

Appendix: Justice for Women



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

2009–2011

The Lutheran tenet of justification by grace through faith is the root of this church's call to address sexism and to work for justice for women, for this theological insight makes clear, first, that everyone is equally created both sinful and redeemed and, second, that God desires no idolatry of any group of humans over others. The whole church is called to address sexism in church and society.

At the churchwide organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), all units have the responsibility to incorporate the churchwide commitment to justice for women in the areas of work for which they are responsible. In addition, the Justice for Women program within the Office of the Presiding Bishop carries the responsibility to engage and equip members of the ELCA to be leaders in their own contexts to address sexism with social and theological solutions.

The Justice for Women program challenges and works with the ELCA, in all its expressions, to address sexism in this church and to promote gender justice in society at large. This entire church is invited to address sexism in church and society by understanding, challenging, and responding faithfully to sexism through a transformation of how individuals see, think, feel, and act. This church is encouraged to *understand* justice for women and girls as a church issue; to have theological ability to *analyze* church and society in terms of justice for women and girls; to be equipped to *challenge* societal, theological, and ecclesial practices and beliefs that are unjust to women and girls; and to be able to *respond* by advocating for changes in church practice and belief, as well as social policy and practice, which bring about and reflect justice for women and girls.

In order to assist this church to understand, analyze, challenge, and respond faithfully to sexism, the Justice for Women program has worked closely with its consulting committee, composed of six at-large ELCA members, Justice for Women program staff, and advisors from the following: the Church Council, the Church in Society program committee, the Conference of Bishops, Women of the ELCA, Lutheran Men in Mission, young adults, and the Office of the Presiding Bishop. This diverse group of women and men has advised the program on its focus and methodology, which are ultimately intertwined. To serve the church in ways that address sexism and work for justice for women, the program has focused on theology and education as the means of transformative change, with a particular focus on a variety of leaders across the ELCA. Programmatic goals continue to be 1) to unite women and men as

partners in this church's call to address sexism, 2) to foster a common vocabulary, understanding, and analysis of patriarchy, sexism, and gender justice within identified leadership and constituency circles, 3) to create the conditions needed for leaders to have the capacity to understand and use institutional gender analysis, done in relationship with other partners, including the Lutheran World Federation, 4) to engage members of the ELCA to think theologically about sexism and patriarchy, and 5) to foster relationships toward commitment, learning, and accountability toward practical social change, both in this church's varied respective contexts and in terms of the acute social and religious problems of domestic and sexual abuse and human trafficking.

At its August 2010 strategic planning meeting, the consulting committee overwhelmingly affirmed that the program should be theologically focused, that the program work particularly should include ongoing engagement across the ELCA to stimulate theological thinking and institutional action regarding sexism and patriarchy, and that this work should be done relative to the proposed social statement process. Detailed specifics of the four-year strategic plan will be confirmed after the 2011 Churchwide Assembly.

The following is an overview of the work of the program from 2009 to 2011. As noted above, the focus and methodology for this program are intertwined. In shorthand, with a focus on engaging leaders in the ELCA through theology and education, the program seeks to fulfill the ecclesiological vision outlined in the 2003 and 2005 churchwide restructuring documents: the work to address sexism and to sustain justice for women in church and society is the work of the whole church. Such changes are long-term and deep-seated.

Transformative Theological and Social Education

The Justice for Women program engages leaders in all expressions of this church in transformative learning to understand individual and collective roles that contribute to an end to sexism and the advancement of gender justice in church and in society. The pedagogical intent is to equip people to think theologically about sexism and gender justice and to understand the value of a sociological analysis of sexism through facilitation, resources, and teaching so that people are equipped to forge changes in their own contexts, ministries, and partnerships.

Seminaries

The program is committed to relationships with seminaries and with developing rostered leaders. Successful sessions on sexism and patriarchy were held in October 2009 and 2010 at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary (PLTS), both as part of the Theological Education for Emerging Ministries (TEEM) program and in the required course for fourth-year seminarians, “Public Ministry.” The Justice for Women program has been invited to continue to be involved with the TEEM program in the future. The program also will continue to be involved with the “Public Ministry” course.

At its February 2011 meeting, the consulting committee advised the director to put program activities with other seminaries on hold due to the limitations on staff capacity in the new structure.

Synods and Synodical Leaders

The program particularly seeks relationships with synodical leaders as key partners in effecting change.

- Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod Assembly (May 2010): Program staff facilitated plenary sessions. The theme was “God’s work. Our hands. We Are All One in Christ—Or Are We? Ending Systemic Racism and Sexism.”
- Conference of Bishops: The program assisted in the co-facilitation of sessions of the Bishops’ Academy in January 2010. Subsequently, the Conference of Bishops has practiced process observation during their semi-annual meetings. The program also provides resources and counsel in their ongoing work as needed.
- Bishops’ Assistants and Associates Gathering February 2011: Program staff led a voluntary four-hour workshop “Speaking of Sexism: What does faith have to do with it?” in which 15 participants from various synods engaged theologically and sociologically about matters of sexism and patriarchy in their ministries. A one-hour workshop also was offered during the event. Men and women attended both workshops.

The Churchwide Organization

For four years since October 2006, the program has convened an inter-unit staff alliance on justice for women; the group has worked to expand its knowledge and capacity to analyze church and society in terms of patriarchy and sexism through texts, guest speakers, and monthly meetings. With the assistance of the alliance members, the program also created and hosted four voluntary lunch-hour sessions for all staff members in 2009, using both dramatic narratives of experiences of sexism and analytical small-group work. A key element in 2009–2010 was to advance leadership on sexism and patriarchy from within the organization by having alliance members, women and men working together, lead sessions. Subsequent to a session on patriarchy and sexism with the churchwide executives in 2009, the program increasingly was involved with churchwide staff members. Several executives began to engage in unit-specific sessions. These included (the former) Church in Society unit, Human Resources, and the Mission Investment Fund. In the fall

of 2009 the program led a series of six sessions for interested staff members.

Engagement with work-specific groups of staff members is crucial for bringing about effective change. Here is one model: 2009–2010, Human Resources worked with Justice for Women in three two-hour sessions to equip staff members with knowledge and to enable them to assess their own challenges and priorities vis-à-vis sexism in their work and ministry. Staff members in Human Resources developed their own “case study” and identified what they needed from themselves and from their partners to change the situation identified in their case study. Actual institutional change depends upon multiple partners being similarly equipped.

A particular challenge is to equip staff members in a new structure with basic tools and abilities so that they can affect the ministries of the churchwide organization in terms of the commitment to justice for women. As part of the ongoing effort to seek the support of churchwide leadership and engagement across the organization on the commitments of the Plan for Mission to address class, race, age, and gender justice, the four conveners of the alliances (Poverty and Wealth, Multicultural Ministries, Young Adult, and Justice for Women), created a proposal for a way forward, which entails staff members in common work areas engaging the commitments on class, race, age, and gender together. Currently, this proposal is under review by the Administrative Team.

Program reports with suggestions for next steps and requests for commitments to institutional gender analysis were shared with the Cabinet of Executives in September 2009 and September 2010.

Regarding its churchwide organization work, the Justice for Women program is committed to collaboration with the newly appointed director for the Racial Justice program and has participated in contributions to the “Glocal” [global/local] Mission Gathering curriculum for a session on power and preaching.

Congregational and Academic Leaders

The program works with partners to involve congregational leaders in the theological engagement on patriarchy and sexism.

- ELCA Safe and Healthy Congregations Training (The Lutheran Community Foundation, Faith Trust Institute, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, February, 2011): In consultation with others, the program provided a session on the theological contextualization of domestic and sexual violence for all participants and a workshop on Lutheran theological roadblocks and resources for pastors assisting survivors of abuse.
- Lutheran Women in Theological and Religious Studies (LWTRS) Conferences (2009 and 2010): Lutheran female scholars in religion are assisted by the program. In partnership with the interim director of the Lutheran Theological Center at the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta and a graduate student, the program was involved in planning and hosting the annual LWTRS conference on the theme, “Listening Closely; Defining the

Conversation” in 2010. There were two unique aspects to this conference. First, about one-third of the participants were rostered leaders. Second, two of the four presenters were women of color, and two were Euro-American. One woman presented in Japanese, her second language; her presentation was translated into English. In 2009, biblical scholars held a panel on the theme “Passion for Things Scriptural.” The LWTRS group meets annually for worship, scholarship, friendship, and mentoring.

- Ecumenical Advocacy Days (EAD), Washington, D.C. (March 25–28, 2011): This year’s theme was “Development, Security, and Economic Justice: What’s Gender Got to Do with It?” As part of the National Council of Churches’ Justice for Women Working Group, the program assisted in the development and leadership of four workshops on the theological framework of gender justice advocacy and institutional and social gender analysis for EAD participants (ecumenical lay and rostered leaders). The program also presented its key work as related to this year’s theme to a gathering of approximately 80 Lutheran leaders.
- North Carolina Women of the ELCA Theological Conference (September 2009): The program director served as the keynote speaker on Christology to this annual conference.

Ecumenical and Global Partners

The program’s theological and social systems focus is a unique contribution in this church’s work with ecumenical and global partners.

- The Lutheran World Federation (LWF): Over the past two years the program has developed relationships within the LWF and has not only strengthened a burgeoning desire across the communion for theological engagement pertaining to justice for women, but also has deeply learned from dialogue and relationships within the communion. Program staff members offered leadership at the 2009 LWF Women’s Pre-Assembly, particularly in terms of communication and organization among global female delegates to the 2010 LWF Assembly in Stuttgart, Germany. The director of the Justice for Women program was invited to join five other leaders from Europe, Asia, Latin America, and Africa to advise the secretary for Women in Church and Society, the Rev. Elaine G. Neuenfeldt, as part of a gender advisory group. The work to advance gender justice throughout the communion was called for by the 2010 LWF Council. The advisory group was formed to assist in this work and will serve the communion through 2017, the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. It will be important for this church both to lead in and to learn through the LWF’s work on gender justice.
- National Council of Churches (NCC) Justice for Women Working Group: The program has been an active participant in the NCC’s Justice for Women Working Group, a coalition of staff members with similar responsibilities in member communions. Because the ELCA Justice for Women program supports theological engagement on sexism and

patriarchy and justice, this church is making a unique contribution to this network, which is largely focused on legislative advocacy. Along with the director for justice of Women of the ELCA, the Justice for Women director was elected co-chair of this working group. The working group is working toward a consistent application of gender analysis on the annual focus issue at Ecumenical Advocacy Days and is collaborating among members to strengthen gender analysis at all levels of member communions’ respective offices.

Published Materials

The program develops resources to meet multiple pedagogical and theological needs of various groups.

- *Transformative Lutheran Theologies: Feminist, Womanist and Mujerista Perspectives*, ed. Mary J. Streufert (Fortress Press, release date September 2010). Growing out of the theological dialogue at the 2009 conference, 16 Lutheran academic female theologians contributed substantial constructive work in a number of central themes in systematic theology, including the doctrine of God, sin, grace, salvation, Christology, the Holy Spirit, ethics, and eschatology. By its nature as a sustained and constructive theological project, this is a ground-breaking contribution to the church and to academic theological discourse. Never before have Lutheran female theologians in this country engaged Lutheran theology in such a coordinated way, whereas, for example, Roman Catholic female theologians have engaged their tradition in such a way for decades. Complementary copies were shared with key leaders and institutions.
- Streufert, Mary J. “An Affinity for Difference: A Theology of Power.” *Currents in Theology and Mission*, 37:1 (February 2010): 28–39.
- _____. “A Feminist Lutheran Substantive Christology: Method and Methodology.” *Dialog: A Journal of Theology*, 49:3 (September 2010): 210–222.
- _____. “Philosophical Kinship: Luther, Schleiermacher, and Feminists on Reason.” In *When Reason Is a Whore: The Quandary of Lutheran Philosophy*, ed. Jennifer Hockenberry Dragseth. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011, forthcoming.
- McCracken, Mikka. *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*. Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn. in *Journal of Lutheran Ethics*, 10:7 (July 2010). (www.elca.org/What-We-Believe/Social-Issues/Journal-of-Lutheran-Ethics/Issues/July-2010/Nicholas-D,-p,-Kristof-and-Sheryl-WuDunns-Half-the-Sky.aspx).
- Streufert. *Feminist and Womanist Essays in Reformed Dogmatics*. Amy Plantinga Pauw and Serene Jones, eds., Columbia Series in Reformed Theology. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006 (280 pp.) in *dialog* 49:4 (December 2010): 360–361.

- _____. *Christology: A Guide for the Perplexed*. Alan Spence. London: T & T Clark, 2008 (174 pp.) in dialog 50:1 (Spring 2011): 105–107.
- _____. *God, Science, Sex, Gender: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Christian Ethics*. ed. Patricia Beattie Jung and Aana Marie Vigen. Urbana: University of Illinois, 2010 (287 pp.) in *Journal of Lutheran Ethics* (May 2011).
- “Transformative Lutheran Theology: Feminist, Womanist, and Mujerista Perspectives” 15-minute video introduction to these theologies, reflects the presentations and experiences from the 2009 conference. Intended for individual, classroom, and congregational use, the video is available in English online and in hard copy; English and Spanish transcripts are available online (2009).
- Streufert, Mary J., ed. “Our Voices, Our Stories: Sexism in Church and Society.” Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2010. A collection of stories from women throughout the ELCA that gives testimony to the face of sexism in church and society. Designed for multiple uses, this resource invites people into dialogue. Study questions are provided. Formats are suggested for possible uses. (Currently hard copy only)
- Online bibliography of academic work of Lutheran female scholars in religion. A project director was hired in 2010 to oversee the collection and Internet availability of an annotated bibliography of Lutheran women’s intellectual discourse in religion. The first phase includes those within the ELCA network and was uploaded in March 2011, with ongoing updates planned. (Available online)
- Bible study #2, “Humanity in God’s Image,” was written under an external contract (December 2010) and will be edited and published in 2011.

Public Policy and Social Issues

There are at least two uses of the word “advocacy” related to the work of justice in church and society, legislative and non-formal (non-governmental). The former refers to the ways in which people and institutions advocate for particular viewpoints with their political representatives. The latter refers to the ways in which people press for changes in church and in society by giving voice to what they think should happen. The Justice for Women program participates in both forms of advocacy on particular social issues pertinent to justice for women and girls.

In 2009, the program collaborated with the former Church in Society advocacy team in an annual internship program. With the arrival of an intern in June 2009, the program increased its capacity for work. The internship program was crafted to provide specific work on social issues of justice for women and girls, such as domestic violence and human trafficking, and to further strengthen this church’s public voice on gender justice by collaborating closely with advocacy staff members. The following is a brief summary of some of the key work that was done in 2009 and 2010.

Legislative

- UN Commission on the Status of Women: In 2010, the program joined other Lutherans through the LWF and ecumenical partners in the non-governmental organization Ecumenical Women to advocate for the rights of women and girls at the United Nations from a faith-based perspective. Due to the limits of staff capacity, the program did not participate in 2011.
- Capitol Hill visits and briefing on violence against women: Subsequent to the UN Commission on the Status of Women in 2010, the program sponsored Leymah Gbowee, internationally renowned Lutheran Liberian organizer and advocate for the rights and security of women and girls in conflict. Among other international bodies, Ms. Gbowee advises the European Union and was the key speaker on violence against women as it relates to international funding appropriations. The briefing was sponsored by a Lutheran, Rep. Lois Capps (D-Calif.), and was attended by non-governmental and faith-based groups, as well as staff from the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations and the House of Representatives Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission.
- Ecumenical Advocacy Days: The program built relationships that contributed to shaping Ecumenical Advocacy Days in 2010 and 2011, an annual four-day event for grassroots ecumenical advocates focused on worship, study, and dialogue that culminates with visits to members of Congress.
- Capitol Hill:
 - a) International Violence Against Women (IVAWA) bills: e-Advocacy alert on IVAWA. The program urged support of specific House and Senate bills on violence against women.
 - b) Domestic violence: e-Advocacy alert and Hill visits during October National Awareness month. The program met with legislative staff and raised awareness within the e-Advocacy network.
 - c) Healthcare bill: e-Advocacy alert on maternal health. The program contributed to a gender analysis of the healthcare debate in 2010.
 - d) Trafficking in Persons report release on the Hill: The program represented the National Council of Churches and the ELCA among state and non-governmental staff members at the 2010 annual release of the “Trafficking in Persons Report.”

Informal/Non-Governmental

- Human Trafficking: The program continues its efforts to raise awareness on human trafficking and, among other things, has provided the following in 2009 and 2010: an interactive learning station at the 2009 Youth Gathering; social media networking with youth and young adults on human trafficking; online session resources for young members to lead their own youth groups; in collaboration with Women of the ELCA, worship and informational resources to synod communicators for International Human Trafficking Awareness Day, January 11; a brochure, “Human Trafficking: A Faith Response,”

including facts, figures, suggestions for further information, and a brief theological response; and a book review of *Half the Sky* by Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, published in *Journal of Lutheran Ethics*, June 2010. (See above.) The program continues to work with partners to address human trafficking. Until October 2010 the program was in exploratory conversations in a Lutheran leaders' table on violence against women and children. Limited staff capacity no longer allows for this commitment. The partners involved included: Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (legislative and direct service representatives); Women of the ELCA; Cherish Our Children, an ELCA-affiliated social ministry organization; Church in Society staff from Justice for Women, Corporate Social Responsibility, and the Lutheran Office for World Community; and the consultant on clergy misconduct from the former Vocation and Education unit.

- Domestic Violence: The program continues to equip members of this church, particularly congregational leaders, to respond helpfully to people in abusive relationships and to prevent domestic and sexual abuse. The program seeks to do this by collaborating with partners, sharing information, and making resources available.
- Lutheran Community Foundation (LCF) and Faith Trust Institute collaboration: The program is assisting the LCF in its project to hold congregation-based training (led by Faith Trust Institute, a nationally known, faith-based non-profit organization seeking to end gender-based violence) to respond to and prevent domestic and sexual violence. The range of support includes personal phone calls made by the Justice for Women program to nearly every synod during the summer of 2008; a written report on interested synods and congregations shared with LCF; writing Lutheran introductions to the four training modules to be used with ELCA leaders; reviews of the training materials; communication with bishops, synods, and congregations and technical and organizational support to the Lutheran Community Foundation to assist in planning and facilitation for two training events in the fall of 2010 (Baltimore; Chicago) and one in February 2011 (San Francisco). Multicultural ministries staff members were sought for their counsel in shaping the next training events. Partnership among all those named is expected to continue.

Publications and Media on Domestic Violence

- "Lutheran Theology Facing Sexual and Domestic Violence," written by Dr. Mary Pellauer, revised and reprinted (fall 2010). Originally written for seminary faculty and published by the former Commission for Women in 1998, this booklet is a provocative analysis of the ways in which Luther's problematic theological anthropology and understandings of power continue to influence the ways survivors of domestic and sexual violence are cared for. It was given to all training participants for discussion and study. (Available in hard copy and online in English and Spanish.)
- "Ministry with the Abused," a substantial handout for Lutheran congregational leaders, revised, updated, and

reprinted. Developed under the leadership of the Commission for Women, this informative handout is a helpful reference guide for Lutheran leaders responding to people in crises of abuse. Revision was done with partners in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. (Available online in English only)

- October National Domestic Violence Awareness Month: In collaboration with Women of the ELCA, the Justice for Women program updated an awareness and resource poster on domestic violence and worked with worship staff members to provide liturgical resources to use during October. Notices were sent to all synod communicators.
- NCC-supported documentary: "I Believe You: Faiths' Response to Intimate Partner Violence," aired on ABC in early 2011, according to local schedules. The program referred the independent director to a number of ELCA-related people and organizations and provided funds to contribute to creating this documentary, which looks at the role of faith communities in the past, present, and future of domestic violence.

Other

- Program staff members have spent considerable time with others to navigate the effects of the reorganization, beginning with discernment gatherings among former Church in Society staff members and ending with formal leadership on a transition team led by Human Resources.
- Lutheran Volunteer Corps: The program applied for and was approved to receive a volunteer for 2011–2012.
- Justice for Women Consulting Committee meeting preparations and communication
- Thrivent Financial for Lutherans report: A report on grant activities for the 2008 Thrivent grant on domestic violence was completed in 2011.

Conclusion

Justice for Women program staff members have worked to assist this church to address sexism in three central ways. First, members of this church are encouraged to have a common vocabulary, understanding, and analysis of patriarchy and sexism so that situations in various contexts can be adequately assessed and addressed. Second, the program engages different types of leaders to think theologically about sexism and patriarchy so that others are not only inspired to work for change but also equipped to see the work of gender justice as a faith issue. Third, the program has worked to contribute to practical social change in terms of domestic and sexual abuse and human trafficking. All of this work can be done well only in collaboration with many partners, especially women and men working together. The director remains extraordinarily grateful to the staff members and other colleagues who shape and support the work of gender justice.

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