

Introduction: From the ELCA task force

Welcome to “Faith, Sexism, Justice: Conversations toward a Social Statement!” In 2009, the Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA authorized a social statement process “on the topic of justice for women in church and society.”¹ Our task force was convened to lead this process as the ELCA Task Force on Women and Justice: One in Christ. This document is the result of our study and conversation so far. We hope that it will generate honest and empowering conversations about sexism and how it negatively affects individuals and families in our homes, congregations and communities.

As Christians we all are living into the promises of God and are being called to “do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8). We know that Jesus Christ came that we may have life abundantly (John 10:10), but in the world around us, it is clear that countless people are suffering under the weight of injustice. They cannot live the abundant lives God intends. Many individuals and their families struggle emotionally, physically and economically because of the effects of sexism and patriarchy. These forces are personal, religious, social and economic. As members of the body of Christ that is the church, we are called to help all people live abundant lives that are just and sufficient – lives in which every individual and community is committed to the mutual values of respect, dignity, interdependence and equity.

As a task force, we designed this study to invite you into dialogue and action with us about faith, sexism and justice. We investigated and discussed a broad range of problems as a task force but could not explore every topic (sex trafficking, women and health care, women and the law, etc.) in this document. For this study, we have focused on:

1. Why do we need to talk together?
2. What problems do women face and what does justice require?
3. How is sexism personal, and how are we the body of Christ together?
4. What does economic sexism look like, and how can we seek equity for all?
5. How can we address violence against women and girls?
6. Why do images and words for God matter?
7. How do we challenge the misuse of Scripture against women and girls?

These issues are complex and hard for some to talk about. We trust, though, that when we come together as members of the body of Christ, the Holy Spirit is with us and among us. We hope that this study will help individuals and congregations hold honest and respectful conversations about *faith, sexism and justice*. We look forward to hearing feedback from you who take part in this process. (The response period runs until August 31, 2017.) We anticipate our common work together and invite you to pray with us that God’s reign of compassion and justice “may also come to us.”

In Christ,
Members of the ELCA Task Force on Women and Justice: One in Christ

¹ www.ELCA.org; ELCA Churchwide Assembly Action CA09.06.31.