

ELCA's Draft Social Statement on "Women and Justice"

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Note: The ELCA is formulating a Social Statement on Women and Justice, to be presented to the Churchwide Assembly in August 2019 for approval. A revised draft will be available in February 2019. Click [here](#) for a link to the original draft. Lutheran CORE has previously published responses to this statement on its [Communications](#) page; click [here](#) and [here](#) to read them.

The draft social statement on Women and Justice is timely. In an age of #metoo and "toxic masculinity," people of faith should reflect on issues of justice for and injustice towards women. The statement rightly lifts up injustices like assault and sexual exploitation of women.

The statement, however, is troubling. It uncritically uses "scientific research and neurological studies" and "intersectional" feminist ideology as the lens through which we ought to evaluate the authority of Scripture, Church history and tradition, and terms like patriarchy and justice.

This leads to statements like "We are bold to proclaim that patriarchy... [is] sinful," "We believe God creates humanity in diversity, encompassing a wide variety of experiences, identities, and expressions, including sex and gender," "We confess that there are problems within the Scriptures themselves... these problems even become idolatrous," and "When Christians rely almost exclusively on male images and language for God, the images and language become literal understandings of God."

The statement comes perilously close to declaring much of Scripture to be sinful, or at least to aiding and abetting the sins of idolatry and patriarchy. This stance does violence to any notion of Scriptural authority.

The draft presents an overwhelmingly negative picture of Scripture, doctrine, liturgy, and church history. It doesn't ask, "If patriarchy is universally evil, why did God routinely use it, not condemn it?" There is no discussion of how the "God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" opposed highly popular idolatry,

fertility cults, and sacred prostitution that were seductive to Israel. No one asks why sexual sins in Scripture are linked to idolatry. Nuptial imagery for God and Israel, or Christ and the Church, is only linked to oppression, sexism, and patriarchy. No one asks why Jesus routinely used "Father" language. The only engagement with "male images" for God is to warn of abuse and misuse by those in so bondage to sin that they clearly think of God the Father as literally male: genitalia, patriarchal privilege, and all. The name, "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" is depicted as an archaic, troublesome formulation. The "theology of the cross" is perceived as abusive, demanding subservience and suffering, especially by women. Nobody asks if feminism might become idolatrous, or whether intersectionality perpetuates victimhood instead of promoting justice.

Read the statement. Read the evaluations. Pray, ponder, and discuss whether this statement does justice to speaking faithfully about women, men, the Church, or God.

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