



## Women and justice draft social statement discussion group tips

### Purpose:

Discussion groups aren't intended for participants to come to a consensus. The goal is to help people study the draft and to clarify their thinking on the material to prepare them to respond.

### Questions to consider:

- How can I encourage participation across my congregation, including men and youth? Is there a nearby congregation that it would be helpful to partner with?
- How much time do I have? How can I have the most productive discussion in that timeframe? What introduction do these participants need to the social statement process?
- How can I help create a welcoming environment for people to discuss sensitive topics?

### Tips:

- Encourage everyone to read the draft before the group discussion. If some folks haven't, consider splitting into two groups.
- Arrange the room so that everyone can see each other—a circle of chairs is optimal.
- Don't try to tackle the entire draft in one session. Consider how you could split it up (for more detail, see page 3):
  - Some sessions for the Basic Convictions, some for the Fuller Explanations
  - Chronologically through the 36 Basic Convictions, each conviction paired with their fuller explanation
  - Poll the group on what they're most excited or uncertain about and focus on those subjects or passages

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- Incorporate prayer into your group's process. To further set the tone, consider setting a bowl of water, a lit candle and an open Bible in a central location.
  - Have the group make a covenant for how they will function. For an example, see page 10 [here](#). A covenant may include:
    - I will treat others as I want to be treated.
    - I will allow others to speak, not interrupting them.
    - I will speak for myself (using I-statements), not on behalf of groups or others in the room.
    - I will respect confidentiality when it is appropriate.
  - If your group is too large for everyone to have time to speak, consider breaking into small groups or using other discussion techniques as suggested [here](#).
  - The leaders(s)/facilitators(s) of the group do not have to be pastors.
  - Look at the response form for the draft and structure discussion around the questions asked. The task force needs to hear not only about the content of the draft but its readability, glossary, format, etc.
  - Invite the group to think about what they are being called to say and do after having read the draft.

### **Sample prayers:**

Beloved, we know the Holy Spirit is present with us here and speaks through our conversation. Open our ears to hear what we might not expect today, open our minds to new ideas, and open our hearts to the struggles of our neighbors. We pray that through our work here today, the women and justice task force is better able to serve the church. In your name we pray, amen.

Good and gracious God, we have heard today how all of your children are in pain due to sexism and patriarchy, which is separating them from you and separating them from each other. Help us to hear where you are calling us as we walk from this place today and help us to remember that nothing can separate us from your love. We pray this in Jesus' name, amen.

## Potential ways to break up the draft:

If you have...	You could...
2 sessions	Provide an overview on social statements, how they're made, and the format of this draft. Explain what the task force is asking for feedback on in their response form, and then focus on what the group is most drawn to from the Basic Statement (pages 1-9) for 1-2 sessions OR
	Focus one session on discussing what the group found most valuable and most unclear in the draft/Basic Statement and another session on the readability and format OR
	Focus one session on what should <i>not</i> change in the draft and another one how the draft could be strengthened.
3 sessions	<p>In Session One, spend 15 minutes introducing the background and context of this document by sharing about what social statements are and how the ELCA develops them. (This information is found on pages 1-2 of the draft booklet.) Then, go over the format of the document, what the task force wants feedback on, and use the time remaining to begin to explore the opening paragraphs and convictions in the Basic Statement.</p> <p>Focus attention in Session Two on working through the rest of the Basic Statement. Invite participants to do a little "homework" by reading through and identifying which items in the Fuller Explanation they would like to discuss in the third session.</p> <p>Focus Session Three on whatever the group has not covered in the Basic Statement and then on selected pieces of the Fuller Explanation. If time permits, give participants 10 minutes at the end to think about and begin to fill out the response form.</p>
4-6 sessions	<p>Focus the sessions on the sections of the Basic Statement, incorporating the Fuller Explanation as there is time and interest.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our Common Foundation and I. Core Convictions (pages 1-3)</li> <li>• II/III. Analysis of Patriarchy and Sexism and Resources for Resisting Patriarchy and Sexism (pages 3-6)</li> <li>• IV/V. Response to God's Works: Call to Action and New Commitments in Society and Regarding the Church (pages 6-9)</li> <li>• A final session discussing the format, applicability to ministries and next steps</li> </ul>

