conscious decisions of individuals acting and thinking separately. Changes in attitudes and behaviors, people who adopt this perspective would argue, often follow rather than precede changes in social structure or public policy. Racial integration in the U.S. South, for instance, was

imposed from outside, against the wishes of Southerners, but racist attitudes in the South have been greatly reduced since this process started.

If one accepts this kind of sociological perspective, then a substantial proportion of ELCA members holds views which may tend to make Christians irrelevant to the direction of social change in this country. The ethical quality of the concern voluntaristic Christians bring to the world may be high, but when a person holds views like those expressed in the first answer to each of these dilemmas, there are few "handles" by which that concern is likely to affect decisions about the future of our society.

It is equally true that voluntaristic perspectives carry many strengths. They can help people feel responsible for the quality of life around them, rather than leaving problems to distant authorities. Voluntaristic views encourage cooperation and the creation of a rich network of voluntary associations, strengthening our civic life. They can make democracy more vital and resilient. Nonetheless, with all these strengths, voluntaristic perspectives still do have the potential to disempower people with regard to affecting the institutional life of our society.

This is especially important given that the church in America today is not, in itself, a powerful institution. ELCA advocacy efforts are important and may occasionally make a critical difference, but the ELCA does not have the political impact of organizations such as the National Rifle Association or the United Automobile Workers. The social statements ELCA assemblies will be considering will probably mold advocacy efforts, the policies of church-related organizations, and the thinking of some pastors and a few lay members (not many, if survey evidence about the impact of Lutheran Church in America statements is any guide). The potential impact of our 11,000 congregations and more than five million members, however, is much greater. Voluntaristic perspectives can encourage grass roots activism in the area of providing direct service to those in need, but the observations made above indicate that such perspectives may diminish the chances of our members and congregations having an impact on the social structures which generate need. Concerted educational efforts to help members see that a wholistic faith has to speak not just to the private realm and one-to-one relationships, but also to our public policies and social order, are worth serious consideration. If such efforts are not made, there is a risk that efforts by the church to speak out or promote discussion among members on particular substantive issues will be undermined by views members hold on meta-issues--views which apply to a broad variety of substantive issues. More important, there is a risk that Christian faith will not have the life-affirming influence on our society which it ought to have.

What kinds of people are more or less voluntaristic? A summary measure of voluntarism was formed from the four items presented above, and this was used to compare various groups of respondents. Among the lay members, males, those who have more income, and those who have joined the congregation recently are more voluntaristic; those who attend worship frequently are less so. All of these relationships, however, are weak (for gender, r = .13; for the others, around .08). They do contradict some stereotypes. Church attendance is often thought to go along with conservative views, but the frequent attenders hold views *more* favorable to connecting faith and politics than those who attend less often. One might

think that the non-voluntaristic response to each question would appeal more to people with more schooling, on the grounds that schooling encourages the kind of sophistication which would allow people to see the importance of social structure, but there is no statistically significant difference, and the tendency is actually for the less schooled to be *less* voluntaristic.

The differences between lay and clergy responses, on the other hand, are quite large ($r = .22$), particularly on the third and fourth items. This is a recurring phenomenon: in survey after survey of mainline Protestant denominations, the clergy are more favorable to church social action, make more connections between faith and politics, and hold more liberal views on most substantive issues, than the laity. There are a variety of possible explanations; three of the most plausible are that clergy may be more social actionist and liberal: (a) because people with such attitudes are more likely to be attracted to the ministry as a profession; (b) because seminary training and contact with judicatory and denominational staff tend to promote such attitudes; or (c) because the conditions of their work life (freedom from the constraints of being an employee combined with relative economic security, time and encouragement for reading and reflection, being employed to articulate basic values and beliefs, etc.) tend to encourage and support them. Our data do not provide a way to choose among these explanations. The fact that the more educated laity are *not* like the clergy on these meta-issues, however, makes the explanations which refer to reading and reflection or to the highly educated character of the clergy less plausible.

Separation and dualism. The second group of items (like the last group, predefined but also emerging from a factor analysis) has to do with issues about separating ourselves from the world. As Christians, we want to preserve a distinctive set of values, rather than blindly follow those of the world around us. Traditionally, this principle was expressed in a set of dualisms: between God and the world, the spirit and the flesh, spiritual and material concerns, religious and secular spheres, the church and the world, and so forth. In terms of applying faith to politics, if material concerns are unimportant then there is no point in trying to connect faith to economic issues, or to other issues which concern our practical well-being rather than the state of our souls. Nowadays many Christians define our difference from the world in a less dualistic way; we try to preserve the integrity of our faith and values, not surrendering to the dominant currents in our culture, but we try to do so while fully immersed in all the joys and problems of the world. In such a view, Jesus calls us to new life in our jobs and political involvements just as much as in the church, and our bodies are good creatures of God, to be enjoyed and used (and of course resisted on occasion), just like our mental faculties.

Four items on the survey put before the respondents a more dualistic or restrictive view of faith and its role, on one side, versus a more wholistic and integrated one. The four dilemmas were:

> Christian principles are applicable to almost every social and political issue.
> It often isn't practical to apply Christian principles to social and political issues.
>
> ---
>
> Faith has to do primarily with our spiritual lives, not our material lives.
> Faith concerns our material lives just as much as our spiritual lives.

It's very important to put our faith to work in business and politics.
We should put our faith to work primarily in church and with family and friends.

Christian ethics have many implications for economic policy.
Christian ethics don't have many implications for economic policy.

In the second item, the first answer is the more dualistic one; in the other three items, the first answer is more wholistic. Overall, the answers are encouraging for those who favor connecting faith to every aspect of life: less than one-third of the lay respondents gave the more dualistic answer to the third item, and only about one-fifth to the other items. Clergy responses are even more emphatic; for each item, fewer than one in twelve gave the more dualistic answer. Furthermore, there is a possible explanation for why the third item received more dualistic answers than the others: that many lay members do not see any way for them personally "to put [their] faith to work in business and politics," and that the church, for the pastors, *is* their "business" context. In short, wholistic understandings of faith are dominant, although there is a minority holding more dualistic views. (The minority here is weaker than with regard to voluntarism, however.)

As with voluntarism, a summary measure of dualism was formed from the items mentioned above, and used for group comparisons. Those who tend to adopt a relatively wholistic view of faith are those who attend worship frequently, participate in parish activities beyond worship, or belong to several church groups. Also, younger people and the more educated take a more wholistic view. The age and education differences ($r = .18$ and .12, respectively; neither found with regard to voluntarism), plus the relationship between wholistic views and every measure of involvement in the life of the congregation, suggest that all the thinking and educating about the ministry of the whole people of God in daily life which has gone on over the last generation may have had an impact. The relationship with worship attendance is quite strong ($r = .24$); of those who attend weekly, 62 percent do not accept the more dualistic answer to *any* of these four dilemmas, compared with 42 percent for those who attend less often. The difference between lay and clergy views is similar to that for voluntarism; the possible explanations given above with regard to voluntarism are likely here as well. In addition, it is possible that pastors' professional identity and interests are tied to having faith cut as broad a swath in the world as possible.

Other issues about social change. Another dilemma dealt with the possibility that a deep pessimism (sometimes thought to be a characteristic Lutheran attitude about the world) could block connections between faith and politics:

It is possible to achieve major improvements in our society.
It isn't possible to improve our society much, if at all.

Only 6 percent of either pastors or lay members chose the pessimistic alternative, so this does not seem to be a major issue in relating faith to the social world. The issue of conflict came up in yet another dilemma:

It is almost never acceptable to try to change our society by means which cause conflict or set people against each other.
It is often necessary to work for change by means which *do* cause conflict.

A little over one-third of the lay respondents, and one-fifth of the pastors, accept the first answer. Many church members may have had negative experiences of conflict, or learned negative images from media presentations of struggles for justice; perhaps some equate conflict with violence. As with voluntaristic responses, how we interpret such statements depends on our assumptions about social change. Since even movements which almost all Lutherans today regard as just (such as the part of the early civil rights movement led by Martin Luther King, Jr.) had to create conflict in the course of asserting claims to justice, one reasonable assumption is that change brought about by self-conscious efforts is unlikely to happen without a significant degree of conflict. Given this assumption, those who accept the first answer hold views which make it hard to work for social change. Perhaps it is possible to provide more ways for Lutherans to learn that conflict need not mean violence or lack of respect for the dignity of the human beings on the other side of a struggle. This could be a focus for educational efforts in the future.

The congregation and its role in one's life. One other dilemma, and a few questions elsewhere in the survey, dealt with the issue of what one desires from one's local congregation. The dilemma was:

Congregations exist primarily to nurture their members.
Congregations exist just as much to affect the world around them as to nurture members.

Since the second choice includes nurture as a legitimate and equal function, it is hardly extreme. Furthermore, it says that the congregation should have a mission, but does not define mission in social terms; evangelical outreach fits this choice almost as well as social ministry. Therefore one might have expected almost everyone to choose the second, mission-oriented answer, just as almost everyone chose the "optimistic" option to the dilemma discussed a moment ago. In fact, about four-fifths of both lay and clergy respondents selected the mission-oriented option. This shows that there is a strong majority who think, in principle, that congregations should be concerned with the outside world, but a significant minority who reject such concern. The impression this gives is reinforced, with regard to the laity, when one considers the responses to another statement, presented as an agree/disagree item, "The church should avoid issues which are likely to be divisive within the congregation." One-third of the lay respondents agreed, 12 percent were not sure, and barely more than half disagreed. Among the pastors, however, almost 90 percent disagreed.

This latter question reinforces the sense we get from the dilemma about how to seek social change, that many Lutherans have great difficulty with conflict. Making any connections between faith and politics, in their view, threatens the inner unity of the church. Perhaps they feel the same about anything likely to be controversial or divisive; perhaps they would be almost equally concerned about the church taking theological positions which were controversial. For the health of the church, this issue about disagreement and conflict needs to be addressed. A church in which people cannot discuss issues bearing on Christian faith

on which there may be disagreement is probably not going to either grow or affect the world. We need to work harder to discover nondivisive means to talk about our commitments and disagreements, so that congregations can be "communities of moral deliberation," as the ELCA Commission for Church and Society puts it. Perhaps this cannot be accomplished, but the effort should be made.

Two other questions about the congregation's role in one's life raise somewhat similar issues, about the balance of comfort and challenge members desire. Over two-thirds of the laity agreed, and only one-fifth disagreed, that "I want the church to challenge me to rethink my ideas and priorities for life." Just under one-third agreed that "When I go to church, I want to get away from the troubles of the world." Clergy responses were in the same direction, but more emphatic on both issues. Taking all these questions together, it looks as if somewhere between one-fifth and one-third of ELCA lay members (and perhaps one-tenth of the pastors) have a desire that the church function primarily as a haven or place of nurture, relatively disconnected from the world. The rest--a strong majority--are at least open to other possibilities. This is encouraging news for those who wish the church to be a force affecting U.S. society.

II
The role of the church: congregational and churchwide activities

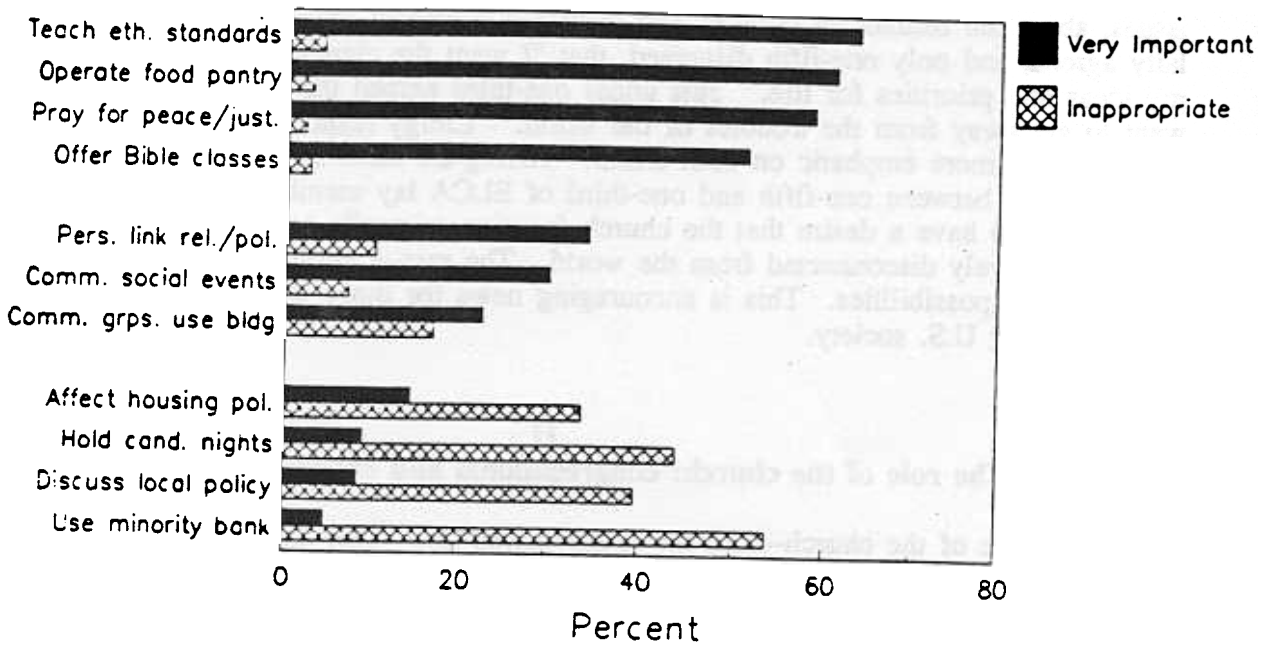
The social role of the church--both the congregation and wider expressions of the church--was the focus of another major part of the questionnaire. Issues about the social role of church are significantly different from those about whether and how individuals should connect faith to social issues. In particular, they raise concerns of voluntarism in a more pressing form, since they concern the right of the church to speak and act corporately.

One approach used in the questionnaire to get at issues about the church was to ask about eleven ways in which "your congregation" might play a role in the community. For each, we asked whether the activity was appropriate or not, and if yes, how important ("very," "fairly," or "not very") it was. Figure 1A indicates how the eleven congregational activities were rated by lay members, showing for each the most emphatic answers: what proportion of respondents rated it "very important" and "inappropriate." *(The items are arranged in order of approval, not as they were presented in the questionnaire; "no opinion" answers are excluded from the percentaging; the full wording for each activity is provided in Appendix A.)*

The first thing to note is that there is majority opinion that *all but one* of these activities are appropriate. In the case of the least preferred activities, opposition is significant and support lukewarm, but there is no mandate against them. The exception is depositing congregational funds in a minority-owned bank; given the very high "no opinion" response (30 percent) to this question, it is possible that the concern many respondents have is that there is no such bank in their community and they want the congregation to use a local bank.

The second thing to note is that there are major differences in the evaluations. The activities fall naturally into three groups. The first four items elicit strong approval and

Figure 1A
LAY APPROVAL OF CONGREGATIONAL ACTIVITIES

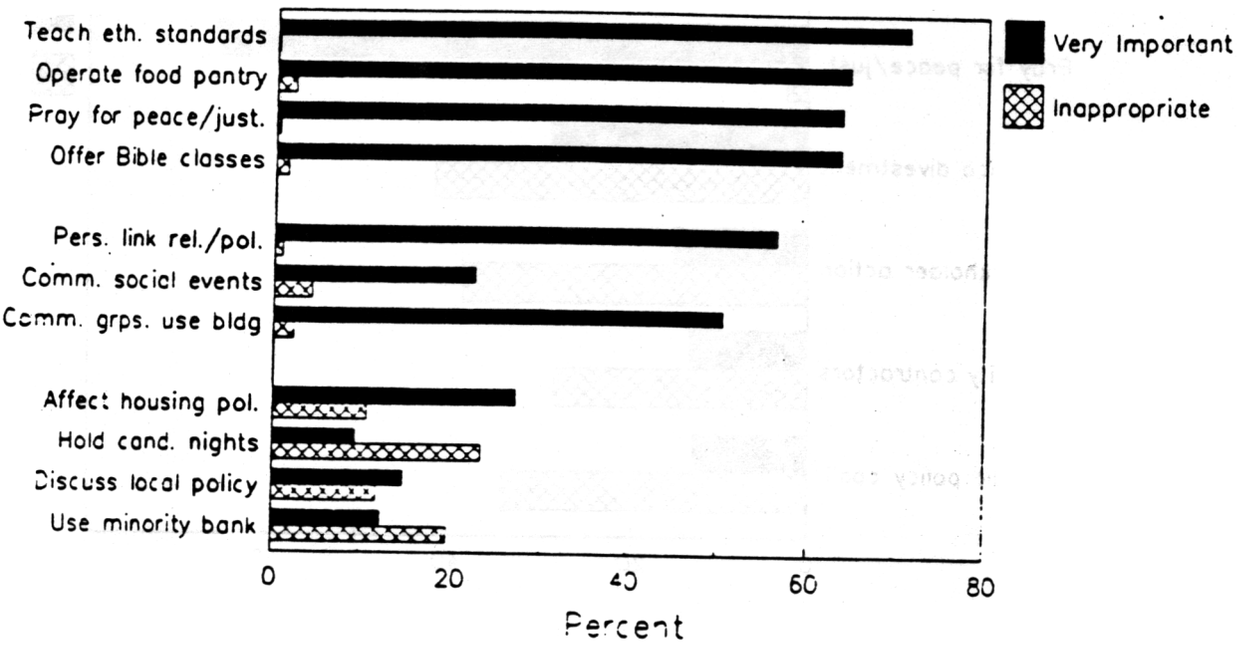


little opposition, with a majority rating them "very important." The next three items still arouse little opposition, but support is less emphatic. The final four activities elicit substantial opposition and little enthusiasm.

Clergy views on each of these items, shown in Figure 1B, are much more positive; six of the eleven activities--the first five on the graph, plus letting community groups use the congregation's building--elicit strong support and little opposition. There is significant opposition to only two--depositing funds in a minority-owned bank and holding candidates' nights--and fewer than one-quarter of the pastors find even these activities inappropriate.

The pattern of the lay responses is fairly clear: those activities which endeavor to affect the community by "spiritual" means or by transforming or serving individuals tend to be seen favorably, and those which in any way seem to involve the congregation in politics--even where it plays an essentially neutral role, as in hosting candidates' nights open to all contenders or promoting discussion of local government policy within the congregation--tend to be seen less favorably.

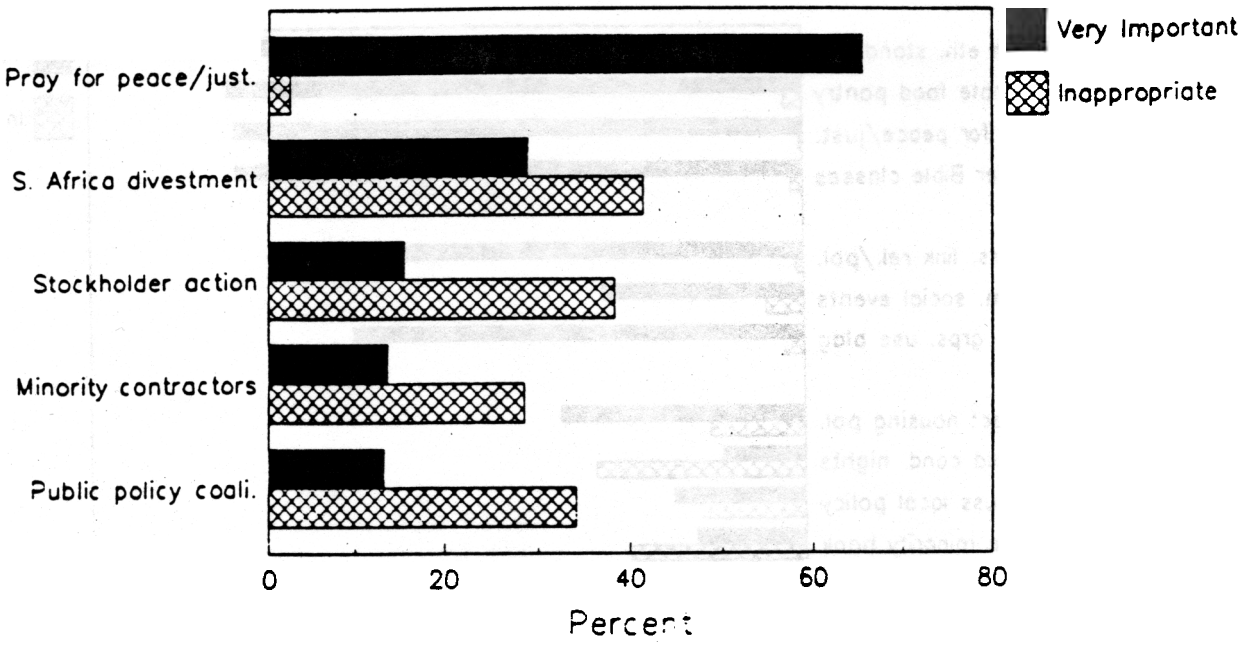
Figure 1B
CLERGY APPROVAL OF CONGREGATIONAL ACTIVITIES



This is an important issue; here, the respondents seem to take a more dualistic and traditional view than they manifested in the questions discussed earlier in this report. Education is needed so that people can see that encouraging democratic participation and discussion among members does not mix the church up in politics as long as care is exercised to remain studiously neutral on electoral and partisan issues, and to respect a broad variety of views.

To study group differences, we formed a summary measure of favorability toward local congregational activism, combining three of the more controversial items (ones which also came out together on a factor analysis): candidates' nights, promoting discussion of local policy, and trying to affect local housing policy. Among the lay respondents, those with lower income, less schooling, and who participate in fewer congregational groups were slightly more favorable, but the relationships are extremely weak (around r = .08). It is interesting to see that here again education is not related to being favorable to social action.

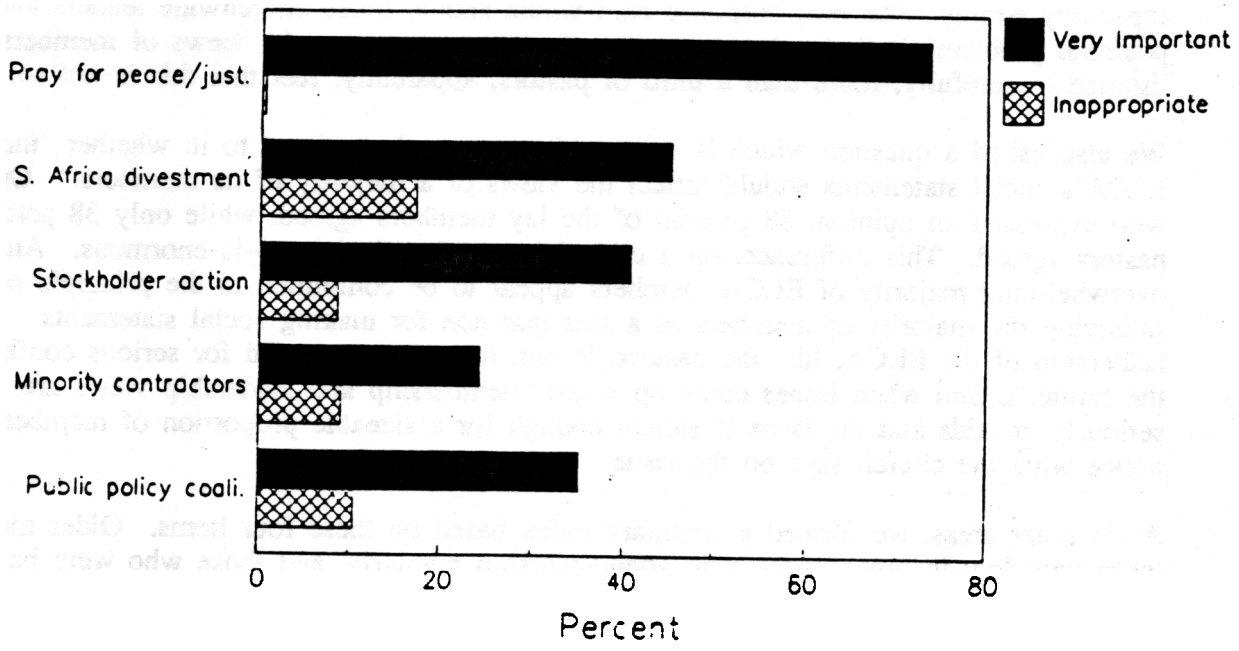
Figure 2A
LAY APPROVAL OF WIDER CHURCH ACTIVITIES



We also asked about five activities which could be taken by the church beyond the congregation. Figure 2A shows how these were evaluated by lay respondents. Only promoting prayers for peace and justice was approved by many and opposed by few lay respondents; contracting with minority businesses, engaging in advocacy through coalitions, stockholder action, and divestment with regard to South Africa all aroused significant opposition. In the case of divestment, however, a quite high proportion say that this is appropriate *and very important*; members seem more polarized on this issue than on any other we asked about. The pastors, whose responses are shown in Figure 2B, were quite favorable to all five activities.

A summary measure was also formed with regard to wider church activities, using all the items except promoting prayers. Women, those with lower incomes, those who attend worship frequently, and those who were baptized Lutheran are more favorable, again with weak relationships (the strongest are r = .13 for attendance, .12 for gender). In short, differences among definable subgroups within the ELCA's membership are small.

Figure 2B
CLERGY APPROVAL OF WIDER CHURCH ACTIVITIES



III
Trust and credibility: perceptions of the ELCA

There are frequent attacks on the ELCA's perceived stance on, and way of handling, social issues; the critics sometimes say that the churchwide structure is out of touch with its constituency, and has little trust or credibility locally. This is an important issue, for several reasons. One is that given the voluntaristic tendencies of many ELCA members, institutional activities beyond the face-to-face context of the congregation may seem irrelevant or ill-conceived to members; the individualism shared by Americans tends to breed distrust of institutions. Another is that a lack of trust could undermine efforts to bring members to a more wholistic understanding of faith. To explore the issues of trust and credibility empirically, we asked a series of questions: whether ELCA leaders listen carefully to members before taking stands, whether people think that when the ELCA speaks they are likely to feel that it is saying things they agree with, whether coverage of social issues in *The Lutheran* is balanced and fair, and whether social statements developed by churchwide offices are well grounded in Scripture.

On the whole, the answers indicate a high level of trust and allegiance--certainly more than one might expect if one took too seriously the more vocal critics of the ELCA. On all these issues, large numbers of lay respondents say they "don't know," which is reasonable given the newness of the ELCA and the limited information most members receive. Of those who do express an opinion, the proportion whose opinion is supportive is 76, 78, 94, and 85 percent, respectively, on these four questions. Pastors are almost equally supportive; the corresponding figures are 64, 83, 86, and 85 percent. Affirmation of *The Lutheran* is especially strong. The only response here which should make churchwide leaders aware of potential problems is that only 64 percent of pastors agree that the views of members are listened to carefully; more than a third of pastors, apparently, feel that this is not so.

We also asked a question which is not in this category but related to it: whether "the ELCA's social statements should reflect the views of a majority of its members." Of those who expressed an opinion, 88 percent of the lay members agreed, while only 38 percent of pastors agreed. This difference--on a critical issue of ecclesiology--is enormous. An overwhelming majority of ELCA members appear to be committed to the principle of satisfying the majority of members as a *sine qua non* for making social statements. If the leadership of the ELCA, like the pastors, is not, there is a potential for serious conflict in the future, if and when issues come up where membership and leadership views are seriously at odds and the issue is salient enough for a sizeable proportion of members to notice what the church says on the issue.

As in other areas, we formed a summary index based on these four items. Older members, those with low incomes, those who attend worship regularly, and those who were baptized as Lutherans show higher levels of trust; however, the relationships are all very weak.

IV
The role of the church: vignettes

One of the difficulties one faces in understanding people's views about the social role of the church is that this role can take extremely varied forms. Most people neither favor nor oppose all kinds of church social action. Rather, they hold varying views, approving of action under some circumstances and disapproving under others. To delineate one's views in the abstract, when they are so complex, with so many factors that might determine one's judgment, is difficult. On the other hand, if we ask people to respond to highly specific instances of church social action, we will cover only a very small proportion of the possibilities.

Our solution to this dilemma was to use a technique involving vignettes. This is a mixture of experimental and survey research methods, and has been used in the last decade (although in a quite different way) by the sociologist Peter Rossi. First we conceptualized some key ways in which church social action varies: (1) the actor involved; (2) the action taken; (3) the issue the action addresses; and (4) the position on that issue (if any) the action supports. Then we listed possible actors, actions, issues, and positions. We did not try to include every possibility, but to include some of the more likely ones, and to get a reasonable

spread. We used nine actors, ten actions, and fourteen issues. For each issue, we described a politically conservative or "right" and liberal to radical or "left" position, and a neutral stance. (Appendix C shows the exact text of the actors, actions, issues and positions we used.) In theory, there would have been 9 times 10 times 14 times 3 or 3,780 possible combinations, but many were logically impossible and had to be eliminated.[2] For instance, a collective actor such as a synod assembly cannot "speak at a rally." We generated all the remaining vignettes (about 1,600 of them) on the computer; that is, we programmed the computer to write a series of sentences, each one a "vignette," consisting of one actor, one action, one issue, and one position. For instance, one vignette read: "The pastor of Reformation Lutheran Church gave money to a group against the death penalty." "The pastor..." is the actor, "gave money to a group" is the action, the death penalty is the issue, and the position is liberal. The sentences all have exactly the same structure; we have not yet programmed the computer to be an elegant stylist!

We presented each respondent with a random sample of eleven of these vignettes. (One page of the questionnaire, containing the vignettes, was printed up individually for each respondent, then glued into the rest of the questionnaire.) We designed the sampling so as to maximize the variety of the vignettes each respondent would get; the order in which the sample vignettes were listed on the questionnaire was reversed in every other sample, so that respondents would not always start with "lay leader" vignettes and end with "ELCA Assembly" ones.[3] The respondents were told that they were being asked to respond to a set of hypothetical actions, and asked how they would react if they heard that this action had taken place, on a scale from strongly approve to strongly disapprove (with a "not sure" option).

Once the responses came in, we analyzed them by thinking of the *rating*--a single vignette, rated by a particular respondent--as the unit of study (in the analysis so far presented, the *respondent* has been the unit of study). In other words, we have a little over 19,000 vignette ratings; in each case, we know to what degree the respondent who rated the vignette approved of the hypothetical action; we know the actor, action, issue, and position (the characteristics of the vignette); and we know the characteristics of the particular respondent who did the rating. In our analysis, we can see how ratings vary depending on the circumstances described in the vignette, and also on the characteristics of the respondent.

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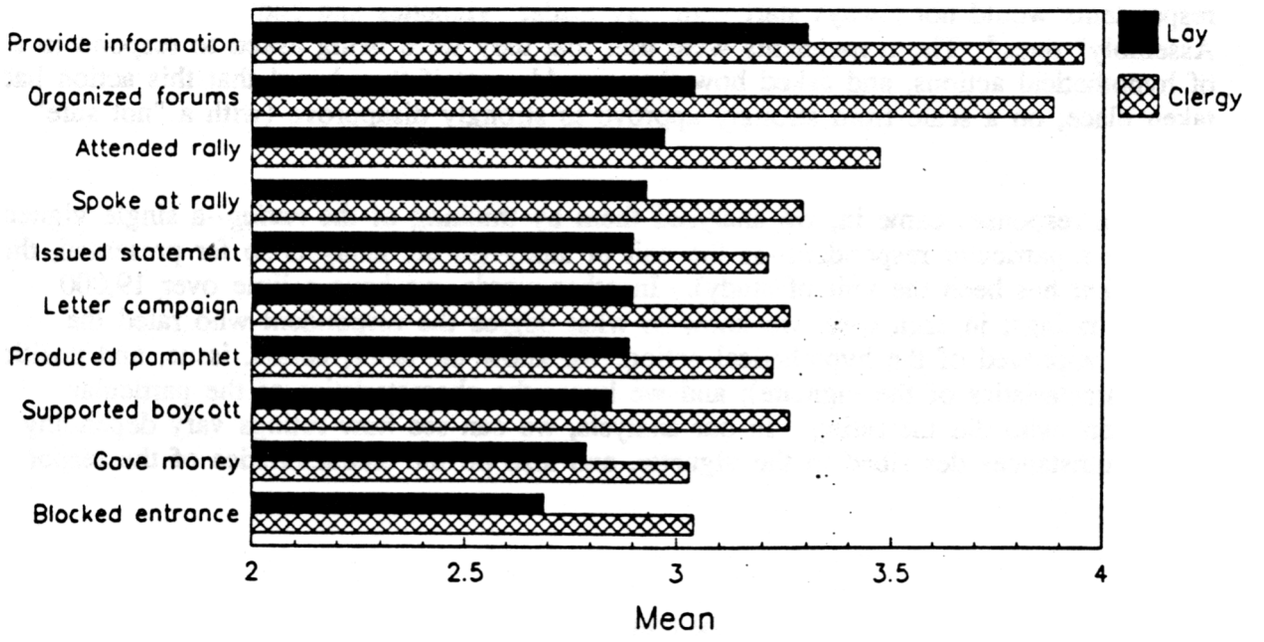
[2] Logically impossible means that the sentence would not make sense. In other cases, however, vignettes describe events which are logically possible but extremely unlikely in practice--for instance, that an ELCA churchwide office would give money to a group in favor of the death penalty. Some of these vignettes may sound a little silly, but we decided not to exclude them, so as to keep the researchers' sense of what is more or less likely from biasing the experimental design.

[3] If we had not done this, and there were a tendency to react progressively more favorably or more unfavorably as the respondents proceeded through their sets of eleven vignettes, we would have introduced a bias, eliciting more favorable reactions to some actors than to others. (In fact, the data do indicate a slight tendency for reactions to become more unfavorable.)

We assigned a score of 5 to "strongly approve," 4 to "approve," 3 to "not sure," 2 to "disapprove," and 1 to "strongly disapprove." Thus, a rating of 3 represents a neutral reaction, and the higher the rating the more approval of the action. The average rating given by lay members is 2.90, showing a very slight tilt toward disapproval, and 3.30, or somewhat in the direction of approval, for pastors.

How do ratings vary depending on the characteristics of the vignettes? It turns out that the actor--*who* acts--makes no noticeable difference; the action makes a minor difference; the issue and the position make a substantial difference. Figure 3 shows the results by *action.* Because of the special characteristics of the vignette technique, assessing the statistical

Figure 3
VIGNETTES: MEAN RATING BY ACTION



significance of differences is difficult; the more important issue is what magnitude of difference matters in practical terms.[4] To give an intuitive idea of what differences mean, let us take an example: lay respondents rate "provide information" vignettes about one-quarter of a point more favorably, on the average, than "organized forums" vignettes. A difference of this magnitude would occur if one-fourth of the respondents rated "information" vignettes one point more favorably than "forums" vignettes (for instance, strongly approve instead of approve, or not sure instead of disapprove) while the other three-quarters rated them the same. To decide if this matters in practice, imagine yourself a pastor who has decided to hold forums rather than distribute information, and consider this question: if you know that this decision will result in somewhat more negative responses in one-quarter of the members, will that influence you toward making special efforts to explain why it is important to hold forums?

When we describe verbally the results shown in the graphs, we will speak of some actions, issues, or positions as being relatively favored or disfavored. These terms refer to the standing of a particular action, issue, or position *relative to the overall average rating for members or pastors, or to vignettes with other actors, issues or positions.* Since the overall average rating is 2.90 for lay respondents, a type of vignette rated 3.10 by lay respondents is relatively favored; the same rating of 3.10 from clergy respondents would mean that vignettes of this type were relatively *dis*favored, since the overall average clergy rating is 3.30.

In interpreting this graph, note that the two actions at the top of the graph were used only in vignettes with a neutral position, and the other eight only in vignettes with a liberal or conservative position. As we will see, vignettes with a neutral position are rated far more favorably than others. Therefore vignettes with one of the top two actions will be rated relatively favorably. Strictly speaking, we can only compare these two actions with each other, and the other eight among themselves. Given this situation, the interesting fact about the first two actions is that organizing forums is not seen all that favorably by lay members; perhaps, again, this has to do with fear that discussions of controversial issues will compromise the unity and effectiveness of the church. Providing information, by contrast, gives each *individual* receiving the information a chance to consider in private his or her reactions. The pastors, however, have equally favorable ratings of both "neutral" actions.

Looking at the other eight actions, the differences as we go from one to another are slight, except that blocking a building entrance is the most disfavored action for lay members; the clergy dislike it as well, and also take a relatively negative view of giving money to a group. Supporting a boycott is relatively disfavored by lay members; for clergy, however, it is not more disfavored than issuing statements or producing pamphlets. On the positive end are the two actions concerning rallies--attending and speaking (however, reactions are relatively positive among pastors only for attending)--and in the middle are three which have

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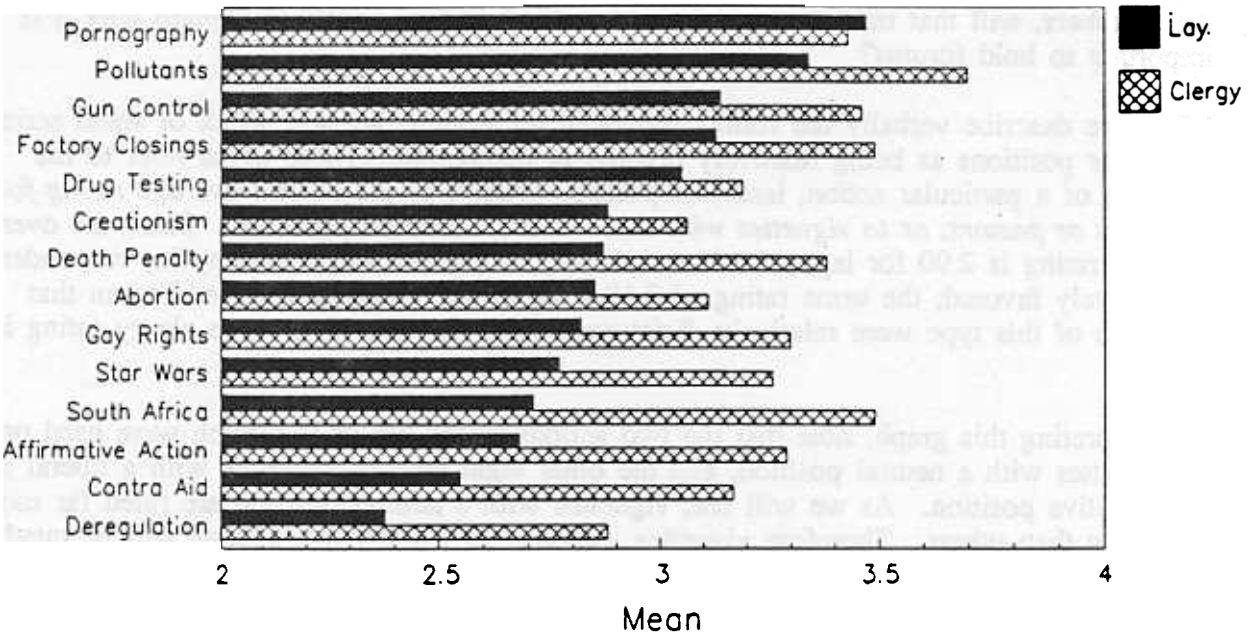
[4] We have used special techniques to assess the statistical significance of these differences. As a rule of thumb, using fairly conservative assumptions, differences of at least 0.15 between two different *actions*, 0.22 between different *issues*, or 0.09 between different *positions*, are significant. In all likelihood, differences smaller than these would not matter in practice.

to do with the written word--organizing a letter-writing campaign, issuing a statement, and producing a pamphlet. Overall, these differences are noticeable but not of great magnitude.

Figure 4
VIGNETTES: MEAN RATING BY ISSUE



The differences are more dramatic with regard to issues; these are shown in Figure 4. Note that this graph is concerned only with the issue, and *not with the position taken on the issue.* Of the vignettes involving a given issue, equal numbers describe a liberal and a conservative position, and some a neutral stance. That is, the question this graph addresses is what political and social issues the church ought to be dealing with--*regardless* of the position taken. If a given issue shows high disapproval, that means that people do not want the church to deal with at all.

If we look at the lay responses, however, the patterning of these differences among issues is not clear. Traditionally, some people have felt that the church should be active on "moral" issues and perhaps racial justice ones, but not on "political" issues, especially those concerned with economic life. The pattern indicated in the graph does not follow this paradigm in any clear way. Take sexuality, a traditional moral issue: vignettes concerning banning pornography are rated much more favorably than others, but ones about abortion

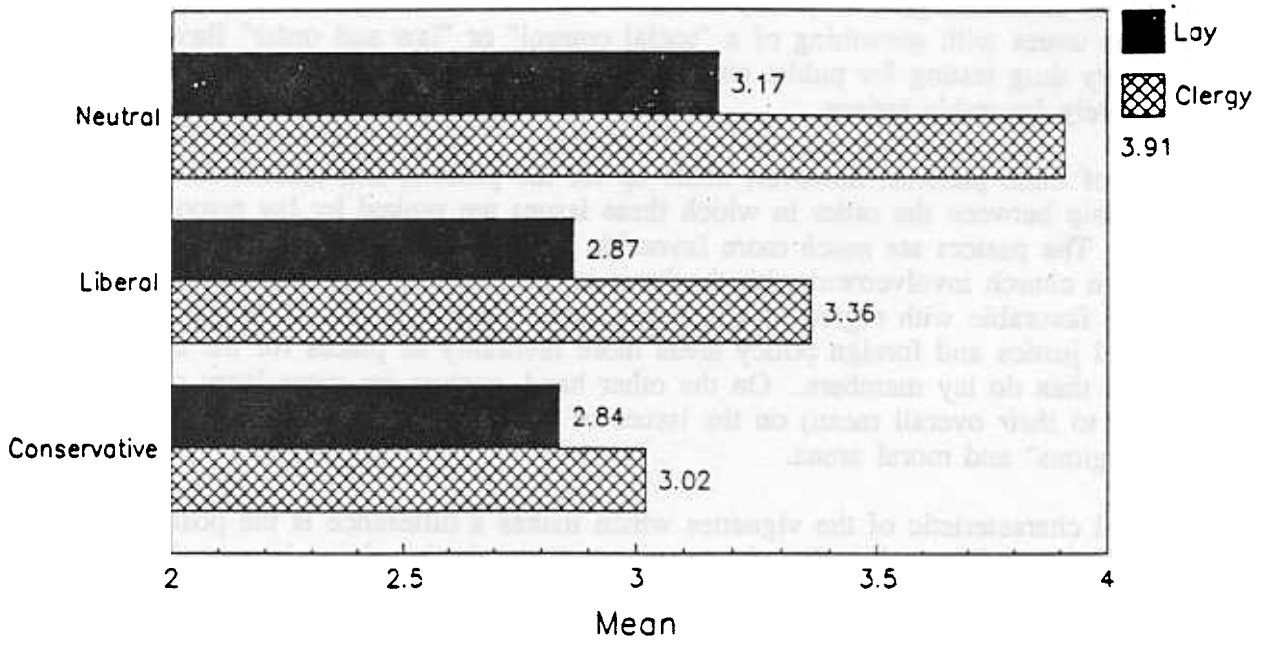
and gay rights are ranked lower than average. The two issues with overtones of racial justice, affirmative action and sanctions against South Africa, are rated even lower. What about economic issues? Vignettes about controlling runoff pollutants, an economic issue concerning the environment, are relatively favored, as are ones about a law requiring notice before factory closings, but vignettes about deregulation are rated more unfavorably than any others. There are only two apparent patterns, and both of them are weak: the three issues in the area of foreign and military policy (developing space weapons, South Africa sanctions, and aid to the Nicaraguan *Contras*) all come out with relatively unfavorable ratings, while the three issues with something of a "social control" or "law and order" flavor (gun control, mandatory drug testing for public employees, and the death penalty) come out with middling to relatively favorable ratings.

Neither of these patterns, however, holds up for the pastors, and indeed, there is little relationship between the order in which these issues are ranked by lay respondents and pastors. The pastors are *much* more favorable than the laity (relative to their respective means) to church involvement with the issue of sanctions against South Africa, and quite a bit more favorable with regard to affirmative action and *Contra* aid. It appears that they see the racial justice and foreign policy areas more favorably as places for the church to be involved than do lay members. On the other hand, pastors are more leery of church action (relative to *their* overall mean) on the issues of pornography, creationism and drug testing--the "religious" and moral arena.

The final characteristic of the vignettes which makes a difference is the position taken; Figure 5 shows the results. For the lay respondents, the key issue is neutrality: they see the vignettes which do not involve taking a particular stand much more favorably than those which do, regardless of the position. These are also the vignettes in which the action is either providing information or organizing forums in the church, and it is possible that the relatively favorable ratings of these vignettes are due to the uncontroversial nature of the *action* rather than to the neutrality of the *position*. However, these two actions usually tend to have a neutral appearance, so these vignettes are doubly neutral--in their action and their position. Probably this double neutrality, rather than anything else about the action, is the key factor. For the clergy, even more than the laity, the neutral actions are seen most favorably, but the clergy also make a distinction between those which involve a liberal versus a conservative position, preferring the liberal vignettes by a sizeable margin. In other words, the clergy are not evenhanded; in their view, it is not equally legitimate (or illegitimate) for the church to take liberal and conservative stances and actions on the issues of our day. On the contrary, they approve liberal stances and actions more. It appears that on the average they find such stances more congruent with their understanding of faith.

How do the characteristics of the *respondents* (as opposed to the characteristics of the vignettes) affect the ratings? On the whole, more favorable ratings are given by members with less schooling ($r = .18$); lower income ($r = .15$); women ($r = .11$); those who attend worship regularly, participate in non-worship activities frequently, and were baptized Lutheran ($r = .10$ in each case); and younger respondents ($r = .08$). None of these relationships is strong, but the ones for schooling and income are moderate. One could see this in at least three ways: as a sign that the less privileged are more willing to see change,

Figure 5
VIGNETTES: MEAN RATING BY POSITION



and therefore more willing to take the risks involved with getting the church into the social fray; as a side effect of the fact that the more educated and affluent tend to have better access to other channels for influencing political decisions; or as an indication that the more educated, with more sophistication, are better able to see how complex the issues of our day are, and how treacherous the waters are into which the church will get if it deals with social issues. The ratings given the vignettes are also associated, not surprisingly, with scores on four of the other five summary measures (but not with the measure of dualism). The strongest relationship is with the summary measure about favorability to wider church activism ($r = .38$), followed by the one for local congregational activism ($r = .29$), voluntarism ($r = .17$) and trust ($r = .16$). Since the two activism scales deal directly with approval of church actions, it is not surprising that they are most strongly related to vignette ratings. It is interesting that it is voluntarism rather than dualism, among the two practical theology measures, which is connected with vignette rankings. Perhaps the issue about church social action has less to do with making a distinction between issues which are religiously relevant or not--or with staying clear of the world altogether--and more to do with the *corporate* quality of church social action, and the ways in which that conflicts with a voluntaristic understanding of faith.

V
Congregational climate: relationships between lay and pastor views

The member and pastor samples allow us to compare the views of these different parts of the ELCA's constituency. However, in addition to the main samples, the survey also included the pastors of all the congregations from which we selected respondents. This allows us to look at how the views of members and pastors *in the same congregation* are related. We can determine, for instance, whether pastors who are highly favorable to church social action tend to serve congregations with members who have the same views. We performed this kind of analysis by averaging, for each congregation, the lay responses that were given to each question by the members from that congregation, and including in the same data set the responses to each question from the pastor (or average of the responses, if the congregation has more than one pastor). The number of respondents per congregation (usually about three) does not allow us to reliably assess the climate of a particular congregation, but we can assess, for any question, whether the pastor and lay averages are correlated across the entire set of 300 congregations involved in the surveys. In other words, the unit of study is not either the respondent or the vignette, but the congregation; the average lay view and clergy view are characteristics of the congregation.

One might expect clergy and lay views in the same congregation to be associated for several reasons: congregations may try to call compatible pastors; pastors may prefer to serve compatible congregations; pastors may influence the members of the congregations they serve; members and the community climate may influence the pastor; discussions between pastor and members may lead to closing whatever gap existed previously; members who disagree with the pastor may be more likely to leave the congregation as time goes on than members who agree; and new members may be recruited more readily among those who agree than among those who disagree with the pastor's views. *(On this questionnaire, we were asking about social issues, but the arguments just presented could apply to any kind of issue; if anything, one might expect even more correspondence on theological issues, since these are presumably more salient to members and discussed more.)*

The facts, however, do not for the most part support these expectations. Consider the questions discussed in Part II, about various congregational and church activities. There is a statistically significant correlation between pastor and lay views on only three of these sixteen items, and even here the correlations are not high. The three items are: letting community groups use the building ($r = .23$); operating a food pantry ($r = .14$); and the wider church divesting with regard to South Africa ($r = .11$). With regard to the trust and credibility items discussed in Part III, relationships between the views of members and pastors in the same congregation are also weak. On *none* of the eleven practical theology questions dealt with in Part I is there a statistically significant relationship between the views of members and pastors from the same congregation. With regard to the vignettes, likewise, there is no relationship between the average ratings given by pastors and members in the same congregation.

The data do not tell us *why* the expected correspondence does not exist. One possible explanation is that congregations are simply not very "ideological" places. That is, the bonds among members within a congregation, and between members and pastor, may not be based primarily on shared beliefs and values (even religious ones, let alone political and social ones), but rather on factors such as sharing a life and history. Furthermore, it is likely that not many discussions go on about social issues, especially in light of responses showing that a sizeable minority of members do not want to have such discussions take place. If so, there is not much chance for pastor and members to influence each other, or even to find out to what extent they agree or disagree. This situation is in certain ways helpful to the pastor, since, as past research and the results presented earlier show, the pastor usually holds much more liberal political views than congregational members, as well as more favorable views toward church social action. If such discrepancies of views come to light, they can well make the pastor's life more difficult, and so a pastor may not wish to foment discussion of issues which can easily be avoided.

This interpretation is supported by the fact that the two congregational items which do have a significant pastor/lay correlation (building use and operating a food pantry) are ones concerning practical activities and policies which come under consideration in a fair number of congregations. When a policy is considered or program initiated, discussions take place, and there is a better chance for pastor and members to influence each other and to arrive at shared agreements. They may all develop a commitment to decisions once made; those who are disgruntled are more likely to leave than if the disagreement had no practical implications for the congregation; and potential new members are more likely to notice the concrete difference of a food pantry or open building use policy than the pastor's views on issues which arise in adult forums or occasionally in sermons.

The processes which might make pastors and lay members in the same congregation tend to hold similar views, in short, depend on occasions for discussion and common decision making. These processes have a reasonable chance to operate around building use issues and food pantries, but probably do not operate with much force around issues which do not have the same kind of practical implications. This makes life easier for the pastor, in some ways, but it may also have unfortunate implications for the church's mission and ministry.

One implication comes up repeatedly as we consider the data considered here and elsewhere in this report. That implication is that if we aspire to be a community of moral deliberation, to affect each other and the world, and to grow in our understanding of what faith implies for our lives, we need to start talking with each other about controversial issues, both religious and political. We have seen some of the obstacles and risks to this path, and some of the reasons it has not been taken more frequently. But this path is worth serious consideration, for it also offers the potential for the church to be even more of a life-bringing force within our society than it is now.

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Appendix A

Question Wordings and Responses

Lutherans Say . . . #2 Questions on Faith, the Church and the World

1. Some ways in which **your congregation** might play a role in the community are listed below. For each activity, please indicate whether this would be **appropriate** for your congregation, and if so, **how important** it would be. *Mark the fourth box on the line if you feel the activity is inappropriate, or one of the first three boxes--depending on how important the activity is--if you feel that it is appropriate.*

Lay Responses
Clergy Responses

	Appropriate and very important	Appropriate and fairly important	Appropriate but not very important	Inappropriate	No opinion
This activity would be:					
Promote prayers for peace and justice	55.6%	29.8	7.4	2.0	5.2
	63.8%	***26.8***	***8.3***	***0.9***	***0.2***
Offer Bible classes open to anyone in the community	49.1	35.1	8.9	2.5	4.4
	63.1	***28.3***	***6.5***	***1.8***	***0.4***
Teach members to have high ethical standards	60.7	25.0	6.0	3.8	4.5
	70.2	***25.3***	***3.4***	***0.4***	***0.7***
Hold social events open to people in the community	28.5	35.0	23.8	6.8	5.9
	23.2	***36.0***	***33.9***	***4.7***	***2.2***
Hold candidates' nights to which all candidates running for local office are invited	7.9	18.6	22.5	38.3	12.7
	10.0	***24.9***	***34.4***	***24.4***	***6.4***
Promote discussion among members of local government policies	7.4	20.5	24.8	34.6	12.6
	14.6	***36.7***	***30.6***	***12.8***	***5.2***
Encourage members to develop a personal understanding of what faith has to say about current social and political issues	31.3	35.1	15.2	9.3	9.1
	57.8	***32.4***	***7.7***	***1.4***	***0.5***
Help operate a food pantry for the needy	59.1	27.9	7.0	2.7	3.2
	61.8	***28.6***	***5.1***	***2.9***	***1.6***
Try to affect local government policy on housing	12.5	27.6	16.9	29.0	14.0
	25.5	***37.9***	***19.1***	***12.0***	***5.5***
Allow community groups to use the congregation's building for meetings	20.5	31.9	21.7	15.5	10.5
	47.8	***35.9***	***12.0***	***2.5***	***1.8***
Deposit congregational funds in a minority-owned bank	3.4	7.1	21.8	37.4	30.3
	11.6	***20.5***	***31.5***	***18.4***	***18.0***

Now let's look at the role of **the church beyond the congregation** (synods, churchwide offices, and so forth). Please indicate your reaction to the following possible activities, using the same categories as before.

	Appropriate and very important	Appropriate and fairly important	Appropriate but not very important	Inappropriate	No opinion
Promote prayers for peace and justice	62.1%	24.2	6.3	2.3	5.2
	73.5%	*21.1*	*4.7*	*0.7*	
Make special efforts to contract with minority-owned businesses for services it needs	11.2	21.5	25.6	23.1	18.6
	24.2	*39.6*	*22.4*	*9.6*	*4.2*
Join with other organizations in coalitions to influence public policy	11.0	24.5	19.1	28.4	17.0
	35.2	*36.1*	*14.1*	*12.1*	*2.5*
Use its position as a stockholder in various companies to promote socially responsible practices by these companies	12.4	21.7	15.1	30.5	20.3
	41.2	*32.9*	*13.7*	*9.2*	*3.1*
Withdraw its money from companies which do business in South Africa	20.9	11.9	9.7	29.8	27.7
	44.3	*22.1*	*12.9*	*15.2*	*5.4*

2. Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Dis-agree (3)	Strongly Disagree (4)	Don't Know (5)
ELCA leaders usually listen carefully to the views of members before they take positions on social issues.	7.8%	37.1	11.0	3.2	40.9
	8.1%	*44.7*	*23.2*	*6.3*	*17.8*
When the ELCA speaks on social issues, I am likely to feel that it is saying things I agree with.	4.6	52.0	13.8	2.2	27.5
	10.8	*68.6*	*11.4*	*3.6*	*5.6*
The ELCA's social statements should reflect the views of a majority of its members.	28.9	51.9	7.7	2.8	8.6
	8.8	*28.1*	*46.8*	*10.8*	*5.4*
Coverage of social issues in *The Lutheran* is usually balanced and fair.	9.1	57.8	3.0	1.0	29.1
	8.5	*72.2*	*10.7*	*2.7*	*6.0*
The ELCA's social statements are usually well grounded in Scripture.	6.9	49.3	8.1	1.7	34.1
	20.0	*61.3*	*10.6*	*3.6*	*4.5*
I want the church to challenge me to rethink my ideas and priorities for life.	18.4	50.4	16.3	3.8	11.1
	41.3	*55.1*	*2.5*	*0.4*	*0.7*
The church should avoid issues which are likely to be divisive within the congregation.	7.3	26.7	42.2	11.7	12.0
	1.8	*6.6*	*59.1*	*29.7*	*2.7*
When I go to church, I want to get away from the troubles of the world.	9.9	21.0	51.5	13.5	4.2
	1.4	*8.5*	*51.4*	*36.3*	*2.3*
I want the church to be an active force in the world, world, challenging our society to be more like what God intended it to be.	42.4	46.5	4.6	1.7	4.8
	59.7	*36.9*	*1.3*	*1.1*	*1.1*

3. Would you say that *The Lutheran* has too little, too much, or about the right amount of coverage of social issues?

	Lay	*Clergy*
Too little	5.1%	*8.3%*
Too much	2.8	*10.5*
About the right amount	52.5	*76.3*
No opinion	14.9	*4.2*
I don't read *The Lutheran*	24.6	*0.7*

4. [Vignettes: 11 of these were printed individually for each respondent. The text of the question was:

Listed below are some ways people or groups within the church might deal with social issues. These are not situations that have actually occurred or will necessarily occur--they are made up examples. In each case, think about how you would react if you heard that this action was taken. Would you strongly approve, approve, disapprove, or strongly disapprove? *(The examples below were randomly chosen from about 1,600 possibilities; each person receiving this questionnaire has a different set.)*

[The answer categories provided for each vignette were: "Strongly Approve," "Approve," "Disapprove," "Strongly Disapprove," and "Not Sure."]

5. Below are some pairs of statements. Most people agree with both to some extent, but if you had to say which **one** you agree with **more**, which would you choose? *Please read both before making up your mind.*

		Clergy
As individual Christians, we are mainly responsible for living ethically in our one-to-one relationships.	52.0%	*46.8%*
As individual Christians, we should each put a lot of time into trying to improve our society.	48.0	*53.2*
Except in extreme situations, we should use persuasion (setting a good example and appealing to people's consciences) rather than laws to make society better.	38.0	*39.0*
It's often necessary to use laws to make society better.	62.0	*61.0*
Christian principles are applicable to almost every social and political issue.	78.1	*92.4*
It often isn't practical to apply Christian principles to social and political issues.	21.9	*7.6*
Faith has to do primarily with our spiritual lives, not our material lives.	19.0	*2.7*
Faith concerns our material lives just as much as our spiritual lives.	81.0	*97.3*

		Clergy
It is possible to achieve major improvements in our society.	94.4	*95.1*
It isn't possible to improve our society much, if at all.	5.6	*4.9*
It's very important to put our faith to work in business and politics.	68.6	*92.0*
We should put our faith to work primarily in church and with family and friends.	31.4	*8.0*
To have a better society people just have to learn to act better toward each other.	62.2%	*26.5%*
To have a better society requires changes in public policy and how our society is organized.	37.8	*73.5*
Christian ethics have many implications for economic policy.	80.4	*97.5*
Christian ethics don't have many implications for economic policy.	19.6	*2.5*
Congregations exist primarily to nurture their members.	20.3	*17.6*
Congregations exist just as much to affect the world around them as to nurture members.	79.7	82.4
The church should deal with poverty mainly by helping people in need.	42.1	*20.0*
The church should work to change society so that there will be fewer poor people.	57.9	*80.0*
It is almost never acceptable to try to change our society by means which cause conflict or set people against each other.	36.8	*19.6*
It is often necessary to work for change by means which do cause conflict.	63.2	*80.4*

6. If you have any comments on the issues raised in Question 5, please record them here:

		Clergy
With comments	83.2%	*72.2%*
Without comments	16.8	*27.8*

[Note: this comment space was provided in part to discover where our dilemmas seemed illogical to the respondents, and in part to allow people to vent the frustration which could easily result from being forced to choose one answer to each of a series of difficult dilemmas. We have not yet done a content analysis of the comments, but hope to in the future.]

Appendix B

Summary Indexes of Views on Faith, the Church, and the World

Average Rating of Vignettes

The average of the answers to the 11 vignettes in Question 4, with questions recoded so that not sure is treated as a neutral response. If not all vignettes were rated, the average is based on those which were; if less than 6 were answered, no score is assigned.

Local Congregational Activism

The sum of the answers to the 5th, 6th and 9th items (e, f, and i) of Question 1. "No opinion" answers are treated as missing data. If, for a particular respondent, two of the three questions have valid data, the mean of the answers (from all respondents, clergy and lay) to the one missing is used in calculating the sum. Items:

Hold candidates' nights to which all candidates running for local office are invited

Promote discussion among members of local government policies

Try to affect local government policy on housing

Wider Church Activism

The sum of the answers to the last four items (m, n, o, and p) of Question 1. "No opinion" answers are treated as missing data. If three of the four questions have valid data, the mean for the one missing is used in calculating the sum. Items:

Make special efforts to contract with minority-owned businesses for services it needs

Join with other organizations in coalitions to influence public policy

Use its position as a stockholder in various companies to promote socially responsible practices by these companies

Withdraw its money from companies which do business in South Africa

Trust

The sum of the answers to the lst, 2nd, 4th, and 5th items (a, b, d, and e) of Question 2. "Don't Know" answers are recoded as a neutral response. If three of the four questions have valid data, the mean for the one missing is used in calculating the sum. Items:

ELCA leaders usually listen carefully to the views of members before they take positions on social issues.

(continued)

(Trust and credibility, continued)

When the ELCA speaks on social issues, I am likely to feel that it is saying things I agree with.

Coverage of social issues in *The Lutheran* is usually balanced and fair.

The ELCA's social statements are usually well grounded in Scripture.

Voluntarism

The sum of the answers to the lst, 2nd, 7th, and 10th items (a, b, g, and j) in Question 5, with the order reversed for all four items. If three out of the four items have valid responses, the mean for the one missing is used in calculating the sum. Items:

As individual Christians, we are mainly responsible for living ethically in our one-to-one relationships; vs. As individual Christians, we should each put a lot of time into trying to improve our society.

Except in extreme situations, we should use persuasion (setting a good example and appealing to people's consciences) rather than laws to make society better; vs. It's often necessary to use laws to make society better

To have a better society people just have to learn to act better toward each other; vs. To have a better society requires changes in public policy and how our society is organized.

The church should deal with poverty mainly by helping people in need; vs. The church should work to change society so that there will be fewer poor people.

Dualism

The sum of the answers to the 3rd, 4th (order reversed), 6th, and 8th items (c, d, f, and h) in Question 5. If three out of the four items have valid responses, the mean for the missing one is used in calculating the sum. Items:

Christian principles are applicable to almost every social and political issue; vs. It often isn't practical to apply Christian principles to social and political issues.

Faith has to do primarily with our spiritual lives, not our material lives; vs. Faith concerns our material lives just as much as our spiritual lives.

It's very important to put our faith to work in business and politics; vs. We should put our faith to work primarily in church and with family and friends.

Christian ethics have many implications for economic policy; vs. Christian ethics don't have many implications for economic policy.

Appendix C

Raw Materials From Which the Vignettes Were Assembled

Each vignette consists of one sentence, constructed from one element from each of the following groups. For instance, the first vignette reads: "A lay leader representing Trinity Lutheran Church spoke at a rally against developing weapons in space."

Actors

01 A lay leader representing Trinity Lutheran Church
02 An unofficial group of members from the Lutheran Church of the Cross
03 The congregational social concerns committee at Redeemer Lutheran Church
04 The church council of St. Mark Lutheran Church
05 The pastor of Reformation Lutheran Church
06 A coalition of local congregations
07 A Synod Assembly (Convention)
09 An ELCA churchwide office
10 The ELCA Assembly (Convention)

Actions

01 spoke at a rally
02 attended a rally
03 organized a letter writing campaign
04 produced a pamphlet
05 issued a statement
06 blocked a building entrance
07 supported a boycott
08 gave money to a group
09 provided information about the issue of
10 organized forums within the church on the issue of

Issues and Positions

(Positions are L = liberal or left; R = conservative or right; N = neutral.)

01-L against developing weapons in space.
01-R in favor of developing weapons in space.
01-N developing weapons in space.

02-L against aid to the Contras.
02-R in favor of aid to the Contras.
02-N aid to the Contras.

(continued)

Appendix C, continued

(Issues and positions, continued)

03-L in favor of stronger sanctions against South Africa.
03-R to oppose stronger sanctions against South Africa.
03-N sanctions against South Africa.

04-L in favor of hiring programs which give priority treatment to minority groups.
04-R against hiring programs which give priority treatment to minority groups.
04-N hiring programs which give priority treatment to minority groups.

05-L in favor of a law protecting homosexuals from discrimination.
05-R against a law protecting homosexuals from discrimination.
05-N laws protecting homosexuals from discrimination.

06-L against required drug testing of public employees.
06-R in favor of required drug testing of public employees.
06-N whether to require drug testing of public employees.

07-L in favor of using federal tax money to pay for abortions.
07-R against using federal tax money to pay for abortions.
07-N using federal tax money to pay for abortions.

08-L against banning pornographic literature.
08-R in favor of banning pornographic literature.
08-N whether or not pornographic literature should be banned.

09-L in favor of a law requiring companies to give 60 days notice before closing a factory.
09-R against a law requiring companies to give 60 days notice before closing a factory.
09-N laws requiring companies to give 60 days notice before closing a factory.

10-L in favor of stricter gun control laws.
10-R against stricter gun control laws.
10-N stricter gun control laws.

11-L in favor of controlling runoff pollutants that contaminate groundwater.
11-R against controlling runoff pollutants that contaminate groundwater.
11-N standards controlling pollutants that contaminate groundwater.

12-L against deregulating more industries.
12-R in favor of deregulating more industries.
12-N deregulating more industries.

13-L against teaching creationism alongside of evolution in the public schools.
13-R in favor of teaching creationism alongside of evolution in the public schools.
13-N teaching creationism alongside evolution in the public schools.

14-L against the death penalty.
14-R in favor of the death penalty.
14-N the death penalty.

Appendix D

Statistical Techniques

In this study, there are three levels of analysis: the congregation, the individual respondent, and the vignette rating. Slightly different methods were used in these three cases.

For analysis of congregational climate, we created two variables for each question in the questionnaire: the mean *lay* answer from respondents in that congregation, and the mean *clergy* answer from pastors serving that congregation. The analysis consisted of computing Pearson correlation coefficients between the two variables in each pair.

Correlation coefficients are a measure of the extent to which two variables, each of which is assumed to be a scale (like income or temperature) tend to vary together; that is, of the extent to which a person who is higher on the first variable is likely to be higher on the second. These coefficients can vary from +1.00 to -1.00. The sign shows the direction of the relationship, and the magnitude shows its strength. For instance, if the correlation is -.55, there is a very strong tendency for those who score higher on the first variable to score lower on the second; if it is +.55, the tendency is for those who score high on one to also score high on the other.* When social scientists analyze relationships involving attitudes, correlation coefficients tend to be low--seldom more than .30, and usually quite a bit lower.

The analysis of *respondents* usually took the form of relating an attitude variable (a measure of the degree to which a respondent was voluntaristic, for instance) to other attitude variables or to "background" variables such as age, sex, or worship attendance. In many cases, we examined crosstabulations showing relationships among variables, and we also calculated correlation coefficients where both variables could reasonably well be considered as scales. Where one of the variables was a typology rather than a scale--with categories in no particular order (for instance, marital status)--we examined the relationship using an analysis of variance.

An *analysis of variance* involves comparing means across groups: for instance, how average levels of voluntarism differ among the married, divorced, and widowed. In essence, the analysis divides the total variability in the sample into one part representing the heterogeneity within each of the groups being compared, and another part representing the differences between groups. The bigger the second part is compared with the first, the stronger the relationship between the two.

For both correlation coefficients and analyses of variance, there are standard statistical techniques by which to assess significance. In essence, those techniques tell us how likely it is, given the sample size and the way it was drawn, that a relationship as strong as we observed could have occurred by chance, if in fact there were *no* relationship between the variables within the population (ELCA members 13 years old or more; ELCA pastors in

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* In the report, instead of showing the sign of correlation coefficients, we have indicated verbally the direction of the relationship.

calls). One should keep in mind the difference between statistical and substantive significance. With a large sample, differences of no practical importance can often be statistically significant. With a small sample (or when comparing the responses of small subgroups) we may observe differences in the data which would matter but are not statistically significant and therefore should not be relied on too heavily.

For the vignettes, some of the assumptions required for a valid analysis of variance are not fulfilled. We calculated mean ratings for each type of vignette, and these means are a valid measure of the degree to which the respondents favor each vignette type, but a more complex test was needed to assess the statistical significance of differences among these means. In general, this indicated that differences of about 0.15 are reliable when comparing different *actions*, 0.22 when comparing different *issues*, and 0.09 when comparing different *positions*.