

ELCA 2022-2025

by Dennis D. Nelson, Executive Director of Lutheran CORE

HISTORY OF THE FORMATION OF LUTHERAN CORE

[Twenty Years of Faithfulness and Blessing - Lutheran Coalition for Renewal \(CORE\)](#)

Many thanks to Pastor Mark Chavez, original Executive Director of Lutheran CORE, for giving us a history of the vision and passion that led to the formation of Lutheran CORE in 2005. As confessional Lutherans saw the authority of the Scriptures, a Biblical view of human sexuality and marriage, and the Trinitarian Name of God all being sidelined in the ELCA, they knew that something needed to be done.

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REVIEW AND EVALUATION OF THE 2022 CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY

[The Revisionists Have Completely Taken Over: A Review and Evaluation of the ELCA Churchwide Assembly - Lutheran Coalition for Renewal \(CORE\)](#)

First, the assembly voted overwhelmingly, without discussion, and with no concerns expressed “to authorize a social statement reconsideration to revise ‘Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust’ (2009) so that its wording reflects current church understanding, church policy, civil law, and public acceptance of marriage of same-gender and gender non-confirming couples.” A second resolution came through the Reference and Counsel Committee “to authorize a possible revision of the social statement” which “reconsiders the church’s current concept of the four positions of bound conscience.” A few people spoke against and 12% voted against it, but still the days of the ELCA’s claiming to honor bound conscience and to provide a place for those who hold traditional views are over.

Second, during the days leading up to the assembly there was much conversation about calling for a restructure of the governance of the ELCA. I read comments from many people who believed that the Memorials Committee’s original recommendation to refer several synodical memorials to the Church Council was an act of deliberately stonewalling their efforts. Some even talked about a showdown at the assembly. By the time of the assembly the Memorials Committee had changed its recommendation – to one which directed “the Church Council to establish a Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church” which would be “particularly attentive to our shared commitment to dismantle racism” and would “present its findings and recommendations to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly in preparation for a possible reconstituting convention.”

Third, there was a lot of strange spirituality and even the worship of other gods during the assembly. The opening focused more on the original inhabitants of the land than on Jesus. The welcome from the bishop of the host synod focused more on the rivers that flow through that synod than on Jesus. And the prayer from a member of the prayer team during the vote on the human sexuality resolution was particularly strange and completely irrelevant. She read an invocation to Mother Earth and Father Sky, concern for all the creatures of the earth, and repentance for our not recycling enough. The thinking seems to be that if we pray prior to a vote, then the outcome of the vote must be within the will of God.

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TWO ARTICLES REGARDING THE MAKEUP OF THE COMMISSION FOR A RENEWED LUTHERAN CHURCH

[Once You Know the Makeup, You Know the Outcome - Lutheran Coalition for Renewal \(CORE\)](#)

[Once You Know the Makeup, You Know the Outcome – Part Two - Lutheran Coalition for Renewal \(CORE\)](#)

The ELCA’s 2022 Churchwide Assembly directed the Church Council “to establish a Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church” which would be “particularly attentive to our shared commitment to dismantle racism” and would “present its findings and recommendations to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly in preparation for a possible reconstituting convention.”

Later communication from the ELCA Church Council stated that the Commission should be made up of at least 25% people of color or whose primary language was other than English and 20% youth and young adults. Keeping in mind that the membership of the typical ELCA congregation is older and white, this means that the Commission would not represent the ELCA as it is but the ELCA as those who are leading and driving the process want the ELCA to be.

As I read the bios of the thirty-five people who had been chosen to serve on the Commission, there was no doubt in my mind that the Commission was made up of people of great ability, experience, and expertise. My concern was with their passions and priorities. Reading their bios and remembering that these are the people who were chosen to reshape the ELCA, I was certain that in a very short time the ELCA will be radically different from the church body that was formed in 1988.

The group included two synodical bishops, one seminary president, and three ELCA college and seminary professors. Thirteen of them have held positions within their synods or have served on the ELCA Church Council. Many of them have held significant positions of leadership in

religious and ministry organizations. But beyond that, reading the bios, I saw this group as creating a new church body whose primary focus will be not on fulfilling the Great Commission but on social justice, LGBTQ+ and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion activism, and where men will continue to play a diminishing role. The Commission was made up of twenty-one women and fourteen men. And there were nearly three times as many women of color on the Commission as men of color. Of the eleven people of color (eleven out of thirty-five or nearly one-third of the Commission), eight were women and only three were men.

Three of the members of the Commission are assistants to synodical bishops. But in each case their focus is on social justice issues and anti-racism, not on any of the other functions and ministries of a congregation.

Seven out of thirty-five (20% of the Commission) hold positions of leadership within LGBTQ+ activist organizations and/or mentioned that they are in a same-sex married relationship. This is not saying that only 20% of them are in favor of LGBTQ+ issues. Rather it is saying that 20% of them see their being an LGBTQ+ activist as among their most prominent qualifications for being on the Commission.

Seven out of thirty-five (again 20% of the Commission) hold positions of diversity, equity, and inclusion activism in their place of employment and/or leadership. Again this is not saying that only 20% of them make decisions and take actions based upon the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Rather it is saying that a full 20% of them see their holding positions of diversity, equity, and inclusion activism in their places of employment and/or leadership as among their most prominent qualifications for being on the Commission.

Following the principle that “once you know the makeup, you know the outcome,” it was painfully obvious and clear from the start what this group was going to come up with for the shape and mission of a reconstituted Lutheran church.

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THE ELCA SHOWS ITS VALUES BY WHOM IT FEATURES

[The ELCA Shows Its Values Through Whom It Features - Lutheran Coalition for Renewal \(CORE\)](#)

In observance of Pride Month, the June 2024 issue of “Living Lutheran,” the ELCA’s digital magazine, featured interviews with a number of LGBTQ+ persons. According to “Living Lutheran,” they were “excited to affirm and embrace everyone in the church, and to amplify the voices of our ELCA siblings in the LGBTQIA+ community.” Typical of the ELCA, they do nothing to “affirm and embrace” those with traditional views.

One of the interviews was with Elle Dowd, an ordained ELCA pastor, who has been on academic leave from call to finish up her Ph. D. in queer theology, researching bisexual theology. She describes herself as “bi-furious.” Sounds like a wonderful person to be teaching your congregation’s future pastors. In 2021 the ELCA’s publishing ministry, Broadleaf Books, published her book entitled, “Baptized in Tear Gas: From White Moderate to Abolitionist.” In the promotional material for the book Elle Dowd describes herself as an “Assata Shakur-reading, courthouse-occupying abolitionist with an arrest record, hungry for the revolution.” Assata Shakur is one of the FBI’s “Most Wanted Terrorists” and was a member of the Black Liberation Army. In 1977, she was convicted in the first-degree murder of a state trooper during a shootout on the New Jersey Turnpike in 1973. She escaped from prison in 1979 and is currently wanted by the FBI. There is a \$1 million FBI reward for information leading to her capture, and an additional \$1 million reward offered by the Attorney General of New Jersey. Such is the hero and role model of someone whom the ELCA lifts up and features.

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ANALYSIS OF THE FIRST SET OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE HUMAN SEXUALITY SOCIAL STATEMENT RECONSIDERATIONS TASK FORCE

[Reconsiderations: More Than "Simply Editorial" - Lutheran Coalition for Renewal \(CORE\)](#)

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**.”

The task force presented its recommendations for **Reconsideration # 1** to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly, describing them as “**simply editorial**.” Since the 2025 Assembly the task force has been working on **Reconsideration # 2**. This work will lead to recommendations which they describe as “**substantive**.”

I do not believe that it is accurate – or even honest – to call the recommended changes in Reconsideration # 1 “simply editorial.” They also are very substantive and are being minimized by being called “simply editorial.”

True, we are living in a different world since the 2015 U. S. Supreme Court decision that states could not discriminate against marriages between individuals according to sex, gender, or sexuality. But the changes that were recommended as part of Reconsideration # 1 went far beyond being “simply editorial.” The resolution called for changes “in light of public acceptance of marriage of same-gender and gender-non-conforming couples.” What all this comes down to is the ELCA’s full

embrace of the most extreme form of non-binary, gender diverse, and gender non-conforming ideology. What began in 2009 as merely affirming publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same sex relationships – a certain subgrouping of L (lesbian) and G (gay) – has now become the ELCA’s full embrace of the most extreme form of L (lesbian) G (gay) B (bisexual) T (transgender) Q (queer) I (intersex) A (asexual) 2S (two spirit) + (I cannot even imagine what all that might be) ideology. That kind of change is not “simply editorial.”

True, the recommended revised version still said, “The predominant historic Christian tradition has recognized marriage as a covenant between a man and a woman, reflecting Mark 10: 6–9.” (Note that the language “between a man and a woman” was removed by the 2025 Churchwide Assembly). It also stated, “The Lutheran Confessions assume and reflect this understanding of marriage.” But it was neither Scripture nor the Confessions that informed the recommended changes, but the most extreme views permeating and being relentlessly promoted throughout our culture and society.

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ANALYSIS OF CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS COMING FROM THE CHURCH COUNCIL TO THE 2025 CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY

[LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR – APRIL 2025 - Lutheran Coalition for Renewal \(CORE\)](#)

The proposed amendments to the “**Constitution for Churchwide**” included the addition of several references to participants in Synodically Authorized Worshiping Communities (SAWCs) to “expand inclusion and leadership opportunities.” SAWCs consist largely of community outreach and social justice-oriented groups. Because they are established by synods and their ongoing existence is dependent upon synodical approval, they would not be able to resist synodical influence as a congregation could, if it so chooses.

In several places a mandated or desired level of participation was added for persons from “historically underrepresented groups.” The ELCA views historically underrepresented groups as including persons of color, diverse gender identities, and diverse sexual orientation. I am certain this change is the result of the DEIA audit which the ELCA had done of its governing documents. Please note that this requirement and/or goal is in addition to a mandated or desired level of participation of persons of color and/or persons whose primary language is other than English.

Proposed change **10.21.03.** in the “**Constitution for Churchwide**” said that the ELCA is to foster organizations for persons of all gender identities.

What was most alarming was the proposed changes to Chapter 22 of the “**Constitution for Churchwide**” which would fast track the approval process for any additional amendments that may come to the floor – including from the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church - without requiring a second, separate, full Churchwide Assembly. These amendments to Chapter 22 were recommended by the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church.

A change in **22.11.a.** would allow for the possibility of a special assembly amending the constitution in a single step, following recommendation of amendments proposed by the Church Council. According to this amendment, the Church Council proposes an amendment and then sends official notice to the synods at least six months prior to the next (the word “regular” is eliminated) meeting of the Churchwide Assembly.

Changes in **22.11.b.** would allow amendments introduced on the floor of the Churchwide Assembly to be ratified unchanged by a 2/3 vote of the Church Council within 12 months of the assembly, instead of waiting three years for the next Churchwide Assembly. According to this amendment, 25 or more members of the Churchwide Assembly can propose an amendment. “The proposed amendment shall be referred to the Committee of Reference and Counsel for its recommendation, following which it shall come before the assembly. If such an amendment is approved by a two-thirds vote of members present and voting, such an amendment shall become effective only if (the words are changed from ‘adopted’ to ‘ratified unchanged’) by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting at the next (again the word ‘regular’ is eliminated) Churchwide Assembly.” The amendment then adds “or a subsequent two-thirds vote of the members of the Church Council taken within 12 months of adoption by the Churchwide Assembly.”

In the same way, Amendment **22.21**, which also was recommended by the Commission, would allow for bylaw amendments to be approved by a special assembly, not only by a regular assembly.

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VIDEOS REGARDING THE ELCA’S QUEST FOR GREATER CONTROL

[The ELCA's Quest for Greater Control - Lutheran Coalition for Renewal \(CORE\)](#)

The Lutheran Congregational Support Network (<https://lutherancongregationalupportnetwork.org>) has a number of brief and powerful videos on their website which tell of changes on the horizon for the ELCA – changes that are a part of the ELCA’s quest for ever greater control. Here is a summary of three of them.

Part 5 – “Changing the Constitution: The Fast Track Proposal”

In July 2025, key constitutional amendments were up for a vote, including a proposed fast-track procedure. This video explains what is at stake and what these changes could mean.

Part 6 – “The ELCA’s Game Changer?”

This video unpacks a seemingly simple question posted by ELCA Vice President Imran Siddiqui: *“If you were to change the organizational structure of the ELCA, how would you do*

it?” What does it mean when a lawyer-vice president calls a proposal to “eliminate congregational home rule” a “game changer (esp. in the legal sphere)”?

Part 7 – “Churchwide Assembly: Who Gets to Vote?”

This video tells of another change that was voted on at the 2025 Churchwide Assembly – adding voting members who are not part of congregations. Instead, they represent Synod-Authorized Worshiping Communities (SAWCs), which are groups that are directly created and controlled by the Synod. The video also talks about the addition of voting members based on demographic categories and how this continues a broader institutional shift that sidelines congregational voice.

If you have not already done so, I highly recommend that you go to the Support Network’s website (link above) and sign up to be on their email mailing list. The Support Network very intentionally approaches matters related to the ELCA not in terms of theology, and not in terms of cultural issues and Biblical moral values, but in terms of the ELCA’s Constitutions and the whole matter of congregational autonomy.

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ANALYSIS OF RECOMMENDATIONS 1 AND 7 FROM THE COMMISSION FOR A RENEWED LUTHERAN CHURCH

[The Horse Has Already Left the Barn: - Lutheran Coalition for Renewal \(CORE\)](#)

These two recommendations in the final report of the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church have accomplished nothing less than cementing a radical leftist agenda, a DEIA value system, and Marxist critical theory into the governing documents of the ELCA.

Recommendation 1 - “Immediate Action on Dismantling Racism” - reveals what the Commission valued the most and felt most urgent about. The Commission recommended that “the ELCA Church Council immediately begin identifying and acting upon mutual accountability measures and compliance incentives across all expressions of the ELCA to ensure the proactive centering of dismantling racism within the denomination.” The Commission’s position was that “all constitution and bylaw amendments needed for the development and implementation of these accountability measures and compliance incentives must be developed and advanced in time for consideration by the 2028 Churchwide Assembly.” If they are not developed in time, then the ELCA Church Council needs to call for a special meeting of the Churchwide Assembly to evaluate and enact the necessary constitutional revisions.

The Rationale for Recommendation 1 concludes with a sentence that gives a preview of what is to come in Recommendation 7. It says, “While much that needs to be done to accomplish this work may be centered in our constitution and bylaws, which can only be amended by the

Churchwide Assembly, the commission encourages the Church Council to act on continuing resolutions and policies that can advance this work before the 2028 Churchwide Assembly.”

Recommendation 7 – “Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Related Changes to Governing Documents and Recognition of Historically Underrepresented Groups” – contains a number of continuing resolutions which the Commission recommended and the Church Council approved, thereby already making them part of the ELCA’s governing documents.

There were many places throughout the final report and in the recommended changes to ELCA constitutions and bylaws where provision was made for “historically underrepresented groups” to have voice, vote, and representation far beyond their actual numbers within the membership of the ELCA.

One of the continuing resolutions identifies “historically underrepresented groups” as including “persons of diverse gender identities” and “persons of diverse sexual orientations.” By approving this resolution the Church Council has not only fully embraced every form of sexual orientation and gender identity. It has also made them a special privileged and protected class that no one dare discriminate against.

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REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF THE 2025 CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY

[LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR – AUGUST 2025 - Lutheran Coalition for Renewal \(CORE\)](#)

DEIA

The “Recommended Minimum DEIA Standards for Congregations” that are listed in the DEIA (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility) audit which the ELCA Church Council had done of its governing documents are not yet mandatory, but it is obvious that powerful people and forces will not stop until they are. The wording of Memorial B14 – “Consideration of Recommendation 1 of the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church” – was not as strong as the wording that came from the Commission (see above). But still the Memorial, which was approved 646-144, calls for the church “to acknowledge the importance of accountability in addressing racism within all structures of the ELCA . . . and to direct the Church Council to add a timeline to actions taken and to provide progress updates to this church with a final report by fall 2027, including possible constitutional changes.”

Carla Christopher, co-chair of the Commission, said that most recommendations of the DEIA audit are not possible with the ELCA’s current polity, so we need to preserve the possibility of a re-constituting convention.

The Church Council has already cemented DEIA language and values into the governing documents of the ELCA through Continuing Resolutions which they have passed and which do not require approval by the Churchwide Assembly.

For the ELCA DEIA is the new gospel – even though DEIA is not Gospel. Instead DEIA is a law that always demands more and will never be satisfied.

Fast Track Approval Process

By a very narrow margin an amendment was approved that removed language from the proposed amendment to the Churchwide Constitution 22.11.b., which would have provided a fast-track approval process for constitutional amendments that come from the floor. Subsequently an amendment was presented which would provide for a provisional ratification of an amendment from the floor by a vote of the church council within twelve months and then a later ratification of the amendment by the next churchwide assembly. The assembly voted 517-247 to refer the motion to the Office of the Secretary for further study.

Human Sexuality

The assembly voted to approve the first set of recommendations from the Human Sexuality Social Statement Reconsiderations Task Force. The Task Force called these recommendations merely “editorial changes.” “Substantive changes” – such as what to do about bound conscience – will not be considered until 2028. But I would not call the 2025 changes merely “editorial” when they amount to no less than a full embrace of every form of gender identity and every sexual orientation.

The assembly stayed within the boundaries of the first step in the process except for one motion that came from the floor. That motion was to remove the phrase “between a man and a woman” from the language “The Christian tradition has historically defined marriage to be a covenant between a man and woman, a reflected in the language of Genesis.” The rationale for the amendment was that the current wording is harmful to LGBTQ people and does not correspond to their lived experience. The claim was that merely reminding people that marriage between one man and one woman has been the historic teaching of the church was traumatic and upsetting. The maker of the motion argued that rather than waiting three more years when bound conscience will be considered, something could be done now to make the social statement less harmful. The amendment to the amendment was adopted 552-211, and the revised social statement was approved 742-46.

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YOUTH MINISTRY

Even though the 2009 ELCA human sexuality social statement gives a place of dignity and respect also to traditional views, ELCA youth gatherings do nothing to support traditional views and those who hold them. Instead the organizers of these gatherings are working relentlessly to groom ELCA youth in LGBTQIA+, transgender, and non-binary ideology.

2018 Youth Gathering - [July-2018-Article-on-ELCA-Trust-Breaking.pdf](#)

One of the most prominent voices within the ELCA, Nadia Bolz-Weber, the ELCA's first Public Theologian, led 30,000 young people in renouncing traditional views as a "lie from Satan." Also one of the keynote speakers was a pre-adolescent transgender child along with her mother.

2024 ELCA's Youth Ministry Network Extravaganza - [Is This What You Want? - Lutheran Coalition for Renewal \(CORE\)](#)

Preparatory materials for the 2024 Youth Gathering implied that people with traditional views do harm, speak hatefully, and work for laws that hurt people, while congregations that are Reconciling in Christ are accepting, loving, and wonderful.

Looking at the bios of the general session speakers for the 2024 Extravaganza – an event for those who work with young people - reveals that the overwhelming emphasis is on LGBTQIA+ ideology as well as diversity, equity, and inclusion.

2024 Youth Gathering - [LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR – AUGUST 2024 - Lutheran Coalition for Renewal \(CORE\)](#)

The only person who mentioned Jesus in the ELCA's summary video described our Savior and Lord as "the Jesus who calls us to challenge systems of oppression and power." Jesus through the lens of Marxism, critical race theory and DEIA ideology.

A video was shown which went through the various days of creation in Genesis 1 as it groomed young people to fully embrace the LGBTGIA+ agenda. Its argument was that at first glance creation seems full of binaries (light/darkness, land/waters, male/female etc.) "But there is also a beautiful in between. Creation gives examples, but does not exclude the possibility of more, and God saw that it was good."