



Draft Social Statement on Women and Justice

For Study and Response
Prior to September 30, 2018

ELCA Task Force on Women and Justice: One in Christ
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

November 2017

The ELCA Task Force on Women and Justice: One in Christ

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Reader's Introduction and Tips for Group Study

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is preparing a social statement on women and justice to be considered by the 2019 ELCA Churchwide Assembly, as mandated by the 2009 assembly. This “Draft of a Social Statement on Women and Justice” is an invitation to everyone in the ELCA to join in conversation and discernment about this concern as people of faith.

There are several ways to participate in the process:

- *Study, discuss, comment:* You are invited to study, discuss and use the response form to share your thoughts in response to the draft. This can be done by individuals or as part of a study group. There is a response form at the back of this booklet or it can be filled out on line at bit.ly/womenandjusticedraft.
- *Participate in a hearing:* Many synods will be holding hearings, and you might attend one of those in your area. If you are interested, please speak to your synod office or send an email to womenandjustice@elca.org.

The due date to submit comments is **Sept. 30, 2018**. Information on how to respond or for acquiring additional copies may be found at the back of this booklet.

What is a draft social statement?

This document was prepared by the ELCA Task Force on Women and Justice: One in Christ. It is the task force's draft of this social statement. As such, it is an invitation to discern what this church should teach about contemporary issues related to sexism and patriarchy in our society.

This draft represents the best thinking of the task force to date. Although not all task force members necessarily agree with every aspect of this draft, it comes with unanimous support for sharing with our church for discussion. It follows and grows out of the study issued by the task force in August of 2016 titled “Faith, Sexism and Justice: Conversations Toward a Social Statement.” Responses from those who used the study were quite positive.

Your response to this draft, along with that of many others across this church, is vital to the process of developing a proposed social statement that will be considered by the 2019 Churchwide Assembly. Talking together is important in our life together as part of Christ's body. Your feedback will join the body of responses that inform the task force's thinking as it revises this draft to create a proposed social statement by January 2019. For more information about the task force and the process, please visit ELCA.org/womenandjustice.

What is a social statement?

ELCA social statements are teaching and policy documents that assist members in forming judgments and in guiding action on social issues. They also set policy for this church, guide advocacy efforts and support its public voice. Social statements are developed through an extensive process of deliberation involving the whole church and must be adopted by a two-thirds vote of an ELCA churchwide assembly.

Leading a discussion on this Draft

Significant responses to this draft will come through synodical hearings. In a hearing, participants work through the text line by line to identify concerns to be shared with the task force.

At the same time, the task force encourages group discussion of this draft of the social statement because it hopes to receive broad and thoughtful responses from across our church. This social statement is written in two interrelated sections: the Basic Statement and the Fuller Explanation. The Basic Statement contains the whole statement but from a big-picture vantage point. The Fuller Explanation allows readers to go deeper into the meaning with more details. Discussion leaders may want to plan for a couple of sessions, one or two that cover the Basic Statement and then several that go more deeply into the five major sections of the Fuller Explanation.

Preparing to lead discussion sessions:

Questions like these may help guide the discussion:

- What in each section speaks to your experience? In what ways?
- What do you think are the strengths of each section? Weaknesses?
- What else needs to be said? How should it be said differently?
- What advice do you have for the task force, keeping in mind that it is charged with writing a social statement for the whole ELCA?

Tips for leading the sessions:

- Keep in mind that discussing matters related to sexism often can touch on sensitive issues and painful personal experiences.
- Invite people of all genders, ages and perspectives to join the discussion. Sometimes people just need to be invited to feel welcome.
- Leaders do not need to be pastors. Discussion facilitators from within the congregation can be recruited and briefed.
- Read and become familiar with the content of the entire draft before beginning a study session.
- Be prepared to take some notes or assign a recorder to capture ideas and thoughts during the discussion. This may be especially helpful when you get to the Response Form found at the back of this booklet. It also is available online at bit.ly/womenandjusticedraft.



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Prior to September 30, 2018

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Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

November 2017



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

Prepared by the ELCA Task Force on Women and Justice: One in Christ

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ITEM #: ELCAOB1021

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Available online at ELCA.org/womenandjustice.

Ordering a copy

A single copy of the draft can be obtained without cost by downloading it from the Women and Justice website (ELCA.org/womenandjustice) or by calling 800-638-3522.

Multiple printed copies may be ordered from the ELCA Online Resource Catalog for a nominal fee at ELCA.org/resources.

Sending your comments to the task force

You are invited to respond to the draft and send your comments to the ELCA Task Force on Women and Justice. You may use the response form at the back of this document or write your comments in letter or essay form. Please send them to the task force by Sept. 30, 2018.

You may send your comments to:

Mail: ELCA Task Force on Women and Justice
Office of the Presiding Bishop
8765 W. Higgins Rd.
Chicago, IL 60631-4101

Email: womenandjustice@elca.org

Online: bit.ly/womenandjusticedraft

Participating in hearings

You are invited to participate in hearings on the draft, which will be held in many synods. Information and dates for these hearings will be posted on the website.

Please visit ELCA.org/womenandjustice.

Draft of the Social Statement on Women and Justice

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Draft of a Social Statement on Women and Justice

Basic Statement

Our Common Foundation

We believe God is the creator of all. We in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) are, therefore, one with humankind made in the image of God, and one with the whole creation.

We believe God is the Word embodied in Jesus Christ who unites us through baptism with all Christians in the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church. As Lutherans, we are united in our confession that we are justified by grace through faith in Jesus Christ and liberated to serve God's whole creation, seeking peace and justice.

We believe that God the Holy Spirit is always at work, transforming and inspiring new ways of living in this world toward God's promised, beloved, eternal community.

Grounded in this understanding of the Triune God, we believe God's intention for humanity is abundant life for all. This calls us to equity and justice for all with respect to issues of gender and sex. We confess that the world is broken by sin. Relying on God's promise in the Gospel, we are bold to declare that patriarchy and sexism are both sinful and found within our own faith tradition and our society.

We believe that we are called by the Holy Spirit to raise a faithful prophetic voice that distinguishes the central witness of the Scriptures from the misuses of the Scriptures found within the Christian tradition. We will resist patriarchy and sexism within church and society by relying on God's gifts of knowledge, reason, and scientific inquiry as we work together with all people of good will.

*Note: Underlined words indicate a glossary reference.

31 Grounded in this unity of faith, in this statement we commit ourselves to
32 the continual work of prayer, learning, reflection, discernment, and action to
33 resist patriarchy and sexism as we live together in community into the promised
34 abundant life God intends for all.

35 36 I. Core Convictions 37

38 1) We believe God's intention revealed through the Scriptures is that all people
39 flourish and have life abundantly.

40
41 2) We believe all people are created equally in the image of God. Every individual
42 is dependent upon God and all share in the God-given vocation to joyfully
43 contribute their gifts to help all of creation flourish. As members of this society,
44 we also affirm that all people are created equal and are endowed with certain
45 inalienable rights.

46
47 3) We affirm that God's creation is wonderful in its variety. We believe God
48 creates humanity in diversity, encompassing a wide variety of experiences,
49 identities, and expressions, including sex and gender.

50
51 4) While we affirm that God's intention is equity and fullness of life for
52 everyone, we confess that the sins of patriarchy and sexism, like all human
53 sin, disrupt God's intention. We recognize that the struggle to achieve sex
54 and gender equity is shaped and complicated by factors of race and ethnicity,
55 nationality and immigration status, sexuality, gender identity, economic means,
56 age, abilities, and education.

57
58 5) We confess that, as God's people, forgiven in Jesus Christ, we are at the same
59 time liberated and sinful. We are broken, and yet we are made new by grace
60 through faith. This good news is true even as we participate in cultures and
61 societies that are broadly patriarchal and sexist.

62 6) We confess that we are justified by God's grace through faith. This promise
63 frees us from trying to earn God's love or justify ourselves, so that we can
64 do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God and our neighbors. A
65 commitment to neighbor justice is key to our understanding of the ministry of
66 Jesus Christ and to our reading of the Scriptures. God's act of redeeming love
67 evokes love in us for others who need justice in all areas of their lives. This call
68 to justice specifically means that we seek equity and justice for women and girls
69 and others who experience oppression due to sexism and patriarchy.

70
71 7) We believe that, redeemed and made new, the Church is called to live as the
72 Body of Christ in the world even while we struggle with the realities of patriarchy
73 and sexism. As Lutherans, we recognize that acting justly within the home, the
74 church, society, and civic life for the good of all is one of the vocations to which
75 God calls all people.

76 77 **II. Analysis of Patriarchy and Sexism**

78
79 8) We recognize patriarchy and sexism are "a mix of power, privilege, and
80 prejudice."¹ They prevent all human beings from living into the abundant life
81 for which God created them. Patriarchy is a social system dominated by men,
82 identified with men, and centered on men's actions, voices, and authority. In
83 patriarchal systems, men are typically viewed as better than women, given more
84 power than women, and have more authority than women. This patriarchal
85 worldview harms women and girls. Sexism is the reinforcement of male privilege.
86 It promotes silencing, controlling, and devaluing women, girls, and gender non-
87 conforming people. Everyone intentionally and unintentionally participates in a
88 patriarchal system, and it affects individuals in different ways.

89
90 9) We recognize that when society and church have spoken about women and
91 girls, the hidden assumption often has been that they are white and heterosexual.

¹ *Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture* (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America [ELCA], 1993), 4.

92 However, this statement's references to women and girls are inclusive of all
93 women—women of color and white women, lesbians, transgender women, women
94 with disabilities, and immigrant women.

95
96 10) We believe that many individuals who suffer under the weight of patriarchy
97 and sexism also experience intersecting burdens. In addition to sex or gender
98 discrimination, they may also be treated in oppressive ways according to
99 their race, ethnicity, economic status, age, sexual orientation, gender identity,
100 immigration status, or ability, or because of the language they speak.

101
102 11) We reject patriarchy and sexism as sinful because they deny the truth that
103 all people are created equally in God's image. Too often behaviors and decisions
104 rooted in patriarchy and sexism cause overt harm, inequities, and degradations.
105 Examples include gender-based violence (including physical and emotional violence
106 and coercion), pay inequality, human trafficking, restricted access to health care
107 and economic resources, inadequate research on health issues affecting women,
108 denial of educational opportunities, objectifying portrayals of women in media, and
109 failure to value and support elderly women, mothers, and children.²

110
111 12) We recognize that the problems experienced by women and girls are vast.
112 However, patriarchal structures that reinforce and perpetuate rigid sex and
113 gender expectations also harm men and boys, including gay and transgender
114 men. Men and boys are harmed when they are forced to conform to narrow
115 gender stereotypes, such as those that tell men and boys not to have traits or
116 roles that are like those associated with women and girls. People of all genders
117 who do not conform to gender-based roles and stereotypes can be made invisible
118 and oppressed.

119
120 13) We celebrate that humans are relational beings and that we live in social
121 systems. The dynamics and powers in these systems are greater than any one

² See ELCA social teaching documents that address many of these topics: ELCA.org/socialstatements and ELCA.org/socialmessages.

individual, government, culture, or religious community, even though personal responsibility is involved. Most instances of patriarchal harm flow from and into commonly held beliefs and customs and can be found in specific laws, policies, and practices within secular and church institutions. Our church's commitment to neighbor justice compels us to expose how patriarchy and sexism are woven into all aspects of individual, social, and religious life, causing harm to all of humanity.

III. Resources for Resisting Patriarchy and Sexism

14) The Scriptures show us a rich texture of justice that is central to God's intention for human flourishing.³ This church has identified sufficiency, sustainability, solidarity, and participation as the key principles of justice.⁴ Social structures and institutions, including the ELCA as a human institution, must be assessed and guided by these principles.

15) In faith, this church is empowered to confess that Christianity, in certain beliefs, practices, and aspects of its history, is complicit in the sins of patriarchy and sexism. At the same time, we believe God provides resources within the Christian faith and the Lutheran tradition and is at work in human community to bring forth new ways of living that challenge the harmful beliefs and effects of patriarchy and sexism.

16) While God's Word of Law and Gospel speaks through the Scriptures, there are words and images, social patterns, and moral beliefs in them that reflect the patriarchal values of the cultures and societies in which they arose. Their continued misuse contributes to maintaining hierarchies and patterns of inequity and harm.

³ See, e.g., Psalm 33:4-5; Proverbs 28:5; Luke 18:1-8; Galatians 6:1-10; I John 3:11-24.

⁴ See ELCA social statements *Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice* (Chicago: ELCA, 1993); *Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All* (Chicago: ELCA, 1999); and *Genetics: Faith and Responsibility* (Chicago: ELCA, 2011).

17) The Christian theological tradition also bears this dual character. In particular, some doctrines affect our understanding about humanity and God more than others. These teachings affect our use of language. The teachings about the image of God, the Body of Christ, and the Trinity have sometimes been misused to support patriarchal beliefs, attitudes, church practices, behaviors, and structures. At the same time, these doctrines also provide liberating resources for healing the effects of the sins of patriarchy and sexism.

18) The central Lutheran belief that we are justified by grace through faith empowers this church to challenge the structures of patriarchy and sexism that ascribe value based on human standards.

19) We recognize that significant progress has been made in society against patriarchy and sexism; however, evidence demonstrates that more attention is needed. Cultural and religious beliefs, practices, policies, and laws continue to promote inequality and inequity and continue to degrade, lessen, and harm people. We believe that Christians, together with many other partners, are able to understand and advance equity. This happens through beliefs and ideas that are gender-just and through laws and policies that support an equitable common good.

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

20) This church teaches that the God who justifies expects all people to seek justice in earthly structures and systems. Human reason and knowledge are necessary here, and this church does not presume to have quick or easy solutions for the deeply rooted and complex problems of patriarchy and sexism that have permeated these structures. Our commitments, however, express this church's firm hope that social relations can be ordered in better ways so that all people may experience greater equity and justice.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America commits to:

21) Seek, support, and advocate that diverse, gendered bodies be respected, rather than objectified, abused, denigrated, or marginalized. First steps toward this goal are laws that do not deprive anyone of their human and civil rights.

22) Seek, support, and advocate for the eradication of gender-based violence, including rape and sexual assault, by acknowledging both personal responsibility and the systemic aspects of such violence. (See the ELCA's social messages "Gender-based Violence" and "Commercial Sexual Exploitation.")

23) Seek, support, and advocate for portrayals of people in entertainment, media, and advertising that do not objectify or stereotype but rather show all people as capable of the wide variety of human characteristics and roles.

24) Seek, support, and advocate for medical research, health care delivery, and access to health care services, including reproductive health care, that recognize how bodies differ and that eliminate discrimination due to gender or sexuality. (See ELCA social statement *Health: Our Common Endeavor*.)

25) Seek, support, and advocate for economic policies, regulations, and practices that enhance equity and equality for women and girls, with special concern for raising up women who experience intersecting forms of oppression. (See the ELCA's social statement *Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All*.)

26) Seek, support, and advocate for services and legal reforms that attend to the particular needs of women, girls, and boys who are physically and economically vulnerable due to migration and immigration. (See the ELCA's social message "Immigration.")

207 27) Seek, support, and advocate for multi-faceted understandings of social and
208 economic roles so that our human traits (such as courage or care) or callings
209 (such as business leader or stay-at-home parent) are not prescribed by gender
210 or sex. Encourage and empower all people to use their gifts for the sake of the
211 social good, whether in the home, at work, or in the public sphere.

212
213 28) Seek, support, and advocate for resources for families and communities that
214 empower parents, whether single or coupled, to nurture, protect, and provide
215 for their household in ways that do not reinforce gender-based stereotypes. In
216 particular, advocate for men to participate in all family roles associated with the
217 home, caregiving, parenting, and nurturing.

218
219 29) Seek, support, and advocate for an increase in women's participation in
220 local, state, and national politics, with special attention to raising up women who
221 experience intersecting forms of oppression.

222
223 **V. Response to God's Work:**
224 **Call to Action and New Commitments Regarding the Church**
225

226 30) This church recognizes that the Body of Christ is called to honor and support
227 women, girls, and people with diverse gender identities in ways more consistent
228 with life-giving theology and faith practices. Therefore, as a church, we commit
229 ourselves to celebrating and affirming the gifts and insights that women and girls
230 bring to congregations, institutions, and the church as a whole.

231
232 The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America commits to:

233
234 31) Promote scriptural translation and interpretation that support gender justice,
235 acknowledge the patriarchal context in which the Scriptures were written, and reject
236 the misuse of Scripture to support sexist attitudes and patriarchal structures.

237 32) Promote theological reflection that is attentive to the gender-based needs of
238 the neighbor. Theologians need to be honest about how church teachings have
239 been misused to support patriarchy and sexism. All teachers of the faith should
240 express God's desire that all persons may thrive.

241
242 33) Use inclusive language for humankind and inclusive and expansive language
243 for God. Encourage the use of language for God that expands rather than limits
244 our understanding of God's goodness and mystery. In particular, we support
245 developing liturgies, hymns, prayers, and educational materials that broaden our
246 language beyond primarily male images. This practice follows the Scriptures'
247 witness that God is wholly other and transcends human categories of sex and
248 gender. Therefore, metaphors and images for God should be drawn from the lives
249 of women and men, from nature, and from humanity in all its diversity to speak
250 of the fullness and beauty of God.

251
252 34) Develop and support more extensive policies and practices within the ELCA
253 that promote the authority and leadership of all women within this church in all
254 its expressions.

255
256 35) Promote changes that are economically just, including equal pay, for women
257 in all ELCA institutions and organizations, with special attention to the situations
258 of people affected by intersecting forms of discrimination.

259
260 36) Seek and encourage faithful discernment and, where possible, joint action
261 with other members of the Body of Christ and inter-religious and secular
262 partners on issues of patriarchy and sexism. This includes the affirmation of the
263 Lutheran World Federation's Gender Justice Policy and continued dialogue with
264 national and global ecumenical and inter-faith partners.

Hope for Justice

We of the ELCA share these convictions and commitments with thanks to the Triune God whose love intends an abundant life for every person. We recognize as God's gifts the society and the church of which we are part, even while an analysis describes how patriarchy and sexism pervade our lives within them. We give thanks for God's gracious promises to break the bonds of sin and to empower our lives of hope to seek neighbor justice.

We rejoice that God is always at work to transform and inspire new ways of living in human society, ways that lean more fully toward God's intention. We are grateful that strides have been made in this society against patriarchy and sexism, and we hear the summons to seek even fuller measures of justice and equity for all. We do not presume to have quick, perfect or easy solutions as we work together with all people of good will. We simply recognize that we have both the freedom and the obligation for the neighbor to do much more, as guided by these commitments.

We know that the Church of Christ in every age is beset by change, but as Spirit led, is called to test and claim its heritage.⁵ We celebrate the Holy Spirit's work in this church to urge ongoing reformation toward equity and equality for all. Most of all, we live in hope because through Jesus Christ we trust that God's promises will not fail.

⁵ See "The Church of Christ in Every Age" by Fred Pratt Green in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2005), #729.

Fuller Explanation

I. Core Convictions

1) We believe God’s intention revealed through the Scriptures is that all people flourish and have life abundantly.

“God saw everything that God had made, and indeed, it was very good” (Genesis 1:31a).

The Scriptures reveal God’s intention of abundant and sustainable life for creation, including for human beings. Creation stories tell of the goodness, flourishing, and majestic diversity that flow from God’s creative and sustaining power (e.g., Genesis 1 and 2, Psalms 8 and 104, and Job 38).

Israel’s exodus from Egypt shows God’s persistent action to free people who are shackled by slavery’s bondage of body, mind, and spirit. God’s gift of the Ten Commandments establishes a covenant that expresses how Israel’s new community can thrive.

The judges, like Deborah, and the prophets trumpet God’s demand for justice when communities are threatened or oppressed, and they proclaim hope when all seems lost. God lifts up individuals like Esther who risk everything so that community may thrive.

The Gospels underscore God’s desire for abundant life. Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, embodies and proclaims God’s desire. In the Gospel of John, Jesus declares, “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10b). Through association with social outcasts (Mark 2:15), advocacy for the disadvantaged, marginalized and unjustly treated (Matthew 25:35-40), compassion for and healing of the sick (Matthew 14:14), and criticism of those who neglect justice and mercy (Matthew 23:23), Jesus Christ witnessed to and lived out God’s desire for the well-being of all in the here and now and not only in the promised, future life. The Scriptures teach that the Spirit of God is the source of life (Psalm 104:30) and pours out power for new, fruitful ways of being in the world (Joel 2:28). The Book of Revelation speaks of the healing of the nations and closes with

a vision of a new heaven and earth as the ultimate outcome of God's intention.⁶
This church believes the Triune God intends creation to flourish and is ever at
work so that all people may thrive.

2) We believe all people are created equally in the image of God. Every individual is dependent upon God, and all share in the God-given vocation to joyfully contribute their gifts to help all of creation flourish. As members of this society, we also affirm that all people are created equal and are endowed with certain inalienable rights.

We believe humans are created equal by God, are equally dependent upon God, and are equally loved by God. We believe humans are called to be co-creative creatures with God, caring for the world and serving other humans and the entire creation as God does. As the Scriptures witness, all of creation originates in God, who sustains creation and will ultimately bring creation to its fullness.

In Genesis 1, God speaks creation into existence; by a word, humans are created in the image of God. In Genesis 2, God makes humans by forming them from the soil (*humus*). Humans did not live until God breathed into the first human's nostrils. We are dependent upon God, the very one who gave us breath. In both creation stories, the first human is neither male nor female but simply human. A translation of the Hebrew text helps to explain this:⁷

“then Yahweh God formed the earth creature [hā- ‘ā dām]
dust from the earth [hā- ‘ā dām]
and breathed into its nostrils the breath of life,
and the earth creature [hā- ‘ā dām] became a living being (*nephesh*)”
(Genesis 2:7).⁸

⁶ “Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb, through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations” (Revelation 22:1-2).

⁷ In Genesis 1, God creates “humankind.” In Genesis 2, the original Hebrew states “then Yahweh God formed the earth creature [hā-‘ā dām].” See Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 78. English translations state that “Adam” is formed first and is referred to as a male.

⁸ Translation from *Ibid.* The interpretation offered here in general is common in current Lutheran theological teaching.

344 In Hebrew, Adam is not a proper name. This is not a text about a man being
345 created first.

346 We believe all people are created in the image of God (*imago Dei*). We
347 are made in the image of God, who calls us to use our creativity, freedom,
348 responsibility, and diversity for the fulfillment of creation. God uses wisdom,
349 understanding, and knowledge to create and nourish (Proverbs 3:19-29); humans
350 are to use these same means to serve all of creation. Like God's action in
351 creation, human use of power is meant to be good for all (Genesis 1:4-25). This
352 careful reading of Genesis 1-3 reminds us that while we are created in the image
353 of God, we are not God. No human is.

354 Human dignity flows from the reality that all humans are made in the image
355 of God. We honor the image of God in others when we do everything in our
356 collective and personal power to meet others' needs and to empower others
357 to flourish. God calls us to live in creative, life-giving relationships with all of
358 creation. In creation, no human is granted domination over another human.
359 Rather, all humankind is given the responsibility to care for creation (Genesis
360 1:26-31 and Genesis 2:15).⁹

361 Many Christians, in the past and still today, interpret the Genesis creation
362 stories to support the belief that females are secondary to males and more sinful
363 than males. One respected teacher of the faith (St. Augustine, 354-430) defined
364 women as malformed men. For centuries women were said to be so intellectually
365 and physically inferior that they should not serve as leaders in the faith. Our
366 reading of the biblical texts, however, shows that such patriarchal interpretations
367 of Genesis 1-3 are faulty. The differentiation of humankind into male and female,
368 expressed in Genesis 2, communicates the joy found in humans having true
369 partners, true peers: "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh"
370 (Genesis 2:23a). God creates community and family, not a hierarchy based on
371 race and ethnicity, ability, social or economic status, or sex (what our bodies look
372 like biologically) or gender (how people express themselves).

⁹ Care for creation includes the responsibility to address the effects of sin. See Kristen E. Kvam on Luther's reading of Genesis in "God's Heart Revealed in Eden: Luther on the Character of God and the Vocation of Humanity" in *Transformative Lutheran Theologies*, ed. Mary J. Streufert (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 57-67.

373 As Lutherans, we also understand that God intends cultures and governments
374 to develop in ways that support cooperative sharing that enable all people to
375 flourish. Given our understanding of God’s desire for human flourishing, together
376 with other members of society, we assert that all people are created equal and
377 are endowed with certain inalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of
378 happiness. We also hold the belief that all people have the responsibility to
379 safeguard these rights for others, as well as for themselves. Insofar as these
380 assertions are necessary so that everyone may flourish, the ELCA joins others,
381 both religious and non-religious, to advance a universal vision of the full and
382 equitable participation of all people in an equitable society.¹⁰

383
384 **3) We affirm that God’s creation is wonderful in its variety. We believe God**
385 **creates humanity in diversity, encompassing a wide variety of experiences,**
386 **identities, and expressions, including sex and gender.**

387
388 The Scriptures reveal the diversity and interconnectedness of creation. God
389 creates a teeming universe, filled with plants and animals, the fish of the sea and
390 the birds of the air. Likewise, humans are remarkably diverse. Contemporary
391 science also finds diversity within creation and among humans. Human genes
392 are a given; you are born with what you are born with. However, genetic activity
393 is influenced by what we do, what we think, what we learn, and how we live.
394 Neurological research has shown that humans are not born with brains that are
395 either “girl” or “boy” brains. Instead, humans learn to act, think, and speak in
396 certain ways; people are not “hardwired” to be exclusive opposites based on sex.
397 Studies of human bodies also reveal diversity, showing that they do not neatly
398 fall into two categories of “opposite” differences. In short, people have genetic
399 and physical variety; individual humans are not automatically placed on one end
400 or the other of a physical or psychological spectrum.¹¹

10 The ELCA acknowledges that sin has interfered with the expression of God’s will through human culture and governments and affirms the role of the church to criticize injustice in them. See *The Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective* (Chicago: ELCA, 1991).

11 See Cordelia Fine, *Delusions of Gender: How Our Minds, Society, and Neurosexism Create Difference* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010), 176-177; 235-239.

401 **4) While we affirm that God’s intention is equity and fullness of life for**
402 **everyone, we confess that the sins of patriarchy and sexism, like all human**
403 **sin, disrupt God’s intention. We recognize that the struggle to achieve**
404 **sex and gender equity is shaped and complicated by factors of race and**
405 **ethnicity, nationality and immigration status, sexuality, gender identity,**
406 **economic means, age, abilities, and education.**

407
408 We believe that God creates human beings not just in marvelous diversity but
409 also with the intention of equity, including gender equity. Equity is fairness or
410 justice in the way people are treated according to their needs. For example, an
411 elderly woman with few economic resources who lives with a chronic illness has
412 different needs than a young woman with wealth who is expecting her first child;
413 therefore, they require different laws, policies, and social support to flourish.

414 Within human history, as well as within the Christian tradition, humans have
415 often created hierarchies where one group has power over another because of
416 their differences. The church has often taught there are only two types of people,
417 male and female, dominant and subordinate. Strong and pervasive views remain
418 among Christian communities in this country and around the world that people
419 are naturally opposites with attributes characterized by sex and gender, for
420 example that females are inherently caring and that males are inherently logical.
421 Many Christians continue to teach this sex and gender complementarity; they
422 believe that a person’s identity, self-understanding, vocation, and social roles are
423 fixed at birth--willed by God.

424 These gendered views are further complicated by intersections with other
425 forms of systemic oppression, such as racism, classism, ableism, ageism,
426 heterosexism, and nationalism.

427 Stereotypes about human characteristics, such as skin color and ability, cause
428 harm because they shape our understandings of ourselves and others from a
429 very early age. These stereotypes and biases then shape how we act. Boys learn
430 not to cry in public, and girls learn that they must dress and act a certain way to
431 be accepted. These learned behaviors then reinforce existing stereotypes.

Expectations and stereotypes for men and boys usually socialize them to step into roles with power, means, and visibility. They benefit from male privilege. Expectations and stereotypes for women and girls often socialize them for roles that give them less access to power, agency, and visibility. People who do not comply with these or other stereotypes often become powerless and invisible. Many live on the margins of society and even fear for their lives.

Sexist beliefs and patriarchal systems often portray bodies in ways that, intended or not, objectify, regulate, devalue, marginalize, politicize, and dominate some bodies more than others. The Christian Church as an institution, including the Lutheran tradition, has been complicit in these sins. In particular, this church confesses its long complicity in the acceptance of the so-called “natural inferiority” of people who are not of European descent. For example, this devaluing of people is evident in the ELCA’s own failure to encourage and support people of color to pursue ordination. The first woman of color was only ordained in a predecessor church of the ELCA in 1980, 10 years after the first white woman. Society reflects this same sin. In the United States, many women and girls were sterilized against their will because they were considered less valuable than white or able-bodied women.¹²

Social roles and policies are essential for living together in society, but fixed gender roles and the power attached to them are inequitable. Limiting certain roles to people according to gender or other characteristics interferes with the expression of their full humanity and thus limits social communities, as well.

The bodies of all people, in their diversity, are gifts of the Creator and are held by God in equal value; indeed, all bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19). Paul confirmed this when he described how our particularities are, in Christ, no longer a source of division: “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28). Humans are wondrously diverse in character, experiences, joys, sorrows, passions, and vocations and God intends

12 Lisa Ko, “Unwanted Sterilization and Eugenics Programs in the United States,” Public Broadcasting System, January 29, 2016, pbs.org/independentlens/blog/unwanted-sterilization-and-eugenics-programs-in-the-united-states/ (accessed September 5, 2017).

equity in that diversity. Therefore, people of faith are called to support civil laws and church policies that treat all people equitably.

5) We confess that, as God's people, forgiven in Jesus Christ, we are simultaneously liberated and yet we sin. We are broken, and yet we are made new by grace through faith. This good news is true even as we participate in cultures and societies that are broadly patriarchal and sexist.

The Lutheran Confessions explain sin fundamentally as the self-centered failure to fear and trust God.¹³ As a result of this broken trust in God, human relationships also become broken and distorted. Because God's law was given to guide human relationships, anything that breaks and distorts human relationships is sinful and unjust.

Sexism and patriarchy are sinful because they foster attitudes and actions that distort relationships, violate God's law, and result in injustice. When we do not ensure the physical and sexual safety of women, girls, and others oppressed by patriarchy, whether in relationships, homes, churches, or anywhere in public, then we sin. When we use derogatory names, we do psychological harm and perpetuate injustice. When we participate in sinful systems of patriarchy and sexism that harm our neighbor, knowingly or unknowingly, we sin.

Sin is not just individual acts. Sin is also found and expressed in organizations and institutions. It is a sin that women are not paid an equal wage for the same work or must pay more for health care. It is an injustice to women and girls to demand physical perfection and to portray women and girls as sexual objects, and it is a sin to profit from such expectations. Sexism and patriarchy in church and society prevent women and girls from affirming, celebrating, and expressing their individuality as God's good creatures.

¹³ "Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article II" in Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 112.

488 **6) We confess that we are justified by God’s grace through faith. This**
489 **promise frees us from trying to earn God’s love or justify ourselves,**
490 **so that we can do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our**
491 **neighbors. A commitment to neighbor justice is key to our understanding**
492 **of the ministry of Jesus Christ and to our reading of the Scriptures. God’s**
493 **act of redeeming love evokes love in us for others who need justice in**
494 **all areas of their lives. This call to justice specifically means that we**
495 **seek equity and justice for women and girls and others who experience**
496 **oppression due to sexism and patriarchy.**
497

498 We believe that we do not have to do anything for God to be gracious to us. The
499 gift of salvation is a divine work, not a human work. God’s justification of us upends
500 both our own attempts to justify ourselves and our own injustice.¹⁴ “For we hold that
501 a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law” (Romans 3:28).

502 Although we have been called into the freedom of the Gospel, we remain
503 sinners. We are freed in Christ to love and serve others, but our efforts to live
504 out the righteousness we have received are always imperfect. Nevertheless, we
505 continue to respond to the divine call to love God, self, and neighbor and to the
506 struggle for justice.

507 Throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, God’s mercy covers God’s people and
508 serves to renew our weary souls. (See Psalm 103.) God calls us to grant mercies
509 to others: “Thus says the LORD of hosts: Render true judgments, show kindness
510 and mercy to one another” (Zechariah 7:9). And God’s faithful people hope to
511 be judged by God’s merciful justice. (See Psalm 119.)

512 The parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-33) teaches us that our
513 neighbors are not just those who are like us. The call to love the neighbor
514 extends to everyone, even those we might think of as enemies, as Jews in Jesus’
515 time regarded Samaritans. Commenting on this parable, Martin Luther defined
516 the neighbor this way: “Now our neighbor is any human being, especially one

¹⁴ See e.g., Ted Peters, *God – The World’s Future: Systematic Theology for a New Era*, 3rd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 433.

517 who needs our help.”¹⁵

518 The parable of the good Samaritan also teaches us that love of neighbor
519 requires concrete action on the neighbor’s behalf. Depending on the neighbor’s
520 needs, this may require not only direct service in response to an immediate
521 situation, but also working more broadly for justice.

522 When we read the Scriptures through the lens of neighbor justice, we are
523 empowered to hear and respond to cries for justice, no matter for whom or
524 from where. A neighbor-justice reading of both the biblical text and of our
525 contemporary context compels us to ask: Who is the neighbor? And what does
526 justice look like for the neighbor? Because we are called to love our neighbor
527 as ourselves, we can also ask, who can help me find justice in my life, work,
528 family, and community? A neighbor-justice approach also helps us ask questions
529 about justice not only for individuals, but also for congregations, institutions,
530 governments, and societies.

531 God’s faithfulness, love, and justice are evident when we read the Bible with
532 a neighbor-justice approach. A neighbor-justice reading helps us challenge
533 and uproot sexism and patriarchy. Striving for justice for the neighbor and for
534 ourselves encourages Christians to live, worship, and work in ways that empower
535 all people to live lives of dignity, responsibility, equity, and justice. God in Christ,
536 through the power of the Holy Spirit, frees the Church.

537
538 **7) We believe that, redeemed and made new, the Church is called to live as**
539 **the Body of Christ in the world even while we struggle with the realities of**
540 **patriarchy and sexism. As Lutherans, we recognize that acting justly within**
541 **the home, the church, society, and civic life for the good of all is one of the**
542 **vocations to which God calls all people.**

543
544 As Christians, we confess that Jesus Christ is the true image of God. Through
545 our baptism, all Christians are unified in Christ and equal members of the
546 Body of Christ. The apostle Paul compared the early Christian community to

15 Martin Luther, “Letters to Galatians, 1535,” *Luther’s Works* (LW) (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955-1986), 27:58.

the human body. He wrote that Christians are united in the Body of Christ, that this body has many diverse parts, and that the members of the body need one another. (See Romans 12:4-5 and 1 Corinthians 12:12-18.)

In the face of ever-present sexism and patriarchy in the church and the world, we look to God's Word to affirm the goodness of our own bodies, minds, and spirits and those of our neighbors. The Gospels testify to the full, embodied humanity of Jesus, who was born, walked, ate, slept, and wept. Indeed, the Hebrew Bible, the Gospels, and the New Testament letters teach that human bodies are a good gift of God.

Because we are equal members of the Body of Christ, we should not objectify others, diminish their worth, or define them by sex or gender stereotypes. As this church seeks to value the bodies of all people and recognize that we depend upon one another, we will not dominate or politicize other people but respect them, promote their health and well-being, and suffer and rejoice together as we strive for justice for all bodies.

As Lutheran Christians, our work to stop the harm that sexism and patriarchy cause to bodies also springs from our understanding of Baptism and Holy Communion. Our heritage teaches that when the water, bread, and wine are combined with God's word, God is really present: "Baptism is not simply plain water. Instead it is water enclosed in God's command and connected with God's Word."¹⁶ When we feel the baptismal water and when we taste the bread and drink the wine, God is present in our diverse individual bodies and in the unity of the Church that is the Body of Christ. Luther taught that the Lord's Supper unites us together into one body: "[S]o that by this sacrament ... and through this mutual love there is one bread, one drink, one body, one community."¹⁷

We must continue the task of embracing our unity and diversity so we welcome and uplift people of every sex and gender—indeed, *every body*—in our work together as the Body of Christ in the world. God's love feeds the Body of Christ so that it might live in love.

¹⁶ "Small Catechism" in *Book of Concord*, 359.

¹⁷ Martin Luther, "A Treatise Concerning the Blessed Sacrament and Concerning the Brotherhoods," cited in *A Compendium of Luther's Theology*, ed. Hugh Kerr (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1943), 176.

II. Analysis of Patriarchy and Sexism

8) We recognize patriarchy and sexism are “a mix of power, privilege, and prejudice;”¹⁸ they prevent all human beings from living into the abundant life for which God created them. Patriarchy is a social system dominated by men, identified with men, and centered on men’s actions, voices, and authority. In patriarchal systems, men are typically viewed as better than women, given more power than women, and have more authority than women. This patriarchal worldview harms women and girls. Sexism is the reinforcement of male privilege. It promotes silencing, controlling, and devaluing women, girls, and gender non-conforming people. Everyone intentionally and unintentionally participates in a patriarchal system, and it affects individuals in different ways.

Looking clearly at women’s and girls’ experiences leads to an analysis of patriarchy and sexism because we believe we need to get to the roots of the problems. An honest assessment of patriarchy can be hard to hear, and it can feel as if people are too easily assigning blame to individuals for what is a complex social reality. Patriarchy does not mean that males are bad and females are good, or that only males support this unfair system. Harm and injustice do not result simply from some individual choices or as the result of a few biased policies and laws. Although the acts of a single individual or group can harm others, injustice is often the result of policies, laws, attitudes, customs, habits, religious beliefs and practices, words, and images that inform and sanction individual and group actions.

As a society, we have fostered patriarchal values that have permeated and impaired our social organization, the distribution of goods and services, the application of justice, and the division of labor. The sin of sexism affects understandings of gender, employment, economics, immigration policies, and gender-based violence. It results in human trafficking, the politicization of the female body and health care, including reproductive health care.

¹⁸ See the definition of racism in *Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture* (Chicago: ELCA, 1993), 4.

606 *Everyone* participates in a patriarchal social system in some measure,
607 sometimes in obvious and intentional ways and sometimes in subtle and
608 unconscious ways. In the language of faith, we have all “fallen short of the glory
609 of God.” Only by naming sin are we boldly able to confess it and, through the
610 grace and strength of God, seek understanding and take wise action.

611
612 **9) We recognize that when society and church have spoken about women**
613 **and girls, the hidden assumption often has been that they are white and**
614 **heterosexual. However, this statement’s references to women and girls**
615 **are inclusive of all women—women of color and white women, lesbians,**
616 **transgender women, women with disabilities, and immigrant women.**

617
618 The word “women” has generally been used to refer to white women. The
619 life stories, challenges, hopes and gifts of women of color, lesbian women,
620 transgender women, women with disabilities, and immigrant women have
621 been ignored—and sometimes maligned—by government agencies, political
622 organizations, Christian communities, and even by women’s groups.

623 This statement acknowledges both the usefulness and the complexity of the
624 phrase “women and girls.” On one hand, the term “women” can be useful. It
625 names the way that social, cultural, economic, and political groups use the term
626 “women” to describe women’s experiences that differ from the experiences of
627 many men. For example, almost two-thirds of women are considered low-wage
628 earners. Using the category “women” helps name the reality that they are paid
629 less for their work, and it empowers women to demand economic justice.

630 On the other hand, “women and girls” should not be used in ways that
631 ignore the particular experiences and gifts of women of color, lesbian women,
632 transgender women, women with disabilities, elderly women, and immigrant
633 women. For example, the fact that women of different races and ethnicities are
634 often paid differently must not be lost when we refer to women being paid less
635 than men. In this statement, the term “women” is used to help women and girls
636 obtain justice, and it is not assumed that all women have the same experiences,
637 life stories, challenges, hopes and gifts.

10) We believe that many individuals who suffer under the weight of patriarchy and sexism also experience intersecting burdens. In addition to sex or gender discrimination, they may also be treated in oppressive ways according to their race, ethnicity, economic status, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, immigration status, or ability, or because of the language they speak.

We recognize that each person is uniquely created in God's image and that every person's identity is made up of different elements. One individual might be a mother, middle class, an employee, a Christian, able-bodied, a college-graduate, heterosexual, Spanish-speaking, and Latina. Some identities are seen or treated in the dominant culture as ideal (white, able-bodied, and heterosexual). Other identities often carry burdens (person of color, elderly, or lesbian).

This statement uses the term intersectionality¹⁹ to name the way certain elements of a person's identity combine and overlap, often causing greater discrimination and burden. The concept of intersectionality helps express the multiple discriminations many women face daily because of the combination of identities they carry.

For example, many women face sexism in the workplace, but a woman of color's experience in the workplace is compounded by racism. If she is also transgender, data show staggering levels of discrimination and violence.²⁰ Such experiences of multiple oppressions are widespread for many women. In one individual, multiple negative experiences can intersect, even if in varied ways.

It is important to note that patriarchy and sexism affect women and men within marginalized communities differently. Men within a similar community benefit from male privilege and often fare better than women in the same community. Intersectionality affects people differently.

19 Crenshaw, Kimberlé, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," *The University of Chicago Legal Forum* 140 (1989): 139-167.

20 See Sandy E. James, Jody L. Herman, Susan Rankin, Mara Keisling, Lisa Mottet, and Ma'ayan Anafi, *The Report of the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey* (Washington, D.C.: National Center for Transgender Equality, 2016).

11) We reject patriarchy and sexism as sinful because they deny the truth that all people are created equally in God's image. Too often behaviors and decisions rooted in patriarchy and sexism cause overt harm, inequities, and degradations. Examples include gender-based violence (including physical and emotional violence and coercion), pay inequality, human trafficking, restricted access to health care and economic resources, inadequate research on health issues affecting women, denial of educational opportunities, objectifying portrayals of women in media, and failure to value and support elderly women, mothers, and children.²¹

The effects of patriarchy and sexism diminish, damage, and often destroy people. Some obvious examples are gender-based violence, economic inequality, and inequitable access to leadership, health care, and education.

As a society, we often blame women for what happens to them because of gender-based oppression, and we often excuse their oppressors. A prime example lies in sexual violence and this society's culture of rape. Rape culture is evident in our society in the media we consume, the games we play, the male role models we idolize, the jokes we tell, our perceptions of sexuality, the prominence of dehumanizing stereotypes, and the hyper-masculinity we tolerate among men and boys. It is further evident in low conviction and penalty rates in rape cases and the high number of untested rape kits across this country.

Dominant social and religious beliefs, ideas, and attitudes reinforce a patriarchal reality and are themselves reinforced through laws, policies, and rules. Male-oriented language in religion and in society more broadly promotes bias against females and protects male privilege. As a result, people not only suffer the direct effects of patriarchy and sexism but may suffer from internalized self-hatred fostered by patriarchal and sexist views, particularly in the entertainment industry, the beauty industry, and the media.

²¹ Various ELCA social teaching documents address many of these topics: ELCA.org/socialstatements and ELCA.org/socialmessages.

693 **12) We recognize that the problems experienced by women and girls are**
694 **vast. However, patriarchal structures that reinforce and perpetuate rigid**
695 **sex and gender expectations also harm men and boys, including gay and**
696 **transgender men. Men and boys are harmed when they are forced to**
697 **conform to narrow gender stereotypes, such as those that tell men and**
698 **boys not to have traits or roles that are like those associated with women**
699 **and girls. People of all genders who do not conform to gender-based roles**
700 **and stereotypes can be made invisible and oppressed.**

701
702 Men and boys suffer when swept up in this tide of dehumanization that
703 sexism and patriarchy foster. They live in the falsehood of superiority when
704 they participate, and they are often punished when they try to resist. If they
705 do not match the ideal model of masculinity, they can be targets of hatred,
706 harassment, bullying, and violence. Cut off from emotions, activities, and
707 careers stereotyped as “feminine,” men and boys are also unable to experience
708 the fullness of life that is a gift from God.

709
710 **13) We celebrate that humans are relational beings and that we live in**
711 **social systems. The dynamics and powers in these systems are greater**
712 **than any one individual, government, culture, or religious community,**
713 **even though personal responsibility is involved. Most instances of**
714 **patriarchal harm flow from and into commonly held beliefs and customs**
715 **and can be found in specific laws, policies, and practices within secular**
716 **and church institutions. Our church’s commitment to neighbor justice**
717 **compels us to expose how patriarchy and sexism are woven into all**
718 **aspects of individual, social, and religious life, causing harm to all**
719 **of humanity.**

720
721 Social systems are necessary because we are relational beings. When
722 social systems are detrimental to well-being, the Scriptures refer to them as
723 evil “powers.” (See Ephesians 6:12 and Romans 8:38.) These powers are forces
724 greater than any one individual, community, government, or culture, and they

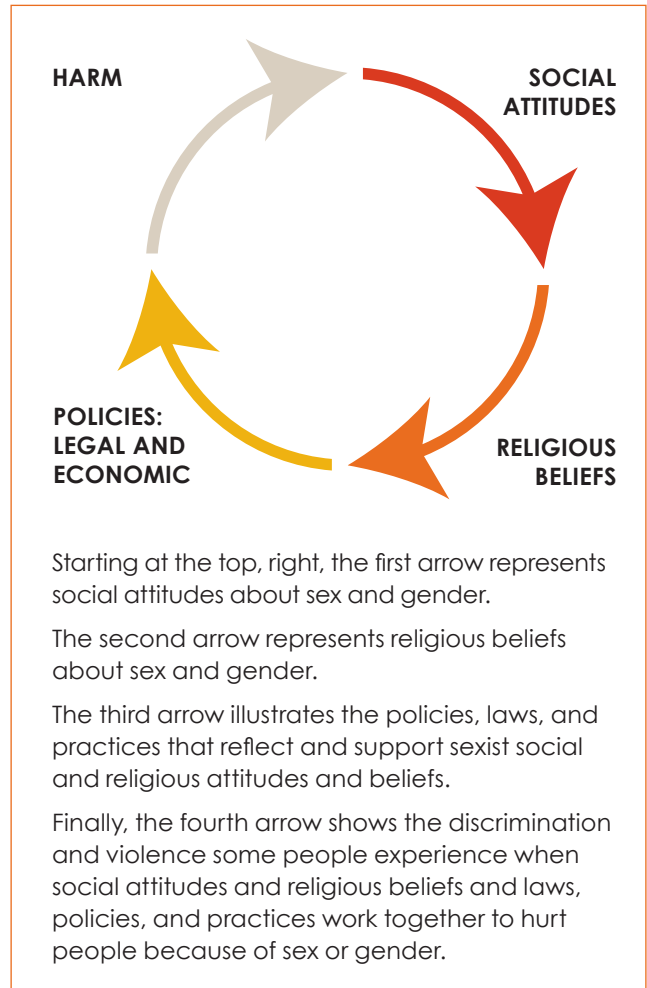
distort human flourishing. In our liturgy, we name this systemic reality in the confession: “We are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves.”

Every instance of harm, violation, coercion, or cruelty, by groups or individuals, is supported by commonly held beliefs and customs and plays out according to laws, policies, and practices.

Scriptural references to sin illuminate how the power of a patriarchal social system can be largely invisible. It is so invisible that everyone contributes in some measure. We may even hold attitudes and beliefs, and we may support laws, policies, and practices that harm ourselves. This is how powerful sin is.

This church recognizes the systemic character of patriarchy as linking social ideas and attitudes, religious beliefs, laws, policies, and practices that lead to the injustice individuals and groups of people experience. (The connections are depicted in the adjacent graphic and explained in greater detail in the sidebar.)

The underlying theme is that many social ideas and religious beliefs share the basic view that men and boys are the intellectual, emotional, and physical opposites of women and girls and are “ordered” higher.²² Current laws, policies, and practices continue to reflect this view insofar as women and girls do not experience sustainability, sufficiency, solidarity, and participation equitably with men and boys. (See Thesis 14)



²² This view is an ancient problem rooted in philosophical ideas and in some religious teachings. On this point, see David Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive: The Domestic Codes in 1 Peter* (Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1981).

A graphic cannot fully depict the complexities of sexism and patriarchy, but it offers a basis for discerning the actual interconnections that contribute to harm and injustice. Many factors weave together into a patriarchal system, creating the problems affecting women, girls, and people who do not conform to the expectations of the familiar gender binary of masculine and feminine. Our church's faith and a commitment to justice require that the discussion about and explanation of patriarchy and sexism address each element of this circle in order that we might understand the problems and seek renewed, life-giving partnerships and approaches to an equitable society.

III. Resources for Resisting Patriarchy and Sexism

14) The Scriptures show us a rich texture of justice that is central to God's intention for human flourishing.²³ This church has identified sufficiency, sustainability, solidarity, and participation as the key principles of justice. Social structures and institutions, including the ELCA as a human institution, must be assessed and guided by these principles.

While we recognize that perfect worldly justice is not possible, this church holds that efforts toward justice should be focused through the principles of sufficiency, sustainability, solidarity, and participation.²⁴ These principles guide the movement from injustices against women and girls, to justice for all those affected by patriarchy.

Sufficiency The principle of sufficiency addresses the basic needs (physical, emotional, intellectual, social, and spiritual) of women, girls, and those hurt by sexism. Sufficiency as a principle of justice means the basic needs of all women and those who depend on them should be met. It means society must work to ensure, for example, safety from gender-based violence and equitable opportunities in education and employment. The principle of sufficiency

²³ See, e.g., Psalm 33:4-5; Proverbs 28:5; Luke 18:1-8; Galatians 6:1-10; I John 3:11-24.

²⁴ These principles are present throughout ELCA social teaching and policy. Examples include *Caring for Creation*, *Economic Life*, and *Genetics*, but are found in others as well.

783 supports not only passive respect, but also advocacy in matters of health care,
784 immigration, violence, sexuality, human trafficking, and the workplace.

785 **Sustainability** The principle of sustainability compels society to provide an
786 acceptable quality of life for all generations of women. This principle applies to
787 both the emotional and material aspects of life. Both church and society should
788 evaluate how their structures ensure—or do not ensure—that livelihood and the
789 means for well-being actually sustain all people.

790 **Solidarity** Solidarity is a commitment with others and a way of seeing, being,
791 and acting. Solidarity means seeing and experiencing one's own well-being
792 as connected to the well-being of others and the communities to which they
793 belong. It often involves people aligning themselves with others who do not have
794 the same experiences. The principle of solidarity compels respect for the lived
795 experience of women and girls and encourages people to share not only in their
796 suffering but also to participate in their liberation.²⁵

797 **Participation** This principle endorses the idea that communities should be
798 structured so that women participate equitably in the decisions that affect their
799 lives in the personal, local, and governmental spheres. All people need to be
800 involved in what affects their lives. The range of decisions to which anyone has
801 access should not be limited by gender.

802
803 **15) In faith, this church is empowered to confess that Christianity in**
804 **certain beliefs, practices, and aspects of its history is complicit in the**
805 **sins of patriarchy and sexism. At the same time, we believe God provides**
806 **resources within the Christian faith and the Lutheran tradition and is at**
807 **work in human community to bring forth new ways of living that challenge**
808 **the harmful beliefs and effects of patriarchy and sexism.**

809
810 In our corporate confession, we recognize that we sin individually and
811 collectively, in word and in deed, by what we have done and by what we have

25 Martin Luther in "An Open Letter on the Harsh Book Against the Peasants, 1525," LW 46:78 writes "[Y]ou must share the community's burdens, dangers, and injuries, even though not you, but your neighbor has caused them. You must do this in the same way that you enjoy the peace, profit ... and security of the community, even though you have not won them or brought them into being."

812 left undone. We do not always live and act as God intends. The recognition of
813 our sin leads us to confession. When we confess, we give up trying to justify
814 ourselves and our actions. By grace, God forgives us and frees us from the sin
815 that alienates us from God, neighbors, and ourselves.

816 Patriarchy and sexism in the Christian Church have a long history. Although
817 women were followers of Jesus and leaders both in Jesus' lifetime and in the very
818 early church, women were excluded and vilified as Christianity grew in status
819 and wealth. Early church theologians were often misogynistic; they repeated
820 the idea that women were "the devil's gateway" and rebuked women as "a feeble
821 race, untrustworthy and of mediocre intelligence."²⁶ Throughout much of the
822 history of the Christian Church, women were therefore excluded from Christian
823 leadership, including ordained leadership; taught to be submissive in marriage,
824 church, and society; and coerced to endure violence.

825 Similar interpretation and teaching continues within global Christianity.
826 Many Christian churches continue to support the subservience and obedience
827 of women and girls to men. And Christian leaders and members worldwide
828 continue to use ill-gotten power and authority to violate women and girls and to
829 suppress their cries for justice.

830 The traditions of this church have also incarnated the sin of patriarchy and
831 sexism into the Body of Christ. For example, although there have been women
832 in ordained Lutheran ministry in the United States since 1970, there remains
833 a deep-seated assumption that leadership and the organization of the church
834 should be male-oriented.²⁷

835 We confess that our actions often reflect Christian theology and faith that
836 portray women as subservient and inferior to men. As a church, we confess our
837 complicity in the exclusion, exploitation, and oppression of those who are not
838 male. We confess not only overt complicity, but also the complicity of silence and
839 passive acceptance of patriarchal and sexist beliefs and practices.

26 Tertullian, *De Cultu Feminarum*, Book 1, Chapter 1, and Epiphanius, *Panarion*, sect 79.1, respectively.

27 For up-to-date information in recurring church studies on these issues, see the website for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. To date, reports exist from the 25th, 35th, and 45th anniversaries of the ordination of women.

840 **16) While God’s Word of Law and Gospel speaks through the Scriptures,**
841 **there are words and images, social patterns, and moral beliefs in them that**
842 **reflect the patriarchal values of the cultures and societies in which they**
843 **arose. Their continued misuse contributes to maintaining hierarchies and**
844 **patterns of inequity and harm.**

845
846 Within the ELCA, we read the Bible in ways that are grounded in our
847 heritage and that can reform sexist uses of the Scriptures. The Word of God is
848 first and foremost Jesus Christ, God incarnate. Secondarily, we encounter the
849 Word as Law and Gospel in preaching and teaching. The Canonical Scriptures
850 are the written Word of God, which proclaims God’s grace and sustains faith in
851 Jesus Christ.²⁸

852 The Word of God is living and active, and we take the written form of the
853 Word of God as the authoritative source and norm for faith. In its use as Law, it
854 provides guidance and reveals human brokenness. In its use as Gospel, it reveals
855 God’s love and promise. Christians treasure the Scriptures because in them we
856 hear the message of God’s wondrous, saving acts—especially the liberation of
857 God’s people from slavery in Egypt and the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus—
858 and God’s promise of new creation in Christ.

859 We recognize that many biblical texts originated in patriarchal cultures and
860 say things about women and girls that are problematic. In Genesis 3:16, God
861 is pictured as telling Eve: “[A]nd he shall rule over you.” Other Old Testament
862 texts illustrate chilling actions such as a host offering his unmarried daughter
863 to a mob of men who wanted to rape a Levite (Judges 19). Many Christian
864 communities struggle with how to interpret such texts.²⁹

865 The New Testament also reflects a thorough-going patriarchal culture
866 through its rules and ideals about women. “[Women] will be saved through
867 bearing children, provided they continue in faith and love and holiness, with
868 modesty” (1 Timothy 2:15). (See also 1 Corinthians 11:6.)

28 The Constitution of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2.02.

29 See *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives* (Overtures to Biblical Theology) by Phyllis Trible, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984).

869 We recognize that the Scriptures have been interpreted within our own
870 tradition in ways that accept such legalistic limits on women and girls and
871 sanction relationships of power and domination. Likewise, these interpretations
872 grant men roles that afford them agency, decision-making power, leadership, and
873 prominence in communities and societies while denying such roles to women.

874 Our tradition's complicity in patriarchy and sexism is connected to such
875 biblical interpretation and to the nature and focus of some of the Lutheran
876 theological tradition. We confess that there are problems within the Scriptures
877 themselves and that our theological tradition has led to a theological
878 understanding of humankind that is overly male-identified. These problems even
879 become idolatrous as deeply rooted but false beliefs.

880 Today this misuse of the Scriptures continues to deny equity among people
881 based on gender, as well as race and sexuality, and subverts the abundant life
882 God intends. In this sense, Christian complicity in patriarchy and sexism has
883 unhealthy roots in the misuse of the Scriptures.

884 For instance, even today some interpret it to be scripturally authoritative and
885 "natural" to deny positions of leadership in the church or in society to women.
886 They appeal to the Scriptures: "[W]omen should be silent in the churches. For
887 they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate For it is shameful
888 for a woman to speak in church" (1 Corinthians 14:34-35).

889 However, we believe God calls Christians into a different vision of unity. Jesus
890 Christ has fulfilled God's Law for us and called us to a new kind of freedom in
891 service to God and neighbor. This is not a revision of the Lutheran tradition
892 but a reaffirmation of its core emphasis. Out of the Gospel promise, we in this
893 church interpret Scripture.³⁰ This emphasis on the Gospel as God's promise and
894 the recognition of the importance of context distinguish a Lutheran reading of
895 Scripture from a literal, legalistic view that insists all passages in the Bible apply
896 to all people in all times and places.

897 When scriptural passages are unclear or even in conflict, this Lutheran
898 reading suggests that Christ, as God's gift of forgiveness, reconciliation, and new

³⁰ "The Gospel itself is our guide and instructor in the Scriptures." Martin Luther, "A Brief Instruction on What to Look for and Expect in the Gospels, 1522," LW 35:123.

899 life, is the lens through which such passages are to be read. Our church, for
900 instance, places more weight on Galatians 3:28 (“[T]here is no longer male and
901 female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.”) than on 1 Timothy 2:12 (“I permit
902 no woman to teach or to have authority over a man.”)

903 We recognize that some passages were given to God’s faithful people in
904 specific historical contexts that are quite different from our own.³¹ This is why,
905 for example, Christians no longer feel bound by certain Old Testament laws,
906 such as kosher dietary principles, or by New Testament instructions concerning
907 women’s hairstyles, jewelry, and clothing (1Timothy 2:9). The fact that many
908 passages in the Scriptures reflect the patriarchal structures and values of their
909 time does not mean that God has prescribed patriarchal structures and values,
910 and has done so for all time.

911 We seek to read the written Word guided by Christ the living Word speaking
912 today. We do so for the sake of proclaiming a life-giving word for all people. This
913 approach interprets the Scriptures with an emphasis on what the Word does and
914 frees us to read them in such a way that God’s Word can be known as genuinely
915 “good news.”

916
917 **17) The Christian theological tradition also bears this dual character. In**
918 **particular, some doctrines affect our understanding about humanity and God**
919 **more than others. These teachings affect our use of language. The teachings**
920 **about the image of God, the Body of Christ, and the Trinity have sometimes**
921 **been misused to support patriarchal beliefs, attitudes, church practices,**
922 **behaviors, and structures. At the same time, these doctrines also provide**
923 **liberating resources for healing the effects of the sins of patriarchy and sexism.**

924
925 We confess that God is infinite mystery beyond human comprehension.
926 To insist on male language can make an idol of maleness. It restricts words
927 about God, who is beyond gender, to one human category. This insistence may
928 be rooted in a false understanding of human beings as existing in a hierarchy

31 See “How Christians Should Regard Moses, 1525,” LW 35:170-172.

of gender opposites. This church commends all Christians to retrieve and reform theological language, images, and themes so that they support faithful proclamations of God's grace in Jesus Christ that are inclusive of all persons.

Theological images and themes are used in multiple ways. The same concept can be understood and applied in ways that either reinforce a patriarchal status quo or in ways that support gender justice.

The concept of "the image of God" has often been used problematically. Sometimes it has been used to describe males as a "fuller" image of God and women as a "lesser" image of God. Understandings like this have led to and still reinforce actions that devalue women.

It is more fruitful to read the creation stories as focusing on relationality. God says, "Let us make humanity in our own image." There is relationality within God's own self, there is relationality between the first humans God creates, and there is relationality between God and the humans. This provides a more generous and more fluid image that is not limited by either binary or hierarchical views of gender.³²

The maleness of Jesus has also been used as a warrant for sexism, particularly in the church. Many Christian traditions have claimed that women cannot be ministers because ministers represent Jesus, and Jesus was male. Sometimes the description of the church as the bride of Christ has contributed to this line of thinking: Since the church is imaged as female, gender complementarity reinforces the idea that those representing Christ must be male.

We must reject the idea that the maleness of Jesus is somehow related to redemption. In the original Greek, the Nicene Creed makes clear that God the Son became human (*anthropos*), not male (*aner*), "for us and for our salvation." The long-time "generic" use of the word "man" in English translations has obscured the original meaning of the Nicene Creed and has fed patriarchal biases and assumptions stemming from Jesus' maleness.

This church's understanding of the Body of Christ goes beyond the literal, physical body of Jesus. As Galatians 3:28 reminds us, the Body of Christ is

³² See Thesis 2 for more discussion on the meaning of Genesis.

959 inclusive; identity markers that we have regarded as opposites, in Christ no
960 longer hold meanings that divide us. Just as “Jew or Greek” are not the only ethnic
961 identities joined to and in Christ, so “male and female” do not limit the gender
962 identity of those joined to and in Christ. Understanding the unity in Christ of
963 persons of various identities frees us from an idolatry of the maleness of Christ.

964 Maleness has also been wrongly assigned to the persons of the Triune God.
965 While the Scriptures often refer to God as Father, and while Jesus was historically
966 male, God as such is beyond gender. When Christians rely almost exclusively
967 on male images and language for God, the images and language become literal
968 understandings of God. This is poor theology because God always exceeds
969 human understanding. Taking male images of God literally can also lead to
970 idolatry, meaning we idolize or hold onto only the male images. Our impressions
971 of God are thus limited by patriarchal ideas, for God in the Scriptures is also a
972 woman searching for a coin and a mother in labor, while also a rock, a hen, and a
973 bear.³³ Yet God is not literally any of these, either.

974 The use of almost exclusively male-identified language and images is not
975 only theologically problematic but also pastorally harmful. Taking God literally
976 as male cultivates the unwarranted idea that maleness has more in common
977 with God than femaleness and that women and girls are farther away from God
978 than men and boys are. And where does this leave people who are not male or
979 female? This is poor theology about humans.

980 Using predominantly male images of God also affects how we live together in
981 human community. If God is male, and women are less than men, then patriarchy
982 and sexism must be God’s will. But Scripture tells of something entirely different.

983 Although most Christian liturgy uses predominantly androcentric language
984 and imagery, expansive language and imagery are both scripturally rooted and
985 theologically faithful. The paradoxes and multiplicity of language and images
986 about God communicate the mystery and intimacy of the Triune God.

987 Just as we read the Scriptures within their historical contexts, we also need
988 to read Luther and the Lutheran Confessions within their historical contexts.

33 See, e.g., Luke 15:8-10, Isaiah 42:14, Psalm 89:26, Matthew 23:37, and Hosea 13:8.

Some of Luther's writings, as well as his personal interactions with women, were more progressive than his peers, but he remains a product of his 16th-century hierarchical context. Just as our fidelity to the Scriptures does not require us to conform to the social practices of the ancient Near East, being faithful Lutherans does not require us to imitate 16th-century social practices.

18) The central Lutheran belief that we are justified by grace through faith empowers this church to challenge the structures of patriarchy and sexism that ascribe value based on human standards.

A robust understanding of justification by grace enriches a Christian commitment to gender justice. We remember that justification motivates us toward justice.³⁴ Faith, active in the form of love of neighbor, is not our own doing but God's gift. We respond to and exercise God's gift by loving others. Responsive love in the world means we listen to neighbors. In society, this responsive love takes the form of justice for the neighbor in an unjust world.³⁵ Justice, then, is bound to faith because it flows from justification and is itself an expression of love of neighbor in society. This love includes gender justice.³⁶

There are three aspects of a Lutheran expression of the doctrine of justification that underscore gender justice as a concern of faith.

First, justification is wholly God's work through Christ. No particular group of humans is superior. Justification as God's act challenges the self-centeredness of self-justification, including self-justifying notions of male privilege. No particular group of humans is superior.

Second, justification frees us from bondage. Being freed in Christ involves being freed from all that tries to replace Jesus Christ as Lord in our lives, including systems of patriarchy. Instead, we are freed to recognize God's work in creation through human variation, human imagination, and human expression

³⁴ See ELCA *Church in Society* (Chicago: ELCA, 1991), 2.

³⁵ Ted Peters, *Sin Boldly! Justifying Faith for Fragile and Broken Souls* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress), 404. See Carl Braaten, *Principles of Lutheran Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 132-133.

³⁶ See also *The Lutheran World Federation Gender Justice Policy* (Geneva: The Lutheran World Federation, 2013), which expresses a Lutheran global faith-based commitment to gender justice.

1017 through gender. We are enabled to see that humans are not simply gender-based
1018 opposites and that we are not created in a hierarchy.

1019 Third, justification reminds Christians of our collective human brokenness
1020 and that God's righteousness comes to us from outside ourselves. Before God, we
1021 are all imperfect, yet God's love covers us. Remembering that this is how we are
1022 with God can affect how we see ourselves and others. We can hear and see what
1023 others need. We can be more concerned with seeing each other in all our variety
1024 and less concerned with following gender-based rules. Justification helps us to
1025 see gender justice from the perspective of faith.

1026
1027 **19) We recognize that significant progress has been made in society**
1028 **against patriarchy and sexism; however, evidence demonstrates that more**
1029 **attention is needed. Cultural and religious beliefs, practices, policies, and**
1030 **laws continue to promote inequality and inequity and continue to degrade,**
1031 **lessen, and harm people. We believe that Christians, together with many**
1032 **other partners, are able to understand and advance equity. This happens**
1033 **through beliefs and ideas that are gender just and through laws and**
1034 **policies that support an equitable common good.**

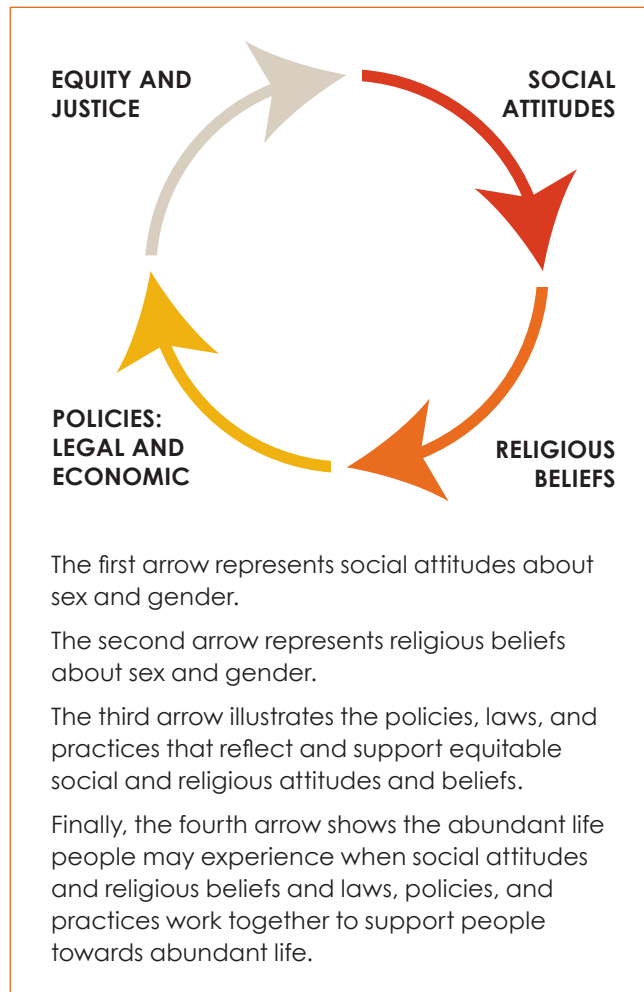
1035
1036 Significant progress has been made in U.S. society despite the continuing
1037 prevalence of patriarchy and sexism. Changes in laws have positively affected
1038 social and religious views. Contrary to cultural and Christian beliefs that women
1039 are intellectually weak and need to follow male leadership, during the 20th
1040 century, women increasingly gained rights as citizens.

1041 History also shows that positive social and religious views about gender
1042 influence laws. For example, the women's movement argued that women should
1043 not be raped within marriage. Finally, in 1993, it was illegal in all states for a
1044 spouse to rape a spouse.

1045 This country and this church have seen and supported many positive changes
1046 in attitudes and laws that have helped women and girls to thrive, but there is still
1047 more work to be done to support neighbor justice.

The circle of attitudes, beliefs, and policies indicates that change is possible and offers a strategy for this church's commitments to and actions toward justice. Working together, we can begin to transform the circle of injustice into a circle of justice.

Individuals and groups can challenge harmful social assumptions and practices, reject sexist religious beliefs, and work to change laws and policies that justify and reinforce patriarchy. When enough people—especially people of faith—work, pray, stand, and struggle together, attitudes, beliefs, laws, policies, and practices can be transformed so that all people of all genders and sexes enjoy God's vision of abundant life.



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

20) This church teaches that the God who justifies expects all people to seek justice in earthly structures and systems. Human reason and knowledge are necessary here, and this church does not presume to have quick or easy solutions for the deeply rooted and complex problems of patriarchy and sexism that have permeated these structures. Our commitments, however, express this church's firm hope that social relations can be ordered in better ways so that all people may experience greater equity and justice.

1078 The Bible is clear that the God who justifies is the same God who insists that
1079 “justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.”
1080 (See Amos 5:21-24.) The ELCA affirms that God’s Law, in its civil use, permeates
1081 and undergirds basic structures of human society to support life and protect all
1082 people in a world that remains under the sway of sin. God works through shared
1083 human endeavor and intends that all people join the work to deter evil and to
1084 seek justice.

1085 Lutheran Confessional teachings identify the overarching structures of
1086 human society—ministry, family, civil authority, and economic arrangements—as
1087 God’s gifts. Justice is the measure by which God’s law in its civil use assesses
1088 basic structures of human society with the goal of enabling people both to thrive
1089 and to be protected in a sinful world. Social structures and their institutions that
1090 fail to do justice are not fulfilling the end for which God has created them, and
1091 they must be held accountable and changed. It is a matter of great urgency when
1092 they fail to do justice and are not held accountable.

1093 Historically, and among some Christians today, these structures, and their
1094 specific gender-assigned roles and characteristics, are understood to be largely
1095 fixed and unchanging. However, this church holds that these structures are
1096 intended for the sake of human well-being and are provisional. The intent of
1097 these structures anticipates the arrival of God’s promised future, but they require
1098 continual reassessment³⁷ if we are to realize a greater measure of gender justice.

1099 In seeking the well-being of the human community, the Lutheran heritage
1100 places a strong reliance on the judgments of human reason. For the ELCA, this
1101 includes a reliance upon human reason and knowledge as tested and exercised
1102 through the sciences and social analysis.³⁸ The exercise of human reason
1103 sometimes breaks forth in social movements that, despite their own failings, can
1104 be expressions of God’s work through the Law to bring about greater measures
1105 of justice and social liberation. The women’s movement, broadly understood, is
1106 one of these.

37 *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* (Chicago: ELCA, 2009), 7.

38 *Caring for Creation* (Chicago: ELCA, 1993), 3; *The Church and Criminal Justice: Hearing the Cries* (Chicago: ELCA, 2013), 16.

In identifying areas that require attention, this church does not presume to have quick or easy solutions for the deeply rooted and intertwined complex problems of sexism and patriarchy that have permeated earthly structures. With systemic problems, the changes necessary for attitudes, laws, and structures require time and continual effort. It is both a clear biblical teaching and a matter of urgency that God's people contribute to holding governing authorities and worldly structures accountable to their purpose—ensuring greater equity and justice for all.³⁹

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America commits to:

21) Seek, support, and advocate that diverse, gendered bodies be respected, rather than objectified, abused, denigrated, or marginalized. First steps toward this goal are laws that do not deprive anyone of their human and civil rights.

The ELCA is on record in support of civil and equal rights for all people.⁴⁰ While members hold differing views on gender identity, this church is nevertheless united in holding that the objectification, abuse, and control of women's, girls', and gender non-conforming persons' bodies must be challenged and rejected. This stance is rooted in an affirmation of respect and welcome for all people as children of God.

Recognizing and honoring the goodness of diverse gendered bodies helps orient the changes and challenges addressed in the various theses that follow. First steps are laws that do not deprive people of their civil and equal rights.

22) Seek, support, and advocate for the eradication of gender-based violence, including rape and sexual assault, by acknowledging both personal responsibility and the systemic aspects of such violence. (See the ELCA's social messages "Gender-based Violence" and "Commercial Sexual Exploitation.")

³⁹ *Church in Society*, 4.

⁴⁰ "Gender Identity Discrimination," (Chicago: ELCA social policy resolution (SPR), 2013).

All people deserve safety and protection from violence, along with due process and aid when violence is inflicted. While anyone may experience gender-based violence, women, girls, and gender non-conforming individuals suffer the overwhelming percentage of incidents. While the violence may occur within intimate settings like the family, gender-based violence includes physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, or other personal harm inflicted on someone for any gender-based reason in any setting.⁴¹

Although individuals are ultimately responsible for their actions, gender-based violence is rooted in systemic sin. A patriarchal social system affirms, even if implicitly, that women and girls should be controlled or subordinated. In this way, it underwrites the justification of, or at least provides permission for, individual acts of violence. Moreover, patriarchy reinforces and often protects attitudes and values that undergird harmful action.

The wide scope of theological, pastoral, and societal matters related to gender-based violence is addressed in the ELCA's social message "Gender-based Violence" (2015).⁴² In it, this church calls upon itself—and likewise calls upon society—to engage everyone to challenge and change harmful attitudes, beliefs, and the systems involved. This social statement is consistent with the analysis, insights and commitments expressed there.

23) Seek, support, and advocate for portrayals of people in entertainment, media, and advertising that do not objectify or stereotype but rather show all people as capable of the wide variety of human characteristics and roles.

The power of entertainment and media to shape individual thought and cultural beliefs is immense and often underestimated. This church expects that entertainment and media should seek to be gender just. Far too often, what is available on screen and in print, whether in film, advertisements, or social media, continues to be centered on men and boys. Furthermore, entertainment

⁴¹ "Gender-based Violence" (Chicago: ELCA, 2015), 2, 6-7, and "Foundational documentation for a social message on Gender-based Violence" (Chicago: ELCA, 2015), 6.

⁴² Ibid.

and media often devalue or degrade females, often through unrealistic physical expectations. These expectations are frequently amplified by the beauty industry. Often unrealistic physical expectations are also put on men and boys. Media also tends to make invisible those who do not identify within the gender binary.

The work of entertainment is to provide release and enjoyment, and the work of art is to offer an interpretation of human experience as seen through the eyes of the artist that enlightens human understanding. In both cases, fixed guidelines as to what depictions degrade and what simply depict are impossible. However, this church encourages entertainment that portrays gender diversity and demonstrates that all kinds of people are capable of the widest variety of human characteristics and status. Guided by a concern for gender equality, we will ask searching questions about available entertainment and media such as:

- a) Who is portrayed in what ways and by whom? What are the predominant messages being delivered about gender roles?
- b) In what ways are other forms of identity interwoven with gender? Are these represented in life-giving and positive ways?
- c) How often are some genders or types of people portrayed as “good and strong” and others as “bad and weak”?
- d) Do those who create the predominant images and messages represent gender diversity and are they committed to edifying art?
- e) In what ways do we all participate in media representation?
- f) In what ways can our participation be consistent with our faith-based values?

24) Seek, support, and advocate for medical research, health care delivery, and access to health care services, including reproductive health care, that recognize how bodies differ and that eliminate discrimination due to gender or sexuality. (See ELCA social statement *Caring for Health: Our Shared Endeavor*.)

1193 The ELCA teaches that a just society provides equitable access to health care
1194 for all.⁴³ Health is a shared endeavor, requiring both personal responsibility and
1195 social commitment. “Health care is the kind of good most appropriately given on
1196 the basis of need.”⁴⁴

1197 The U.S. medical system is widely recognized as a global leader in amazing
1198 advances in research, prevention, and treatment. For all this we are grateful.
1199 At the same time, U.S. health care has carried a bias against women despite its
1200 advances and its practice.

1201 Historically, research and practice has assumed that the male body could
1202 be generalized to all bodies. While some researchers and practitioners have
1203 begun to challenge this assumption, it remains common that male and female
1204 differences are not factored in. For instance, the entire evaluation and delivery
1205 system of heart care has been based on the male body, even though more
1206 women experience heart attacks than men, with different symptoms than men.

1207 The bias is evident also in that U.S. health care for prenatal and maternal
1208 care, as of this writing, ranks 33rd in the world, despite being the world’s
1209 wealthiest economy.⁴⁵ Comparatively, women and their children, especially those
1210 who are poor or people of color, receive a reduced quality of care.

1211 The examples of bias could be multiplied, but the need to redress the injustice
1212 of a male-oriented health care system is clear. This church gives thanks for those
1213 who have drawn attention to these problems and urges that everyone in medical
1214 research and health care delivery recognize the legitimate needs of all people,
1215 taking sexual and gender diversity into consideration. The goal is to eliminate
1216 discrimination in the health care system because of gender, sex, sexuality,
1217 economic resources, ethnicity, or race.

1218 This statement affirms previous ELCA teaching on reproductive health care;
1219 it is most appropriately given on the basis of need,⁴⁶ and this church opposes any
1220 effort to roll back its delivery. While questions about how best to organize and

⁴³ *Caring for Health: Our Shared Endeavor* (Chicago: ELCA, 2003), 18.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Save the Children, *State of the World’s Mothers 2015* (Fairfield, Connecticut: Save the Children, 2015), 55-64.

⁴⁶ *Caring for Health* (Chicago: ELCA, 2003).

1221 finance mechanisms of care leave room for legitimate discernment, the mandate
1222 for equitable access to reproductive care for all remains compelling.

1223 The ELCA social statement *Abortion* has addressed at length in a nuanced
1224 way one critical, complex, and controversial aspect of reproductive health care.⁴⁷
1225 It teaches that the life and decisions of a woman *and* the developing life in a
1226 womb both must be respected and protected through a complex assessment of
1227 moral and social factors.

1228 On that basis, this church teaches that abortion ought to be an option of last
1229 resort⁴⁸ while opposing laws that deny access to safe and affordable services
1230 for abortions.⁴⁹ It urges this society to reduce the need to turn to abortion as
1231 the answer to unintended pregnancy and commits our community of faith to
1232 support both laws and practices that foster abundant life in all its dimensions.

1233
1234 **25) Seek, support, and advocate for economic policies, regulations, and**
1235 **practices that enhance equity and equality for women and girls, with**
1236 **special concern for raising up women who experience intersecting forms**
1237 **of oppression. (See the ELCA's social statement *Sufficient, Sustainable***
1238 ***Livelihood for All*.)**

1239
1240 Through human decisions and actions, God intends economic arrangements
1241 to enable human thriving. This church's benchmark on economic arrangements
1242 is that they should provide "sufficient, sustainable livelihood for all."⁵⁰ In terms of
1243 the U.S. economic system's delivery for women over the last 40 years, there has
1244 been important movement in this direction that must be applauded.

1245 However, economic inequality between males and females, especially when
1246 overlapping or intersecting social identities are included, remains stark. This
1247 is most evident in pay discrepancy. The current system of distribution harms
1248 women and their families.

⁴⁷ *Abortion* (Chicago: ELCA, 1991).

⁴⁸ Ibid, 4.

⁴⁹ See *ibid*, 6-10.

⁵⁰ *Sufficient, Sustainable, Livelihood for All* (Chicago: ELCA, 1999), 3.

There are various ways to think about the problem of economic inequality and how to redress it. Some approaches stress the importance of regulations aimed at equity, and other approaches emphasize the importance of market freedom. Regardless of how the problem of injustice is viewed, one fact remains: Unequal distribution is evident in our economic practices. How we address the problem of economic inequality will affect both the nature of society and the lives of women as providers and citizens.

This church expects people to be paid equitably for equitable work. There should be no discrepancies in pay or in access to capital in business and investments, and no discrepancies in access to Social Security or pensions based upon gender, sex, and sexuality, or any of the ways that factors such as race, ethnicity, and ability exacerbate the problems. When people receive lower pay because of gender identity, they are being denied the opportunity to thrive in and contribute economically to God's good world. Ultimately, all people should be paid equitably as a matter of equal rights.

26) Seek, support, and advocate for services and legal reforms that attend to the particular needs of women, girls, and boys who are physically and economically vulnerable due to migration and immigration. (See the ELCA's social message "Immigration.")

This statement affirms previous ELCA teaching and policy regarding immigration and refugees, addressed most comprehensively in the social message "Immigration" (1998).⁵¹ The ELCA's attention to the need for U.S. policy reform also has prompted numerous social policy resolutions anchored by the themes of compassionate, just, and wise reform.⁵² Those resolutions prioritize addressing the root causes of mass migration, the unification of families, and just and humane enforcement, among others.

⁵¹ "Immigration" (Chicago: ELCA, 1998). See also *For Peace in God's World* (Chicago: ELCA, 1995).

⁵² Since 2009, actions include "Toward Compassionate, Just, and Wise Reform" (ELCA SPR, 2008); "AAMPARO Strategy" (ELCA SPR, 2016); "Dream Act," (ELCA SPR, 2011); "Uniting American Families Act," (ELCA SPR, 2013); "Welcoming and Advocating for Refugees," (ELCA SPR, 2016). These and others can be viewed at ELCA.org/Resources/Faith-and-Society.

The unique plight of undocumented women and girls also must be highlighted here. Undocumented women and girls are especially vulnerable to rape and other forms of violence or degradation. This is true during their journey, when they are held within the U.S. immigration and customs system, or when laboring or living in U.S. communities. Their lack of legal standing dramatically heightens their vulnerability.

In all cases, their status as undocumented must not be an obstacle to the safety and well-being all humans need. On the contrary, their status as sojourners in this society invokes the biblical injunctions for special care and concern (Leviticus 19:34).

27) Seek, support, and advocate for multi-faceted understandings of social and economic roles so that our human traits (such as courage or care) or callings (such as business leader or stay-at-home parent) are not prescribed by gender or sex. Encourage and empower all people to use their gifts for the sake of the social good, whether in the home, at work, or in the public sphere.

In affirming the goodness of being embodied creatures and of social structures and social roles, this church does not hold that structures and roles are either utterly fluid or immutably defined by God or by nature for all time. The teaching of complementarianism (See glossary and Thesis 4.) remains common. The historical evidence is clear that many of the injustices and power inequities visited upon women have followed from that teaching.

As social beings, humans do need social structures and guidance for the roles we live out, some of which are tied to biology. Yet, social changes of the last century, like the admission of women to medicine, law, or the military, continue to demonstrate that fixed gender-assigned roles are neither immutable nor

1304 fruitful for the common good.⁵³ The appropriate question is whether and how
1305 roles and structures serve God's intent that human community flourish.

1306 There is no one principle, but the general aim is for individuals in community
1307 to seek the most life-giving balance within the structures of church, family,
1308 work or government. This church applauds when females find their place of
1309 responsibility as either the head of a corporation or as a full-time homemaker.
1310 Both are means to express one's creativity and to contribute to society's
1311 good.⁵⁴ We encourage males to explore similar versatility. Because there are
1312 many phases in each person's life journey, we also honor roles that are not
1313 compensated, such as retirement or volunteerism.

1314 Toward this end, the ELCA urges that society's laws and policies be constructed
1315 to support versatility. Thankfully, courts and legislatures no longer assume
1316 that it is only the domestic sphere that belongs to the domain and function of
1317 womanhood. Laws today are generally supportive of women's vocations outside
1318 the home, and include rights to be paid equivalently to men for the same job and
1319 to be free from discrimination based on sex, including pregnancy.

1320 But laws alone are not enough. For one thing, attitudes and fears about cost
1321 often stand in the way of practicing equity or of effective legal remedy. Where
1322 legal reforms are under consideration, however, the ELCA advocates for those
1323 laws that foster the opportunity for women as well as men to express their
1324 individual vocations and to be compensated equitably.

53 The 1872 Supreme Court, for instance, upholding the exclusion of women from law practice, cited civil law, divine ordinance and nature itself: "the civil law, as well as nature herself, has always recognized a wide difference in the respective spheres and destinies of man and woman. Man is, or should be, woman's protector and defender. The natural and proper timidity and delicacy which belongs to the female sex evidently unfits it for many of the occupations of civil life. The Constitution of the family organization, which is founded in the divine ordinance as well as in the nature of things, indicates the domestic sphere as that which properly belongs to the domain and functions of womanhood. The harmony, not to say identity, of interest and views which belong, or should belong, to the family institution is repugnant to the idea of a woman adopting a distinct and independent career from that of her husband." *Bradwell v. Illinois*, 83 U.S. 130, 141 (1872) (Bradley, J., concurring).

54 *Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All* (Chicago: ELCA, 1999), 7.

1325 **28) Seek, support, and advocate for resources for families and communities**
1326 **that empower parents, whether single or coupled, to nurture, protect, and**
1327 **provide for their household in ways that do not reinforce gender-based**
1328 **stereotypes. In particular, advocate for men to participate in all family roles**
1329 **associated with the home, caregiving, parenting, and nurturing.**
1330

1331 The ELCA continues to regard the family as “an indispensable social
1332 institution because of its role in establishing conditions of trust and protection of
1333 the vulnerable.”⁵⁵ We also recognize that families are formed in many ways and
1334 that the primary concern is how well families meet their indispensable purpose.

1335 Historically, in this society men have assumed the “headship” of the home
1336 and have been expected to be strong, to provide, to protect, and to have final
1337 authority. Typically, women have been expected to be submissive, to accomplish
1338 necessary domestic chores, and to fulfill roles considered subordinate that
1339 provide care and nurture.

1340 In support of this, Christians in the past, and many today, cite as God-
1341 assigned the so-called “Household Codes” (Ephesians 5:22-6:9 and Colossians
1342 3:18-4:1) that were borrowed and adapted by some New Testament writers from
1343 the household codes prevalent in the pagan social order of the first century.⁵⁶
1344 Indeed, gender-based rules are even presented in one letter as a form of works
1345 righteousness (1 Timothy 2:15). In non-Christian homes, male hierarchy has been
1346 (and often still is) maintained by other social or religious beliefs and customs.

1347 This church sees, by contrast, God’s intention for the structure of families as
1348 full and equitable partnerships of those responsible for the family, partnerships
1349 that can be arranged in various ways. In such partnerships, all members of the
1350 family benefit in the greatest way, as social science research indicates.⁵⁷

1351 The answer does not lie with fixed gender roles that always structure a
1352 household with a male as the head. Rather, the goal is to enable parents to

55 *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* (Chicago: ELCA, 2009), 22 and following.

56 See David Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1981).

57 Don S. Browning, *Equality and the Family: A Fundamental, Practical Theology of Children, Mothers, and Fathers, in Modern Societies* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 285ff.

share equitably in authority and to engage in roles that allow everyone to thrive. This necessarily means balancing personal strengths and interests with both the needs of work and income and the need to care for children and others in the extended family or household.

Society's economic and social structures should provide generously for parents' needs in order to support such arrangements. This includes, for example, parental leave for parents who do not give birth, as well as adequate leave for parents who do give birth. It is critical in U.S. society that we find ways to increase paid parental leave for the care of family members and increased support for child care. Additionally, parents returning to work after raising children need profession-specific attention for support and advancement.

29) Seek, support, and advocate for an increase in women's participation in local, state, and national politics, with special attention to raising up women who experience intersecting forms of oppression.

This church holds that God institutes governing authorities to serve the good of society.⁵⁸ When women are underrepresented in this country's political offices and public leadership, that good is not served. This church calls for changes in social beliefs and attitudes about women that are often at the root of their exclusion from political life and public leadership. This church likewise calls for mentoring, education, and services to families that enable women to serve. The need is especially acute for encouraging and supporting women of color and others in marginalized groups to serve in political and leadership roles.

⁵⁸ *Church in Society* (Chicago: ELCA, 1991), 4.

V. Response to God's Work:

Call to Action and New Commitments Regarding the Church

30) This church recognizes that the Body of Christ is called to honor and support women, girls, and people with diverse gender identities in ways more consistent with life-giving theology and faith practices. Therefore, as a church, we commit ourselves to celebrating and affirming the gifts and insights that women and girls bring to congregations, institutions, and the church as a whole.

This section draws out the implications of this statement's insights for promoting and supporting life in the church that fosters life-giving challenges and changes. Challenges and change rarely come quickly or easily, but together, as a church, we can address urgent needs with determination, discernment, and prayer for the Spirit's guidance. Such efforts inevitably employ the judgments of reason in discerning what changes are needed and how such changes are to be implemented. The particulars of desired changes are always open to further development and correction.

Naming these areas for discernment and action expresses our church's firm hope that life within the ELCA can be ordered in fresh ways so that all people may experience greater equity and justice. While we pursue this hope, we acknowledge the brokenness within ourselves and within the Body of Christ of which we are a part.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America commits to:

31) Promote scriptural translation and interpretation that support gender justice, acknowledge the patriarchal context in which the Scriptures were written, and reject the misuse of Scripture to support sexist attitudes and patriarchal structures.

Drawing deeply from its Lutheran heritage, the ELCA promotes an understanding of Scripture that both honors its primary purpose and

acknowledges its historical sources and contextual origin over a “supposed” literal reading. (See Thesis 17.) This approach understands that God speaks to us through Scripture primarily to sustain Christian faith and community for service to the neighbor in the world.

Mindful of the Bible’s historical context and the misuse of Scripture to support patriarchal structures and sexist attitudes, this church will promote scriptural interpretation that seeks the Holy Spirit’s life-giving word⁵⁹ rather than a literal reading of the text that deals harm and degradation. Scriptural texts in which females are degraded, terrorized, debased, or valued less than males should be interpreted in the light of God’s intention for abundant life for all people. The neighbor-justice reading should also guide the interpretation of passages that may be less obvious but implicitly impart ancient cultural beliefs and practices with respect to the status and roles of people in society.

32) Promote theological reflection that is attentive to the gender-based needs of the neighbor. Theologians need to be honest about how church teachings have been misused to support patriarchy and sexism. All teachers of the faith should express God’s desire that all persons may thrive.

This church affirms its rootedness in the Christian theological tradition while pursuing a neighbor-justice critique of language and ideas that have been roadblocks. They have been obstacles to the proclamation of the liberating grace of God through Jesus Christ and the work of God in society to bring forth greater measures of justice and equality. We encourage continued scholarly research and church discernment regarding the faithful use of:

- teaching about God and gender, especially the use of Trinitarian language and images that make clear that God is beyond gender even while recognizing that the limitations of human understanding require inclusive and expansive symbols and words;

⁵⁹ There are many different translations of the Scriptures from the original languages into different languages that are not of equal value in how they use language. Martin Luther was concerned to focus on the grace proclaimed in the Scriptures when he wrote, “You must keep your eye on the word that applies to you, that is spoken to you.” “How Christians Should Regard Moses, 1525,” LW 35:170.

- teaching about Jesus Christ and gender;
- teaching about creation and gender; and
- teaching and preaching about justification and the theology of the cross, mindful of how violence and suffering motifs have sometimes played into their explanation and application, particularly with respect to women.

33) Use inclusive language for humankind and inclusive and expansive language for God. Encourage the use of language for God that expands rather than limits our understanding of God’s goodness and mystery. In particular, we support developing liturgies, hymns, prayers, and educational materials that broaden our language beyond primarily male images. This practice follows the Scripture’s witness that God is wholly other and transcends human categories of sex and gender. Therefore, metaphors and images for God should be drawn from the lives of women and men, from nature, and from humanity in all its diversity to speak of the fullness and beauty of God.

The God revealed in Christ is beyond our human capacity to name or fully describe. Still, we must use words to pray and praise, and our experience of God is affected by the language we use. We affirm our commitment to language for God that expands rather than limits our understanding of God’s goodness and mystery.

The movement away from male-oriented wording for human beings is necessary to counter patriarchy and sexism. The use of inclusive language is at the same time more precise and shapes how we think about each other as humans.⁶⁰ The selection of particular words is powerful. The ELCA teaches that inclusive language about human beings should be the goal in both worship and everyday use.⁶¹

⁶⁰ See Kate Swift and Casey Miller, *The Handbook of Nonsexist Writing: For writers, editors and speakers*, 2nd ed. (Lincoln, Neb.: iUniverse.com, Inc., 2000). See also Krista Tippett with Jean Berko Gleason, “Unfolding Language, Unfolding Life,” On Being, podcast audio, February 4, 2016 (Public Broadcasting System), onbeing.org/programs/jean-berko-gleason-unfolding-language-unfolding-life/ (accessed October 4, 2017).

⁶¹ *ELCA Style Guide* (Chicago, ELCA, Fall 2014), 48.

1466 Religious language and imagery, likewise, matter because exclusive language
1467 and imagery have contributed significantly to patriarchal religious beliefs and
1468 practices. Because words and images *are* religious symbolism, they carry deep
1469 and unconscious meanings.⁶² Changes to religious symbolism may be both
1470 unsettling and life-giving.⁶³

1471 For instance, while God has no gender or sex, the use of either father or
1472 mother images for God may be liberating for one person but evoke deep
1473 emotional pain for another. Words and images about God express how we
1474 understand God and affect how we understand ourselves. They simultaneously
1475 carry personal, communal, historical, and ecumenical implications.

1476 Ecumenically and within our church some people think the correct way to
1477 speak of God is as “Father, Son and Holy Spirit.” Other people think it is essential
1478 to use expanded alternatives. This church recognizes that the Trinitarian formula
1479 is an issue for the universal church that requires prayer, scholarship, and
1480 extensive discernment. At the same time, this church calls upon our leadership
1481 and members to enlarge the dialogue about and practice of expansive language
1482 and images for God.

1483 Without setting fixed requirements, this church encourages people of faith
1484 to explore the rich variety of language recorded in the Scriptures and the rich
1485 imagery in religious art and the Christian theological tradition.

1486 In the same spirit, we encourage the continued exploration and development
1487 of expansive language for liturgies, hymnody, and worship resources. This work
1488 must always be grounded in the faithful message of God’s graciousness and
1489 God’s call for justice that seeks to enable all people to thrive.

62 For the effects of language, see Jean Berko Gleason and Nan Bernstein Ratner, eds. *The Development of Language*, 8th ed., Allyn & Bacon Communication Sciences and Disorders Series (Boston: Pearson Education, 2012) and Jean Berko Gleason and Sandra Weintraub, “The Acquisition of Routines in Child Language,” *Language in Society* 5 (2), (Cambridge University Press: 1976), 129–136, [jstor.org/stable/4166866](https://www.jstor.org/stable/4166866) (accessed April 4, 2016). See also Gail Ramshaw Schmidt, “*De Divinis Nominibus*: The Gender of God,” in *Worship* (March 1982): 127 and H. Frederick Reisz Jr., “Language and God: Theological and Pastoral Issues,” in *Women and Men in the Body of Christ: A Report by the Advisory Committee for the Study of Women on Women and Men in the Body of Christ* (Lutheran Church in America, 1987), 84.

63 See Lois Malcolm, “On Not Three Male Gods: Retrieving Wisdom in Trinitarian Discourse,” in *Dialog* 49 (Fall 2010): 238-247.

1490 **34) Develop and support more extensive policies and practices within the**
1491 **ELCA that promote the authority and leadership of all women within this**
1492 **church in all its expressions.**

1493
1494 In the 1970's the LCA, ALC and AELC,⁶⁴ the predecessor churches of the
1495 ELCA, made decisions to ordain women for the public ministry of Word and
1496 Sacrament. While multiple viewpoints were argued, the final decisions were
1497 largely based on the conclusion that Scriptures presented a mixed case regarding
1498 ordination and that nothing definitive prevented allowing women into this office.

1499 Since that time, the vast experience of this church has demonstrated how those
1500 decisions honored God's intention expressed in the Pentecost story of Acts where
1501 the Spirit falls equally on male and female in every leadership role. Yes, personal
1502 journeys have been difficult for many and the communal journey since 1970 has
1503 been agonizingly slow. Female participation, however, in ministries of Word and
1504 Sacrament and Word and Service and in lay leadership has borne powerful witness
1505 to the Gospel and enlivened this church's ministry in abundant ways.

1506 In light of this experience, this church gives thanks, rejoices, and remains
1507 committed to developing and supporting additional policies and practices
1508 that promote women's authority and leadership within this church. Given
1509 the continual struggles of women of color for leadership roles, the ELCA's
1510 commitments to them need special attention.⁶⁵

1511 This commitment to recognize continuing sexism and to find ways to expand
1512 female authority and leadership falls to the entire church: call committees,
1513 boards and councils, the election of bishops and other leaders, formal and non-
1514 formal mentoring and succession planning, educational practices in seminaries,
1515 colleges and universities, pre-schools and grade schools, the ELCA Lutheran
1516 Youth Gathering, and youth ministry. Together this church can joyfully open
1517 itself to the work of the Spirit by using the gifts and contributions of women

64 The Lutheran Church in America, the American Lutheran Church, and the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches, respectively.

65 See 45th Anniversary of the Ordination of Women (Chicago: ELCA, 2016), download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/45th_Anniversary_of_the_Ordination_Women_Ordained_Full_Report.pdf?ga=2.5082804.664826014.1507055211-471709994.1462479885 (accessed October 4, 2017).

who have clearly demonstrated that they can enable and empower the various ministries of this church.

35) Promote changes that are economically just, including equal pay, for women in all ELCA institutions and organizations, with special attention to the situations of people affected by intersecting forms of discrimination.

In support of women's authority and leadership, this church must continue to seek new ways to promote changes that redress the economic injustice that shows, slowly, signs of abating.⁶⁶ As of this writing, women ordained to Word and Sacrament ministry in the ELCA earn on average more than the national average of ordained women, but their pay remains inequitable. Attention to the issue of equitable benefits and pay is needed across the entire ELCA, not only in congregations.

Secondly, greater support for women's ministry and leadership entails the development of more adequate arrangements related to pregnancy, parental leave, and lactation for ELCA rostered leaders and for employees of ELCA-related organizations and institutions. Such arrangements would support both leadership and commitments to families.

36) Seek and encourage faithful discernment and, where possible, joint action with other members of the Body of Christ and inter-religious and secular partners on issues of patriarchy and sexism. This includes the affirmation of the Lutheran World Federation's Gender Justice Policy and continued dialogue with national and global ecumenical and inter-faith partners.

Governed by the framework established in this social statement, we in this church acknowledge our responsibility to continue addressing our own actions and attitudes, policies and practices as one member in Christ's visible church. At

⁶⁶ Ibid.

the same time, we recognize that seeking theological understanding and faithful action through the Holy Spirit for church and society is an ongoing project of Christ's whole church. It is a project in which we are to "hear, understand, and consider with love and graciousness everyone's judgment, opinion, and beliefs."⁶⁷ In that spirit, this church is committed to faithful discernment, together with fellow members and churches of Christ's Body, in the areas identified here, and we invite them to join us in common action when possible.

While the ELCA rightly attends to the issues of patriarchy and sexism domestically, we know that the global nature of these problems affects women across the world. The examples are many. For instance, while women are 40 percent of the world's work force, they own 1 percent of the world's wealth.⁶⁸ Some 28.7 million are forced into sexual slavery,⁶⁹ and in many places women cannot hold political office.

In a world of expanding globalization, ELCA leaders in official capacities and ELCA members in their everyday lives encounter cultural commitments and perspectives quite different from those taught by this statement. In facing these differences, there is a challenge to be clear regarding ELCA concerns about sexism and patriarchy, to hear the call for ongoing renewal from all quarters of global Lutheranism, and, at the same time, to build relationships of understanding. The ultimate point is to engage in discernment together as God's people and to challenge each other to greater justice while accompanying women and girls in their own context.

In this regard, the ELCA is grateful for the guidance provided by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), and affirms the Gender Justice Policy created and affirmed by the federation. While this statement grows out of our cultural context, this church regards the foundation, principles and methodology in the LWF policy as a global benchmark for conversation and efforts toward common

⁶⁷ Preface of "Augsburg Confession" in *Book of Concord*, 30.

⁶⁸ The World Bank, "Gender Equality and Development," in *World Development Report 2012*, (Washington, D.C.: The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank, 2011).

⁶⁹ This figure includes forced labor, forced marriage and commercial sexual exploitation. See "Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage," (Geneva, Switzerland: International Labor Organization, September 2017), 9-11, http://www.alliance87.org/global_estimates_of_modern_slavery-forced_labour_and_forced_marriage.pdf (accessed October 10, 2017).

1575 practice. In a spirit of mutual accountability consistent with the Lutheran
1576 heritage's commitment to "mutual conversation and consolation,"⁷⁰ we look
1577 forward to mutual support and accompaniment in implementing the LWF Gender
1578 Justice Policy with the global Lutheran community.

1579 In a similar spirit, we invite ecumenical partners, especially full communion
1580 partners, to journey with us on the road to gender justice in church and
1581 society. The fundamental biblical commitment to justice for women, even when
1582 understood in different ways, should undergird and guide our common attention
1583 to concerns about patriarchy and sexism. Our hope is for conversation that
1584 is transformative, providing a foundation for common actions toward justice,
1585 equity, and equality for all. In those areas where we are not of one mind in our
1586 discernment, we will continue to walk together in the bond of Christian unity,
1587 seeking afresh the Spirit's leading.

⁷⁰ "Smalcald Articles," *Book of Concord*, 319.

Glossary

Androcentric: Male-centered.

Complementarity: The idea that men and women have inherently separate roles and purposes.

Equity: Fairness or justice in the way people are treated that accounts for different contexts and factors to ensure each person is not inadvertently disadvantaged.

Freedom (Christian): This is a freedom for serving the neighbor in need empowered by God's grace as we trust that we do not have to justify ourselves and do not need to earn God's love through actions or behaviors.

Gender: How someone acts and looks; categories into which cultures and societies separate behaviors and characteristics that are usually linked to a person's biology. The most common gender identities are woman and man, but other identities exist.

Gender binary: The concept that there are only two genders which are distinctly different in inherent ways.

Gender identity: How a person understands their gender; one's internal sense of one's gender.

Gender just: Describes something that promotes justice in matters related to gender.

Gender justice: Removing power imbalances among people on individual and societal levels and discrimination against people who do not adhere to stereotypes associated with men and women.

Gender non-conforming: Refers to people whose gender identity and/or biological characteristics do not completely fit with the dominant and expected ways of acting as a man or a woman. There are many identities and experiences included under the umbrella of gender non-conforming, for example, transgender people, those born with ambiguous genitalia, or those who do not express their gender in traditional, expected ways.

Gender-based violence: Physical, sexual, psychological, emotional or other personal harm inflicted on someone for gender-based reasons, including but not limited to intimate partner violence or violence among family members. This can include things like catcalling women or bullying boys who are not perceived as "adequately manly."

Heterosexism: The systematic discrimination, exclusion and oppression of people who are not heterosexual.

Human trafficking: Also known as modern-day slavery, people who are trafficked are coerced, abducted and/or imprisoned for forced labor, often of a sexual nature.

Hyper-masculinity: A term for exaggerated masculine behavior or traits that emphasize physical strength, aggression and sexuality and deemphasize emotions related to caring and vulnerability.

Idolatrous/Idolatry: Given to placing something as more important than God.

Inclusive and expansive language: Inclusive language refers to the inclusion of all genders when referring to humanity or God, for instance, using “humans” to talk about humanity, rather than “men.” Expansive language for God also includes language and imagery that is not limited to humanity.

Intersecting/intersectionality: Human identities that are tied to systemic privilege and oppression can intersect with one another and shape the unique ways that people experience aspects of life. These identities have to do with sex, gender, sexual orientation, age, ability, race, ethnicity, nationality/citizenship, social class, economics and religion, to name a few. All human identities and all forms of privilege and oppression are made up of many intersections.

Justice: Generally, justice refers to an underlying sense of fairness, right treatment and reciprocity. Various forms of justice include: retributive justice, corrective justice, distributive justice, restorative justice, structural justice, fair or equal treatment under the law, ending oppression based on power differences. In this statement, the term justice emphasizes the last three meanings but always with the biblical emphasis on justice as right relationship with God and within community.

Law and Gospel: Central principles in the Lutheran Confessions and other teaching to interpret and apply the Scriptures. Both law and gospel are God’s Word. The terms refer not only to the content of the Scriptures but to how God’s Word affects us when we read or hear it. God’s law addresses us in two ways or “uses.” One exposes our sinfulness and puts the old creature to death; the other provides direction for how we are to live in society. The gospel is the good news of Jesus Christ, which we receive through faith as the gift of forgiveness and new life.

Lutheran Confessions: Documents written by Lutheran reformers during the 16th century that provide a foundation for Lutheran theology and practice. One example is the Small Catechism.

Misogyny: The hatred of women.

Neighbor justice: A concept proposed in this draft for scriptural interpretation that emphasizes seeking the neighbor’s good for the sake of justice for all.

Objectification: Thinking of or portraying a person as an object, erasing their humanity, emotions and rights.

Patriarchy: The social, institutional, legal, political, educational, economic, religious and interpersonal systems of society that benefit men and the interests of men with status and power. While all people within a patriarchal system participate in it, the system functions with men at the center. This means that, sometimes unconsciously, people participate in systems that control and oppress people who do not fit society’s ideas of maleness and masculinity.

Privilege: Advantage or special treatment of a group or individual that is unearned but comes from the fact that their identity is perceived as “normal” or “better.”

Rape culture: An environment in which the objectification and assault of human bodies is normalized and tolerated, particularly in a sexual way. Rape culture primarily harms women and girls.

Reproductive health care: Health services related to the reproductive system at all stages of life for all genders, including the menstrual cycle, fertility and cancer.

Sex (biological sex): Refers to physical characteristics of genitals and gonads.

Sexism: That which promotes and perpetuates male privilege.

Sexuality: The romantic and/or sexual attraction experienced by a person, often categorized by the genders to which they are attracted. The ELCA views sexuality as a gift from God.

Theology of the cross: Martin Luther's conviction that God is revealed in the suffering and crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

Transgender: Describes a person whose gender is different from their assigned or identified sex at birth.

Vocation: In Lutheran theology, vocation (or calling) refers to God's call to all people to live responsibly in their roles within the world God has made, serving their neighbors within the areas of family, work and community life. All people have multiple callings that are lived out in various settings and relationships.

Works righteousness: The idea that a person is made right with God because of actions they do, often called good works.

Notes

Notes

Response Form

If you would like more room to fill out the questions, please feel free to attach additional sheets or fill out the survey online at bit.ly/womenandjusticedraft.

What did you think of the draft statement overall?

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

The draft statement reflects what I think the ELCA should say about women and justice.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree

☐☐☐☐☐

Comments (Please refer to specific line numbers as you are able.):

The Basic Statement of the draft (pages 1-9) is clear and easy to read.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree

☐☐☐☐☐

Comments (Please refer to specific line numbers as you are able.):

The Fuller Explanation section of the draft is a valuable deeper look at the Basic Statement.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree

☐☐☐☐☐

Comments (Please refer to specific line numbers as you are able.):

The draft statement equips ELCA communities to address gender justice issues in their ministries.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree

☐☐☐☐☐

Comments (Please refer to specific line numbers as you are able.):

Where did the text speak most powerfully or directly to you and your life experience? (Please include line numbers as you are able.)

Is there anything you think should be added to strengthen the draft statement?

Is there anything you think should be removed to strengthen the draft statement? (Please include line numbers as you are able.)

What did you think of each section of the draft?

Please rate how valuable each section of the draft statement was.

Basic Statement:

	Not at all <u>valuable</u>				<u>Very valuable</u>	<u>Didn't read</u>
Our Common Foundation (lines 1-34)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I. Core Convictions (lines 36-75)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
II. Analysis of Patriarchy and Sexism (lines 77-127)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
III. Resources for Resisting Patriarchy and Sexism (lines 129-166)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
IV. Response to God's Work: Call to Action and New Commitments in Society (lines 168-221)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
V. Response to God's Work: Call to Action and New Commitments Regarding the Church (lines 223-264)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hope for Justice (lines 265-285)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Comments (Please include line numbers as you are able.):

Fuller Explanation:

	<u>Not at all valuable</u>				<u>Very valuable</u>	<u>Didn't read</u>
I. Core Convictions (lines 288-575)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
II. Analysis of Patriarchy and Sexism (lines 576-762)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
III. Resources for Resisting Patriarchy and Sexism (lines 764-1066)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
IV. Response to God's Work: Call to Action and New Commitments in Society (lines 1068-1376)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
V. Response to God's Work: Call to Action and New Commitments Regarding the Church (lines 1377-1587)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Comments (Please include line numbers as you are able.):

To what extent did you find this format, The Basic Statement followed by the Fuller Explanation, useful?

Not at all

Very

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Were there any terms in the draft which should be more clearly defined or added to the glossary?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes – What are they?

Who are you? (This helps us better understand from whom we're hearing so that we can ensure we hear a wide range of voices.)

Age

- 19 or younger ☐
- 20-29 ☐
- 30-39 ☐
- 40-49 ☐
- 50-59 ☐
- 60-69 ☐
- 70-79 ☐
- 80 or older ☐

Education: What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? If currently enrolled, highest degree received.

- Eighth grade ☐
- High school diploma, GED or Associate degree ☐
- Bachelor's degree ☐
- Master's degree ☐
- Professional degree ☐
- Doctorate degree ☐

Gender

- Woman or girl ☐
- Man or boy ☐
- Gender non-conforming ☐
- Not listed above – Please specify below ☐

ZIP code

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2 2 2 2 2

3 3 3 3 3

4 4 4 4 4

5 5 5 5 5

6 6 6 6 6

7 7 7 7 7

8 8 8 8 8

9 9 9 9 9

Ethnicity or Race

- African American / Black ☐
- African National / African Caribbean ☐
- American Indian / Alaska Native ☐
- Arab / Middle Eastern ☐
- Asian / Pacific Islander ☐
- Latinx / Hispanic ☐
- Multiracial ☐
- White ☐



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

Ordering Information

Prepared by the ELCA Task Force on Women and Justice: One in Christ

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ITEM #: ELCAOB1021

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This document is available online at [ELCA.org/womenandjustice](https://elca.org/womenandjustice).

To order a single, complimentary printed copy of this document, call 800-638-3522. Multiple printed copies may be ordered from the ELCA Online Resource Catalog for a nominal fee at [ELCA.org/resources](https://elca.org/resources).

You are invited to share your response to the draft in two ways.

1. You may use the response form near the back of this booklet, or share your comments in letter or essay form. Please send them to the task force at the address below by Sept. 30, 2018.

ELCA Task Force on Women and Justice
Office of the Presiding Bishop
8765 W. Higgins Rd.
Chicago, IL 60631-4101

2. You may, instead, respond online at bit.ly/womenandjusticedraft or email your comments to womenandjustice@elca.org.

You also are invited to participate in hearings on the draft, which will be held in many synods.

Information and dates for these hearings will be posted at [ELCA.org/womenandjustice](https://elca.org/womenandjustice). You also may contact your synod office for further information.



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