

CORE'S SUPPORT TO ORTHODOX ELCA PASTORS

by Dennis D. Nelson

A while back someone asked how Lutheran CORE supports faithful, confessional, orthodox ELCA pastors who are serving in ELCA congregations. It is a good question. In the March 2019 issue of our newsletter, CORE Voice, I sought to answer that question. I updated my answer in the March 2021 issue of CORE Voice. Here is a further update to my answer.

First of all, I would again want to say that when I speak of confessional, orthodox ELCA pastors who are serving (or did serve) in ELCA congregations, I am also speaking of myself. I am ELCA rostered. I served the same congregation (first ALC, then ELCA) for forty years before my retirement in June 2014. So I will also be speaking of ways in which Lutheran CORE was of support to me during my years of ministry.

Let me also say at the beginning that we feel that part of our calling as Lutheran CORE is to alert people to ways in which orthodoxy is being threatened in the ELCA. We inform people of how the ELCA is not keeping its promise to honor also the traditional view of marriage and human sexuality. We know that there are many faithful, confessional, orthodox pastors still in the ELCA, and we want to be of support to them in every way that we can. But we also believe that that number is continually diminishing as many of them have retired, are retiring, or soon will retire. Our role is to support those who are working to be faithful in the ELCA, those who have decided that being faithful requires them to leave the ELCA, and those who are in the process of determining how God is calling them to be faithful and affiliated.

Having said that, I will now list a number of ways in which CORE seeks to support confessional, orthodox ELCA pastors who are faithfully serving in ELCA congregations.

- Assurance that you are not alone. Connection with many others who share your concerns and are engaged in the same struggles.
- Providing Facebook groups in which you can engage in conversation with like-minded people. We have a private and visible (Facebook terminology) Facebook group that includes pastors, seminarians, and lay people with several different church body affiliations. We also have a private and hidden (again Facebook terminology) Facebook group that is only for ELCA pastors and seminarians. In addition, we have a third Facebook group, the Lutheran CORE Worship Group, where people can post worship services and Bible studies.
- Resources for worship, including prayers and hymn suggestions.
- Daily devotionals.

- Our annual Encuentro – a day of support, connection, fellowship, inspiration, and resources for those who already are involved and for those who are considering becoming involved in bi-lingual (English-Spanish) or Spanish language ministries.
- Through our Congregations in Transition (CiT) ministry we help both congregations where the pastor has already announced his or her upcoming retirement as well as congregations who already have a vacancy and have organized a call committee. In the case of the former, a coach works with the pastor and congregational leaders to prepare for the time of transition. In the case of the latter, a coach assists in the search for the next long-term pastor.
- Clergy Connect – a resource on our website through which congregations that are looking for an orthodox pastor and pastors who are looking for another call can find each other.
- Guidance in evaluating ELCA communications and decisions such as the social statement, “Faith, Sexism, and Justice” and the “Declaration of Inter-Religious Commitment,” both of which were approved at the 2019 Churchwide Assembly.
- Assistance for pastors who want to gather examples to communicate to their church leaders of ways in which orthodoxy is being threatened within the ELCA.
- Articles in our bi-monthly newsletter, CORE Voice, on such topics as critical race theory, how revisionists have used the principles of community organizing to take over the ELCA, and how to be effective in ministry in a COVID world.
- Representation to ELCA leaders. We have advocated for traditional views in our communications to the presiding bishop and synodical bishops concerning such things as the Supreme Court decision regarding same sex marriage, the choice of keynote speakers for the 2018 youth gathering, and state legislation regarding abortion.
- We are one of the sponsors of the NEXUS program at Grand View University in Des Moines, Iowa. This annual event provides a week for high school youth of Bible study, theological reflection, fellowship, involvement in ministry, and vocational discernment.
- We are working with a pan-Lutheran group of younger persons to do three things: (1) develop a support network for college students planning on attending seminary, (2) support people who are leading and/or seeking to start young adult ministries, and (3) find ways to communicate the Christian faith to younger persons in a clear and compelling way.
- On our website an annotated List of Confessional Resources – books, magazines, ministries, and other resources recommended by other confessional pastors.

- Also on our website video reviews of some of these confessional resources.

The author of the letter to the Hebrews wrote, “Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us . . . run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.” (12:1-2) Our goal as Lutheran CORE is to help you look to Jesus and to run with perseverance the race that is set before you.