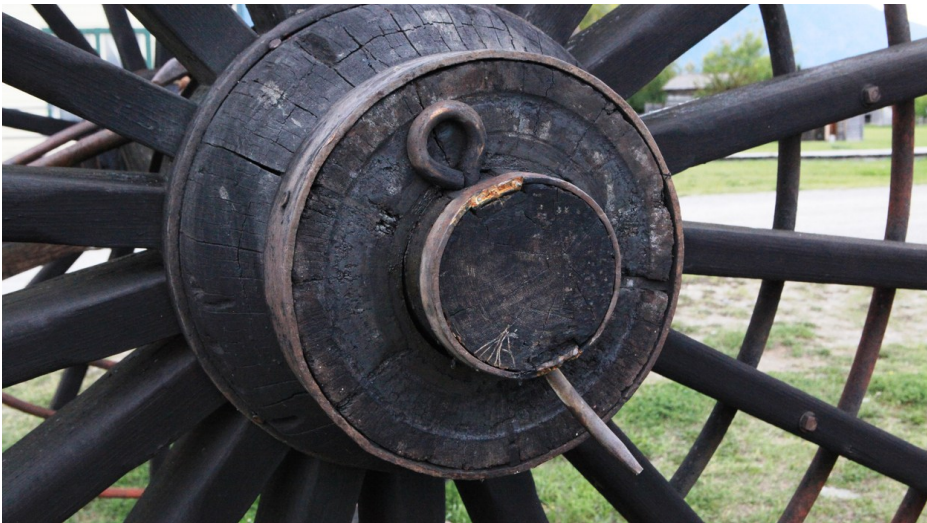


When the Quiet Part is Said Out Loud: Our Journey to Disaffiliation from the ELCA

by [Pastor Larry Becker](#), member of the board of Lutheran CORE, pastor of Westchester Lutheran Church, Los Angeles, California (NALC)



There were **three linchpins** that were integral to my departure from the ELCA. The first linchpin, the so-called “**Bound Conscience**” statements, kept me from leaving the ELCA for over 15 years with the belief in the lie that the ELCA was some kind of “big tent,” with room purposely made for biblical conservatives along with progressives. It was, of course, a lie intended to stop the mass exodus of conservatives and others, but it was convenient for me to believe and promote. I told myself that as long as I could preach and teach from a biblically conservative and confessional theological position without interference, I would remain in the ELCA. Why risk damaging a church when there was no interference or pressure? As the years went on, this self-deception wore thin and I felt less and less welcome and safe in the ELCA.

This Bound Conscience (BC) linchpin was exposed and readied for pulling at the 2022 Churchwide Assembly, when it was decided that BC needed to be “reconsidered.” Conservatives who already had diminished trust levels in the ELCA interpreted this as meaning that BC would be neutered or eliminated. When asked about what this meant, we were typically told that the language would be “updated,” “aligned with current understanding of issues,” or even “aligned with Federal DEIA guidelines” (except when it was pointed out that DEI was being eliminated throughout the federal government).

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2009 to 2011: My Congregation's Disaffiliation Journey

by [Pr. Don Brandt, *Congregations in Transition*](#) and
[Congregational Lay-Led Initiative \(CLI\)](#)

Back in the fall of 2009, shortly after the ELCA national assembly actions created so much controversy, my congregational members were already leaning toward disaffiliation. In fact, my co-pastor and I took a quick Sunday-morning written survey in the fall of that year to confirm our sense that the majority of members disagreed with the new ELCA policies. Sure enough, two-thirds disagreed with the national assembly's actions.

However, the leaders of our church knew that two-thirds disagreeing was a “far cry” from eventually convincing *more* than two-thirds to vote—twice—to leave the ELCA. Furthermore, we were part of the Oregon Synod, and in our synod only four out of its 110 congregations ended up even pursuing disaffiliation. And our congregation—Our Savior's—ended up being one of only two churches to eventually *succeed* in disaffiliating.

So as we began a one-year education process on the relevant issues surrounding disaffiliation, the goal was to do everything possible to minimize our losses at our first official vote; which ultimately took place in February of 2011. Below are the major strategies we pursued on the way to our congregational votes; both of which ended up being over 90% supporting disaffiliation.

The first strategy was to learn from the experience of other congregations that either succeeded, or failed, in their disaffiliation process during the year 2010. For those who failed we learned the principle of not voting until you know, with a high degree of certainty, that you will have at least 80% of members supporting your exit from the ELCA. Why 80%? Because many of those who show up to vote against disaffiliation will in all probability eventually leave your congregation. And we wanted to minimize the number of people we would lose due to this ELCA-instigated controversy. Also, we wanted to acknowledge that a pre-vote guesstimate of the vote results on our part might prove to be overly optimistic.

So how did we insure—prior to the vote—that we would have at least 80% of members voting in favor? By conducting an anonymous, mail-in survey where both members in support *and* in opposition would be motivated to participate in our survey. This mail-in survey, conducted in January of 2011, resulted in 84% stating that they would, at a special congregational meeting, vote for Our Savior's Lutheran to leave the ELCA.



And what did we learn from congregations that failed in their disaffiliation vote? We learned that the traditional and quaint principle, “don't count your chickens before they hatch” was applicable to this situation. A case in point: One of the two Oregon Synod churches which had already failed in their effort in early 2010 had miscalculated in their assumption that an overwhelming percentage of their members were so upset with the ELCA that they were ready to vote for disaffiliation in January of 2010. But this large congregation ended up—with about 400 members attending their special congregational meeting—just seven votes short of two-thirds! In other words, the clear majority of the over 400 members voting ended up on the “losing” side! So for us the lesson learned was the necessity for 1) an extended pre-vote education process, and 2) having a high level of confidence as to the vote outcome based on a thorough, advance mail-in survey. (Note: for smaller churches, informal face-to-face surveys will usually suffice when it comes to an accurate prediction of your formal-vote outcome.)

A second major strategy related to our one-year education process. We decided to focus on the centrality of Scripture in the life and teaching of the church, and not as much on LGBTQIA+ issues. Our primary emphasis was on this fact: there was and is no scriptural support for the actions of the national assembly in the summer of 2009.

Our third strategy was emphasizing to our members that the ELCA national assembly actions were taken unilaterally, and without the support of a majority of ELCA congregations. In fact, the only national survey of ELCA congregations, before the assembly vote, showed that a clear majority of the congregations were in opposition to the recommended policy changes. And yet ELCA national church leaders went ahead and supported these changes anyway.

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GO Into the GAP

by [Pr. Brett Jenkins](#), Pastor of Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, and Dean, NE Mission District, NALC



Once the endless meetings, insulting slurs, character attacks, hurt feelings, and procedural difficulties involved in leaving one ecclesial community and entering another are over, the remaining congregation members are often fatigued. Yet they are often galvanized by the process' inevitable conflicts and are more committed as disciples of Jesus Christ than ever. They hope that the Lord will reward their faithfulness by swelling their ranks, securing their sometimes-tenuous finances, and allow them to return once again to whatever is identified as the golden age of the congregation's life.

The Lord, in His mercy, rarely does this, at least in any easily recognizable, straightforward way. The process of reaffiliating for the local congregation is always, to a larger or smaller degree, a traumatic one. Before a congregation is ready to properly disciple a significant number of people, there is usually work the Lord needs to do within us first. There is a gap between what we were and what we will need to be for the mission the Lord has planned for us. I want to encourage anyone facing this to GO intentionally into that GAP:

Go deep with God: Lutherans confess that the Spirit uses God's Word and Sacraments to create and sustain saving faith in the hearts of people and thereby constitutes the Church. As Luther avers, it is only in this way that we are "called, gathered, enlightened and sanctified." Don't do generic Bible studies but do some focused on God's promises and power related to healing, mission, and yes, even vengeance upon those who persecute His people (having one's character assassinated by people you love is a real, though mild, form of white martyrdom). Let the Lord's Word be a branch thrown into the oft unspoken tension, pain, and ennui into the bitter

waters of church hurt and make them sweet.

Open your heart to the new thing the Lord wants to do: Paul's ministry changed radically after he was called by Jesus. Your congregation has been called by Jesus too, and it is not likely that He has called it to do basically what it has done in the past, just with purer doctrine. This is not because local traditions are bad or change is good, but because if Jesus has called you into a new denominational affiliation, it is for the purpose of *mission*, and the mission field is always in flux. Indeed, learning that the mission field lies at our doorstep rather than in other countries is a radical thing for many long-established congregations. Please note that what I am issuing here is not a call to radical change, but rather to radical *openness* to God's leading.

Get to know your mission field: Don't assume you know your community's spiritual needs. Remember, when you ASSUME, you make an ASS out of U and ME. As a Gen X'er I typically assume that Christianity's chief rival is atheism. For those under 40, it is *paganism*. Does your congregation's ministry take this into account? What are the socio-economic pressures with which your visitors are dealing? What are the most common family dynamics and dysfunctions? Learn what people will need in your context to become good Christian disciples apart from orthodox doctrinal commitments.

I am issuing a call to radical openness to God's Leading.

Align yourself with what God is already doing: Ministry changed for me and my congregation when we stopped having a plan to reach people and started recognizing what the Lord was already doing with those He was gathering, then putting our time, talent, and treasures behind that. "Unless the Lord builds the house, the laborer works in vain."

Patiently wait for God, then move decisively: Don't let anxiety about the future push your congregation to waste energy on mission to which the Lord is not calling you. The Church's only mission is the Great Commission, but your congregation is not *the* Church. Your congregation is *a* church, and God is not calling you to do everything. Instead of trying to reach some group or create some ministry that leadership thinks is essential to the congregation's long term survival, trust the Lord with your future. It may be that the ministry everyone thinks critical must have the foundation the Lord wishes to provide *now*.

GO into the GAP without fear, for it is not the valley of the shadow of death, but rather God's way of teaching you trust on the way to the green fields and still waters for which He has claimed you.

The Hard Work of Honoring the Eighth Commandment

by [Pr. Chris Johnson](#), Secretary of the board of Lutheran CORE and associate pastor of Zion Lutheran, Wausau, WI (LCMC)



The Eighth Commandment: *You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.*

What does this mean? *We should fear and love God so that we do not tell lies about our neighbor, betray him, slander him, or hurt his reputation, but defend him, speak well of him, and explain everything in the kindest way.*

When was the last time you defended your neighbor's actions in the kindest possible way? It's not a very common thing we see done today. But was it ever a very common thing to do? In the charged atmosphere we live in today, a time and an age in which things are "hardening and narrowing and coming to a point...getting sharper and harder" (*That Hideous Strength*, chapter 13, C.S. Lewis), to speak well of others, especially those we vehemently disagree with on theological or philosophical or political grounds, it makes one wonder if it is even at all possible to do so. It makes one wonder if it would even be prudent to do so. After all, "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven...a time to keep silence, and a time to speak" (Ecclesiastes 3:1, 7). But there is God's Law staring us in the face: "You shall not bear false witness." As always, the Law gives no wiggle room. The Law, that hammer of God (Jeremiah 23:29), crushes as it is intended to do. Or, as Saint Paul once so shockingly put it, the letter of the Law kills (2 Corinthians 3:6).

We cannot explain away the 8th Commandment no matter how tempting it might be. Those who are opposed to the truth, those who do not think Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6), those who do not take into consideration or blithely ignore that love rejoices with the truth (1 Corinthians 13:6), can-

not be expected to follow this divine command. But we who are of the truth, we who teach and will be judged with "greater strictness" (James 3:1), take the yoke upon us to honor all the commandments including the one here in focus, the 8th Commandment.

What others cannot and will not do (and can we expect them to?), the Church and her people must absolutely do to the best of their ability. Again Saint Paul (Romans 12:18): "If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all." So how, dear Christians, might we defend our neighbor's actions in the kindest possible way that we may so live peaceably? As we obediently follow the Lord's commandments as seen and given us in the Ten Commandments, think about the following paragraphs.

As we are all aware, on September 10th this country, and millions throughout the world, saw the assassination of Charlie Kirk. The fallout of his murder has motivated some to come back to Church. God be praised for this! The fallout of his murder has also hardened the consciences of others, convinced that what he said was hateful and that he deserved what happened. What I have noticed, and perhaps you have too, is that those who hated this man – a champion for freedom, encourager of young men, encourager of discussion and debate on any topic, and defender of Christian values and principles – have not watched very much of what he said in his various dialogues and debates with people. Often all that has been seen by those who despised Charlie Kirk is a snippet, a viral quote, something taken out of context in a longer answer to a question. And for others, they don't even want to listen to the man himself but are simply taking it as gospel from someone else that he was a mean, bigoted man.

To honor and follow the 8th Commandment, perhaps we can think about some questions: What motivates someone to paint someone else (like a Charlie Kirk) as hateful, as deplorable? Why would they not want to interact with the one they deem as a bigoted teacher so as to disprove them? Whom have they been listening to and what books have they been reading? Why does this person you know or work with or are related to feel so strongly against a Charlie Kirk? Against the moral precepts of the Church? What has been their experience of the Church? Of the Bible? Have we read dissenting opinions with which we vehemently disagree and learned from them? Am I just as much in an echo chamber as those with whom I disagree? Is there anything redeemable, anything that can be spoken well of, in viewpoints or opinions

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Orthodox Lutherans on the Frontlines of Advancing the Gospel

by [Rev. John Lomperis, Director of Education and Development for Petros Network](#)



Amidst Lutheranism's many recent challenges, we must celebrate where faithful Lutherans continue making a great difference for Jesus Christ.

The world's largest, reportedly fastest-growing Lutheran denomination is the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY). Its membership of 12 million is roughly twice as large as all American Lutherans and many more than all Lutherans in the historic strongholds of Norway, Sweden, Estonia, Iceland, and Latvia *combined*. The EECMY, also known as the Mekane Yesus Church, is [in full communion with the North American Lutheran Church](#), and hosted the 2018 [Global Confessional & Mission-al Lutheran Forum](#), where leaders of the EECMY, NALC, [Lutheran CORE](#), and other faithful Lutheran bodies developed [a declaration of shared orthodox Lutheran faith](#).

Meanwhile, Petros Network has developed a proven methodology of working with theologically orthodox Protestant denominations in Ethiopia to train and equip their church planters to make disciples and establish denominationally connected, financially self-sustaining congregations, *entirely* in “unreached” areas. These are often places where people have never heard the Gospel. On average, these new churches each plant 2.5 additional “second-generation” new congregations within a few years.

Petros Network has launched some 200 church planters with the EECMY, one of our strongest early partners. Together, we are seeing many members of Ethiopia's large Muslim population come to Christ and become Lutherans. Some Mekane Yesus church planters are themselves former Muslims. One of this partnership's female church planters, Kutebe, lost everything when she left Islam. But she boldly spread the Gospel in a very difficult location, dominated by Islam and devastated by civil conflict, so

that her Lutheran church plant grew from zero to 18 baptized members within just two years!

The Mekane Yesus Church requires all of its church planters to affirm standard Lutheran doctrine (the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds plus the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, Book of Concord, and Martin Luther's Small and Large Catechisms).

Bringing the Gospel into long-unreached areas means working in contexts of extreme poverty, malnutrition, isolation, and civil unrest. Petros Network's holistic approach alleviates both spiritual and physical poverty. Through sustainably productive gardens and livestock projects, church planters are trained to multiply food security and income, training others and transforming entire communities. For example, one Mekane Yesus church planter has led neighbors to start 16 new community gardens, through which 14 men, 18 women, and 11 children are now being trained in sustainable farming practices. With the Mekane Yesus Church and other partners, Petros Network has trained over 17,622 individuals in sustainable farming, bringing holistic uplift that ripples through impoverished villages.

Church planters work in close connection with Petros Network's humanitarian initiatives bringing micro-economic development, sustainable agriculture, health care, clean water, and provision for children in areas of desperate need. One EECMY church planter helped establish a benevolent association to provide for elderly neighbors who often have no means of support. One Petros Network women's economic empowerment program meets in a church of the EECMY's North-Central Ethiopia Synod. This program benefits the whole community by equipping and training women to start successful small businesses so that they can sustainably provide for their families. While there was much distress over the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) recently pulling back from this impoverished border region, Petros Network has remained there with our Mekane Yesus and other partners.

The EECMY has further suffered severe financial limitations after its faith-filled decision to break longstanding ties with the national leadership of the Church of Sweden and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), over these former partners' unrepentantly liberalized approach to Scriptural authority and marriage.

Despite many challenges, our Mekane Yesus

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Global Lutheran Leaders Gather

by [Pastor Paul Borg](#), LCMS pastor and friend of Lutheran CORE



Note from our Executive Director: Many thanks to Paul Borg, LCMS pastor and friend of Lutheran CORE, for his report on the recent gathering of the Global Confessional and Missional Lutheran Forum (Global Forum) in Nairobi, Kenya. This is an international gathering of Lutheran church leaders and representatives of Lutheran reform and renewal communities throughout the world. Many of them are from Western Europe and Africa. The NALC was very instrumental in the formation of the Global Forum. On several occasions the Forum met in conjunction with the NALC's Lutheran Week. More recently it has met in Africa. We are very grateful to hear from Paul about how the Spirit of God is moving mightily in the Lutheran Church throughout the world.

Pause and ponder with me for just a moment. There has never been a time in all of civilization when so many unbelievers are discovering and embracing the Creator of the universe, Jesus. Never. And because of the financial support of CORE, I was gifted with a wonderful five day opportunity in Nairobi, Kenya, Africa. I lived with, listened to, and learned from many global Christian leaders. They are being empowered and used by Jesus to reach those who do not yet know Him.

Many of us know the statistics of this unique moment of Christian history: a greater number of people are coming to know Jesus as Lord, than centuries past. Therefore, during this week, we sat together, ate together, became friends with each other and prayed with so many of these leaders whom Jesus is using to reach the unreached.

This particular gathering includes close to 50 Lutheran pastors and leaders from 14 different countries. We, in the global North, asked those from the global South, to teach us and be missionaries to us.

There were many fascinating revelations that were, in the end, a call back to the basics: the core of sacred Scriptures, the essential act of reaching the lost, and prayer as a constant, life-sustaining heartbeat.

Here are three examples of their encouragement. They lovingly said to us:

- 1) *Hold on passionately to the power and authority of sacred Scriptures. It is indeed "True Truth," accurate and true as it describes history, life and faith. This is what the missionaries taught us! The Bible brings us out of darkness and evil, into light and into the presence and joy of Jesus. Maybe we simply need to remind you of what you, in the past, had profoundly taught us: Many of you in the North are diminishing that power of The Scriptures.*
- 2) *Ask Jesus for a passionate zeal to reach the lost. May that zeal not be a part of, but the very heart of every breathing moment of life. This is more than reading books and listening to lectures. And always have a couple of unbelievers as personal friends. Those growing relationships with unbelievers empower not only growth in faith but transformation of all of life, both for the Christian and for the one who may not yet know Jesus.*
- 3) *Personally talking with our Creator of the universe, Jesus. Consider prayer as more than quick sentences for appropriate occasions. Instead, consider prayer as breathing. That intimate personal conversation becomes life giving, like a courtship with our Creator. Such intimacy results not only in profound joy but also in profound power. Jesus asks us to do what Jesus did. His miraculous life was empowered by His intimacy and continuous prayer with His Father.*

Finally, I thank you for your investment in me and the leaders of God's church. Your generosity has brought about much encouragement, strategic planning and purposeful connection between the Lutheran leaders, globally. Thanks in part to your support, we are bringing forth the Kingdom of God back into the dry bones of the Church. Amen!

When the Quiet Part Is Said ...

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It took me a long time to understand that the phrasing of BC as “Conscience Bound Belief” was itself actually a trap. Scripturally conservative pastors and believers would never say that we were “conscience-bound” to a belief. We would rather say that, like Martin Luther, our conscience is bound to the plain language of Scripture. Our consciences are not simply bound to an easily dismissed social construct. Even with this problem, BC provided at least some legal and denominational cover for conservatives, while being incredibly offensive to progressives.

The concept of Bound Conscience as an important factor for conservative pastors and churches was difficult to explain to the lay people in my congregation. None had heard of it. Explaining it and what the loss of it would mean to conservative pastors and churches was critical in preparing my congregation for disaffiliation.

The **second linchpin** in my disaffiliation journey was the work of the **Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church (CRLC)**. This is where the “quiet part was said out loud.” I was providing sound and video support for a pastors’ conference in 2023 where I got to hear first-hand what they were planning to do to the denomination. I have never felt so unwelcome and unsafe in my entire ministry. It was as though I had fallen into a DEIA-based cult, where Jesus wasn’t really needed and scripture was only quoted to make what was being done sound vaguely religious, or to confuse anyone who dared object to anything being proposed, all presented with this kind of sanctimonious smirk intended to intimidate or shame any who disagreed. After three days of listening to their plans, I knew I had to get out of the ELCA prior to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly. There absolutely was no place for a conservative pastor – or church – in the ELCA.

If there was any doubt about my concerns, they were put to rest when the final report of the CRLC was released by the ELCA Church Council. It was so much worse than I had understood. DEIA, along with anti-racism and Critical Race theory, were now to be the central “operating system” of the ELCA, and it was now in writing. I was surprised to see that much of what the CRLC was proposing was already approved through Continuing Resolutions (requiring no vote) or was being passed on for approval. The fix was already in and the traps to catch conservative pastors and churches were now set.

Walking my congregation through this very well

constructed maze of traps was interesting. It all assumed that, of course, DEIA was in place and would be implemented on every level: Churchwide, Synodical AND in congregations. The problem was that congregations still had some level of autonomy. Much of the CRLC’s plan involved implementing DEIA policies fully in congregations and congregation councils. Plans were put in place to do that, but congregation constitutions needed to be brought into line with the Churchwide and Synodical constitutions, and to do that, a constitution convention would need to be held. That wasn’t approved at the 2025 Churchwide Assembly, but all of the groundwork had been done to implement DEIA, CRT, anti-racism and all the rest of it fully into every aspect of the ELCA. For a more complete discussion on this, click [here](#) to see my Lutheran CORE article from July of 2024.

The **last linchpin** in my journey was the results of the ELCA’s **DEIA audit** that has been on the ELCA’s website for some time (found [here](#) and [here](#)). It’s in two parts and has largely been adopted for implementation along with the CRLC’s final proposals. The DEIA audit is another fascinating “saying the quiet part out loud” document that is so disrespectful of conservative pastors and churches, literally mandating DEIA policies and training for all pastors and church councils. It’s breathtaking in its scope, and *it describes the tenuous autonomy that congregations have as an obstacle to the full implementation of DEIA policies.*

With all three of these linchpins about to be pulled, the wheels are about to fall off of the ELCA, at least with regard to all conservative pastors and churches. How? It’s a really clever trap. There is, as ELCA representatives insist, no directly stated threat to congregational autonomy. There is no “Do this or else” language. However, if a congregation or pastor refuses to adopt and implement these policies, they will be branded as sexist, racist and misogynist, and put under discipline or removed for failing to fall in line. When there is a pastoral transition, congregations will only be given candidates chosen to bring them back in line with current ELCA DEIA polity, or worse, given interim pastors whose job it is to weed out the “problems”



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When the Quiet Part Is Said ...

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with the church. And conservative pastors? Good luck with mobility or support. Any refusal to go along with the progressive agenda will be viewed as hate speech. See [this](#) video of a SWCA synod council member doing just that to motivate the 2023 synod assembly into voting to put a congregation under synodical preservation.

What Our Disaffiliation Process Looked Like

With the very helpful advice of the **Lutheran Congregational Support Network** YouTube videos ([here](#)) we focused ONLY on the issue of **congregational autonomy**. I was heading in this direction on my own, but this really helped clarify the issue. The “big tent” lie, while still being promoted by the ELCA, is easily dismissed as a manipulative tactic to keep churches from leaving. The question for me is simply, “**Are conservative pastors and churches Welcome and Safe in the ELCA?**” That phrase, “**Welcome and Safe,**” became my main emphasis as I worked to educate my congregation. If you focus on DEIA or LGBTQIA issues, you end up in endless, circular and manipulative arguments that the ELCA is very well prepared to win, or at least, to distort the issues and gaslight people into confusion. Focusing on the congregation autonomy question is the only route to take, and it is easily understood and grasped by congregation leaders and members.

Once I understood fully what was coming and what the issues were, I began the education process in my congregation – first with the council leadership, then with broader leadership, and then with the congregation as a whole. Education and information are key. Members have to fully understand the issues.

The first vote we took was with the church council, moving to ask the congregation to vote on whether we should begin the disaffiliation process at the congregation’s annual meeting. That passed unanimously.

The next vote was at that annual meeting, to decide to move forward with the disaffiliation process. There we set the official disaffiliation vote dates according to the ELCA’s model constitution for congregations. This also passed at over 95%.

Even though our formerly ALC congregation was operating under a church constitution from 1977 (!), I decided to follow the ELCA’s current process guidelines for former ALC congregations to the letter. This made little difference to us, and it removed an ELCA objection point.

It’s important to note that we engaged a conserva-

tive Christian legal firm (Tyler Law, LLP, out of Murietta, CA) to walk us through the process. Even though I was confident that I understood the process, I wanted legal backing to make sure I wasn’t missing something. I wasn’t. A representative from the firm was present at each of the two mandated disaffiliation votes to verify that the process was conducted properly, and all correspondence went through our legal firm. We had used this firm before for issues with the City of Los Angeles and some HR issues. The total legal cost to us for this process was just over \$11k. **I would not recommend going into this process without a legal team.**

I can’t stress enough the importance of fully preparing the congregation for disaffiliation, making sure they understand completely what the issue really is. Because my congregation was well-prepared, both votes were above 95% in favor of disaffiliation. The Bishop’s Consultation meeting actually solidified the results.

Because I had a good working relationship with the current and previous synodical bishops (I provided a lot of sound and video support for them, as well as serving as a Conference Dean for many years – and having served in this synod for 32 years), the process was not contentious or adversarial. I understand that this is probably the exception rather than the rule as these things go. I do feel utterly cut off from former friends and colleagues in the synod, however. That seems par for the course.

In this disaffiliation process, I prepared extensive documentation and educational materials for my congregation. I am happy to share these with pastors or congregations considering this process. Just email me with your questions and concerns. I am also open to phone conversations on this.

Our congregation is now a part of the North American Lutheran Church (NALC). We are now a part of an organization that truly honors Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. It feels like we came home.

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Aim your phone’s camera at the QR code to the right to bring up the address of Lutheran CORE’s website.



2009 to 2011: My Congregation's...

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Our fourth strategy was—during the one-year pre-vote education process—to give those in opposition to disaffiliation opportunities to publicly share their views. And we did this both at two annual congregational meetings, and in numerous adult forums.

And our fifth strategy was to follow the “letter of the law” laid out in the ELCA constitution for those congregations pursuing disaffiliation. This is especially important in those cases where congregations are putting their property ownership at risk by not carefully following those constitutional requirements.

Our disaffiliation process from 2009 to 2011 was an incredible challenge involving significant prayer—and stress—on members, congregational leaders, staff and pastors. However, I have never, in the last fifteen years, regretted helping lead Our Savior’s out of the ELCA.

But what about ELCA churches considering disaffiliation in 2025/2026? My sense is that the challenges of the disaffiliation process today are not quite as daunting as in 2010. And this is true despite the fact that the current ELCA constitutional requirements for disaffiliation are even stricter than they were fifteen years ago. Then how can I say that today this process is not as “daunting”? I say that because of the increasing politicization of the ELCA since the assembly actions of 2009. This politicization of the ELCA continues to alienate many of their congregations. And this was, in my opinion, inevitable given that many if not most of the more moderate pastors and members who were part of the ELCA in 2010 have since left. And where are they today? Not surprisingly, most of them now belong to either the LCMC (Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ) or the NALC (North American Lutheran Church). Back in the late 80’s and early 90’s I was part of an ELCA synod’s staff, and then eventually the national staff of the ELCA’s Division for Congregational Ministries. In that capacity my assignment was to travel and eventually work with the synodical evangelism committees of 25 of the ELCA’s 65 synods. In fact I ultimately worked with pastors and lay leaders from over 500 ELCA congregations. Back then the ELCA was a national church body comprised primarily of biblical and theological moderates; the great majority of whom understood that Scripture was and should continue to be the very foundation of our national church’s life and mission. In my humble opinion that understanding of the centrality of God’s Word is no longer an emphasis among those who currently lead the ELCA.

The Hard Work of Honoring ...

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that conflict with “the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude v. 3)?

In asking ourselves such questions I don’t presume the Church, “the pillar and buttress of truth” (1 Timothy 3:15), will give an inch to erroneous teaching, to faulty, misguided, or just lazy opinions from those with whom we disagree. But by asking such questions we continue the hard work of honoring the 8th Commandment explaining “everything in the kindest way.” Like the people of Nineveh, there are many “who do not know their right hand from their left” (Jonah 4:11). Yet in the midst of all the moral, philosophical, ideological, and theological confusion there remains our Lord Jesus “the dearest and best for a world of lost sinners was slain” (“Old Rugged Cross”). We do what we can until the Lord’s glorious return. We do what we can having “mercy on those who doubt,” hoping to “save others by snatching them out of the fire” (Jude vv. 23-24). We do what we can remembering that “so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all” (Romans 12:18). And we do what we can so that all thoughts may one day be “captive to obey Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5). Honoring the 8th Commandment can help us in that task, as well as crucify any animosity we might also be harboring or hiding.

Orthodox Lutherans On ...

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brothers and sisters remain eager to make the most of what resources are available to continue spreading the love of Jesus and growing confessional Lutheranism among some of the poorest, remotest corners of the planet. As they pursue their holy mission, they welcome greater connections with North American Lutherans who have remained orthodox.

Rev. Wagnew Andarge shares that the aforementioned North-Central Synod, of which he is president, “is profoundly grateful for our partnership with Petros Network, which has been instrumental in helping us to advance God’s Kingdom and make disciples among unreached people groups,” but that “a great need remains, especially among those who have not yet heard the Good News, including many Muslims and practitioners of traditional religions.”

To learn more about the Mekane Yesus Church’s fruitful partnership with Petros Network and how you can get connected, please visit www.petrosnetwork.org/Lutheran

Video Ministries: “The Jesus Shaped Way” by Bob Rognlien

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



Many thanks to Brian Hughes for his review of “The Jesus Shaped Way” by Bob Rognlien. Brian is a dual rostered NALC and retired ELCA pastor and vice president of the board of Lutheran CORE. A link to Brian’s video can be found [HERE](#).

Brian writes - “Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” Jesus answered, “I am the Way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” John 14:5-6

Lutheran Pastor Bob Rognlien has released his latest book on discipleship, “The Jesus Shaped Way, six steps to being and making disciples the way Jesus did,” and is IMHO, a must read for anyone seeking to launch a discipling culture movement in their congregation. For most of its recent life the church has concentrated on two words from that text: Truth and Life. What does Scripture teach us that is True and how do we Live in response? What if HOW Jesus made disciples, The Way, is equally important? Drawing from decades of leading two-week pilgrimages to the Holy Land and years of building disciples who can make disciples, Pastor Rognlien brings together those experiences in profound ways. You can purchase the book and the video training course in the Store at www.bobrognlien.com.

Video Ministries: “The Big Relief” by David Zahl

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



Many thanks to LCMC pastor Daniel Ostercamp for his video review of “The Big Relief” by David Zahl. A link to Daniel’s video can be found [HERE](#). A link to our You Tube channel, which contains sixty-two reviews of books and videos on topics of interest and importance, can be found [HERE](#).

Daniel writes – “The Big Relief” is a helpful reminder that our congregations and our lives need to be centered upon the wondrous grace of Jesus Christ. This difference sets us apart from the cacophony of so many religions and voices that do not set us free from the desires and schemes of our hearts to justify and prove ourselves.

David Zahl is a licensed lay minister at Christ Episcopal Church in Charlottesville, VA. In 2007, he founded Mockingbird Ministries, an interdenominational parachurch organization that aims to reach out to younger adults who have become alienated from the institutional church. The endeavor has grown to include a robust website and two annual conferences.

As church people, we may have fewer and fewer opportunities to preserve our heritage. David Zahl confesses that if he had time to rescue just one thing out of the edifice, “Grace is what I would grab every time.”

Coming Events

- **Nicaea Pro Ecclesia: The Status and Potential of Our Nicene Heritage in Christian Catechesis and Ecumenical Dialogue**—Beeson Divinity School, Samford University, Birmingham, AL. January 12-14, 2026. Click [here](#).
- **NALC Continental Youth Gathering 2026**, Roanoke, VA, July 7-10, 2026. Registration is open! Click [here](#).

CORE Voice Newsletter
Published by Lutheran CORE;
Kim Smith, Editor

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