

# **Draft Social Statement on Women and Justice**

For Study and Response  
Prior to September 30, 2018



Available online at [ELCA.org/womenandjustice](http://ELCA.org/womenandjustice).

### **Ordering a copy**

A single copy of the draft can be obtained without cost by downloading it from the Women and Justice website ([ELCA.org/womenandjustice](http://ELCA.org/womenandjustice)) or by calling 800-638-3522.

Multiple printed copies may be ordered from the ELCA Online Resource Catalog for a nominal fee at [ELCA.org/resources](http://ELCA.org/resources).

### **Sending your comments to the task force**

You are invited to respond to the draft and send your comments to the ELCA Task Force on Women and Justice. You may use the response form at the back of this document or write your comments in letter or essay form. Please send them to the task force by Sept. 30, 2018.

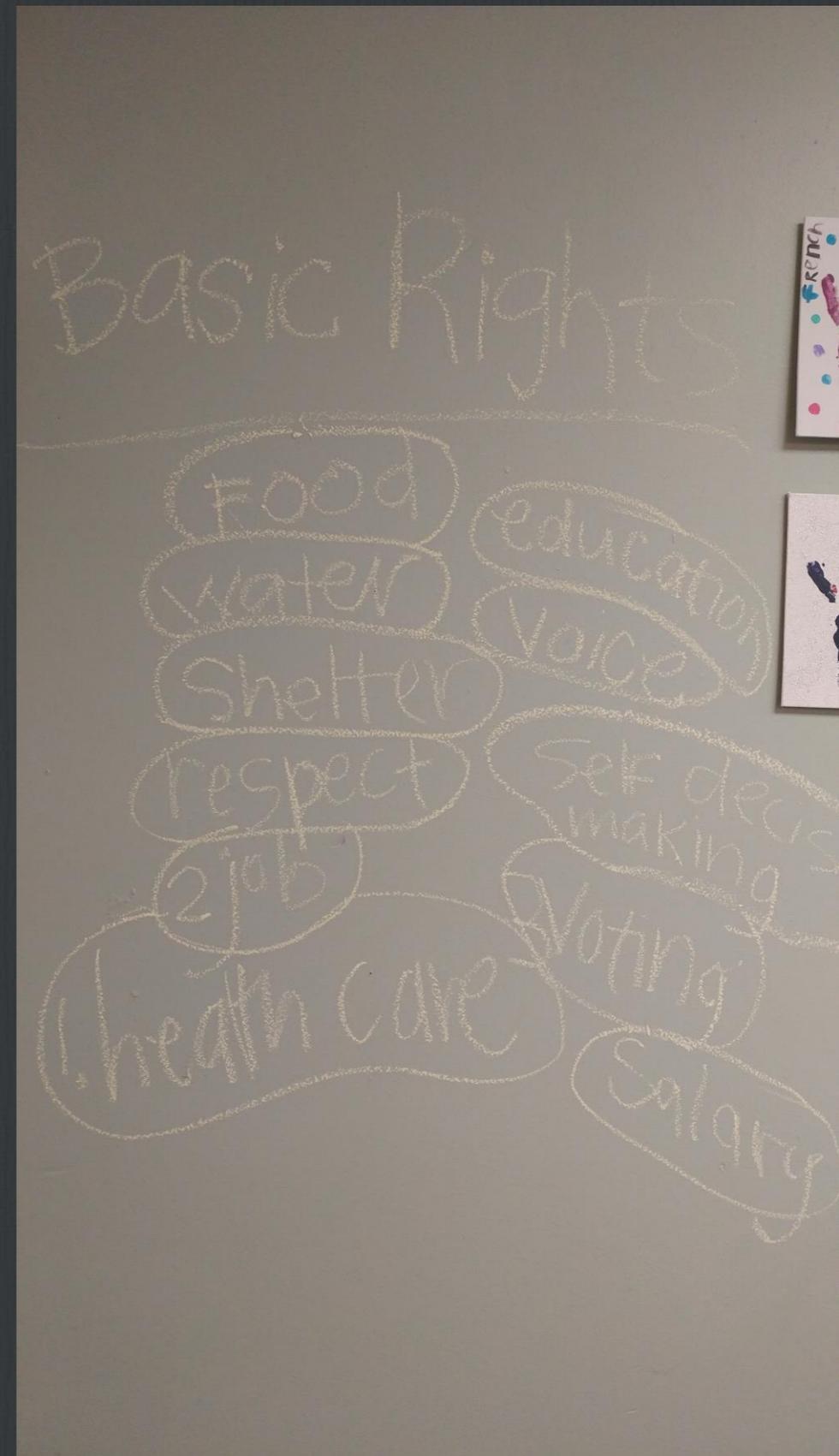
### **You may send your comments to:**

Mail: ELCA Task Force on Women and Justice  
Office of the Presiding Bishop  
8765 W. Higgins Rd.  
Chicago, IL 60631-4101

Email: [womenandjustice@elca.org](mailto:womenandjustice@elca.org)

Online: [bit.ly/womenandjusticedraft](http://bit.ly/womenandjusticedraft)

- Pre-assembly session at Synod assembly 2017
- Adult forum (Vicar Kelsey) on women and violence
- 2 sessions using curriculum
- 3 coffee house conversations
- 3 sessions on this document
- Developed concrete actions we can implement here



# MEN DISCUSS FEMINISM AND GENDER EQUALITY



<https://youtu.be/ufQSF3mpQ6k>

36

## I. Core Convictions

37

38 1) We believe God's intention revealed through the Scriptures is that all people  
39 flourish and have life abundantly.

40

41 2) We believe all people are created equally in the image of God. Every individual  
42 is dependent upon God and all share in the God-given vocation to joyfully  
43 contribute their gifts to help all of creation flourish. As members of this society,  
44 we also affirm that all people are created equal and are endowed with certain  
45 inalienable rights.

46

47 3) We affirm that God's creation is wonderful in its variety. We believe God  
48 creates humanity in diversity, encompassing a wide variety of experiences,  
49 identities, and expressions, including sex and gender.



51 4) While we affirm that God's intention is equity and fullness of life for  
52 everyone, we confess that the sins of patriarchy and sexism, like all human  
53 sin, disrupt God's intention. We recognize that the struggle to achieve sex  
54 and gender equity is shaped and complicated by factors of race and ethnicity,  
55 nationality and immigration status, sexuality, gender identity, economic means,  
56 age, abilities, and education.

57

58 5) We confess that, as God's people, forgiven in Jesus Christ, we are at the same  
59 time liberated and sinful. We are broken, and yet we are made new by grace  
60 through faith. This good news is true even as we participate in cultures and  
61 societies that are broadly patriarchal and sexist.



62 6) We confess that we are justified by God's grace through faith. This promise  
63 frees us from trying to earn God's love or justify ourselves, so that we can  
64 do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God and our neighbors. A  
65 commitment to neighbor justice is key to our understanding of the ministry of  
66 Jesus Christ and to our reading of the Scriptures. God's act of redeeming love  
67 evokes love in us for others who need justice in all areas of their lives. This call  
68 to justice specifically means that we seek equity and justice for women and girls  
69 and others who experience oppression due to sexism and patriarchy.

70

71 7) We believe that, redeemed and made new, the Church is called to live as the  
72 Body of Christ in the world even while we struggle with the realities of patriarchy  
73 and sexism. As Lutherans, we recognize that acting justly within the home, the  
74 church, society, and civic life for the good of all is one of the vocations to which  
75 God calls all people.

76



# Comments for Section I

---

Paragraph (6), Lines 62-69 – While we whole-heartedly believe that Neighbor Justice is necessary, and that there is grace, freely given, for both oppressors and victims, this statement does not fully acknowledge the pain and trauma that victims of oppression endure. We feel the statement should be strengthened to reflect more emotion and the need to walk with the oppressed and allow a full range of emotions to be expressed and validated.



## II. Analysis of Patriarchy and Sexism

77

78

79 8) We recognize patriarchy and sexism are “a mix of power, privilege, and  
80 prejudice.”<sup>1</sup> They prevent all human beings from living into the abundant life  
81 for which God created them. Patriarchy is a social system dominated by men,  
82 identified with men, and centered on men’s actions, voices, and authority. In  
83 patriarchal systems, men are typically viewed as better than women, given more  
84 power than women, and have more authority than women. This patriarchal  
85 worldview harms women and girls. Sexism is the reinforcement of male privilege.  
86 It promotes silencing, controlling, and devaluing women, girls, and gender non-  
87 conforming people. Everyone intentionally and unintentionally participates in a  
88 patriarchal system, and it affects individuals in different ways.

89

90 9) We recognize that when society and church have spoken about women and  
91 girls, the hidden assumption often has been that they are white and heterosexual.  
92 However, this statement’s references to women and girls are inclusive of all  
93 women—women of color and white women, lesbians, transgender women, women  
94 with disabilities, and immigrant women.



96 10) We believe that many individuals who suffer under the weight of patriarchy  
97 and sexism also experience intersecting burdens. In addition to sex or gender  
98 discrimination, they may also be treated in oppressive ways according to  
99 their race, ethnicity, economic status, age, sexual orientation, gender identity,  
100 immigration status, or ability, or because of the language they speak.

101

102 11) We reject patriarchy and sexism as sinful because they deny the truth that  
103 all people are created equally in God's image. Too often behaviors and decisions  
104 rooted in patriarchy and sexism cause overt harm, inequities, and degradations.  
105 Examples include gender-based violence (including physical and emotional violence  
106 and coercion), pay inequality, human trafficking, restricted access to health care  
107 and economic resources, inadequate research on health issues affecting women,  
108 denial of educational opportunities, objectifying portrayals of women in media, and  
109 failure to value and support elderly women, mothers, and children.<sup>2</sup>



111 12) We recognize that the problems experienced by women and girls are vast.  
112 However, patriarchal structures that reinforce and perpetuate rigid sex and  
113 gender expectations also harm men and boys, including gay and transgender  
114 men. Men and boys are harmed when they are forced to conform to narrow  
115 gender stereotypes, such as those that tell men and boys not to have traits or  
116 roles that are like those associated with women and girls. People of all genders  
117 who do not conform to gender-based roles and stereotypes can be made invisible  
118 and oppressed.



120 13) We celebrate that humans are relational beings and that we live in social  
121 systems. The dynamics and powers in these systems are greater than any one  
122 individual, government, culture, or religious community, even though personal  
123 responsibility is involved. Most instances of patriarchal harm flow from and into  
124 commonly held beliefs and customs and can be found in specific laws, policies,  
125 and practices within secular and church institutions. Our church's commitment to  
126 neighbor justice compels us to expose how patriarchy and sexism are woven into  
127 all aspects of individual, social, and religious life, causing harm to all of humanity.



# Comments for Section II

---

Paragraph (8) Line 85 - Sexism is the reinforcement of heterosexual male privilege.

Paragraph (8) Line 600 – As a society, and in religious institutions, we have fostered patriarchal values..



### III. Resources for Resisting Patriarchy and Sexism

129

130

131 14) The Scriptures show us a rich texture of justice that is central to God's  
132 intention for human flourishing.<sup>3</sup> This church has identified sufficiency,  
133 sustainability, solidarity, and participation as the key principles of justice.<sup>4</sup> Social  
134 structures and institutions, including the ELCA as a human institution, must be  
135 assessed and guided by these principles.

136

137 15) In faith, this church is empowered to confess that Christianity, in certain  
138 beliefs, practices, and aspects of its history, is complicit in the sins of patriarchy  
139 and sexism. At the same time, we believe God provides resources within the  
140 Christian faith and the Lutheran tradition and is at work in human community  
141 to bring forth new ways of living that challenge the harmful beliefs and effects of  
142 patriarchy and sexism.



144 16) While God's Word of Law and Gospel speaks through the Scriptures, there  
145 are words and images, social patterns, and moral beliefs in them that reflect the  
146 patriarchal values of the cultures and societies in which they arose. Their continued  
147 misuse contributes to maintaining hierarchies and patterns of inequity and harm.

148 17) The Christian theological tradition also bears this dual character. In particular,  
149 some doctrines affect our understanding about humanity and God more than  
150 others. These teachings affect our use of language. The teachings about the  
151 image of God, the Body of Christ, and the Trinity have sometimes been misused  
152 to support patriarchal beliefs, attitudes, church practices, behaviors, and  
153 structures. At the same time, these doctrines also provide liberating resources  
154 for healing the effects of the sins of patriarchy and sexism.

155

156 18) The central Lutheran belief that we are justified by grace through faith  
157 empowers this church to challenge the structures of patriarchy and sexism that  
158 ascribe value based on human standards.



160 19) We recognize that significant progress has been made in society against  
161 patriarchy and sexism; however, evidence demonstrates that more attention  
162 is needed. Cultural and religious beliefs, practices, policies, and laws continue  
163 to promote inequality and inequity and continue to degrade, lessen, and harm  
164 people. We believe that Christians, together with many other partners, are able to  
165 understand and advance equity. This happens through beliefs and ideas that are  
166 gender-just and through laws and policies that support an equitable common good.



# Comments for Section III

---

Paragraph 15, Lines 137 – We noted that women were leaders in the early church and that the institutional church became a vehicle to promote patriarchy and sexism. We suggest that “institutional church” replace the word “Christianity.”

Paragraph 16, Lines 144-147 – We feel that the ELCA must distinguish itself regarding the interpretation of troublesome Bible passages.



168

#### **IV. Response to God's Work:**

169

#### **Call to Action and New Commitments in Society**

170

171

20) This church teaches that the God who justifies expects all people to seek

172

justice in earthly structures and systems. Human reason and knowledge are

173

necessary here, and this church does not presume to have quick or easy

174

solutions for the deeply rooted and complex problems of patriarchy and sexism

175

that have permeated these structures. Our commitments, however, express this

176

church's firm hope that social relations can be ordered in better ways so that all

177

people may experience greater equity and justice.



180 21) Seek, support, and advocate that diverse, gendered bodies be respected,  
181 rather than objectified, abused, denigrated, or marginalized. First steps toward  
182 this goal are laws that do not deprive anyone of their human and civil rights.

183

184 22) Seek, support, and advocate for the eradication of gender-based violence,  
185 including rape and sexual assault, by acknowledging both personal responsibility  
186 and the systemic aspects of such violence. (See the ELCA's social messages  
187 "Gender-based Violence" and "Commercial Sexual Exploitation.")

188

189 23) Seek, support, and advocate for portrayals of people in entertainment, media,  
190 and advertising that do not objectify or stereotype but rather show all people as  
191 capable of the wide variety of human characteristics and roles.

192

193 24) Seek, support, and advocate for medical research, health care delivery, and  
194 access to health care services, including reproductive health care, that recognize  
195 how bodies differ and that eliminate discrimination due to gender or sexuality.

196 (See ELCA social statement *Health: Our Common Endeavor*.)



198 25) Seek, support, and advocate for economic policies, regulations, and practices  
199 that enhance equity and equality for women and girls, with special concern for  
200 raising up women who experience intersecting forms of oppression. (See the  
201 ELCA's social statement *Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All*.)

202

203 26) Seek, support, and advocate for services and legal reforms that attend  
204 to the particular needs of women, girls, and boys who are physically and  
205 economically vulnerable due to migration and immigration. (See the ELCA's  
206 social message "Immigration.")



207 27) Seek, support, and advocate for multi-faceted understandings of social and  
208 economic roles so that our human traits (such as courage or care) or callings  
209 (such as business leader or stay-at-home parent) are not prescribed by gender  
210 or sex. Encourage and empower all people to use their gifts for the sake of the  
211 social good, whether in the home, at work, or in the public sphere.

212

213 28) Seek, support, and advocate for resources for families and communities that  
214 empower parents, whether single or coupled, to nurture, protect, and provide  
215 for their household in ways that do not reinforce gender-based stereotypes. In  
216 particular, advocate for men to participate in all family roles associated with the  
217 home, caregiving, parenting, and nurturing.

218

219 29) Seek, support, and advocate for an increase in women's participation in  
220 local, state, and national politics, with special attention to raising up women who  
221 experience intersecting forms of oppression.



# Comments for Section IV

---

Paragraph 20, Lines 177-178 – While it's not always quick or easy to make broad changes to societal issues that have been embedded for centuries, the church can quickly implement policies to address inequalities. We request that obstacles are actively identified and addressed.

Paragraph 21, Lines 180-182 – This paragraph feels light. We request specific actions that can be implemented within the ELCA's realm of authority.

Paragraph 22, Lines 184-187 – Expand personal responsibility to include complicity and “moral muteness.”

223

## V. Response to God's Work:

224

### Call to Action and New Commitments Regarding the Church

225

226 30) This church recognizes that the Body of Christ is called to honor and support  
227 women, girls, and people with diverse gender identities in ways more consistent  
228 with life-giving theology and faith practices. Therefore, as a church, we commit  
229 ourselves to celebrating and affirming the gifts and insights that women and girls  
230 bring to congregations, institutions, and the church as a whole.

231

232 The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America commits to:

233

234 31) Promote scriptural translation and interpretation that support gender justice,  
235 acknowledge the patriarchal context in which the Scriptures were written, and reject  
236 the misuse of Scripture to support sexist attitudes and patriarchal structures.



237 32) Promote theological reflection that is attentive to the gender-based needs of  
238 the neighbor. Theologians need to be honest about how church teachings have  
239 been misused to support patriarchy and sexism. All teachers of the faith should  
240 express God's desire that all persons may thrive.

241  
242 33) Use inclusive language for humankind and inclusive and expansive language  
243 for God. Encourage the use of language for God that expands rather than limits  
244 our understanding of God's goodness and mystery. In particular, we support  
245 developing liturgies, hymns, prayers, and educational materials that broaden our  
246 language beyond primarily male images. This practice follows the Scriptures'  
247 witness that God is wholly other and transcends human categories of sex and  
248 gender. Therefore, metaphors and images for God should be drawn from the lives  
249 of women and men, from nature, and from humanity in all its diversity to speak  
250 of the fullness and beauty of God.

252 34) Develop and support more extensive policies and practices within the ELCA  
253 that promote the authority and leadership of all women within this church in all  
254 its expressions.

255

256 35) Promote changes that are economically just, including equal pay, for women  
257 in all ELCA institutions and organizations, with special attention to the situations  
258 of people affected by intersecting forms of discrimination.

259

260 36) Seek and encourage faithful discernment and, where possible, joint action  
261 with other members of the Body of Christ and inter-religious and secular  
262 partners on issues of patriarchy and sexism. This includes the affirmation of the  
263 Lutheran World Federation's Gender Justice Policy and continued dialogue with  
264 national and global ecumenical and inter-faith partners.



# Comments for Section V

---

In general, we request more attention to specific actions such as encouraging and supporting women in politics, as well as supporting and global actions.



# Action Plans-Brainstorming Ideas

---

Rotate women leading worship and providing sermons.

Sermon series on women and women's issues.

More communication and promotion of women's issues, support opportunities, etc. Embed the language and ideas.

Talk about what the ELCA has been doing in regard to women's issues, such as 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ordination of women, other history of the ELCA, next steps and plans of the ELCA.

Closer look at language used in liturgy, Bible readings, communications. Provide permission to use language that is comfortable for the individual. Leave blanks for words like "Father," so that people don't just recite from memory but really think about the words that they would like to use.

# Action Plans-Brainstorming Ideas

---

Provide options on wording without judging the choices of others.

Ensure there are resources and curriculum for Sunday School that focus on women in the Bible and depict different kinds of families.

Incorporate some of the history of women in the church in the Adult Forum series, "Why We Do What We Do."

Pastor Dan's weekly messages – work in some topics about women in the Bible and early church.



# Action Plans-Brainstorming Ideas

---

Develop guidelines for print and social media.

Actively support community programs and support women and designate Gifts of Hope. (Fresh Start, Bridges to Hope, Peoples City Mission, etc.)

Emphasize the concept – All people have a right to be respected. We have a responsibility to treat all people with respect.



# What next?

---

- Submit your personal comments to the ELCA
- Engage with others for discussions and brainstorming
- Implement changes at this congregation/in this community
- Speak up when you hear patriarchal or oppressive language or opinions

