

## NEWS RELEASE

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# ELCA draft statement on sexuality draws criticism from renewal leaders

Leaders of the WordAlone Network, a group working for renewal within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, are disappointed with a proposed draft of an ELCA social statement on human sexuality because the document soft-pedals questions regarding sexual relationships outside of marriage.

The draft social statement was written by a task force in response to a request from the 2001 ELCA Churchwide Assembly. The church is seeking responses and comments by Nov. 1 after which the draft probably will be revised for presentation to the church council in Feb. 2009.

WordAlone director Mark Chavez said that the statement, released today, could be used in support of changing ordination standards next year so that each synod would decide whether or not to ordain practicing homosexuals, which has been controversial in the ELCA for more than 15 years. “They’re preparing the way for a local option on blessing same sex relationships and ordaining practicing homosexuals,” he said.

“In the Bible, God speaks a clear word about human sexuality—He created us male and female—and gave us a clear word about sexual relationships and behavior. Other than in the lifelong marriage of one man and one woman, all other sexual relationships and behaviors are out of bounds,” said Chavez.

“In this draft statement the ELCA neglects to be prophetic in a culture that urgently needs to hear God’s clear Word,” he added.

Concerning homosexual behavior, the statement reads: *In their pastoral response, some pastors and congregations will advocate repentance and celibacy. Other pastors and congregations will call our same-gender-oriented brothers and sisters in Christ to establish relationships that are chaste, mutual, monogamous, and lifelong.*

The human sexuality document acknowledged that even after many years of study and conversation, the ELCA did not have consensus regarding homosexual relationships. The church “has committed itself” to continue in study, prayer, discernment and pastoral care, it said.

Jaynan Clark Eglund, WordAlone president, said today, “We can draft statements and we can take votes and we can even change rites and ceremonies, but we still have no authority to change what God first ordered and how He ordered it.”

Clark Eglund said, “The time is now for the ELCA leadership and the authors of this statement to join the rest of us in confession of our sins, acknowledge the brokenness of this world, return to the Bible and be still, know God and obey Him.”

“ELCA members need to respond to this study in the months ahead,” Chavez said. “There is much more at stake than just what the ELCA decides to say about sexuality. The ELCA’s confession of faith is open for interpretation. Will it be based on Scripture or on ‘insights of culture and human knowledge’?”

Hearings on the social statement are scheduled in many synods. For information, visit [www.elca.org/faithfuljourney/synods](http://www.elca.org/faithfuljourney/synods).