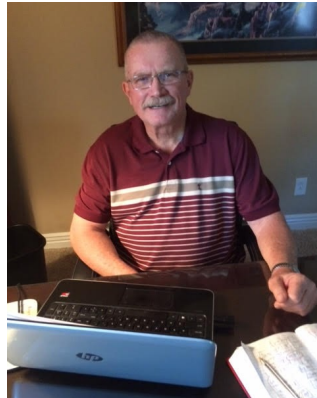


Lutheran CORE Receives Response (Sort Of) from ELCA Presiding Bishop

by Pr. Dennis D. Nelson, CORE Director and President

Towards the end of July Lutheran CORE sent a letter to ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, expressing our great dismay over some of the keynote speakers who had been chosen for the recent youth gathering. A copy of our letter can be found [here](#).



When ELCA pastor Nadia Bolz-Weber (NBW) called upon an arena full of thirty thousand young people to renounce the so-called lie that “queerness is anything other than beauty,” she violated the commitment that was made at the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly (CWA) to respect the bound conscience of those who hold to a traditional view of human sexuality. When the planners of the gathering lined up as keynote speakers a transgender activist and her pre-adolescent transgender child, as well as two people who are signers of the “We Are Naked and Unashamed” movement — Pastors Nadia Bolz-Weber and Tuhina Verma Rasche — these planners were acting outside of anything that has been approved by the ELCA. The “We Are Naked and Unashamed” movement believes that it is oppressive and culturally irrelevant for the ELCA to require that pastors and seminarians be married in order to be sexually active.

We have heard from many who had written to Bishop Eaton that all they received in response from her was a brief, generic, non-specific form letter that could have been sent to anyone regarding anything. We were wondering if we would receive anything different, anything more, and anything better from her.

Bp. Eaton ignores the point we made about boundaries set by 2009 CWA.

Bishop Eaton’s Response

A copy of Bishop Eaton’s response, which we received about a month later, can be found [here](#). The first thing that should be noticed is that Bishop Eaton does not engage in any way with the major point that we were making — that the content of some of the keynote presentations was in violation of the commitments that were made and the boundaries that were

include providing a place for publicly accountable, lifelong, and monogamous same sex relationships (PALMS) but do not include recognizing or approving transgenderism or any of the other agenda priorities of the [LGBTQIA+](#) community.

The keynote presentations violated the boundaries set by the 2009 CWA.

Beyond that, here is my evaluation of her response, focusing on ways in which her response is positive, ways in which it is less than it should have been, and what we need to do next.

Ways in Which Her Response Is Positive

- We did receive a response.
- Her response is cordial and seems to give a valid place for Lutheran CORE.
- It is more than just the generic, one paragraph form response that many have received.
- She plans to speak to the youth gathering leadership team.
- She does not want to give credence to the “We Are Naked and Unashamed” movement, and she recognizes that it is “outside this church’s social teaching.”

Ways in Which Her Response Is Less Than It Should Have Been

- As we have already stated, she has not engaged in any way with the major point that we were making. Instead, she places the greatest emphasis upon thanking us for such things as our “generous prayers of support,” our “resolve to make certain that the information (we) have is accurate,” and our “mutual respect and attentiveness to this church’s ministry and witness.” All this feels very dismissive.
- She does not say what she will say to the youth gathering leadership team.
- She minimizes the offensiveness and inappropriateness of some of the presentations as she only states

CWA 2009 approved PALMS —not transgenderism or any other LGBTQIA+ priorities.

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that some people “were challenged by the content.” *We who hold to the traditional view were not “challenged” by Nadia Bolz-Weber. We were rebuked by her.* Our beliefs were renounced by her and condemned as demonic. I am deeply offended by the word “challenged.” That word implies that there is something wrong and insufficient with those who are challenged. It suggests that if we stodgy conservatives were more with it, up to date, and up to snuff, we would not be challenged.

- While Bishop Eaton does not want to give more attention and credence to a movement that is outside the ELCA’s social teaching, such as the “We Are Naked and Unashamed” movement, she does not display any concern over the fact that many of the signers are ELCA pastors and seminarians, and two of the youth gathering keynote speakers are signers. She does not demonstrate any alarm over the fact that this movement has been allowed to sink its roots deeply into the culture of an ELCA seminary, the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. She shows no concern over the fact that this movement has been allowed to dwell there and has been cultivated there.
- In our letter to her, we had called upon her to clearly reject the “We Are Naked and Unashamed” movement and to publicly disassociate the ELCA from it. Instead she only says that it is “outside this church’s social teaching.” Her concern is not that it is contrary to Biblical teaching. Typical of the ELCA, she places a higher value upon “this church’s teaching” than upon Biblical teaching.
- Her response raises the question, how can the ELCA have the moral authority to exercise discipline in any area if its approach to the “We Are Naked and Unashamed” movement is just to look the other way?
- In her final paragraph where she quotes the 2009

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“Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust” social statement, she does not do what we had asked her to do and publicly affirm that positions 1 and 2 as described on page 20 of that document, which represent the more traditional view of human sexuality, are still seen as acceptable positions within egregious harm that has been done to people who hold traditional views. She has shown that not even the Presiding Bishop of the ELCA is truly committed to the integrity of the structures of the ELCA. Just from an institutional perspective, if not also from a faith perspective, Nadia’s comments require a remediating response. The refusal of the leader of the ELCA to give it shows (a) the presence of fear, and (b) the resulting absence of love and respect for the people who made the decisions in 2009 as well as for the decisions that were made.

- Bishop Eaton’s response places the highest value upon “peace and unity in his Church,” rather than upon being a Church that believes, proclaims, and lives according to God’s Word.

What We Need to do Next

According to the ELCA website, the next meeting of the Conference of Bishops will begin on September 27, 2018. The next meeting of the ELCA Church Council will begin on November 8, 2018. So time is of the essence.

We need as many people as possible to write to Bishop Eaton as well as to their synodical bishop. Tell them how upset you are over the choice of some of the keynote speakers for the youth gathering and how offended you are by some of the things that were said. Sample letters can be found [here](#) and [here](#). We need the presiding bishop as well as all the synodical bishops to realize that this is an issue that they must take seriously. They cannot just dismiss it, minimize it, and sweep it under the rug, hoping that we will all just calm down and/or go away.

A list of all of the synodical bishops and their mailing addresses can be found [here](#). Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton’s mailing address is:

**8765 West Higgins Road
Chicago, Illinois 60631-4101**