



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

Overview of the 'Draft Social Statement on Women and Justice'

*The ELCA Task Force on Women and Justice: One in Christ has written this draft as a crucial step toward the development of a social statement that will be considered by the 2019 ELCA Churchwide Assembly. **Draft social statements have no official standing as statements of the ELCA.** They are a means to invite everyone to participate in the process toward the creation of an official statement.*

ELCA social statements are theological and teaching documents. They assist the ELCA and its members to reach informed judgments on social issues from a perspective of faith. They are intended to cultivate individual and community discernment, as well as to guide moral formation. They govern this church's institutional policy and teaching in its social witness and guide its work as a public church. Social statements are developed through an extensive process of deliberation involving the whole church and are adopted by a two-thirds majority of an ELCA churchwide assembly.

The heart of this social statement draft 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 feedback form is online and also 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. The draft closes with an expression of hope for justice, grounded in trust in God's promise of grace.

Each of the 36 assertions (thesis statements) are explained in the "Fuller Explanation," which makes up the rest of this draft. Here every assertion is explained, often with supporting citations.

I. Core Convictions

The Scriptures show God's intention is abundant life for all in this diverse creation and God's care in creating humans in the image of God. However, patriarchy and sexism prevent abundant life for all and deny—in practice—that *all* humans are created in the image of God. Sexism and patriarchy are therefore sinful. As Christians we understand that God's grace justifies us and turns us to serve others through neighbor justice, including gender justice.

II. Analysis of Patriarchy and Sexism

Patriarchy is a social system in which everyone consciously and subconsciously participates, and it benefits men and boys at the expense of women and girls and gender non-conforming individuals. Sexism is the support of male privilege. This does not mean women are good and men are bad. Both church and society and the individuals within them contribute to patriarchy and sexism.

III. Resources for Resisting Patriarchy and Sexism

Although the Christian church and the ELCA as one member of Christ's body are guilty of participating in the forces of patriarchy and sexism, there are a number of resources in the faith tradition to foster gender justice. Scriptural witness to God's desire for justice elucidates principles for our church in its work toward equity. These include: sufficiency, sustainability, solidarity, and participation. Likewise, Lutheran biblical interpretation and interpretations of doctrines are faithful resources to respond to the sins of patriarchy and sexism; interpretation and doctrine should be evangelical and serve *all* people, no matter their gender. Empowered by God's justifying grace received through faith, our church sees its calling to foster secular ideas, religious beliefs, and laws, policies, and practices that support abundant life for all.

IV. Response to God's Work and Our Call to Action and New Commitments in Society

This section of the draft outlines some of the commitments the ELCA should make in society to create gender-based equality and equity. Subjects range from human rights to violence to the media to health care to economics to immigration and migration to families, communities, caregiving, and stereotypes to public leadership.

V. Response to God's Work and Call to Action and New Commitments Regarding the Church

This section of the draft outlines some of the commitments our church should make within its own life toward greater gender-based equality and equity. Subjects range from church leadership and authority to scriptural translation and interpretation to the Lutheran theological tradition to language for God to economics to ecumenical, inter-faith, and secular dialogues and partnerships.