

Hearing on the Draft Social Statement on Human Sexuality

To members of the West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod,

Synod Council and I are extending to you and the members of your congregation an invitation to attend a hearing on the Draft Social Statement on Human Sexuality. This is an important opportunity for members of the West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod. This hearing provides a chance both to respond to the ideas in the draft statement and to hear the perspectives of others about these issues.

The background information you need is this:

- The 2001 Churchwide Assembly mandated a social statement on human sexuality (along with requesting a report and recommendations regarding homosexuality and ministry issues). Social statements in our church are developed in a participatory process. For that purpose, the Task Force for the ELCA Studies on Sexuality developed three studies in the “Journey Together Faithfully” series. These were made available to all congregations and included response forms for members. These responses, along with communication in the form of letters and e-mails from rostered leaders and lay members of this church, have helped the task force to know this church’s thinking on these issues.
- On March 13, 2008 the task force will issue a **Draft Social Statement** for this church’s consideration. Hearings are the next step in the participatory process.
- This synod will host a hearing on Saturday, May 31 at the conclusion of the 2008 Synod Assembly. A representative of the task force will be present and comments at the hearing will be summarized by a synod representative. Both reports will be shared with the whole task force as they consider how to revise the draft and craft the Proposed Statement on Human Sexuality for 2009.
- When you register for the **2008 Synod Assembly** in the lobby of the hotel, you may also register to speak during the hearing. We will have three registration boxes for those wishing to speak about the Social Statement of “**Favor,**” “**Against**” and “**Comments and Questions.**” Each speaker will be allotted three minutes to address this First Draft of a proposed Social Statement. We will do everything we can to make sure that no less than ten persons from each of the possible registration boxes have an opportunity to speak. You are encouraged to remain for this event, and we ask that you encourage participation by your congregation. It may help to hold a study on the draft statement within the congregation in order that members will have a better understanding of this theologically based document. We have allotted 90 minutes for this hearing.

With thanks for your prayers and involvement in this process.