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Prepared by the Consultative Panel on Lutheran–Jewish Relations of the office of Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Your ideas about these topics are very welcome and will be considered by the Panel in its further work. To submit personal reflections or the results of a group discussion, please use the accompanying Response and Evaluation form or simply send a letter to the ELCA office of Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations at the address below, or send an email to [erinfo@elca.org](mailto:erinfo@elca.org).

Further information on Jewish-Christian relations, including a downloadable form of these “Talking Points,” may be found at [www.elca.org/Who-We-Are/Our-Three-Expressions/Churchwide-Organization/Ecumenical-and-Inter-Religious-Relations/Inter-Religious-Relations/Christian-Jewish-Relations/Talking-Points.aspx](http://www.elca.org/Who-We-Are/Our-Three-Expressions/Churchwide-Organization/Ecumenical-and-Inter-Religious-Relations/Inter-Religious-Relations/Christian-Jewish-Relations/Talking-Points.aspx). See also the comprehensive set of resources on the ecumenical web site [www.jcrelations.net](http://www.jcrelations.net).

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## TALKING POINTS

#7

### TOPICS IN CHRISTIAN-JEWISH RELATIONS

#### *TIKKUN OLAM* – MENDING THE WORLD

Jews and Christians both hear the call to be active in “the care and redemption of all that God has made” and can collaborate in such efforts.

The world and human society are not what they could be. Both Jews and Christians find in the Bible a witness to the reality that something has gone wrong with God’s good creation, something that God is working to remedy. Both Jews and Christians feel called to participate in that work. Christians dedicate themselves to “the care and redemption of all that God has made,” and Jews commit themselves to *tikkun olam* – mending (or healing, or repairing) the world.

For Christians, the gift of the Holy Spirit gives us power and wisdom to live rightly and be a blessing to the world. For Jews, the inborn “good impulse” of human beings offsets an opposing “evil impulse” that leads us to sin; by following the good impulse, a Jew will lead a more upright life and add to the world’s betterment. For both Christians and Jews, being “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Exodus 19:6, 1 Peter 2:9) means bearing responsibility to use God’s gifts for the good of the world.

Martin Luther spoke of God working among us in two ways – in a spiritual realm ruled by Christ and the law of love, and in a worldly realm ruled by human powers and laws of justice. Some Lutherans have misunderstood this “two kingdoms” teaching to

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“Talking Points” is a set of eight leaflets issued by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America’s office of Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations to set forth propositions for discussion and debate on topics in Christian-Jewish relations. These “Talking Points” are not intended as position papers, but as discussion starters, with the hope of eliciting a broad range of responses to the point as stated in the box above. See back page for information on how to offer feedback.

*BUT SEEK THE WELFARE OF THE CITY  
WHERE I HAVE SENT YOU INTO EXILE,  
AND PRAY TO THE LORD ON ITS BEHALF,  
FOR IN ITS WELFARE  
YOU WILL FIND YOUR WELFARE.*

JEREMIAH 29:7

*LET JUSTICE ROLL DOWN LIKE WATERS,  
AND RIGHTEOUSNESS LIKE AN  
EVERFLOWING STREAM.*

AMOS 5:24

mean that Christians have no special role to play in the worldly realm (human society) as long as they are good citizens and proclaim the gospel for individual salvation. At its worst, this misunderstanding has allowed Lutherans to participate in the most repressive regimes and programs.

In the last century, many Lutherans and other Christians both acquiesced to and collaborated in the Nazi efforts to annihilate the Jewish people (the Holocaust, or *Shoah*\*). Surely this catastrophe was a grievous wound in God's creation, one for which healing must still be sought. In similar ways, the persisting problem of race relations in United States and the worldwide ecological crisis are vital arenas in which Christians and Jews can work together.

In this matter, we can learn much from Jewish teaching and heritage. In many times and places, one finds leading examples of Jews who devoted their lives to improving the society in which they lived. One stream of Jewish messianic thought envisions the messiah coming only when Israel has fulfilled its role as witness to God's will. Such a belief ties together the task of healing the world (*tikkun olam*) with the hope of complete redemption in a very powerful way.

Lutherans and Jews can work together as partners in the tasks of social justice, ecological renewal, personal and family relationships, interfaith reconciliation, and all the other challenges of healing what is broken in our world.

\* A Hebrew term meaning "catastrophe."

#### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What brokenness in the world do you most care about healing?
2. Who are your role models for making a difference for good in the world?
3. What role does faith have in motivating people to work for a just society and healthy relationships?
4. How can Jews and Christians work together towards *tikkun olam*?