

**No Way to Slow Down**

by *Pr. David Charlton*, Lutheran CORE Board President  
 and NALC pastor in Florida



This January marks the end of my term as President of Lutheran CORE. I have been on the board of CORE since 2019. In that time, my own congregation held a successful vote to leave the ELCA. As a result, the fate of the ELCA will not have a direct impact on me and my congregation. Nevertheless, with the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly approaching, I wanted to share some final thoughts about the denomination of which I was a part for 35 years.

When I think about the direction of the ELCA in 2024, the words “no way to slow down” come to mind. In case you don’t recognize those words, they come from the song *Locomotive Breath* by the rock band Jethro Tull. It tells the story of a runaway train. The refrain says, “Old Charlie stole the handle / and the train it won’t stop going / no way to slow down.”

I have begun to wonder whether the bishops of the ELCA are less like the engineer of the train, and more like the unwilling passenger. In my interactions with bishops and various other church leaders over the years, they always seemed to have a standard response to any question about the future of the ELCA. Whenever I would share a concern, the answer I would get was, “Don’t worry. That will never happen.”

Are you concerned that “bound conscience” will be ignored, or worse yet, rescinded? “Don’t worry. That will never happen.” Are you afraid that ELCA pastors will be required to preach and teach in

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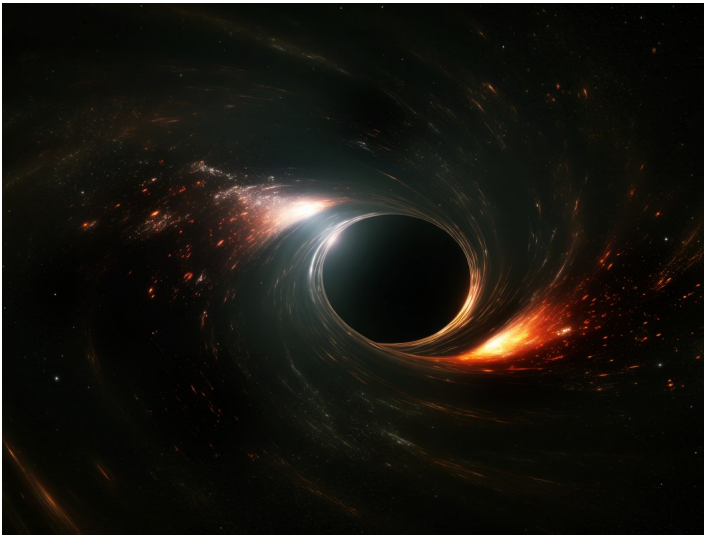
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# Reconsiderations: More Than “Simply Editorial”

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



The 2022 ELCA Churchwide Assembly passed two resolutions that called for reconsideration of the 2009 social statement, “Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust.”

- Reconsideration #1: A review of specific text references that “would consider the import that marriage legally is now a covenant between individuals;” review specific wording “in light of public acceptance of marriage of same-gender and gender-non-conforming couples;” and “consider references to diversity of family configurations.”
- Reconsideration #2: A fresh consideration of the “church’s current concept of the four positions of bound conscience” found on pages 19-21 of “Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust.”

The task force that has been appointed to work on these reconsiderations will have recommendations for the 2025 Churchwide Assembly regarding Reconsideration # 1. They describe these recommendations as “simply editorial.” After the 2025 Assembly the task force will begin work on Reconsideration # 2. This work will include recommendations which have been described as substantive.

The task force has released draft edits related to the first reconsideration, and the public comment period on these draft edits is open until January 31. The following resources can be found on [www.elca.org/Reconsiderations](http://www.elca.org/Reconsiderations).

- A copy of the entire social statement with draft edits underlined and highlighted
- A document with Explanations of the Draft Edits,

which helps connect each draft edit to the authorization from the 2022 Churchwide Assembly

- A conversation guide for groups
- A survey for people to submit their feedback on the draft edits

The task force has also updated the FAQs on the webpage. Most of the resources are available in Spanish and large-print.

The task force will review the feedback at its next meeting in mid-February. You can email comments or questions directly to the task force at [reconsiderations@elca.org](mailto:reconsiderations@elca.org), but they would prefer that people fill out the survey at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/8PMDXQM>.

I am very grateful for the two opportunities I was given to have conversation via zoom with the two churchwide staff members who are working with the task force. I found them very easy to talk with and very respectful of my views and concerns. When I was asked what hopes I had for the process, I told them that I have no hopes for the process. Rather it is obvious that from the beginning there have been powerful and preferred voices who have been working relentlessly to eliminate the provision for bound conscience and that if they do not succeed this time they will not stop until they eventually succeed. Also I believe that when the ELCA does finally eliminate the provision for bound conscience, it will be committing a massive breach of trust.

Please join with me in praying for the friend of Lutheran CORE who is a member of the task force. Pray that he will be bold in his witness and clear, articulate, effective, and compelling in his contributions to the discussion.

I encourage friends of Lutheran CORE who are still in the ELCA to participate in this feedback process. There are basically two things that I have to say about changes being recommended as part of Reconsideration # 1. I have sent this communication to the leaders of the task force as my response.

## Comment # 1

The original 2009 social statement was 48 pages in length. The document containing recommendations related to Reconsideration # 1 is 51 pages in length. True, the recommended changes are clearly highlighted and the “Explanation of the Draft Edits” is only 11 pages in length. But why are ELCA social statements always so long, convoluted, and complex? How many people – what percentage of people – do

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## Accountability

by [Pr. Brett Jenkins](#), NALC pastor from Pennsylvania and former board member of Lutheran CORE



In my [last article](#) I detailed a way you could tell that “Progressive Christianity” was in fact an alternative to Christianity, namely that it held different things sacrosanct and considered other things blasphemous than Christians have since Apostolic times. This month I will note another way in which we can see this truth demonstrated—to whom and for whom progressive Christians feel responsible.

In a recent [Core Christianity podcast](#), Pr. Adriel Sanchez detailed an encounter he had with a “progressive Christian” pastor. According to Pr. Sanchez, this pastor (who goes unnamed in the broadcast) was the author of a book arguing that the Bible does not proscribe homosexual behavior and that the Church had used the classic prooftexts in this regard to abuse same-sex attracted people since its inception. Since the pastor was a neighbor, Pr. Sanchez had acquired and read the book. His critical evaluation was that the “way in which he was approaching the Scriptures was incorrect; that rather than just letting them speak for themselves and understanding them in their context, he was twisting them and allowing—essentially—the current cultural social ethic to drive his interpretation of the Bible.”

Nothing too radical here. This kind of critique of another theologian has characterized necessary dialogue within the Church in every era, from Irenaeus to the present day, on issues as diverse as whether Christians can ethically serve in the military to the nature of Christ’s Deity. Indeed, though Pr. Sanchez has the advantage of time since the incident and not being engaged in a debate while presenting his story, he shows no non-verbal animosity while presenting his critique.

When he happened to have a chance meeting with this author in a local coffee shop, it seems that the conversation he engaged was handled civilly, if

coolly, until Pr. Sanchez challenged the author on an issue core to their identity as pastors rather than mere theologians, pastoral rebuke as an expression of spiritual care. Pr. Sanchez asked him, “As a pastor, when you have someone in your church whom you believe is doing something that you do think is sinful—maybe they’re abusive to their spouse or maybe they’re stealing or whatever it might be—how do you confront them lovingly as a pastor while challenging the sinful behavior?” At that point his interlocutor after a moment of apparent shock said, “I can’t believe you asked me that question. That was an offensive question to ask me, and [essentially] you should be ashamed of yourself.” When Pr. Sanchez then tried to explain that he really did want to understand the other pastor’s position, the supercilious author declaimed, “No; you need to understand that you are offensive, and you need to accept that... and this conversation is over.” Upon which he stood up and left.

I do an extensive treatment of this episode in my own [podcast](#), but to summarize my observations, the pastor who walked away from the conversation with Pr. Sanchez clearly did not feel accountable to him as a fellow clergyman or Christian, a member of the “One Holy *Catholic* [Universal] and Apostolic Church.” The issue of how to deal with these texts is a lively issue throughout the worldwide Church with most Christians (read: *non-Western* Christians) siding with Pr. Sanchez, but the other pastor still presumed to speak to him as a person possessing authority over him; “you *need* to understand... you *need* to accept.”

In what hierarchy did the author of the book possess more authority than Pr. Sanchez? Clearly not the hierarchy of the Church. To what community standards did this pastor feel accountable? Whose good opinion did he crave or perhaps fear losing? Again, not those of a Church whose existence preceded him and that will endure until Christ “comes again in glory to judge the living and the dead.” Did he by walking away from a conversation with a fellow bearer of the name of Christ show love for him, reason together with him, or even engage him in the sort of loving rebuke Pr. Sanchez queried him about to such great offense? Did he even from his own point of view show love for the same-sex attracted individuals whom Pr. Sanchez might encounter in the course of his ministry?

No, the community to which and for which this pastor felt accountable was clearly not the “beloved community” of those baptized into Christ but rather defined in some other way.

Though they were heretics, Arius, Valentinus, and Pelagius knew that their primary accountability was

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## Leadership: Wisdom and Innocence

by [Pr. John Mohan](#), pastor of St. Luke Lutheran Church, Bloomsburg, PA (NALC)

“Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.” (Matthew 10:16)

Our Lord gave these instructions to the 72 as he “sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go” (Matthew 10:1). I often think of these words when I attend an ordination. I don’t focus on the “sheep in the midst of wolves,” although that can certainly be true. Instead, I pray that the newly ordained may be “wise as serpents and innocent as doves.” It’s a lesson every pastor needs to learn.

“What is the wisdom of the snake?” Dallas Willard asks in his classic *The Divine Conspiracy*. “It is to be watchful and observant until the time is right to act. It is timeliness. One rarely sees a snake chasing its prey or thrashing about in an effort to impress it. But when it acts, it acts quickly and decisively. And as for the dove, it does not contrive. It is incapable of intrigue. Guile is totally beyond it. There is nothing indirect about this gentle creature. It is in this sense ‘harmless.’”

Imagine being able to act at just the right moment in just the right way to build up the body of Christ. That’s what came to mind recently as I listened to a newly ordained pastor process some early challenges in her first call. She described two different situations that involved important ministries with key leaders involved, and she wanted to engage in appropriate ways to move the ministry forward without creating conflict. The time seemed to be right, and she brought a servant’s heart to the work. But what should she do?

She shared her thoughts with a group of people trained in discipling cultures, so we naturally began using a tool called the Discipleship Square. This tool describes the experience of growing in faith and what kind of leadership style best supports a disciple’s growth. The four stages (thus a square) are as follows:

**D<sub>1</sub>/L<sub>1</sub>** – The initial stage marked by excitement and enthusiasm. The disciple doesn’t know what they don’t know. The appropriate leadership style is directive since disciples have little depth or experience. “I do, you watch.”

**D<sub>2</sub>/L<sub>2</sub>** – A stage marked by a lack of confidence. The disciple knows what they don’t know. The appropriate leadership style is persuasive as disciples



begin to gain understanding while experiencing doubts regarding their abilities. “I do, you help.”

**D<sub>3</sub>/L<sub>3</sub>** – A stage marked by growing confidence. The disciple knows what they know. The appropriate leadership style is collaborative as disciples gain experience and begin to lead. “You do, I help.”

**D<sub>4</sub>/L<sub>4</sub>** – The last stage marked by self-confidence and natural ability. The disciple doesn’t know what they know. The appropriate leadership style is to delegate since the disciples have mastered the specific ministry and effectiveness comes naturally. “You do, I celebrate your work.”

While the Square is a very helpful description of how novice disciples move toward maturity, *it is an even more powerful tool*

*when used by a leader to engage an existing ministry that needs help.* My colleague above was dealing with one ministry whose leader was willing, but didn’t know what to do. The pastor needed to use persuasive leadership

(L<sub>2</sub> “I do, you help”) to keep the disciple engaged while he learned the skills necessary. The other ministry had a leader who knew what to do but had lost some confidence. The pastor needed to use collaborative leadership (L<sub>3</sub> “You do, I help”) to restore the disciples’ confidence in their existing ability.

Blessedly, both situations had disciples who understood the mission of the congregation, so my colleague didn’t have to shut down a ministry to begin again from scratch, but do you see the danger? If we engage a ministry with the wrong leadership style, we can create conflict, damage people, and set the mission of the church back significantly. But if we get it right, and engage appropriately, we can grow disciples and build up the body of Christ.

The Discipleship Square helps me get it right when I need to be as wise as a serpent and as innocent as a dove.

**If we engage a ministry with the wrong leadership style, we can create conflict, damage people, and set the mission ... back significantly.**

## ELCA- Focus

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

Please check out the new page on our website, “ELCA Focus,” which brings together in one place a large number of resources and articles regarding the ELCA. It is intended to help pastors, lay leaders,



and congregations become aware of and prepared for the dramatic changes that are anticipated from decisions that will be made and actions that will be taken by the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly. A link to that page can be found [here](#).

There are three sections to the page – “What Is the Issue?”, “Stories from Churches”, and “Relevant Articles.”

“What Is the Issue?” ([LINK](#)) contains links to the websites for the Lutheran Congregational Support Network, the ELCA’s Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church, and the DEIA audit which the ELCA had done of its governing documents. The page also includes a link to my evaluation of a communication from an ELCA synodical bishop where he totally dismisses the legitimate concerns that people have about anticipated coming changes. You will also find a link to power point slides that were used by the Reformers group of one ELCA congregation to inform their fellow members regarding issues within the ELCA.

If you have not yet checked out the Lutheran Congregational Support Network, we urge you to go to their website - <https://lutherancongregationalupportnetwork.org/> Their goal is to provide a means to inform ELCA congregations of coming constitutional changes in the ELCA and to help congregations be prepared and know how they can respond.

“Stories from Churches” ([LINK](#)) contains links to actual accounts of pastors, churches, and lay leaders that have experienced the heavy-handed tactics of synods.

“Relevant Articles” ([LINK](#)) contains links to articles previously published by Lutheran CORE. I do not see how anyone could read several of these articles and not say, “Something is very, very wrong.”

We hope this resource is helpful for you and that you will share it with others.

## Free ILT Evangelism Class

by [Mr. Joel Williams](#), Institute of Lutheran Theology (ILT)



## STANDING AGAINST THE TIDE

**PT 400/500: EVANGELISM – Rev. Mark Mattes, Ph.D.**

Build your confidence in sharing Christ with others, especially the unchurched. Whether layperson or pastor, student, faculty, or brand-new to ILT, all are invited to be a part of this groundbreaking course.



Explore opportunities to spark congregational outreach, along with hands on experiences of sharing Christ one-on-one and through social media. Attend presentations from skilled pastor/evangelists who will help you creatively strategize effective outreach. Pastors are not expected to be the sole evangelist in their congregations. Instead, pastors are encouraged to model a life of witness and lead a team creating momentum for outreach. This promises to be a life-changing course. Sign up for this invaluable course at no cost! Classes meet on Thursdays from 6 pm-9 pm [CST] this spring semester [starting January 23, 2025].

To learn more about these opportunities, contact Joel Williams at [jwilliams@ilt.edu](mailto:jwilliams@ilt.edu), or call (605) 392-9337.

## Vision Casting for Church Leaders

by [Dr. Brian Hughes](#), Lutheran CORE Board Vice-President (NALC)



*Editor's Note: Click [here](#) to register for Lutheran CORE's next free webinar, Vision Casting for Church Leaders, led by the author.*

*During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. Acts 16:9-10*

An extraordinary vision launched St. Paul into new territory, setting the stage for a world history changing ministry despite all the challenges that would follow. Every movement in Christian history has followed the same pattern including the path taken by our own Martin Luther. God shows a way forward and believers do something about it. "What is God saying to me and how will I respond?" becomes the basis for a different trajectory because the inverse is also true: "Where there is no vision, the people perish" Proverbs 29:18. Vision is the place where tomorrow is shaped. Vision draws in excitement, motivates believers, and determines what may be accomplished. Vision inspires creativity and is a catalyst for innovation. Vision points to a future possibility. And then comes Monday morning and we're already exhausted.

Our mutual challenge is this; statistically, according to a research study by George Barna, four percent of pastors have a Vision for their communities. I would suggest the other ninety-six percent of us also have a Vision, but it's a Vision maybe not as clearly articulated to inspire motivation in a congregation. Personally, I think Barna asked the wrong questions. In a lengthier tome we could dig into the results of spiritual gift inventories and note how few of us have

Apostle as our primary gift set (they love taking new territory and Vision seems to leak out of their pores) and how/why the bulk of us test out as Pastors/ Teachers. No surprise, yes? We are emotionally and spiritually committed to the people who called us. That's what it means to be called – caring for those who invited us into that role of leadership and understand our roles as pastoring and teaching.

Living with integrity requires an openness to lean into the negative, see past the frustration and ask, "Why is this my reality?" That is the pivot point for all manner of Holy Discontents. Then what? This is not throwing shade at the theological systems which formed us, but were we taught next steps? I know I wasn't, at least not initially, and I don't claim to be an expert in how to teach others to discover their own, but I have learned a few things over the years about how to hear and effectively cast one. Much of that came from the Beeson Institute for Church Leadership, sadly a three-year program no longer available at Asbury Seminary and I thank Dr. Dale Galloway for having the vision to have launched it.

What does an implemented Vision look like?

One example: It happened in Orinda, California and the congregation I was serving. Both of our kids were in school in Moraga, CA.

**Why doesn't my church look like my kids' friends?**

Their friends would come over for play dates or we'd drop them off to visit. One Saturday I noticed our backyard looked like a tiny version of the UN. There were kids from nearly every ethnic background running around and happily laughing and then it hit me – **why doesn't my congregation look like my kids' friends?** So it began. In Orinda we welcomed a Korean ministry among us which eventually led to their pastor teaching at Luther Seminary. That vision never left and when the family ended up in Columbia, Maryland the same Vision continued. I felt a call to that community precisely because it was so ethnically diverse and we ended up with nine services a weekend in five languages with the Ocansey Royal Family of Ada, Ghana blessing me to become an honorary chief and my wife an honorary queen mother. A simple challenge that I heard from Christ, "Why doesn't my church look like my kids' friends?"

What's God saying to you? And if you want to do something about it, how will you cast the Vision for it?

Please register and join us [online](#) on Wednesday, February 19th for our vision casting webinar.

## Untrustworthy Faith: Good As Your Word?

by [Pr. Douglas Schoelles](#), NALC Pastor in Indiana and Lutheran CORE Board Member



Is your word any good? Like the Old Westens, “My word is My bond.” We like to think we are people of our word. We make a concerted effort to follow through and do what we said we’d do. We want to be seen as straight-shooting, trustworthy folks who keep their promises.

When someone doesn’t keep their word to us we get irritated, don’t we? Of course! With politicians, we just expect them to break their promises. We are disappointed when companies break their policies, their promises. We are hurt when someone breaks their word. Broken promises break our trust.

The Bible speaks about “giving your word” as making an oath. Like the president and other officials take an oath, a promise, to faithfully execute the responsibilities of their office. An oath is a solemn promise, often invoking a divine witness, regarding one’s future action or behavior.

We know first, that sometimes making an oath can get you into trouble. Like when King Herod who swore an oath ended up cutting off the head of John the Baptist (Mt 14:6-10). Or the time Peter perjured himself, swearing an oath that he didn’t know Jesus (Mt 26:72).

But more realistically, we know we often break our promises. In today’s world, if something better comes along, people will do what they can to walk away from their prior commitment. We break our promises to friends, our children and our spouses. If we are painfully honest with ourselves, we admit that we are not always true to our word.

Because the LORD is a God of His Word, the church is a community where we make many promises. Every time you say the Apostle’s Creed you are making a promise that you believe in God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit over every thing else. If you

were married in the church you promised to make Christ an active part of strengthening your marriage. When a child is baptized, parents make promises to bring their children to worship regularly and raise their children as Christ followers. When we do Affirmation of Baptism on the Sunday of the LORD’s baptism, you make a public profession of your faith, a promise, that you intend to continue in the covenant God made with you in Holy Baptism (LBW, p.201). We make lots of promises in the church. When we do, we are not making promises to the Church, but to God.

And we know. We break our oaths to God. Although we expect God to be faithful to us, we make excuses for why we are not. We rationalize why it’s okay to break our oath, our covenant, with the LORD.

We should know that God holds us to our word:

“When a man makes a vow to the Lord or takes an oath to obligate himself by a pledge, he must not break his word but must do everything he said.” (Num 30:2, see also Deut 23:21, Ps 116:14)

And again:

“When you make a vow to God, do not delay fulfilling it; for he has no pleasure in fools. Fulfill what you vow.” (Eccl 5:4, see also Ps 22:25, 50:14, 66:13.14, Ezek 16:59 and Matt 5:33-37)

Yet, God makes a way for us sinners who don’t keep our word, who don’t stay true to the Word. Even though we distrust and despise his WORD, the LORD is always faithful. Even if we are faithless, he remains true. (2 Tim 2:13) Our God is a God of His Word. “For no word from God will ever fail.” (Lk 1:37) The LORD swears an oath on His own glory to be our God and to be with us (Deut 29:12-13, Deut 31:23). So, the LORD sends His Word in the Flesh. The Word and Promise of God is incarnated in Christ who willing takes up the Cross. The Word in the Flesh takes on all our unfaithfulness upon the cross to give us God’s Word, give us God’s faithfulness.

God makes a way for us oath breakers so that by trusting in the Word Made Flesh we are made faith filled. As we trust in the Promise Giver and Promise Keeper, we are empowered to walk in his Word. We become the faithful in Christ.

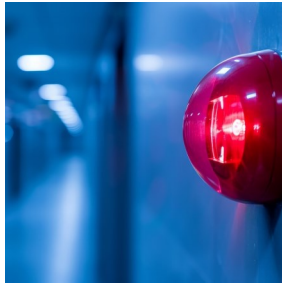
May the LORD’s unfailing love, your salvation, come to you, according to His promise. (Ps 119:41)

Your servant in the Gospel,  
Pastor Douglas

## No Way to Slow Down

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accord with ELCA social statements? “Don’t worry. That will never happen.” Are you afraid that the ELCA will close congregations and seize their assets to fund the church’s bureaucracy? “Don’t worry. That will never happen.”



That is what we are told. However, I also remember being told that the group “Naked and Unashamed” was a fringe group that would have no influence on the ELCA. I remember being assured that seminary faculties would not be purged of those holding to orthodox teaching on marriage, the Trinity, Christology, or salvation. I remember being assured that ELCA Advocacy would defend the right of religious organizations to adhere to traditional teachings on marriage. All of those assurances proved to be empty.

In 2019, one of the primary demands of “Naked and Unashamed” was met. The ELCA removed the requirement that unmarried rostered leaders remain chaste and abstinent from Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline. At least three seminaries have seen purges of faculty or staff take place. ELCA Advocacy declined to publicly support the freedom of religious institutions to follow their bound consciences in regard to marriage.

Why do bishops resort to such empty promises? You could argue that they are simply dishonest. That may be true in some cases. However, I think that explanation is too easy. I think it might be the case that the bishops are afraid. They are afraid to tell people the truth. First of all, they are afraid of what will happen to the ELCA if too many people decide to leave at the same time. Secondly, they are afraid of what will happen to them if they tell the truth. There is an unnamed group of people who will make life very difficult for any bishop that steps out of line.

Who are these unnamed people? I can’t say for sure. All I can say is that there is a sense in which the ELCA is a runaway locomotive that is outside of the control of its bishops. Someone else is at the throttle and the brake handle has been stolen. Even if a wreck is imminent, some think it is better to keep the passengers calm. That’s why groups like Lutheran CORE have to sound the alarm.

**...it might be the case that the bishops are afraid ...**

## How Can We Be Sure of Salvation?

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

Many thanks to Dr. Mark Mattes of Grand View University, Des Moines, Iowa, for the video recordings of the lectures he recently gave on how we can be sure of our salvation. These lectures were given at Lutheran Church of the Master in Corona del Mar, California, where Russell Lackey serves as pastor. Until recently Russell was campus pastor at Grand View.



Mark Mattes has been a Lutheran pastor for 38 years. He served congregations in Illinois and Wisconsin and has taught theology at Grand View University for over 29 years. He has authored and edited numerous books in theology and has lectured both across the country and in various parts of the world.

Concerning the theological and spiritual significance of his presentation, Mark wrote, “Many Christians look not just to Christ for the assurance of their salvation but also to changed behaviors, such as a greater engagement with prayer, Bible study, and witnessing. They have a ‘checklist’ for evidence of conversion and ask you to mark off your progress in spiritual growth.”

In this presentation Mark shows us that this approach is simply not scriptural. “The Bible tells us that Jesus alone is sufficient for our salvation. If we look to changes in our lives and not to Christ alone, we jeopardize our assurance of salvation. Anxiety, not security, is found when we look to the quality of our faith or righteousness for comfort. Growing in devotional practices is a good thing but it does not guarantee our salvation. Nothing other than Jesus can secure those consciences anxious about God’s judgment.”

After watching these videos and reading his book on the same subject, “Ditching the Checklist,” I told Mark, “What you are saying I wish I had heard sixty years ago. It would have saved me so much stress and anxiety.”

Here are links to his two YouTube videos.

- Link to [part 1](#)
- Link to [part 2](#)



## Reconsiderations: More Than ...

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they really think will thoroughly and carefully read, analyze, and evaluate all those pages? It is easy to wonder whether the reason for so much verbiage is to include things in all those words and pages that people will not catch.

Comment # 2

I do not believe that the task force is being accurate when it calls the recommended changes in Reconsideration # 1 “simply editorial.” Nor was a January 7 communication from the Theological Ethics Staff of the Office of the Presiding Bishop accurate when it described them as “small word changes that update the text without changing its meaning.”

To support that claim I would point to the resolution’s calling for changes “in light of public acceptance of marriage of same-gender and gender-non-conforming couples.” The key phrase is “gender non-conforming couples.” The 2009 social statement affirmed publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same sex relationships. The new wording being recommended goes beyond that as it considers “lifelong, monogamous relationships of same-gender or gender-diverse couples” (page 19 of the “Human Sexuality Social Statement Draft Edits”). On the same page it speaks of “life-long, monogamous relationships between individuals of diverse sexes, genders, or sexualities.” A footnote on that page defines “gender diverse” as encompassing “a wide diversity of identities and expressions in relationships between individuals, including gender non-conforming, non-binary, genderqueer, and transgender persons.” That kind of change is far more than “simply editorial” and “small word changes” that do not change the meaning.

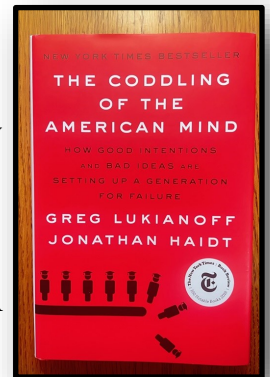
True, the recommended revised version still says, “The predominant historic Christian tradition has recognized marriage as a covenant between a man and a woman, reflecting Mark 10: 6–9” (page 15). It also states, “The Lutheran Confessions assume and reflect this understanding of marriage” (pages 15-16). But it is neither the Scriptures nor the Confessions that inform the recommended changes, but “public acceptance of marriage of same-gender and gender-non-conforming couples.” Those with traditional views knew that the ELCA would not stop with what was approved in 2009. Nor will it stop with what is now being recommended in this revised social statement.

**The key phrase is “gender-nonconforming couples.”**

## Video Ministries—Review of “The Coddling of the American Mind”

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

Many thanks to LCMC pastor Daniel Ostercamp for his video review of the book, “The Coddling of the American Mind: How Good Intentions and Bad Ideas Are Setting Up a Generation for Failure,” by Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt. A link to Daniel’s review can be found [here](#). A link to our YouTube channel, which contains over four dozen reviews of books and videos on topics of interest and importance, can be found [here](#).



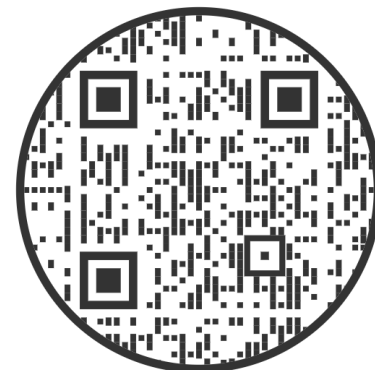
Regarding the book, Daniel writes –

Successful societies find ways to teach their youth the timeless wisdom needed to build good lives. In this thoughtful and accessible book, a free speech lawyer (Lukianoff) and a social psychologist (Haidt) demonstrate how a generation of Americans is being set up to fail.

Three “Great Untruths” have become part and parcel of our educational process. Safetyism has replaced our innate need for challenge and stressors, the false advice to “always trust your feelings” has curved us ever more inward upon ourselves, and our political decisions have morphed from being based in our common humanity into a call to identify and eliminate our common enemies.

“The Coddling of the American Mind” provides a warning of the end station of good intentions and a pathway to renew our commitment to knowledge and truth.

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## March for Life and Y4Life Conference in January!

by [Dennis Di Mauro](#), pastor at Trinity Lutheran Church (NALC) in Warrenton, VA.



The NALC Life Ministries team is once again preparing for the March for Life in Washington D.C. this January, but our plan is a little different. Instead of holding a life conference, NALC Life has decided to team up with Lutherans for Life (LFL) and participate in their events at the March! Their youth conference, Y4Life, will be held at the Hilton Arlington Landing Hotel (2399 Richmond Highway, Arlington, VA 22202) from Thursday, January 23rd, 2025 through Saturday, January 25th, 2025 and it has over 400 kids already registered (register at <https://y4life.org/event/y4life-in-washington-d-c-january-23-25-2025/>) We encourage all our NALC youth to participate in this free conference.

On Friday, January 24th we will be once again participating in the March for Life under the NALC banner, and I hope you can join us at 12th and Madison Sts., N.W at noon as we march to the U.S. Capitol. Before the march there is a prayer service at DAR Constitution Hall 1776 D St. NW (18th and D St.) Washington, DC 20006 starting at 8:30am. All our NALC members are invited to attend this service and our clergy are invited to participate (stoles are white). If you have any problems at the march, please contact Pastor Dennis Di Mauro at (703) 568-3346. Pastor Di Mauro can also host you in his home if you would like to stay overnight in DC. We can't wait to see you in our nation's capital this January!!

## Accountability

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to the Church of Jesus Christ. Though history has judged them to be in error, they fought for what they seem to have sincerely believed was its good and perhaps even what was necessary for the salvation of its members. Indeed, they garner the appellation “heretic” only because they so earnestly fought for and remain accountable to the life of the Church Her-self—because they are at least erstwhile Christians.



I believe that Progressive Christianity functionally (if not formally) quickly ceases to be Christian in any historically recognizable way precisely because of what this pastor's behavior demonstrated, that it considers itself—and more importantly, the Church's proclamation—accountable to standards that originate outside the Church and people whose lives are lived beyond its bounds.

## Coming Events

- **Free Evangelism Course—Online ILT class—** Taught by Mark Mattes. Starts 23 January, 2025 and meets on Thursdays 6-9pm (CST). Enroll [here](#).
- **Free Webinar “Vision Casting”** — February 19, 2025 from 11 am—12 pm EST. Click [here](#).
- **Free Webinar “Grief and Change”** — March 19, 2025 from 11 am—12 pm EST. Details TBD.
- **Free Webinar “Organizational Structure and Succession Planning”** — April 23, 2025 from 11 am—12 pm EST. Details TBD.
- **BYLD: Building Youth As Leaders Who Are Disciples of Christ**—Geneva College, Beaver, PA. July 7-12, 2025. Click [here](#).
- **2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly**—Phoenix, AZ. July 28 - Aug 2, 2025. Click [here](#).
- **NALC Lutheran Week 2025**—Pittsburgh, PA. August 3, 2025—Aug 8, 2025. Click [here](#).
- **LCMC 25th Annual Gathering & Convention** — Lakeville, MN. October 5-8, 2025. Click [here](#).

### CORE Voice Newsletter

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