



Are We So
Different?

The ELS & the ELCA

Please note that not every teaching listed in the column for the ELCA applies to every member or pastor within the ELCA. Yet there are statements and pronouncements put out by the ELCA over the years demonstrating that the ELCA allows teachings which are not in agreement with the Bible. Such unbiblical teachings are, at the very least, tolerated by the ELCA without discipline.

Evangelical Lutheran Synod

AUTHORITY

Everything recorded in the Bible is to be taught and accepted as God's true Word (Holy Scripture: truth unchanged, unchanging):

John 17:17 Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.

God is the author of all Scripture. He breathed into certain writers the words He wanted them to write. The Scripture contains no errors or contradictions.

2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.

John 10:35 ... Scripture cannot be broken.

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

AUTHORITY

The ELCA on its website makes the following claim:

“This church accepts the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired Word of God and the authoritative source and norm of its proclamation, faith, and life.” <http://www.elca.org/What-We-Believe/Statements-of-Belief/ELCA-Confession-of-Faith.aspx>

The meaning of this confession of Scripture is described by the ELCA this way:

“Because Biblical writers, editors and compilers were limited by their times and world views, even as we are, the Bible contains material wedded to those times and places. It also means that writers sometimes provide differing and even contradictory views of God's word, ways and will.” <http://web.archive.org/web/20090727125207/http://www.elca.org/What-We-Believe/New-or-Returning-to-Church/Dig-Deeper/The-Bible.aspx>

CREATION

The biblical account of creation recorded in Genesis 1–3 is a factual, historical account of the world’s origin. It is contrary to the Bible to hold that the world and man originated by chance according to the theory of evolution.

Matthew 19:4 He answered, “Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female.

CREATION

The theory of evolution is an acceptable explanation of the beginning and on-going working of this world.

A questioner asked:

“I believe in an old earth theory, (4.3-4.6 Byo) and also I believe in evolution both macro and micro, does this conflict with my ELCA Church?”

The ELCA response:

“Not at all. As a church body the ELCA believes that science per se is a gift of God to be used for the stewarding of creation, but it does not pronounce on the correctness of scientific theories or data. It does believe its members in their callings as scientists, technicians, and educated citizens should do so, though! The theories you mention represent the best thinking of science at this time.”

<http://www.elca.org/What-We-Believe/Social-Issues/Faith-Science-and-Technology/Ask-a-Scientist.aspx#anchor14>

Other statements from the ELCA are:

“For all practical purposes, we can say time began when the big bang first began its bang” (GWF 139).

“The ELCA does not have an official position on creation vs. evolution, but we subscribe to the historical-critical method of biblical interpretation, so we believe God created the universe and all that is therein, only not necessarily in six 24-hour days, and that God actually may have used evolution in the process of creation. In fact, to deny the possibility that evolutionary processes were used is seen by some as an attempt to limit God’s power.” <http://www2.elca.org/questions/Results.asp?recid=4>

MORAL LAW

The moral law of God, that is the Ten Commandments, an immutable set of precepts or rules, is absolute and unchanging throughout the history of humanity in this creation.

MORAL LAW

“Given the dramatic changes in Western culture since the Enlightenment, given the avalanche of social transformation the world has undergone since the 1980s, and given the philosophical necessity for formulating a dynamic ontology [theory of existence] to understand our world, it is difficult now to conceive of an ethic based on some immutable [unchangeable] set of precepts or rules. Because of the continuing creation, the rules [God’s law] must change too.” (GWF 374)

JESUS CHRIST

The virgin birth of Christ, as a biological miracle, is believed and taught, since it is stated plainly in Scripture.

Matthew 1:18-25 Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. 19 And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. 20 But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." 22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: 23 "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us). 24 When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, 25 but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

JESUS CHRIST

“When we confess in the Apostles’ Creed that Jesus was ‘conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary ...,’ and in the Nicene Creed that Jesus is ‘the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father ...’ we are not making a gynecological assertion. We are saying that God entered into Christ and, in him, is fully revealed to humankind. This is God’s graceful act of reconciliation with creation and humankind’s redemption.” <http://web.archive.org/web/20091103031351/http://www.elca.org/What-We-Believe/New-or-Returning-to-Church/Dig-Deeper/Virgin-Birth.aspx>

“In the incarnation God ceases to be God in a previously stereotypical sense and enters fully into the plight of human suffering. The history of Jesus is divine history.” (GWF 210)

CHURCH FELLOWSHIP

The synod should not join in worship services or with religious organizations which compromise any of the teachings of Scripture.

2 John 9-10 Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. 10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting.

Romans 16:17 I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them.

Martin Luther confessed:

“I reckon them all as belonging together (that is, as Sacramentarians and enthusiasts), for that is what they are who will not believe that the Lord’s bread in the Supper is his true, natural body, which the godless or Judas receive orally as well as St. Peter and all the saints. Whoever, I say, will not believe this, will please let me alone and expect no fellowship from me. This is final.” (FC, SD VII, 39)

“[The] churches will not condemn each other... as long as they are otherwise agreed in doctrine and in all its articles and are also agreed concerning the right use of the holy sacraments...” (FC SD, X, 31)

CHURCH FELLOWSHIP

The ELCA & Presbyterian Church (USA), United Church of Christ, Reformed Church in America stated:

“The members of the theological conversations acknowledged that it has not been possible to reconcile the confessional formulations from the sixteenth century with a ‘common language...which could do justice to all the insights, convictions, and concerns of our ancestors in the faith’ (A Common Calling, p. 49). However, the theological conversations recognized these enduring differences as acceptable diversities with regard to the Lord’s Supper.”

<http://www.elca.org/Who-We-Are/Our-Three-Expressions/Churchwide-Organization/Office-of-the-Presiding-Bishop/Ecumenical-and-Inter-Religious-Relations/Full-Communion-Partners/Presbyterian-Church-USA/A-Formula-of-Agreement/Official-Text.aspx>
(accessed 3/12/13)

ABORTION

Except where the life of the mother is seriously threatened, abortion is a violation of the Fifth commandment.

Psalm 139:13-16 For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. 14 I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. 15 My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. 16 Your eyes saw my unformed substance...

WOMEN PASTORS

It is contrary to Scripture for women to be ordained into the pastoral ministry.

1 Corinthians 14:33-35 For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. As in all the churches of the saints, 34 the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. 35 If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.

1 Timothy 2:11-12 Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. 12 I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet.

ABORTION

Elective abortion is morally acceptable in our day. The decision concerning abortion should be left to individuals.

“Does the ELCA Health Benefits Plan in fact pay for ‘induced abortions’ during the first 20 weeks of pregnancy?” Answer: “Yes, the ELCA Health Benefits Plan may pay for abortion procedures during the first 20 weeks of pregnancy...”

Question: “Are there any conditions under which abortions during the first twenty weeks are not covered by the ELCA health benefits plan?” Answer: “No, the ELCA Health Plan does not question abortions performed within the first 20 weeks of pregnancy...”

Cathy Hendrickson, Health Care Advocacy Supervisor, ELCA Board of Pensions, in e-mail correspondence with John Vincent, December 11, 2009. http://www.exposingtheelca.com/uploads/2/4/2/8/2428588/the_elca_abortion_policy1.pdf

WOMEN PASTORS

Women are to be ordained into the pastoral ministry, and serve as bishops. Objections to the ordination of women are considered to be merely cultural and historical.

HOMOSEXUALITY

Homosexual behavior is a sin according to God's Word. However, there is forgiveness for this sin, as for all others. *Romans 1:24-27 Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, 25 because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. 26 For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; 27 and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.*

(See also 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 and Hebrews 13:4)

HOMOSEXUALITY

From the ELCA 2009 statement Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust, "On the basis of conscience-bound belief, some are convinced that the scriptural witness does not address the context of sexual orientation and committed relationships that we experience today. They believe that the neighbor and community are best served when same-gender relationships are lived out with lifelong and monogamous commitments that are held to the same rigorous standards, sexual ethics, and status as heterosexual marriage."

Since 2009 partnered homosexuals are allowed to be ordained as ministers, and ministers are allowed to officiate at same-sex marriage ceremonies.

As of July 2013 a synod of the ELCA has elected to the office of bishop a partnered homosexual.

ⁱ All Scripture quotations are taken from the English Standard Version (ESV).

ⁱⁱ God—the World's Future: Systematic Theology for a New Era. Second Edition. By Ted Peters. Augsburg Fortress: Minneapolis, 2000. (Abbreviated as GWF. This text is a standard text for the study of doctrine for the training of pastors in the ELCA.)



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