



## **“Our Calling in Education” Social Statement Summary**

### *Basic Orientation*

- Christian vocation (calling) involves God’s saving call to us in baptism and life lived in joyful response to this call. “Education belongs to our baptismal vocation. Our particular calling in education is twofold: to educate people in the Christian faith for their [baptismal] vocation and to strive with others to ensure that all have access to high quality education that develops personal gifts and abilities and serves the common good.” (p.1)
- The statement recalls the deep involvement of the Lutheran Churches and heritage with education. It notes that the Lutheran Reformation began in a university, and that Lutherans early on supported public education for both boys and girls as ways to prepare them to live out their Christian vocation of serving their community and the common good.
- The statement can be said to give attention to education under two categories: toward Christian faith and toward vocation in the world.

### *Education in the Christian Faith for Our Baptismal Vocation*

- The statement “affirm[s] the essential role of parents and congregations in the faith formation of young people and urge[s] revitalization of the baptismal commitment to educate in the faith for vocation, a commitment that continues throughout life.” (p. 2) Education is for children and youth but Lutherans also hold an equal emphasis on revitalization of lifelong learning in the faith for adults in congregations and other settings. The statement calls on Christians throughout their lives “to assume personal responsibility to grow in their faith by:
  - deepening their relationship with God through worship and prayer;
  - maturing in their knowledge of the Bible and the Church’s doctrines;
  - learning by doing, practicing their faith in daily living, service, and justice;
  - learning and using the art and skills of speaking the truth in love and discerning together the gospel’s meaning for life; and
  - connecting their baptismal vocation and their specific callings in daily life.” (p. 13)
- The statement calls upon congregations to increase their efforts to help parents teach the faith to their children.
- It affirms the important role of ELCA outdoor ministries in assisting congregations to form the faith of children and youth.
- It affirms the work of ELCA seminaries “in their preparation of leaders for our church.” (p. 3) It also affirms and supports the 1995 Study of Theological Education by the ELCA.
- The statement affirms the work and vital role of ELCA campus ministries and urges “new and creative collaborative efforts in their support” (p. 3) including support from congregations.

### *Education for Vocation in the World*

- The statement affirms four purposes for all educational institutions (public, private, and Lutheran) in educating students for their callings and responsibilities in the world:
  - prepare students academically;
  - encourage their personal flourishing, developing their knowledge and wisdom and instilling a delight in learning;
  - prepare students for productive work and financial responsibility; and
  - equip them to live and serve in a complex, diverse, and interdependent global society and to be responsible and civil citizens.
  
- The statement affirms the work and role of public primary and secondary schools where 90% of all students are educated, and “advocate[s] for the equitable, adequate, and effective funding of public schools.
  
- The statement views education of young people to be a shared responsibility between parents, schools, religious bodies, and community.
  
- The statement affirms ELCA early childhood education centers and Lutheran primary and secondary schools and encourages synods, pastors, congregations, and members to claim and support this unique mission opportunity.
  
- The statement articulates expectations for public schools, that they:
  - be communities of learning and teaching;
  - have a role in teaching and forming students to live morally in society;
  - teach about religion but not sponsor religious exercises such as prayer or devotional reading of religious texts, nor that they advocate for or against particular religions;
  - acknowledge the distinctions between the natural sciences and religion when teaching the natural and physical sciences.
  
- The statement calls upon pastors and congregations “to develop strong connections with their public schools for the sake of the children and their communities.” (p.18)
  
- The statement proposes seven criteria for citizens in evaluating proposals for educational reform of the public schools.
  - “Does it improve educational quality for all students?
  - Is it effective in enhancing student learning?
  - Does it assist educators in their work?
  - Is it affordable and sustainable?
  - Does it protect students from invidious discrimination?
  - Is it supported by reliable research?
  - Is there a means to evaluate the results of the program and decide if the program should be continued, modified, or ended?

- The statement proposes a number of measures in public education to reduce the negative effects of poverty and discrimination.
- The statement calls for the reduction of funding inequities in public education, with reforms tied to measurable outcomes.
- The statement proposes several criteria to judge measures that attempt to provide for accountability of public education.
- The statement provides counsel to parents when they consider what kind of schooling to provide for their children which includes such considerations as:
  - “the special needs and gifts of their child;
  - whether or not they desire a faith-based education for their child;
  - how well each option will achieve the purposes of education
  - how well the options prepare the student for life and service to others in a complex, diverse, global society; and
  - the affordability of each option.

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