



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

Frequently asked questions about the 'Draft Social Statement on Women and Justice'

What is the most important thing to know about this draft social statement?

The heart of the "Draft Social Statement on Women and Justice" is expressed in the first nine pages (2,800 words), and the task force hopes *everyone* will take the time to read them. The task force also wishes to receive comments and feedback from every reader so that our church is engaged in a broad discussion of these timely themes and commitments. (The form is online and at the end of the draft booklet. Both are available at ELCA.org/womenandjustice.)

The draft begins with and is rooted in our common foundation, a confession of faith in the Triune God. From this certainty of faith flow 36 assertions, divided into five sections. These assertions claim God's intention of abundant life for all, confess sexism and patriarchy as sin, name the resources of Lutheran faith to address this sin, and articulate this church's work and its call to religious and secular partners. It closes with an expression of hope for justice, grounded in trust in God's promise of grace.

What does it mean that this is the "Draft Social Statement on Women and Justice"?

The ELCA Task Force on Women and Justice: One in Christ has written this draft statement as a means to receive input from across this church. Draft social statements have *no official standing* as teaching of the ELCA. They are a means for everyone to participate in the process of developing a social statement.

Why is the ELCA studying the topic of women and justice?

The 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly authorized the development of a social statement for this church on this topic because of memorials from synods requesting it. In accordance with ELCA processes, a task force was created to study the issues, provide resource material, create a draft and offer a proposed social statement that may be considered by the 2019 ELCA Churchwide Assembly.

What is a social statement?

ELCA social statements are teaching documents that assist members in forming judgments on social issues. They are meant to aid in communal and individual moral deliberation and moral formation. Social statements also set policy for this church and guide its advocacy and work as a public church. They result from an extensive process of deliberation and are adopted by a two-thirds vote of a churchwide assembly.

How are social statements used?

ELCA members are encouraged to use social statements for teaching and moral guidance. Social statements govern church policy and state the official position of this church, but not all members are expected to agree with all parts of a social statement.

Where can I get a copy of the "Draft Social Statement on Women and Justice"?

The draft statement is available for download at ELCA.org/womenandjustice. Printed copies may be ordered from the ELCA Resource Catalog online at ELCA.org/resources. The women and justice web

pages also feature a two-page summary, a brochure and access to brief study resources. All of these can assist ELCA members and leaders in discussion and deliberation of the document.

How has the content of the draft been determined?

The content and range of issues covered in the “Draft Social Statement on Women and Justice” were developed through the ELCA social statement process. The ELCA Task Force on Women and Justice: One in Christ has led the process. The members read, deliberated and consulted with experts on matters from the Bible to gender theory to sociology and theology. The task force published the study “Faith, Sexism, Justice: Conversations Toward a Social Statement” in 2016 to invite deliberation and response throughout the ELCA. Responses to that study have been tabulated and reported to the task force. Drawing from this learning and the feedback to the study, the task force has written the draft, and it represents its best thinking to date about these issues. This draft has unanimous support from the task force for discussion by our church although all task force members may not agree with all aspects of the content.

Who is on the ELCA Task Force on Women and Justice: One in Christ?

The task force is composed of members of this church who have different perspectives and backgrounds. It represents a range of opinions held by those in the ELCA. To learn more about who is on the task force, please visit ELCA.org/womenandjustice.

How can I express my thoughts about the draft to the task force?

There are several ways to respond to the task force regarding the “Draft Social Statement on Women and Justice”: 1) fill out the response form in the back of the draft booklet; 2) attend synod-sponsored hearings; 3) access the response form online at bit.ly/womenandjusticedraft; or 4) share comments and suggestions by letter or email to the task force. Response forms should be sent to: ELCA Women and Justice Task Force, 8765 West Higgins Road, Chicago, IL 60631. Email responses should be sent to womenandjustice@elca.org. The due date for all feedback is Sept. 30, 2018.

What is a synod hearing?

Many synods sponsor hearings as a public place to share comments and hear what others are saying about the draft statement. They are not designed for interactive discussion, but they offer participants about an hour-and-a-half to share their comments on the text as it now stands. A task force representative is present at each hearing to listen to all comments; a synod recorder takes notes. The task force will receive reports from these hearings as part of the process for revising the draft for 2019. To find out if your synod is holding a hearing, please visit ELCA.org/womenandjustice.

I've never been to a hearing. What kinds of things can I expect people to say?

Participants are likely to offer a variety of responses and insights. Comments at such hearings generally range from affirmations of particular ideas, to suggestions about what should be changed, to concerns about what is missing from the text as it now reads. The point is to share responses of various kinds that will strengthen the document. Responses that reference line numbers from the draft are particularly helpful to the task force.

How can I prepare for a hearing?

The best way to prepare for a hearing is to read the draft social statement thoroughly and carefully. If there are some points you would like to make, write them down, including the line numbers of the section of the text you are referencing, and be prepared to state them at the appropriate time. If you do not have time to say everything you want to say, it is also helpful to have written your questions and comments down so that you can give them to the task force representative.

I'm unable to attend my synod's hearing on the "Draft Social Statement on Women and Justice." How can I have my voice heard?

The best way is to fill out and send in the response form in the draft booklet and at bit.ly/womenandjusticedraft. However, you may check to see if there is a hearing that you can attend in a neighboring synod. To find out where and when all synod hearings will be, visit ELCA.org/womenandjustice. You may also communicate by sending a letter or email to the task force. Letter responses should be sent to: ELCA Women and Justice Task Force, 8765 West Higgins Road, Chicago, IL 60631. Email responses should be sent to womenandjustice@elca.org.

What happens after the comment period ends on Sept. 30, 2018?

The task force will review all response forms, letters, emails and hearing reports received on the draft statement. They will then use that feedback to revise the draft social statement. When the revised social statement is released in early 2019, it will be called the proposed social statement on women and justice.

What happens after the task force publishes the proposed social statement in early 2019?

Once the proposed statement on women and justice is approved by the task force, it will be reviewed by the ELCA Conference of Bishops and the Church Council. A recommended proposed statement will go to the 2019 ELCA Churchwide Assembly for consideration. For more information about this process, see the timeline at ELCA.org/womenandjustice.

Don't social statements often have implementing resolutions attached?

Social statements normally are accompanied by a few implementing resolutions when they are considered at a churchwide assembly. Any implementing resolutions for this social statement will be provided by the task force when the proposed social statement becomes available in early 2019.