

CORE's Support to ELCA Orthodox Pastors

by [Pr. Dennis D. Nelson](#), Executive Director of Lutheran CORE

Someone recently asked how Lutheran CORE supports faithful, confessional, orthodox ELCA pastors who are serving in orthodox ELCA congregations. It is a good question. In this article I will seek to answer it.

First of all, I would want to say that when I speak of confessional, orthodox ELCA pastors who are serving (or did serve) in orthodox ELCA congregations, I am also speaking of myself. I am ELCA rostered. I served the same congregation (first ALC, then ELCA) for forty years before my retirement in June 2014. So I will also be speaking of ways in which Lutheran CORE was of support to me during my years of ministry.

CORE's Calling

Let me also say at the beginning that we feel that part of our calling as Lutheran CORE is to alert people to ways in which orthodoxy is being threatened in the ELCA. We inform people of ways in which the ELCA is not keeping its promise to honor also the traditional view of marriage and human sexuality. But we do not believe that faithfulness in the ELCA is impossible, though we are extremely concerned about the diminishing number of faithful, confessional, orthodox ELCA pastors as so many of them have retired, are retiring, or soon will retire. *Our role is to support those who are working to be faithful in the ELCA, those who have decided that being faithful requires them to leave the ELCA, and those who are in the process of determining how God is calling them to be affiliated.*

**Faithfulness
in the ELCA is
not impossible.**

Support

Having said that, I will now list a number of ways in which CORE seeks to support confessional, orthodox ELCA pastors who are faithfully serving in ELCA congregations.

- Assurance that you are not alone. Connection with many others who share your concerns and are engaged in the same struggles.
- Providing a [closed Facebook group](#) in which you can engage in conversation with like-minded people. Both page and group are named Lutheran CORE.
- Resources for [worship](#), including prayers and hymn suggestions.
- [Daily devotionals](#).

- Our annual [Encuentro](#) – a day of support, connection, fellowship, inspiration, and resources for those who already are involved and for those who are considering becoming involved in bi-lingual (English-Spanish) or Spanish language ministries.
- Some day you will retire or resign to take another call. Through our [Congregations in Transition](#) ministry initiative we are training a group of (mostly retired) Lutheran pastors to serve as coaches for congregations who are between pastors who either do not have an interim pastor available to them or do not have the resources for an interim pastor.
- [Clergy Connect](#) – a resource on our website through which congregations that are looking for an orthodox pastor and pastors who are looking for another call can find each other.
- Through our pastoral formation project, addressing the critical issue of the looming clergy shortage, especially the looming extreme shortage of orthodox clergy and seminary graduates for ELCA congregations.
- Guidance in evaluating ELCA communications, such as the social statement on [Women and Justice](#).
- Articles in our bi-monthly [newsletter](#), CORE Voice, on such topics as how to share the faith with people who are hostile to the Christian faith and how to communicate in a way that is relevant to technically sophisticated, younger generations.
- Representation to ELCA leaders. We have advocated for traditional views in our communications to the presiding bishop and the synodical bishops concerning such things as the [Supreme Court decision regarding same sex marriage](#), the choice of [keynote speakers](#) for last summer's youth gathering, and recent state legislation regarding [abortion](#).
- An idea that has not yet come together - setting up a way in which orthodox students at ELCA seminaries and recent orthodox seminary graduates can make connections and support each other.

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The author of the letter to the Hebrews wrote, “Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us . . . run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.” (12:1-2) *Our goal as Lutheran CORE is to help you look to Jesus and to run with perseverance the race that is set before you.*