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Lutheran CORE leaders renounce ELCA decision to endorse gay marriage and to allow pastors to be in same-sex relationships

MINNEAPOLIS — Leaders of Lutheran CORE (Coalition for Reform) expressed both great distress and firm resolve over the decision Friday, Aug. 21, by the Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to endorse gay marriage and to change its standards to allow pastors and other rostered leaders to be in committed same-sex relationships.

Lutheran CORE leaders are calling on faithful Lutherans to meet in Indianapolis in September to begin an expanded ministry that draws faithful ELCA congregations and members together. They are also encouraging ELCA members and congregations to direct finances away from the ELCA churchwide organization to faithful ministries within and outside of the ELCA.

“Lutheran CORE is continuing in the Christian faith as it has been passed down to us by generations of Christians. The ELCA is the one that has departed from the teaching of the Bible as understood by Christians for 2,000 years,” said the Rev. Paull Spring of State College, Pa., chair of Lutheran CORE. “I am saddened that a Lutheran Church that was founded on a firm commitment to the Bible has come to the point that the ELCA would vote to reject the Bible’s teaching on marriage and homosexual behavior. It breaks my heart.”

“The assembly has voted to remove the ELCA from the universal Christian consensus on marriage and homosexual behavior. Lutheran CORE intends to remain faithful to the clear teaching of Scripture and the consistent teaching of the Christian Church worldwide and throughout time,” said Ryan Schwarz of Washington, D.C., a member of the Lutheran CORE Steering Committee, who was a finalist in Friday’s election for ELCA Vice President.

“The ELCA Confession of Faith says that Scripture is ‘source and norm’ of the church’s faith and life, but this assembly has shown that the ELCA is willing to violate what it officially says it believes about the Bible,” Schwarz said. “It is appalling that ELCA leaders brought these proposals to a vote. The church should not be voting on whether or not to follow the teaching of the Bible.”

“Luther’s stand was on the Word of God and sound reason. He was not convinced then, and we are not convinced now. We just voted out the Word of God, sound reason and the good orders of creation,” said Jaynan Clark of Spokane, Wash., president of the WordAlone Network. The WordAlone Network is one of the renewal organizations that make up Lutheran CORE. “When God said, ‘I Am Who I Am,’ He meant it. It’s not I am who you want me to be or who you remake me to be. God and His Word are the authority over all of faith and life. It’s not up for a vote,” she added. “And He always gets the last word.”

ELCA has broken faith with its members and Lutherans worldwide

“We are confident that most ELCA Lutherans uphold biblical standards for marriage and sexuality in spite of decisions made by this assembly,” said the Rev. Mark Chavez of Landisville, Pa., director of Lutheran CORE.

“These decisions have damaged the ELCA’s relationship with our partner churches in the Lutheran World Federation. The Anglican Communion is in the process of splitting apart because of the actions of The

Episcopal Church. The ELCA seems unconcerned about a similar effect on the LWF,” Chavez said. “These decisions have also hurt the ELCA’s ecumenical relationships with Roman Catholics, Orthodox, and most Protestant Churches.”

Faithful Lutherans to gather in Indianapolis Sept. 25-26

Lutheran CORE leaders are hosting a gathering for Lutherans who uphold the authority of the Bible for the church’s faith and life Sept. 25-26 in Indianapolis. “Lutheran CORE intends to help those in the ELCA who uphold the authority of Scripture to find a way to remain faithful Lutherans by maintaining basic Christian teaching as revealed in the Bible,” Chavez said.

“We are encouraging individuals and congregations to join us in Indianapolis to discuss what the future for faithful Lutherans in the ELCA might look like and how faithful congregations and individuals can work together,” Bishop Spring said. “It is crucial that those ELCA Lutherans who uphold the authority of Scripture work together. We need each other. We urge people to come to Indianapolis.”

“We intend to gather the largest possible body of faithful Lutherans so that we might collectively plan a united common future. For that reason it is important that congregations and individuals not make hasty decisions about their future in the ELCA,” Spring added. “We want to work together to do what will be best for all of us and for the continuation of faithful Christian teaching.”

Lutheran CORE renounces official recognition by ELCA

Lutheran CORE leaders also said that they are renouncing their recognition by the ELCA as an Independent Lutheran Organization that officially relates to the ELCA. “We can no longer in good conscience participate in this relationship with the offices in Chicago,” Spring said.

Congregations and members are encouraged to direct financial support away from ELCA

Lutheran CORE leaders are inviting faithful Lutheran congregations and individuals to direct funding away from the national church body because of the decisions made this week by the Churchwide Assembly. Lutheran CORE will participate in and support faithful ELCA ministries, but, cannot support ELCA ministries that reject the authority of God’s Word.

“It is important that congregations and individuals continue to provide financial support beyond their congregations, but the actions of this assembly will make many of our members question whether they can support the ELCA churchwide organization,” said the Rev. Erma Wolf of Brandon, S.D., vice chair of the Lutheran CORE Steering Committee.

“As Martin Luther said, our consciences are captive to the Word of God. We cannot support this departure from God’s Word,” said Chavez. “Congregations and individuals should continue to support local synods and synodical ministries where those institutions remain faithful to biblical teaching,” said Chavez. “Congregations and individuals should directly support our companion churches worldwide. This could be done through synod companion church programs. Congregations and individuals should support ministries like ELCA Disaster Response, Lutheran World Relief, Global Health Ministries and other faithful ministries.”

Lutheran CORE is a coalition of pastors, lay people, congregations and reforming groups that seeks to uphold the authority of God’s Word in the ELCA. Lutheran CORE seeks to be a voice for the solid, faithful core that is the majority of ELCA members, pastors, and congregations. More information is available at www.lutherancore.org.