

February 7, 2019

Dear Bishops Eaton, McCoid, and Macholz,

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America adopted a social statement in 1991 that provides guidance for this church's teaching and public witness on the subject of abortion. In that document, we read the following:

"Because we believe that God is the creator of life, the number of induced abortions is a source of deep concern to this church. We mourn the loss of life that God has created. The strong Christian presumption is to preserve and protect life. Abortion ought to be an option only of last resort. Therefore, as a church we seek to reduce the need to turn to abortion as the answer to unintended pregnancies. We also deplore the circumstances that lead a woman to consider abortion as the best option available to her." (Section III, *The Church As a Community Supportive of Life*, pages 3-4)

"This church encourages and seeks to support adoption as a positive option to abortion." (Section IV, subsection A, *Continuing the Pregnancy*, page 6).

"An abortion is morally responsible in those cases in which continuation of a pregnancy presents a clear threat to the physical life of the woman" (Section IV, subsection B, *Ending a Pregnancy*, page 7)

Given these strong statements in favor of life, a statement that Bishop Eaton once (once!) echoed in her comment, "Life is precious and beautiful and, even in its painfulness, something to be fiercely protected," we of Lutheran CORE have been waiting for your public response to the recent action of the New York legislature and governor regarding abortion. We have waited, and we have waited some more.

Why are we still waiting?

Our social statement clearly indicates that this church regards "a clear threat to the physical life of the woman" to be the situation that makes an abortion morally responsible. Yet the New York legislation does not so carefully define the threat, leaving open the possibility of aborting a full-term baby for non-physical reasons. That breach of moral responsibility calls for you to speak up and say something.

You have said nothing.

How will you, on behalf and for the sake of this church's witness, publicly "mourn the loss of life that God has created" that will result from this legislation?

How will you bear witness to the people of New York that "[a]bortion ought to be an option only of last resort"?

Did you gather in the pink glow of the One World Trade Center to "deplore the circumstances that lead a woman to consider abortion as the best option available to her"?

As the wealthy and the privileged officials of New York rejoiced over this legislation, did you call on them to "reduce the need to turn to abortion as the answer to unintended pregnancies?"

Why did you not cry out for the sake of justice and the most vulnerable among us, the unborn who are smitten, stricken, and afflicted like our rejected Jesus?

Will you drink His blood for the forgiveness of your sins while overlooking the spilling of theirs? Do you not love His blood enough to love theirs?

And if His blood has moved you to speak, will not theirs?

Since the ELCA understands itself to be a "public church" and has not been hesitant to speak on issues of social justice, we in Lutheran CORE believe that it is incumbent upon the bishops and all agencies and institutions of the Church to speak and act firmly and decisively to resist this assault on human life (and others as they may come!). The official position of the ELCA as formally adopted permits nothing less.

Lutheran CORE had hoped to read a statement on the matter by this time. We will be eager to hear from you how you and our various advocacy offices intend to work to bring about a repeal of this legislation in New York and to oppose the adoption of similar unjust laws in other states, in accordance with our social statement.

Sincerely,

Leaders of Lutheran CORE who are members of the ELCA

Kim Smith, President

Pastor Steven Gjerde, Vice President

Rob Kittel, Treasurer

Pastor Keith Forni, Member of the Board

Pastor Dennis Nelson, Executive Director