

WORDALONE NETWORK

CHAPLAIN CORPS HANDBOOK

Therefore take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. (Ephesians 6:13)

This booklet contains information and resources for those who are serving as part of the WordAlone Network Chaplain Corps — providing counsel, encouragement, and guidance to those who seek to remain faithful to Christ, despite the changes taking place in the larger church.



WordAlone Network

2299 Palmer Drive, Suite 220
New Brighton, MN 55112-2202
1-888-551-7254 or 651-633-6004

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Chaplain Corps Handbook

Assembled and Edited by the Rev. Steven E. King
WordAlone Education Director

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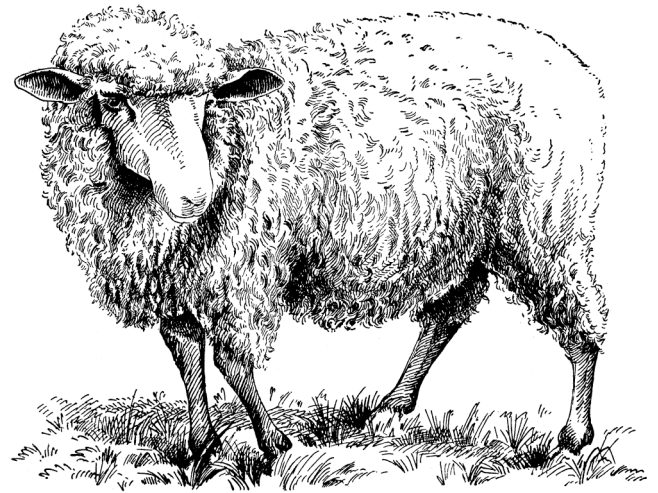
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Introduction

Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! says the LORD. Therefore thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who shepherd my people: It is you who have scattered my flock, and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them. So I will attend to you for your evil doings, says the LORD.

Then I myself will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the lands where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply. I will raise up shepherds over them who will shepherd them, and they shall not fear any longer, or be dismayed, nor shall any be missing, says the LORD. (Jeremiah 23:1-4 NRSV)



In the Scriptures, not only are we given the promise of the Good Shepherd, our Lord Jesus Christ, we are called to follow Him as His own flock. From the sheep, God calls forth some to serve as earthly shepherds within the flock. But He warns us that we all still belong and are accountable to Him.

When one considers the state of the ELCA it becomes pretty apparent that the sexuality statement and the proposed changes are not the only problems. What is being taught in the seminaries, and therefore preached and taught from the pulpits, perpetuates the problem across the denomination. We have not only sold out on primary evangelism globally but have done it with language that smacks of universalism and basically a state of being ashamed to speak Jesus' name with all of the exclusive character and demands that He himself made. If God is God and He is revealed in Jesus Christ in whom salvation resides exclusively, then the mission of the church that serves the Holy Trinity is quite clear. To find that claim and that proclamation within the ELCA and all of its leadership over the last decade is difficult.

The sheep have been led astray and are now scattered. This is not only an observable fact but a biblical prediction of what takes place when the flock becomes a pack under the direction of wolves and hirelings and not the one Good Shepherd alone.

WordAlone is committed to preaching, teaching and acting upon the Word of God alone, whatever the consequences or the actions taken against us by those who have acted according to their sinful power and not under the authority of God and His Word. Our mission is the same: to witness to the Living Word of God and to tend His flock as He has commanded by directing, guiding and supporting all confessing Lutherans inside and outside the ELCA to discern those faithful "institutions" on this earth that do the work of the true church of God — ones that preach the Word and administer the sacraments rightly.

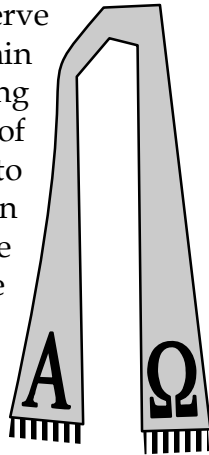
Sheep herding... at the heels of our One Good Shepherd. That is our calling.

The Rev. Jaynan Clark

President, WordAlone Network

What Is Expected of a Chaplain?

Thank you for volunteering to serve as part of the WordAlone Chaplain Corps. As a chaplain, you are being asked to provide a ministry of encouragement and support to those who are looking for help in responding faithfully to the changes taking place in the Lutheran Church and the broader Christian faith. Here are some of the key ministries to which you have been called:



A Ministry of Prayer

The LORD is far from the wicked, but he hears the prayer of the righteous. (Psalm 15:29)

As chaplains, your primary task is to be in regular prayer for others. Ask for guidance, strength, and endurance to be given to those who are a part of the WordAlone Network, Lutheran CORE, LCMC, and other faithful Christians working for the sake of the Gospel and the Word of God. Pray for church and synod leaders, as well as those who have departed from the faith of the Scriptures.

If you can, obtain a copy of the roster for your local synod, conference or district. Pray for the pastors and congregations in your own local area by name. Perhaps you may even want to send them a note of support, to let them know that you are praying for them.

A Ministry of Conversation

Anxiety weighs down the human heart, but a good word cheers it up. The righteous gives good advice to friends, but the way of the wicked leads astray. (Proverbs 12:25-26)

Another key ministry of the chaplain is in one-to-one conversation and pastoral care. In the crisis facing the Church, it is easy to think that everyone recognizes what is at stake. It is just as easy to fall into the trap of thinking you are the only person in your church who sees the problem. Neither is probably the case.

In the midst of all that is taking place in the Church, many do not fully grasp the significance of the issues. On the other hand, many who are concerned or upset feel isolated and helpless. As in any time of crisis, we must rely upon the foundational promises that we have in Christ. Jesus said: *"Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am among them."* (Matthew 18:20)

Take the time to call up those from your area that are part of WordAlone and the greater renewal movement, both pastors and clergy. If you are able to do so, offer to meet for coffee or lunch. Simple words of encouragement and support can bear witness powerfully to the grace and mercy of Christ.

Let clergy know that you are "on call" to serve as their pastor, especially if they no longer feel they can call upon their synod staff.

A Ministry of Fellowship

Let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another. (Hebrews 10:25)

Another way that you may be able to help as a WordAlone chaplain is to serve as an area contact person for the larger network. If there is a WordAlone or Lutheran CORE chapter in your area, that would be a great place to begin. Make your name and email address available, and introduce yourself to new people. If there is no organized group in your area, you might want to start meeting with others in your area and consider forming a group.

One way to form a group that has worked well is to plan a public meeting that addresses the need for confessional and evangelical Lutherans to hear about where the Church is headed and how to choose a different path that is faithful to God's Word. Gathering names, addresses and phone numbers of those who attend facilitates planning a follow-up meeting to organize a group. The more conversations are generated around key issues of faith, the more strength the movement will have.

A Ministry of Word & Sacrament

The rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God. (2 Corinthians 9:12)

With all that is happening among Christian denominations these days, it is important to remember that the Church is not the human institution or the letters on a sign, it is “the assembly of believers in Christ among whom the gospel is preached in its purity.” The *Augsburg Confession* states with certainty: “The one holy Christian church will be and remain forever” (Article 7).

While your work as a WordAlone chaplain is not intended to replace that of local clergy and congregations, you may be called upon to provide pastoral care to those who have been (officially or unofficially) marginalized and excluded from the ministry of their local parishes. We ask that you take care not to overstep the bounds of mutual respect and professional courtesy. Seek appropriate permission or consultation when working in a pastoral relationship with those who are not members of your own congregation.

In cases where a number of local parishioners have been alienated from their congregation, you could be called upon to help lead a small group ministry, Bible study, or ‘house church’ fellowship. You will need to decide whether this is feasible, and whether you would have the time and energy to commit to such work.

A Ministry of Teaching

I will study the way that is blameless... I will walk with integrity of heart within my house. (Psalm 101:1-2)

The arguments being made now by institutional leaders seek to assure congregational members that nothing significant has changed in the church. Arguments for institutional loyalty and unity always seem to come at the expense of the Word of God and the mission of Christ.

It is therefore vitally important to be aware of the denominational “spin” and be able to counter it in a truthful and effective way. In

particular, it is important to highlight the deep theological implications of the assembly decisions that go beyond surface matters of sexuality, to core Christian teachings about Scripture and the nature of the Gospel itself.

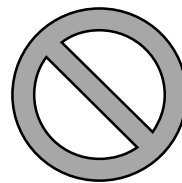
There are many documents and links you can find on the internet at www.lutherancore.org and www.wordalone.org, as well as other web sites, that can help to equip you to make the case for the theological crisis in the Church today.



www.wordalone.org

Included in the Chaplain's Booklet

This booklet contains several pages of information on issues and decisions of the ELCA, along with a number of basic educational resources from the WordAlone Network. The pages in the back of the book are meant to serve as individual handouts. You have permission to reproduce anything in this book for local use.



Caution: It is a bad habit – especially among Lutheran pastors and lay leaders – to photocopy large quantities of handouts and to pass out numerous sheets at events and classes. Try not to overwhelm people with too much paper. Instead, selectively choose more specific pieces that you will be covering in a presentation, and try to limit yourself only to those you actually have the chance to address.

What Happened at the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly?

The time is coming when people will not put up with sound doctrine, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own desires, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander away to myths. As for you, always be sober, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, carry out your ministry fully.

(2 Timothy 4:3-5)

Actions of the ELCA

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) met for its Churchwide Assembly in Minneapolis from August 17-23, 2009. Significant decisions were made that have changed the denomination's teaching and practice in matters of sexuality and ministerial standards. These decisions will affect the future of our national church as well as local congregations.

Social Statement

In adopting a social statement entitled "Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust," the ELCA departed from the traditional biblical and confessional Lutheran understanding of marriage and family.

Resolutions

In several implementing resolutions, the ELCA specifically took action to:

- a) Officially allow ELCA clergy and congregations to perform ceremonies for same-sex unions, which would include the blessing of same-sex civil unions or performing same-sex marriages (where permitted by state).
- b) Officially allow on the ELCA clergy roster for ordained ministers gay and lesbian persons who are sexually active in what are called "publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships" [the content and limits of which were left undefined].

The Word of the Lord

Contrary to the vote of the ELCA Churchwide Assembly, our Lord Jesus Christ described God's intention for sexual unions:

Jesus said: "Have you not read that the one who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate."
(Matthew 19:4-6)

In the previous chapter of Matthew, our Lord had already warned about the consequences for *teaching* others to sin:

Jesus said: "If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe to the world because of stumbling blocks! Occasions for stumbling are bound to come, but woe to the one by whom the stumbling block comes!" (Matthew 18:6-7)

It is important to be clear: The changes made to the ELCA's policy and practice are a direct denial of Jesus' teaching of repentance and forgiveness of sin. We confess that all people are sinners before God, and all are welcome in the church on that basis. The goal and purpose of the ELCA resolutions, however, was to change what is taught among us, declaring that what God calls Sin is good, acceptable, and endorsed by the Church.

Pastors and congregations of the WordAlone Network will continue to preach and teach in accordance with Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. This effectively puts us in a "state of confession" (*status confessionis*) over against our denomination. This means, we must actively resist and refuse to support ministries that oppose the Word of God.

The Official “Spin”

In making these decisions, ELCA leaders have already begun attempting to mitigate the consequences of the denomination’s actions. Some statements are particularly misleading:

1) They say: “This controversy is just the same as when the decision was made to ordain women.”

This is not accurate. There was resistance to women’s ordination among some Lutherans in the 1970’s. However, that decision was based on a *positive* argument from Scripture, grounded in the Lutheran understanding of ministerial authority based in the Word and on the many biblical examples of women serving in Christian ministry.

Unlike the case with homosexual behavior, Scripture *never* says that being a woman is in itself sinful, or that sexual activity within the appropriate bounds of marriage between husband and wife is sin.

2) They say: “This is no different from the way the Church treats divorce and remarriage.”

This is not accurate. The way our church has treated divorce and remarriage is expressly within the context of confession, forgiveness and repentance. We do not recognize divorce as an unqualified good, but only in some circumstances as the necessary “lesser of two evils.” As with any violation of the adultery commandment, it is addressed with forgiveness and the call to “go and do not sin again” (John 8).

Divorce among clergy regularly results in the termination of a call, and *always* does so in the case of sexual misconduct.

On the contrary, the argument made by the pro-GLBT lobby is that homosexual behavior is not sinful in itself and requires no forgiveness or repentance. Under the new guidelines, same-sex partnerships will not at all be handled in a manner similar to divorce.

3) They say: “Congregations have the right to choose their own pastors; no congregation is forced to accept a certain candidate.”

This is accurate only in the most abstract sense. In the ELCA, synod bishops sign all letters of call, meaning they can overrule and “veto” the decision of a congregation; they are also able to block the transfer of a candidate from one synod to another.

In most cases, bishops and synods provide the list of candidates from which a congregation may choose, limiting a congregation’s choices only to those offered. Many small congregations are in the position to take what they are offered or have no pastor at all.

With the official teaching of the ELCA altered, future seminarians will be indoctrinated with this “new” perspective on sexuality.

Also, since the denomination officially allows active gay and lesbian persons on its roster, congregations who reject candidates on the basis of their sexual behavior are open to employment discrimination lawsuits in civil courts.

4) They say: “The church has promised to respect the bound conscience of those who disagree with these changes.”

The ELCA does not have a good track record on respecting bound conscience in other matters. ELCA bishops regularly deny those who request exceptions to ordination under the historic episcopate, even though such an exception is provided in the denomination’s bylaws.

Since the ELCA Churchwide Assembly, implementing measures have already denied the right of any official church body (synods, synod call and endorsement committees) and officers (bishops) from exercising bound conscience over against the new “national policy.”

What the WordAlone Network Has to Offer

For those who are concerned about what it would mean for a local ministry to leave their denomination and synod, we want to assure you that the WordAlone Network has been working over the last several years to create ministries and partnerships that mirror the function of synodical bodies. On the WordAlone Network website at www.wordalone.org you will find a description of the support ministries we offer:

1) Administrative & Staffing Functions

We have a functioning staff of support personnel, both lay and clergy, which works together well. In New Brighton, MN, we have office space and equipment, computers and software, an established web presence, as well as up-to-date databases and mailing lists. Our support staff is on duty taking calls and emails with regular office hours, available for local needs in different parts of the country.

2) Theological Advisory Board

We have the support of a number of world-class theologians and scholars who are able to provide doctrinal instruction and advice, from a distinctly Lutheran position. We have existing doctrinal statements on a number of topics.

3) Publishing Ministry

In Sola Publishing, we have our own publishing ministry to produce educational materials for children and adults that represent biblically orthodox Lutheran theology. We already have an attractive and accessible periodical, written to a pan-Lutheran audience, in the bi-monthly Connections magazine.

4) Seminary Education

Through our valued partnership with the Institute for Lutheran Theology (ILT), as well as through relationships developed with Luther Seminary, we are able to commend a solidly confessional education to future church leaders – both lay and clergy. We also have a “Seminary Debt Relief Fund” for new pastors.

5) Worship Resources

Through our valued partnership with ReClaim Resources, we are able to commend worship resources with historical and theological integrity, working toward the development of an alternative hymnal.

6) Partner Agencies

We have existing relationships with a number of partner agencies, including: Youth Encounter, Mount Carmel Ministries, World Mission Prayer League, East European Mission Network, Faith Inkubators, and many others.

7) Mobility & Clergy Support

In our internet-based “Clergy Connect” we have an existing and effective channel for networking congregations in the call process and candidates seeking call. We also have a personal network of area pastors and congregations through local chapters and email lists, and a “Chaplain Corps” for support to local pastors.

8) Evangelism & Mission

In addition to our mission agency contacts, we are currently developing resources for congregational evangelism, and are already beginning the plant of new congregations.

9) Inter-church Relations

We have already worked to build relationships and open conversations with other church bodies, including: The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, LCMC, and other smaller Lutheran bodies. We have built relationships with reform groups of other denominations through the Association for Church Renewal (ACR). In addition, we have established a working relationship with “Solid Ground” of Canada, and have personal contacts from global Lutheran partners.

WordAlone Network

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New Brighton, MN 55112-2202
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www.wordalone.org

The Common Confession

A Lutheran Statement of Faith

(The shared faith statement of the WordAlone Network and Lutheran CORE)

This statement is offered for adoption by individual congregations and organizations, as a summary of their basic teachings. It could serve as a short faith statement for a congregation's website, brochure, or new member materials. It also may serve as the basis for a "teacher's covenant" to which a congregation's teachers and preachers could be asked to subscribe.

1) The Lord Jesus Christ

We are people who believe and confess our faith in the Triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We trust and believe in Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord.

2) The Gospel of Salvation

We believe 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 beings by faith in Christ – a faith which God creates through the message of the Gospel. As ambassadors for Christ, God uses us to speak his Word and build his kingdom.

3) The Authority of Scripture

We believe and confess that the Bible is God's revealed Word to us, spoken in Law and Gospel. The Bible is the final authority for us in all matters of our faith and life.

4) A Common Confession of Faith

We accept and uphold that the Lutheran Confessions reliably guide us as faithful interpretations of Scripture, and that we share a unity and fellowship in faith with others among whom the Gospel of Jesus Christ is preached and the sacraments are administered in accordance with the Gospel.

5) The Priesthood of All Believers

We believe and confess that the Holy Spirit makes all who believe in Jesus Christ to be priests for service to others in Jesus' name, and that God desires to make use of the spiritual gifts he has given through the priesthood of all believers.

6) Marriage and Family

We believe and confess that the marriage of male and female is an institution created and blessed by God. From marriage, God forms families to serve as the building blocks of all human civilization and community. We teach and practice that sexual activity belongs exclusively within the biblical boundaries of a faithful marriage between one man and one woman.

7) The Mission and Ministry of the Congregation

We believe and confess that the church is the assembly of believers called and gathered by God around Word and Sacrament, and that the mission and ministry of the church is carried out within the context of individual congregations, which are able to work together locally and globally.

Teaching Statement: On Faithful Stewardship & the Redirection of Congregational Benevolence

The Lord said, “Who then is the faithful and prudent steward whom his master will put in charge of his servants, to give them their allowance of food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find at work when he arrives. Truly I tell you, he will put that one in charge of all his possessions.”

(Luke 12:42-44)

On the Nature of Faithful Stewardship

The biblical word “steward” refers to someone who takes care of something that belongs to another. As the people of God, our Christian stewardship acknowledges the fact that everything we have comes from God. God has entrusted to us what belongs to Him, and he wants us to use it in a way that serves His will and work in the world.

Jesus described what this is like in his parable from Matthew 25:

It is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. (vv. 14-15)

Like the master in the parable, God expects us to use the resources He has given us to do His business as the Church. The wise steward is the one who takes seriously this task, always asking the question: “When I use God’s money and give of what has been given to me — am I being obedient to God? Am I doing His work and serving His mission, according to His Word?”

We’ve all heard the old saying: “Put your money where your mouth is.” It is a way of expressing the need for our actions to match our professed beliefs — especially in terms of the things we invest in.

In our case as Christians, this faithfulness might best be expressed as “Putting our money where **God’s** mouth is” — that is, investing the resources we have been entrusted with, according to God’s own Word and command. Jesus tells us that the faithful and prudent stewards are the ones who do God’s work with what God has entrusted to us — both as individuals and as congregations.

Redirection, Not “Withholding”

Our obligation to give to the mission of God — both as individuals and as congregations — is not an option for people of faith. We are commanded by God to share what has been entrusted to us.

This has been true since the days Israel worshipped in a tent in the wilderness:

The choicest of the first fruits of your ground you shall bring into the house of the LORD your God. (Exodus 23:19)

— just as it was true for the first Christians:

Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work. (2 Corinthians 9:7-8)

The question for faithful stewards is not **whether** we are required to give, but **to what** we will give. God does not allow us to “withhold” offerings, but God *does* expect us to direct our offerings to what faithfully serves His mission in the world.

Making Sound Stewardship Decisions

Given the changes that are taking place in the broader Church at this time — as Christian denominations depart from the historic faith and the clear teaching of Scripture — faithful Christians cannot take for granted that denominational institutions are using their benevolence dollars in a manner that truly serves the mission of Christ. As faithful stewards, we are called not simply to be the supporters of a human institution; we are accountable to God.

In their budget planning, it is important for congregations and church councils to be mindful of this calling. If we are to be faithful stewards of the resources God has given us, we must pay special attention to the ministries that we support with our benevolence dollars (i.e., the money we use in support of ministries outside the walls of our own congregation). We need to make sure that our investment of God’s resources goes to faithful ministries that actually serve the mission of God.

Real Service to the Neighbor

As Christians, we are called to love and serve our neighbors. In many places Scripture tells us that we must serve those in need rather than supporting institutions for the sake of the institutions themselves.

For example, God speaks through the prophet Amos, announcing His judgment upon ones who have built up their own houses at the expense of the needy. Because of a lack of faithfulness on the part of Israel's leaders — specifically, their willful rejection of God's Word — God himself promised that he would redirect His blessings to others:

They hate the one who reproves in the gate, and they abhor the one who speaks the truth. Therefore because you trample on the poor and take from them levies of grain, you have built houses of hewn stone, but you shall not live in them; you have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink their wine. (Amos 5:10-11)

Jesus himself often criticized those who propped up their own position and privilege at the expense of the neighbor and of serving real people in need:

Jesus said, "Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and to have the best seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets! They devour widows' houses and for the sake of appearance say long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation." (Mark 12:38-40)

Jesus never advocated the "withholding" of offerings to the temple, but he did remind his disciples that there are many other urgent and pressing needs for their help and assistance.

Therefore thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who shepherd my people: It is you who have scattered my flock, and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them. So I will attend to you for your evil doings, says the LORD. Then I myself will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the lands where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply. I will raise up shepherds over them who will shepherd them, and they shall not fear any longer, or be dismayed, nor shall any be missing, says the LORD. (Jeremiah 23:2-4)

Institutions or Mission?

In recent years, it has become popular among church leaders to use the term "Mission Support" to refer to funding of the denominational institution as a whole, when only a small part of this money goes to the actual mission of the church, as defined by Christ's own Great Commission:

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. (Matthew 28:19-20)

Admittedly, there are many worthy things that are done by church bodies in service of the neighbor — hunger and disaster relief, evangelism and education — just to name a few. However, denominational bodies do not hold the monopoly on such ministries.

There have always been many faithful para-church ministries and independent organizations that serve these same functions — often more effectively and with less "overhead" than denominational offices.

What Can We Do?

At this critical time in the history of the Church, it is important for Christians to consider whether their continued financial support of a denomination is faithful when that institution has officially made key aspects of Christian faith optional. There are many ways offerings might be used more faithfully:

- Local congregations can consider redirecting benevolence gifts away from the national denomination and perhaps also their local synod. Some synods already have the option of giving to the synod only, others are creating that option in the wake of the churchwide assembly.
- If a congregation is not willing to re-direct all or part of its benevolence, the local church council can create an option for individual members to do so with their own offerings by designated giving.
- Congregations and individuals can give their benevolence directly to many of the countless independent, faithful ministries that have had a long association with the Lutheran church.

Please refer to the websites of the WordAlone Network (www.wordalone.org) and Lutheran CORE (www.lutherancore.org) for recommendations on ministries that faithfully serve the mission of Christ.

Three Basic Biblical Categories of Giving

In teaching biblical stewardship, it is important to remember that there were several different “types” of giving required by God. It was not assumed that all such giving passed through or was accomplished by the centralized religious institution, but was directed toward different recipients. Individuals and congregations are encouraged to split their benevolence offerings into these three basic biblical categories.

Biblical Categories

Tithes

Definition: Ten percent of one's income (produce, flocks, money) given to support the temple of God and its ministers. This offering was to be given from the “first fruits” (as a priority, rather than ‘leftovers’).

In biblical times, the Levites (local ministers) received a tenth of the land's produce from the people, of which they in turn passed along ten percent for the support of the temple and the Aaronic priests.

All the tithes from the land, whether the seed from the ground or the fruit from the tree, are the Lord's... All tithes of herd and flock, every tenth one that passes under the shepherd's staff, shall be holy to the Lord. (Leviticus 27:30, 32)

Offerings

Definition: A donation given to mark a special occasion or dedicated for a specific purpose, that was ‘over and above’ the regular tithe.

In biblical times, special sacrifices and offerings were made for various reasons, for example: to give thanks, to atone for sin, to mark the birth of a child, or at an ordination. In the early church, missionaries were sponsored by direct support.

And they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, ‘a pair of turtle doves or two small pigeons.’ (Luke 2:24)

Alms

Definition: Something given (clothing, food, etc.) for the direct relief of the poor, often coming from one's own property.

In biblical times, alms were given to people who were unable to work due to physical disability, or those who simply had no means of support. There were no public assistance programs.

Since there will never cease to be some in need on the earth, I therefore command you, open your hand to the poor and needy neighbor in your land. (Deuteronomy 15:11)

Modern Equivalents

Regular Planned Giving

Definition: Giving that goes directly to the church for general operating expenses, payment of the building mortgage and staff salaries, as well as benevolence to the greater church.

This planned giving is a percentage of one's annual income, given on a regular basis throughout the year (sometimes called ‘envelope’ offerings). From what the congregation receives, a percentage is used to support the greater church.

Concerning the collection for the saints... On the first day of every week, each of you is to put aside and save whatever extra you earn, so that collections need not be taken when I come. (1 Corinthians 16:1-2)

Special Offerings

Definition: Gifts or money given in thanks on a special occasion, or designated for a particular purpose or mission project.

Memorials and honorariums are often given in connection with weddings, funerals, etc. Also, in this category would be included collections made for designated purposes (bible camp, furnace fund, missionary support, etc.).

They voluntarily gave according to their means, and even beyond their means, begging us earnestly for the privilege of sharing in this ministry to the saints. (2 Cor. 8:3-4)

Charity Giving

Definition: Money or other items (food, clothing, etc.) given for the relief of the poor and needy, both locally and globally.

This includes such things as: the local food shelf, donations to organizations like Lutheran World Relief, Goodwill, United Way, Red Cross, as well as giving directly to those who need immediate help.

Jesus said: “Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.” (Luke 12:33)

Some Suggestions for Alternative Giving

For congregations and individuals that would like to consider other options for their outreach giving, the following are offered as suggestions. This list is not exhaustive; there are many fine ministries and para-church organizations that do important work.

Cooperative Representation

This giving supports organizations that are working to maintain integrity in the teachings and practice of the Lutheran church.

WordAlone Network
WordAlone Theological Advisory Board
Lutheran CORE – Coalition for Renewal
Solid Ground (Canada)
The Society of the Holy Trinity
WA/CORE Chapters & Other Local Reform Groups

Church Bodies & Organizations

This giving supports the organization of a church body and ministries directly related to it.

Orthodox ELCA Synods
Companion Synod Projects
CORE – “Free-Standing Synod”
LCMC National Association & LCMC Districts
CALC (Canada) & Other Orthodox Lutheran Bodies
Local Ministeriums

Educational Ministries

There are a number of faithful alternatives to support educational and publishing ministries, including direct partners of WordAlone and Lutheran CORE, as well as other independent publishers.

Sola Publishing
ReClaim Resources
Faith Inkubators
Connections Magazine

Youth & Family Ministries

A number of faithful para-church organizations directly serve in youth and family ministries. In addition to national organizations, there are many local outdoor ministries that congregations may choose to support.

Youth Encounter
Exodus International
Mount Carmel Ministries
Other Local Camping Ministries

Pastoral & Lay Ministry Training

An important area for cooperative support is in the area of supporting seminary instruction for new pastors and lay ministers. This may be done through supporting a faithful entity or institution, or through individual sponsorship of orthodox students.

Institute of Lutheran Theology
WordAlone Seminary Debt Relief Fund
Individual Seminarian Scholarships

Global Mission Opportunities

This giving goes directly to ministries that carry out the work of Christ around the world. This could be designated support of a specific missionary or missionary organization.

World Mission Prayer League
Eastern European Mission Network
Latin American Lutheran Mission
New Hope Mission Society
Individual Missionary Sponsorship

Domestic Mission Opportunities

This giving supports evangelism within our own country and the planting of new congregations. It also includes support of ministries to specific communities or populations.

Development of New Congregations
Mission Congregation Support
Immigrant Congregation Support
Prison Ministries
Nursing Home Ministries

Relief Organizations

This giving goes directly to the assistance of the poor and hungry and those in need, both locally and throughout the world.

Lutheran World Relief
Lutheran Disaster Response
Global Health Ministries
Local Social Service Programs
Local Food Shelf

Should Our Church Leave the ELCA or Stay in It?

(An excerpt from the larger article “What Should We Do Now?”
available on the Lutheran CORE website at: www.lutherancore.org)

First of all, that is not the question. It is essential to recognize that the ELCA is the one who has left us, along with the majority of the Christian Church. That is not just spin. It is the truth of the matter.

Second, whether inside or outside of the ELCA, the most important thing is for faithful congregations to remain in fellowship with each other, as we collectively discern what future God might be calling us to as a confessional Lutheran witness in North America.

Beyond that, the question instead becomes whether holding our ground necessitates formal action to sever ties with the ELCA. Here, too, there are several options:

- A. Remain in the ELCA as the voice of opposition to its direction and decisions. Many of us have pursued this route for years to the point of exhaustion, but others still feel called to be a prophetic voice in the ELCA, while not being of the ELCA.
- B. Remain in the ELCA, but join Lutheran CORE as a public statement of adherence to the authority of Scripture, the Lutheran Confessions and the great Christian tradition. This can be an effective community witness in terms of what your church will teach.
- C. Remain formally in the ELCA, but withdraw functionally. Re-direct benevolence, do not participate in synod or ELCA events and play down the church’s ELCA connection.
- D. Remain in the ELCA, but seek dual membership in Lutheran Congregations for Mission in Christ (LCMC) or another Lutheran church body. ELCA leaders will say that the ELCA constitution forbids this, but it does not. Dual membership churches have existed throughout its life. This step may allow a church to avoid the challenges of formally severing ties, but still find a new, more faithful church home.
- E. Sever ties with the ELCA and join another Lutheran church body. A church must be quite united to take this step. The ELCA model

constitution for congregations requires two votes, each with a two-thirds majority, at least 90 days apart. In the meantime, the church must consult with the synodical bishop. Moving into another Lutheran church body recognized by the ELCA will generally allow the church to keep its property, but check your constitution carefully before proceeding.

- F. In any case, remain connected and in partnership with other churches in Lutheran CORE and/or any of the movements that are a part of it. While the situation of each church and individual is different, it would be tragic to allow the variety of responses to lead to a splintering of our efforts or result in a different kind of isolation.

This crisis has forced us all into a new and difficult position. If these suggestions do not fit your situation, consult with leaders of Lutheran CORE or others in your area for other ideas. Above all, let us bathe these efforts in prayer that whatever responses we make will be a faithful witness to Christ.

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What if our ELCA Synod is orthodox and upholds the authority of God’s Word?

Several ELCA synods have historically expressed strong opposition to the ELCA’s new teaching and policies on sexuality. In synods that stay focused on the proper mission of the church, there might be ways for congregations to be involved in a synod’s biblically faithful ministries. It is possible that those synods might take a confessional stand over against the ELCA churchwide’s new teaching and policies. In synods like this, it might be worth exploring the options. Even congregations that withdraw from the ELCA might find ways that they can work with an ELCA synod to do the mission of the church.

Church councils could ask to meet with the bishop or synod council to discuss all the options. It might well be an opportunity for developing new, more effective ways to proclaim the Gospel and to do mission work.

Some Basic Information About LCMC

(Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ)



Introducing who we are as Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ:

- We are rooted and grounded in the Scriptures and Lutheran Confessions.
- Our association is firmly committed to accepting the normative authority of the Bible. We reject the notion that science, personal experience, tradition, or other human endeavors have equal footing with the Bible. We are certainly aware that these endeavors contribute to our conversations and deliberations, but the Bible must be our final authority in matters of faith and practice.
- We also believe that the Lutheran Confessions offer us accurate interpretations of the Biblical witness and we commit ourselves to being guided by them in our life together as an association.
- We are working to fulfill Christ's Great Commission to go and make disciples of all nations. LCMC has one primary mission: that of sharing the life-giving Gospel of Jesus Christ. We are focused on starting congregations in this country, supporting missionaries around the world, and raising up and training leaders to serve Christ and his church.
- LCMC is committed to knowing Jesus and to making Jesus known. The association is dedicated to helping member congregations carry out this mission.

For more information,
please refer to the LCMC website at:

www.lcmc.net

Friends of the WordAlone Network may also
want to visit the "Faithful Transition" blogsite at:

faithfultransition.blogspot.com

The LCMC Constitutional Statement of Faith:

1. We believe, teach, and confess the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
2. We believe, teach and confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and the gospel as the power of God for the salvation of all who believe in him.
 - a. Jesus Christ is the Word of God incarnate, through whom everything was made and through whose life, death and resurrection God fashions a new creation.
 - b. The proclamation of God's message to us as both law and gospel is the Word of God, revealing judgment and mercy in the person of Jesus Christ, through whom God was pleased to reconcile all things to himself.
 - c. The canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God. Inspired by God's Spirit speaking through their authors, they record and announce God's revelation centering in Jesus Christ. Through them, God's spirit speaks to us to create and sustain Christian faith and fellowship for service in the world.
3. We believe, teach and accept the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired Word of God, and the sole authoritative source and norm of our proclamation, faith and fellowship.
4. We accept the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds as true declarations of the scriptural faith.
5. We believe, teach and accept the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and the Small Catechism as true witnesses to the Word of God, normative for our teaching and practice. We acknowledge that we are one in faith, and doctrine with all churches that likewise accept the teachings of the Augsburg Confession.
6. We believe, teach and confess the other confessional writings in the Book of Concord, namely, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles, the Treatise, the Large Catechism, and the Formula of Concord, as further valid expositions of the Holy Scriptures.
7. We believe, teach and confess the gospel, recorded in the Holy Scriptures and confessed in the ecumenical creeds and Lutheran confessional writings, as the power of God to create and sustain the priesthood of all believers for God's mission in the world.

Congregations may freely join LCMC by subscribing to this Statement of Faith and the provisions of the constitution of Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ. For more information on LCMC, call (toll free): 1-866-720-5262.