

## ST. JOHN LUTHERAN CHURCH TASK FORCE INFORMATION

THEOLOGY/DOCTRINE					
AREA OF COMPARISON	ELCA	LCMS	WELS	LCMC	CORE
Family	Indispensible social institution because of its role in establishing conditions of trust and protection for the vulnerable. All types of families are recognized, and all families have the responsibility to provide safety and develop trustworthy relationships.	LCMS believes in the divine institution of marriage. Christians husbands and wives are to love and serve one another. Believe wives are submissive to their husbands and husbands should love their wives just as Christ does the church.	No information found regarding their belief of family.	Blessed and ordained by God.	CORE believes that from marriage, God forms families to serve as the building blocks of all human civilization and community.
Marriage/Divorce	<p>Marriage is a covenant of mutual promises and commitment blessed by God. While historic Christian tradition and Lutheran Confessions have recognized marriage as a covenant between a man and a woman, some feel that marriage can also be used to describe similar benefits and support for same-gender couples entering lifelong monogamous relationships.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. ELCA lacks consensus on how to regard these relationships, yet encourages respect for the conscience bound belief of their neighbor, noting that these different beliefs follow from strongly held different understandings of Scripture/tradition.</li> <li>2. ELCA as a whole has not endorsed the blessing or marriage of same sex couples, but permits (not mandates) congregations to find ways to hold publicly accountable same-gender relationships that intend to be lifelong and monogamous.</li> <li>3. Pastors carry legal and religious responsibilities for marriage, and hold and exercise pastoral discretion for the decision to marry in the church.</li> <li>4. In some situations, the trust in a marriage becomes so deeply damaged that the marriage come to a legal end.</li> </ol> <p>*See attached ELCA Statement of Vision and Expectations for Ordained Ministers. The constitution of the State of Nebraska does not allow same-sex marriages.</p>	<p>LCMS believes that the Bible teaches that homosexual behavior is contrary to God's Word and will, and seeks to minister to those who are struggling with homosexual inclinations.</p> <p>LCMS teaches that extramarital sex and homosexual relations are sins.</p>	WELS teaches that extramarital sex and homosexual relations are sins.	<p>The LCMC affirms that God created us male and female, and that it is God's will and intention that human sexual expression and fulfillment take place only within the boundaries of marriage between one man and one woman.</p> <p>LCMC also confesses as individuals and as congregations, we have not fulfilled God's will in our decisions, modeling and teaching.</p> <p>LCMC does not publish a specific position on the topic of divorce, however, they do affirm they are firmly committed to accepting the normative authority of the Bible.</p>	<p>CORE believes and confesses that the marriage of male and female is an institution created and blessed by "God.</p> <p>Sexual activity belongs exclusively within the Biblical boundaries of a faithful marriage between one man and one woman.</p>
Sin	Definition of sin is consistent with Augsburg Confession. All are born into sin, but also have free will and are still responsible for their own sins.	All are born into sin and therefore, are unable through any efforts of their own to reconcile themselves to God and conquer death and damnation.	Believe in the Scriptural definition of sin.	All are born into sin, but also have free will and are still responsible for own sins.	No information could be found regarding the Sacraments.

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Sacraments	<p>2 Sacraments: Baptism and Holy Communion</p> <p>Open communion sanctioned. Believe in real presence of Christ (body and blood) through the bread and wine.</p> <p>Infant baptism sanctioned.</p>	<p>2 Sacraments: Baptism and Holy Communion</p> <p>Closed communion practiced.</p> <p>Infant baptism sanctioned.</p>	<p>2 Sacraments: Baptism and Holy Communion</p> <p>Closed communion practiced.</p> <p>Infant baptism sanctioned.</p>	<p>2 Sacraments: Baptism and Holy Communion</p> <p>Open communion sanctioned. Believe in real presence of Christ (body and blood) through the bread and wine.</p> <p>Infant baptism sanctioned.</p>	No information could be found regarding the Sacraments.
Salvation	Saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.	Saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.	Saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.	Saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.	Believes and confess that all human beings are sinners, and that sinners are redeemed by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. God alone justifies human being by faith in Christ -- a faith that God creates through the message of the Gospel. As ambassadors for Christ, God uses us to speak his Word and build his kingdom.
Bible Version/Translation	<p>ELCA clergy tend not to subscribe to a doctrine of Biblical inerrancy, but see validity in various scholarly methods of analysis such as the historical-critical method to help in understanding the Bible. This is in concord with most liberal Protestant bodies.</p> <p>The ELCA sees value in reading a number of current translations and comparing curious or troubling texts with the aid of commentaries that seek to clarify meanings. Readers are encouraged to a) seek to understand the depth of what is being said and value scholarship/textual study and b) discover the text's meaning/context for those first addressed by the authors, as well as for today.</p>	<p>LCMS practices the historical-grammatical method of Biblical interpretation.</p> <p>The historical-grammatical is a process that strives to discover the Biblical author's original intended meaning in the text and what the original hearers would have understood. The original passage is seen as having only a single meaning or sense.</p> <p>Believe in "Scripture Alone". LCMS preach agree to teach in harmony with the Book of Concord. They all teach Biblical inerrancy.</p>	<p>WELS practices the historical-grammatical method of Biblical interpretation.</p> <p>The historical-grammatical is a process that strives to discover the Biblical author's original intended meaning in the text and what the original hearers would have understood. The original passage is seen as having only a single meaning or sense.</p> <p>WELS believes in Scriptural "inerrancy."</p>	<p>LCMC does not publish their method of interpretation, however, via discussion by a task force member, they would use the historical-critical method of biblical interpretation. Using scripture to explain other scripture.</p>	The Living Word of God is clearly revealed in the Holy Scriptures, the written Word of God, and in the Lutheran Confessions, a faithful and trustworthy witness to the Word of God.

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Closed Communion	<p>The ELCA practices open communion. All baptized Christians who believe that Christ is truly present are welcome at the Table.</p>	<p>LCMS endorses the doctrine of clos or closed communion, the policy of sharing the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion only with those who are baptized and confirmed members of one of the LCMS congregations. Some congregations, however, do not implement Synod's policy, celebraing open communion and welcoming all to their altars.</p>	<p>WELS practices "close" or "closed" communion, inviting to their altars only those who are members of congregations in WELS fellowship.</p>	<p>LCMC practices open communion.</p>	<p>No information could be found regarding the Sacraments.</p>
Pastoral & Lay Leadership	<p>The pastoral office can be filled by either men or women as long as they are qualified.</p> <p>On August 21, 2009, the ELCA's Churchwide Assy. in Minnesapolis voted to ordain gays and lesbians in committed monogamous relationships to serve as clergy. Delegates approved a resolution delcaring that the church would find a way for people in publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous same-gender relationships to serve as official ministers. Congregations that do not wish to call these persons to ordained ministry are not required by these policy changes to do so.</p> <p>No one is asked to violate their bound conscience, and all are asked to respect the bound conscience of others.</p> <p>Leaders who have been called to serve in the ELCA are considered to be rostered. Ordained leaders are pastors. To qualify for ordained ministry, individuals must graduate either from an ELCA seminary or, if they attend a non-ELCA seminary, they must affiliate with an ELCA seminary for some parts of the education process.</p> <p>Rostered lay leaders serve in the role of Associate in Ministry or Diaconal Lay Leader. Lay leadership training is provided largely at the synod level through formal education as well as various workshops and continuing education courses.</p> <p>Those who are going to serve as ministers of Word and Sacrament must be ordained.</p>	<p>The pastoral office may only be filled by men. long as they are qualified.</p> <p>Ordination is viewed as a public ceremony where of recognition that a man has received and accepted a divine call. LCMS pastors are required to have a four-year bachelor's degree in any discipline as well as a four-year Master of Divinity degree.</p>	<p>The pastoral office may only be filled by men as long as they are qualified.</p>	<p>The pastoral office can be filled by either men or women as long as they are qualified.</p> <p>The LCMC does not support individuals in same-gender relationships to serve in a pastoral capacity.</p> <p>Those who are going to serve as ministers of word and sacrament do not need to ordained.</p> <p>Websites and a network of contacts help provide congregations with names of pastors to consider. If it chooses, a congregation can appoint one of their own to preach, teach, and administer the sacraments.</p>	<p>The pastoral office can be filled by either men or women as long as they are qualified.</p> <p>They acknowledge the diversity of opinion that exists within the Christian community on this subject.</p> <p>NALC intends to adopt the standards of the ELCA Statement of Visions and Expectations for Ordained Ministers.</p>

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Fellowship	<p>The ELCA is a member of the National Council of Churches, the World Council of Churches and Christian Churches Together and is a "partner in mission and dialog" with the Churches Uniting In Christ.</p> <p>The Church maintains full communion relationships with member churches of the Lutheran World Federation (which is a communion of 140 autonomous national/regional Lutheran church bodies in 78 countries around the world, representing nearly 66 million Christians), the Moravian Church in America, the Presbyterian Church (USA), the Reformed Church in America, the United Church of Christ, the Episcopal Church in the United States of America (the U.S. Branch of the Anglican Communion) and the United Methodist Church.</p>	<p>The LCMS teaches that there are different levels of fellowship among Christians, so that altar fellowship (sharing in the Eucharist together), pulpit fellowship (exchange of preaching privileges among ministers of various congregations), and other manifestations of Christian fellowship (such as fellowship in prayer) are distinct. Thus, according to the LCMS doctrine, members of different church bodies can engage in greater or lesser degrees of fellowship depending on the extent of the doctrinal disagreement. The LCMS is not associated with ecumenical organizations such as the National Council of Churches, the National Association of Evangelicals, the World Council of Churches or the Lutheran World Federation.</p>	<p>WELS teaches that all forms of Christian fellowship require complete unity in matters of doctrine.</p> <p>Fellowship between WELS and other church groups is established only upon investigation and confirmation that both church groups hold complete unity in doctrine and practice.</p>	<p>LCMC was formed in opposition to the "Call for Common Mission" (the ELCA document on full communion with the Episcopal Church).</p> <p>LCMC has no official fellowship, but does have an unofficial fellowship with Lutheran Core and have pledged cooperation.</p>	<p>The NALC will be committed to the unity of the universal Church, doctrinal continuity with apostolic teaching, and its distinctive confessional heritage.</p>