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The LGBT Policies of Mainline Protestantism: An Analysis and Response

By the Rev. Dr. Martin Noland

At the 2024 General Conference of the United Methodist Church (hereafter UMC), held from April 23 to May 3, 2024, the members of that church-body removed regulations that prohibited their pastors from officiating at same-sex marriages and that prohibited the ordination of LGBT pastors by their bishops.¹ By removing these regulations, the UMC in reality adopted pro-LGBT policies.

To be clear, in this discussion we are not talking about “civil rights,” i.e., the civil rights that LGBT people have, or may have, under the civil law in the United States of America. Our discussion refers specifically to whether denominations and congregations will ordain ministers who are LGBT, i.e., lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, or trans-gender, and whether they will bless the LGBT marriages of such persons. In denominations or congregations where they do not ordain any ministers, it refers to whether they allow LGBT persons to serve as ministers of religion in some capacity.

It has been a long struggle in the UMC, first surfacing in 2018. In that year, the Council of Bishops in the United Methodist Church proposed allowing individual pastors and regional church bodies to decide whether to ordain LGBT clergy and perform same-sex weddings. Since 2019, 7,660 congregations have been approved to leave the UMC over this issue, which is one-quarter of its membership. In 2022 a conservative group created the “Global Methodist Church” which now numbers 4,495 congregations.

If this news sounds familiar, it is the same pattern of—struggle, approval of pro-LGBT policies, and secession of conservatives—that has been occurring in the mainline Protestant churches since the mid-1980s. What is different this time is that the UMC is the last of the “seven sisters” of mainline Protestantism, i.e., the big mainline churches, to abandon traditional Christian sexual morality. Where the mainline Protestant churches constituted the majority of Protestants in the United States up until the mid-20th century, today they claim only 15% of American adults.² Whether pro-LGBT policies were the cause or the result of this decline, the fact is that the Seven Sisters of the “mainline” are no longer the “mainline” in any sense of that term.³

Who are the “Seven Sisters” of so-called “mainline Protestantism” today? In order by size of membership in the United States of America, from largest to smallest (membership numbers from 2021 or 2022 are in parenthesis): the United Methodist Church (5.4 million), the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (hereafter ELCA)(2.9 million), the Episcopal Church (1.6 million), the Presbyterian Church (USA) (1.1 million), the American Baptist Churches USA (hereafter ABCUSA)(1.1 million), the United

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Luther Classical College: Why Now?

The article below is Part 1 of the presentation given by the Rev. Dr. Christian Preus at the LCA Conference at Concordia Theological Seminary, Ft. Wayne on January 15, 2024. Part 2 will appear in the next issue of the Clarion.

Luther Classical College is the first Lutheran college to be founded in the United States in 60 years. Why now? The only reason to start a Lutheran college or any other Christian institution is to fill a need in Christ’s Church and so further Christ’s Kingdom. The LCMS has a long history of identifying a need for higher education and then filling that need. But it has not been the LCMS proper that has founded most institutions of higher learning in the synod. This seminary, for instance, was not founded by the LCMS. Pastors saw the need to educate future pastors and they founded this seminary a year before the LCMS even existed. The same goes for Concordia Seminary, Saint Louis – founded before the synod existed. This pattern of pastors and laymen recognizing a need in the Church and then founding institutions of higher learning continued with the founding of our colleges. Concordia Wisconsin, Concordia Chicago, they started in church basements on the initiative of pastors who recognized the need for Lutheran teachers in their schools. They were local initiatives, not national, synodical, top-down foundations. This principle that colleges arise in the LCMS from local pastors and laymen recognizing the need within their congregations and homes, Francis Pieper made clear in his address to the 1903 LCMS convention – don’t expect the synod to be starting colleges, he said. “You must raise your own crop.” That’s what Pieper said. The next years saw the pastors and saints on the West coast responding to Pieper by founding what would become Concordia Portland and Concordia Irvine. This is how colleges started in our synod. The exceptions were Concordia Seward, which the Synod did found, and much later, Concordia Texas and Concordia Ann Arbor. All in all, of the 14 higher education institutions started in the LCMS, 10 started from local initiative and not from Synod proper. But every single one of them started for the churches and people of the Synod.¹

So Luther Classical College follows in this beautiful tradition.

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Lutheran Classical College: Why Now?

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It's not a top-down synodical endeavor. Pastors and laymen from across the country recognized a need in the Synod and met that need with this college. And they didn't do it secretly either, but right in the open. In fact, before going public with Luther Classical College our Board reached out to Dr. Wenthe of CUS and asked his advice and his blessing on this endeavor; he gave both; we reached out to the synodical president also and received his blessing. But it has been individual pastors and laymen who have put in the work, individual congregations that have supported the work (over 160 congregations throughout the synod support us as a mission of their church). We "raised our own crop." And this is not an anomaly. It is what the LCMS calls for in its constitution. This is why the synod exists, to encourage exactly what we are doing at Luther Classical College.²

We started colleges within the LCMS for the purpose of educating Lutherans. That's the only reason we have ever started a college in the LCMS – to educate Lutherans. That goes also for our parochial schools, at least for the first century of our existence. The original constitution of the LCMS says that the synod exists for starting schools to educate our own children, our own members, as Lutherans.³ This mission of our schools and colleges has shifted overtime, so that we hear far more now that our schools and colleges are missions and outreach to non-believers or non-Lutherans. Most of our parochial schools and all of our colleges (with the exception of CUNE) now have majority non-Lutheran students. But we should know that this is a relatively new change, a new phenomenon. The switch from all-Lutheran or vast-majority Lutheran parochial schools and colleges to majority non-Lutheran parochial schools and colleges happened within my lifetime – and I'm not old.

Now it's no secret that our Concordias are mostly non-Lutheran in their student population (again with the exception of CUNE). It is also no coincidence that the three Concordias that went insolvent and shut down are the three that had the least Lutheran student population (we're talking an LCMS student population of 1.1% in Selma, 2.1% in Bronxville, and 3% in Portland).⁴ And Concordia Austin, which is now involved in an enormous lawsuit with the LCMS, is less than 10% LCMS in its student population. The Concordias that remain are well aware of the need to return to a strong Lutheran identity, to something approaching the original purpose of LCMS colleges. President Dawn of Chicago has been vocal on this and Dr. Bull from CUNE made it clear in a paper last year at the CTS Symposia that the future is in Lutheran colleges that have a critical mass (as he put it) of Lutherans on campus, as well as Lutheran colleges, like Luther Classical College, that are all-Lutheran.⁵

The principle of Lutheranism, what has served us so well for 500 years, is the classical principle – *ad fontes*, back to the sources. This was the battle cry of the Reformation. We can apply this within our own experience here in America. Go back to the sources in the LCMS and you will see that every single one of our colleges was founded to educate Lutherans to teach in our schools, to go to our seminaries; that our colleges were founded to prepare Lutherans for life as Lutheran fathers, mothers, citizens, and workers. That is the history of the LCMS.

And once again Luther Classical College follows in this beautiful tradition. We have gone back to the sources. We join every other college ever founded by LCMS Lutherans in starting a college with the express purpose of educating Lutherans for life as Lutherans.

And yet we will be unique in being all Lutheran. When we start in 2025, we will be the only college in the country that has all Lutheran faculty and all Lutheran students. We'll also have all-Lutheran staff, but that's just us being overachievers. Why do this? Why did our fathers do it and why should we return to it? What is the importance of an all-Lutheran faculty and student body? "Much in every way," to take a line from St. Paul (Rom. 3:2).

First, the faculty of a Lutheran college needs to be Lutheran. All of them. We wouldn't consider having a non-Lutheran pastor teach and preach at our churches (at least we shouldn't!); why would we think any differently about those who teach at a Lutheran college? We cannot simply give lip service to the idea that every subject taught in college has to do with God's Word. If it does, then we need Lutheran professors across the board. And every single subject of learning that is worth anything most certainly has to do with theology and touches on how you think of the world and your relation to God and to other people.

You can't teach a literature class without discussing morality and marriage and the meaning of life and the existence of God. You can't study science without either asserting or denying the Creator, the Designer, the Orderer of all things. You can't teach economic theory without discussing the seventh commandment and original sin. You definitely shouldn't discuss business and marketing and accounting without treatment of greed and covetousness. The list goes on and on. There is no neutrality in education. Either you inform the subject with the true perspective of God's Word or you will inform it with the empty theories of this world. So it is of the utmost importance that all faculty at a Lutheran college be Lutheran. This again was the norm and the universal practice of our Lutheran colleges for generations. Now Luther Classical College will stand out as the only Lutheran college with all Lutheran faculty. This is written into our constitution at the College. It's simply a requirement, considered obvious and decisively so, that all faculty be conservative, LCMS Lutherans who are fully and unapologetically committed to the Bible as God's inerrant word.

That includes adjunct faculty. Adjuncts do a ton of the teaching for colleges. In a recent paper, I pointed out the fact that Lutheran colleges today don't have all-Lutheran faculties.⁶ I pointed out that this was the case for all Lutheran colleges, but Bethany Lutheran College actually gave an official response to my paper, which invites a response from me. In Bethany's response they stated that something like 95% of their fulltime faculty were Lutheran.⁷ And that's wonderful – I hadn't realized it was so high. But there was not a word about the adjunct faculty or the staff or the coaches, who spend so much time with the students and have so much influence on student life. When I attended Bethany twenty years ago, we took classes from an adjunct professor named Hagan, whom we affectionately dubbed "Hagan the Pagan." Hagan the Pagan openly taught in class that Christianity borrowed teachings and symbols from the pagan religions and gods. That's not only anti-Christian, it's ahistorical and hackneyed leftist propaganda, unworthy of any college classroom, let alone a Lutheran college. This is simply what you get when you don't know the confession of the

people you hire to teach students. The point here isn't to point fingers at Bethany or any other Lutheran college. It is to point out the fact that all subjects have to do with God in some way and so all subjects, including the many classes taught by adjuncts, need to be taught by Lutherans.

The reason this is not the case in Lutheran colleges today is because they can't find the Lutherans to teach all the courses they offer. They have grown too big, with too many majors, too many offerings, and not near enough Lutherans to fill the postings for business, economics, engineering, marketing, communications, and the list goes on. We'll get back to the massive number of majors, but it's the large student population that we should address first.

Because, whom you go to college with matters. All LCMS colleges began by teaching Lutherans. Luther Classical College will be the only Lutheran college that has an all-Lutheran student population when we begin in 2025.⁸ All students will sign our Confession of Faith, which is a digest of the Augsburg Confession, confesses Creation in six days and rejects evolution; it confesses marriage between one man and one woman, and rejects all perversions commonly called "marriage" today; it teaches the inerrancy of Scripture, the blood-Atonement of Jesus Christ for the sins of the world, justification by faith alone, and the saving power of Baptism, Absolution, and the body of blood of Jesus in the Lord's Supper.⁹ It's a beautifully conservative and Lutheran confession. And all our students will sign it and they'll sign it happily. That's why they want to come to our college, because they believe this and want professors and fellow students who believe it too.

You will learn more from the people you spend time with, from your fellow students, than from your professors in many cases. Bad company corrupts good morals (1 Cor. 15:33). St. Paul tells us this. He means it. We should listen and receive his words as what they are, the words of God (1 Thessalonians 2:13). Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers (2 Cor. 5:14). Mark those who cause division among you and avoid them (Rom. 16:17). It would simply have been outside the comprehension of our Lutheran fathers that we could call a college Lutheran and have a majority of the students be non-Lutheran. Because the non-Lutheran influence will obviously affect the learning of the Lutherans. But this has become the norm. And the Word of God together with experience tells us how dangerous this is.

They called it peer pressure when I was a kid. What it is really is the life-fact of imitation. You imitate what you see. You think what you continually hear. This is why propaganda campaigns work. Look at the acceptance of homosexuality in America. You went from President Barak Obama opposing homosexual marriage in his 2008 campaign, to what we have now, which is the overwhelming majority of Americans, both Democrat and Republican, considering so-called homosexual marriage a basic right. (Our Academic Dean calls it sodomitic pseudogamy – false marriage, literally.) The purposeful normalization of homosexuality through TV, commercials, appointments to high office, and other media quickly convinced the public. They see it and hear it enough; it becomes normal. That trend is continuing even with transgenderism, which ten years ago was anything but normal, totally fringe.

So if you attend a Lutheran college and see the overwhelming majority of your classmates not go to chapel, what happens? If you see that the majority of them have sex outside of marriage, what

then? If you see the majority skip church on Sundays after their Saturday night parties, what then? These are life-changing concerns, literally matters of life and death in the spiritual and more important sense. The statistics here are startling too. The world is against us. 93% of Americans have sex outside of marriage. The vast majority stop going to church in the college years. It is for us to purposefully nurture and encourage and model a different culture, a Christian culture.

When I was a student at UND my last year of undergraduate, my political science professor entertained the question before the entire class of 50, whether any of us actually believed in an historical Adam and Eve. I was the only one who raised his hand. So I looked around and raised my voice and said, "Come on, guys, this is North Dakota, there have to be more Christians than that!" And I got two or three more hands. People don't want to go against the majority.

And that's great when the majority is Lutheran. There can be good peer pressure, good imitation. That's why St. Paul says, "Imitate me, as I also imitate Christ" (Rom. 11:1). It's why he brags to the Corinthians about the Philippians' generosity (2 Cor. 8:1-7). Why he tells the young women to imitate the older women in church (Titus 2:3-5). When you go to a college where everyone is a committed Lutheran you are constantly encouraged in the Lutheran faith. It's wonderful to experience, wonderful to see. You discuss with your classmates what you just learned and read; and you do it as you go to chapel together and sing Lutheran hymns together. You see each other at church on Sundays and eat and drink the body and blood of Jesus together, and you see again and again that this is what life is about: taking God's word seriously, happily going to church, loving the Lord's Supper, singing hymns and bringing them home with you to sing together there. You do devotions together in your dorms. You see your professors going daily to chapel and enjoying it. You see happy marriages in your professors and fellow students, wives submitting to husbands, husbands loving their wives, welcoming children, having them baptized, little children singing the Gloria and Sanctus by memory; and you see it all as normal, as the way it is supposed to be, and that is a beautiful thing. And it's a beautiful thing students hold with them all their lives, bring with them to their congregations, hand down to their children.

Christian culture spreads, sometimes thirtyfold, sometimes, sixty, sometimes a hundred (Mark 4:8). And that's where the mission outreach is, not in inviting a majority of non-Lutherans onto campus, so that no Lutheran culture can actually take hold. But in teaching the faith, modeling it, in a decidedly and beautifully Lutheran atmosphere, so that the Christian confession and life learned and practiced on campus draws others to church when the students begin families and work and join LCMS congregations throughout the country.

We're about to release our Academic Catalog – it hits the press next week, and there we say something seemingly paradoxical, that at Luther Classical College chapel is required and yet it is totally voluntary. Every student is expected to go, but every student wants to go, because that's why they're coming to our college. They want to be lifelong Lutherans. They love to hear good sermons, sing good hymns, they actually mean it when they sing, "Ah how hungers all my spirit, for the love I do not merit. Oft have I with sighs fast thronging, thought upon this food with longing."

When we say chapel we mean recognizably Lutheran chapel, with the liturgy and hymns of the Church, the Lutheran you see at Kramer Chapel, with men doing what men should do – including reading the lessons, preaching, administering the sacraments. Too many conservative Lutheran colleges have brought in non-Lutheran worship, praise songs, contemporary music (and they advertise it on their websites).¹⁰ Luther Classical College sings Lutheran hymns, with the organ, with stringed instruments, with Bach arrangements, and we follow the traditional services of the western Church, Matins, Vespers, Compline, and the Divine “Common” Service. We are thoroughly Lutheran. That first and foremost is why we are starting Luther Classical College. Lutheran first. Everything else second.

1. See John Hellwege, “Doing a New-Old Thing,” *Ad Fontes*, January, 2024

2. Article II of the original Constitution of the LCMS lists as condition for membership in the Synod “Provision of a Christian education for children of the congregation.”

3. See the previous note.

4. See *Lutheran Witness*, November, 2018.

5. 2023 CTSFW Symposia paper, originally entitled “The Affordances & Limitations of Six Types of Christian Schools.”

6. <https://cc.lutheranclassical.org/summer-fall-2022/bad-company-corrupts-good-morals-the-only-way-to-keep-a-lutheran-college-lutheran/>

7. “Bethany’s Unique Approach,” 10/26/22, Letter from President Gene Pfeiffer and Chaplain Donald Moldstad to all faculty of Bethany and pastors in the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. pg. 2, “In fact, only three of Bethany’s 48 full-time faculty are not members of a Confessional Lutheran congregation. Also, all full-time faculty are vetted during the hiring process by the Board of Regents for alignment with our Biblical teaching.”

8. Excepted is the WELS teacher and pre-seminary college, Martin Luther College.

9. Soon available on our website, in the Academic Catalog: lutherclassical.org

10. See, e.g., the advertisement of “praise song” and “contemporary worship” at <https://www.cuaa.edu/about/lutheran-identity.html>

The LGBT Policies of Mainline Protestantism: An Analysis and Response

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Church of Christ (710,000), and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)(278,000).⁴ Members of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod might be interested to note that with 1.8 million members (from 2021 statistics), we are larger than all the denominations listed here, except the UMC and ELCA, and are larger than all the denominations listed next.

Other denominations in the U.S.A. that generally identify with the ecumenical theology and social issues of these “Seven Sisters” are (most recent membership numbers in parenthesis): Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (700,00), Religious Society of Friends (a.k.a. Quakers) (350,000), Reformed Church in America (104,921), Mennonite Church USA (100,000), Church of the Brethren (87,181), International Council of Community Churches (69,276), National Association of Congregational Christian Churches (65,392), Alliance of Baptists (65,000), Moravian Church in North America (60,000), Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches (15,666), Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (12,000), Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church Abroad (8,000), and the Hungarian Reformed Church in America (6,080).⁵

Where do these “mainline” churches now stand on pro-LGBT policies?⁶ As stated previously, all of the Seven Sisters have approved pro-LGBT policies, except that the ABCUSA reserve those decisions for individual congregations. That means that ABCUSA congregations in liberal states, like California and New York, will probably have pro-LGBT policies, while those in conservative states, like Wyoming and Florida, may not.

It is more complicated for the smaller denominations listed above. The Quakers, the Reformed Church in America, the Alliance of Baptists, and the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches all have denomination-wide pro-LGBT policies. The Moravians reserve these decisions to their “regions,” which “regions” are like LCMS districts or ELCA synods. The Cooperative Baptists, Mennonite Church USA, and the Church of the Brethren reserve these decisions for individual congregations, just like the ABCUSA. The Community Churches group and Congregational group are, by definition, congregational in polity, so ALL these types of decisions are made locally. Finally, for the three ethnic groups listed: Latvian, Estonian, and Hungarian, I could not determine their positions or policies.

You might be thinking by now, “How can they approve of LGBT behavior and lifestyle when the Bible is against it?” Good question. It can only happen in Protestant denominations that have rejected the normative authority of Scripture. All of these denominations rejected the normative authority of Scripture in the 20th century. The normative authority of Scripture was what our Missouri Synod’s big “civil war” was all about in the 1960s and 1970s.⁷ Church leaders in the LCMS who were caught up in the ecumenical mania of the 20th century tried to downplay or eliminate the normative authority of Scripture in our synod, so that we would be accepted by the mainline Protestant churches and their members. By God’s grace, we retained our original views that all of canonical Scripture is God’s Word, and that the Bible is the “only rule and norm according to which all doctrines and teachers alike must be appraised and judged” (Formula of Concord, Epitome, Rule and Norm, 1; Tappert, 464; Kolb-Wengert, 486).

LAST CALL!

WE ARE UPDATING OUR CLARION DISTRIBUTION LIST

Besides subscribers, the goal continues to be for each congregation to receive a printed copy of the Clarion.

Additionally, insofar as possible, we will continue to send the Clarion to individuals who enjoy the publication and are not yet paid LCA members. If you are in this category and wish to continue receiving the Clarion, please contact us at LCAForwarding@gmail.com and indicate whether you prefer the print form (provide name & US mailing address) or a pdf (provide name & email address).

If you wish to continue receiving the Clarion and are not an LCA member, please let us know. We want you to get every issue!

What about the other Lutheran churches?⁸ The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA; founded 1988) has approved the LGBT policies, as noted above. The new North American Lutheran Church (NALC; founded 2010) and the Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC; founded 2001) are former ELCA congregations that rejected the LGBT policies, although both ordain women. The Wisconsin Synod (WELS; founded 1892), the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS; founded 1917), and other smaller Lutheran denominations, synods, and groups agree with the Missouri Synod in rejecting the LGBT policies.

Does this mean that churches that are opposed to the LGBT policies are in favor of harassing or denying civil rights to LGBT persons? No. There are a few individuals who harass LGBT persons and argue for denying them civil rights. But our synod does not do that, I don't know anyone in our synod who does that, nor do I know of any Lutheran synod that does that. Of course, we believe, teach, and confess that LGBT behavior is wrong, because the Bible tells us so. But that is not "harassment." That is a religiously grounded moral norm, which has four thousand years of solid precedent in the Old Testament with New Testament sanction. We also have our own civil rights under the First Amendment to believe, teach, and confess that moral norm, which is not an irrational moral norm.

What does this mean for your friends, neighbors, or relatives who are LGBT? It means, on the one hand, that they can find plenty of churches, of different types, that will bless their behavior and bless their homosexual marriages. But it also means, on the other hand, that God is against that behavior and will punish it, if they do not repent, are baptized, and believe in Jesus. Luther's Small Catechism says of God's commands, including the Sixth Commandment: "God threatens to punish all who transgress these commandments. We should therefore fear his wrath and not disobey these commandments" (Close of the Commandments).

Where does the Bible talk about homosexuality and what does it say?⁹ I will point you to just a few passages, which I encourage you to read and consider from your own Bible. First, there are the passages in Leviticus 18 that talk about the "forbidden degrees" of sexual relations, including incest. In that context is Leviticus 18:22, 24-25: "Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman it is detestable. . . Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, because this is how the nations that I am going to drive out before you became defiled. Even the land was defiled; so, I punished it for its sin and the land vomited out its inhabitants."

In the New Testament, Saint Paul teaches that God gave the heathen Gentiles who rejected Him "over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural [sexual] relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the man also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion" (Romans 1:24-27). At the end of that book, Paul explains behavior that is not appropriate for Christians: "Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy" (Romans 13:13). So, to be clear, Paul is not saying that heterosexual immorality, i.e., adultery, is okay. Christians are to be exclusively faithful to their spouse, if married, or to be chaste if single.

Paul is consistent in this matter of sexual immorality. In 1 Cor-

inthians 5:9 he says that faithful Christians must not "associate with anyone who calls himself a brother, but is sexually immoral . . . With such a man do not even eat!" In 1 Corinthians 6:9 Paul specifically mentions that neither "male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders . . . will inherit the kingdom of God," along with other violators of sexual morality. The consequences of sexual immorality can be severe, as Paul reminds us with an Old Testament story "We should not commit sexual immorality as some of them did—and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died" (1 Corinthians 6:8; refers to Numbers 25:1-9).

Lest we think Paul was "picking on" the Romans and Corinthians, we find similar warnings in his other epistles. To the Ephesians, "Among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality or of any kind of impurity or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. . . . For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure, or greedy person—such a man is an idolator—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God" (Ephesians 5:3, 5). To the Thessalonians, "It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen" (1 Thessalonians 4:3-5). In his first letter to Timothy, Paul explains that the Law "is not made for the righteous, but for lawbreakers . . . for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders. . . and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine" (1 Timothy 1:9-10). The writer to the Hebrews expresses the same doctrine with respect to sexual morality: "Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral" (Hebrews 13:4). Finally, at the very end of the New Testament, the Apostle John sees a vision where the "sexually immoral" are outside the city New Jerusalem and are in the fiery lake of burning sulfur (Revelation 21:8 and 22:15).

The Lutheran confessions do not relax these standards of sexual morality. There was no controversy between Protestants and Catholics about homosexuality, nor between the many different types of Protestants. So, you will not find homosexuality specifically addressed in the Book of Concord. But you will find excellent statements rejecting "delusional" ideas that faith can coexist with "intentional, persistent sin." For example, the Formula of Concord Epitome states:

We also reject and condemn the bald expression that 'good works are harmful to salvation' as offensive and harmful to Christian discipline. . . For people can be damned by an Epicurean delusion about faith just as much as by the papistic, Pharisaic trust in their own works and merit. We also reject and condemn the teaching that faith and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit are not lost through intentional sin, but that the saints and the elect retain the Holy Spirit even when they fall into adultery and other sins and persist in them. (FC Ep, 18-19; Tappert, 477; Kolb-Wengert, 501).

A longer exposition of the same thoughts is found in the Formula of Concord Solid Declaration:

Therefore, we must begin by diligently condemning and rejecting this false Epicurean delusion that some dream up, that faith and the righteousness and salvation we have received cannot be lost through any arrogant and intentional sin or evil work, but rather that when Christians follow evil lusts without any fear and shame, resist the Holy Spirit, and intentional-

ly proceed to sin against their consciences, they nonetheless at the same time retain faith, God's grace, righteousness, and salvation.

Against this harmful illusion we should often, with all diligence and seriousness, repeat and impress upon Christians who have become righteous by faith these real, immutable divine threats of punishment and admonitions: 1 Corinthians 6:9-10: "Do not be deceived! Fornicators, adulterers, the greedy, will not inherit the kingdom of God!"; Galatians 5:21 and Ephesians 5:5: "Those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God"; Romans 8:13: "If you live according to the flesh, you will die"; Colossians 3:5; cf. Eph. 5:6: "On account of these the wrath of God is coming on those who are disobedient" (FC SD IV, 31-32; Tappert, 556; Kolb-Wengert, 579).

What is our Missouri Synod's official position today on matters of human sexuality and homosexuality? The first is a report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) of the LCMS issued September 1981 titled *Human Sexuality: A Theological Perspective*.¹⁰ This report discusses homosexuality in a four-page section. It both recognizes that "homosexuality comes under a categorical prohibition in the Old and New Testaments" and that "Christian thought has condemned and should continue to condemn homosexual lusts and acts."¹¹ At the same time, it states "It is important to realize that there are those persons who, apart from any deliberate choice on their part, have a predisposition toward homosexuality and have no desire to enter into a relationship with a person of the opposite sex."¹² Also, "Christian counsel for the homosexual is that he seek to control his sexual orientation at least in the sense that he abstain from homosexual acts."¹³ Realizing that Christian counsel to homosexuals could be complicated by many factors, the synod created a task force "On Ministry to Homosexuals and their Families" which in 1999 published *A Plan for Ministry to Homosexuals and their Families*.¹⁴

More recently, the synod asked the CTCR to review and expand its 1981 report, which it completed in 2022 with the title: *A Chaste and Decent Life: An Update to Human Sexuality 1981* (Saint Louis: LC-MS, 2022).¹⁵ I highly recommend this report as it covers many more angles and issues of this matter. *A Chaste and Decent Life* continues to affirm all seven "affirmations" found in the 1981 report but addresses new challenges.

One of those challenges is the theological approval of LGBT policies by the ELCA and other mainline Protestants. Instead of addressing that theological problem, *A Chaste and Decent Life* refers the reader to theological documents by Robert Gagnon, Joel Biermann, Thomas Egger, and Timothy Saleska, and the CTCR document "Response to Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust."¹⁶ I refer our pastors, theologians, and interested laymen to those same documents.

I also want to note here that there were some significant leaders in the ELCA that opposed its approval of LGBT policies. The leaders of the ELCA who opposed the LGBT policies are mentioned in a footnote in the CTCR document "Response to Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust."¹⁷ They are Robert Benne, Carl Braaten, Gerhard Forde, Richard J. Niebanck, William Lazareth, and James Nestingen. Although we have major differences in our theology with these ELCA theologians, as is to be expected from our synodical histories and differing commitments, I thank God that these theo-

logians confessed the biblical truth about homosexuality against the pro-LGBT forces in the ELCA.

I have no idea what God has in store for the mainline Protestants who now welcome homosexual clergy and bless homosexual marriages. What I hope and pray for, when it comes to individuals of LGBT behavior and lifestyle, is that they will eventually see that it is contrary to God's will, and that they will submit to God's will by avoiding that behavior. I have seen many cases of people who were caught up in that behavior and lifestyle in their youth and middle-age, and as they grew older, they had a change of heart and mind about it and abandoned it. We hope and pray that everyone who is alienated from God, through their rejection of God's will, will someday have that change of heart and mind, which the Bible calls "repentance."

1. For critical reviews of the UMC decisions, see Scott Field, "The United Methodist Church is No More," at <https://wesleyancovenant.org/2024/05/07/the-united-methodist-church-is-no-more/>; and see Chris Ritter, "What Happened at the United Methodist General Conference?," at <https://peopleneedjesus.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/what-happened-at-the-united-methodist-general-conferencev20.pdf>. For other information on this decision, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Methodist_Church#Sexuality. With regard to the terminology of LGBT, see <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT>. All web-pages in this note accessed 15 May 2024.

2. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mainline_Protestant; accessed 15 May 2024.

3. This decline was often described by Richard John Neuhaus as "from mainline to sideline" after he left the ELCA. An example of his writing on that subject is: "A Possible Protestantism, Perhaps," *First Things* (May 1996), in "The Public Square" column, found at: <https://www.firstthings.com/article/1996/05/against-christian-politics>; accessed 15 May 2024.

4. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mainline_Protestant#Denominations; accessed 15 May 2024.

5. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mainline_Protestant#Denominations; accessed 15 May 2024.

6. Most of this information was gleaned from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Christian_denominational_positions_on_homosexuality; accessed 15 May 2024. The bigger denominations have a "main article" in Wikipedia that I also used; plus, there is a summary table at the bottom of this Wikipedia article. Be aware that this type of data can change, and that some of what is reported may already be outdated. For specific denominations, I recommend going to their official website and looking under search terms like "social issues," "sexuality," and similar terms.

7. On this topic, see Ken Schurb, ed., *Rediscovering the Issues Surrounding the 1974 Concordia Seminary Walkout*, CHI Monograph Series (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2023).

8. A fine, recent history of the Lutheran churches in America that includes the new ones formed in the twenty-first century is: Mark Granquist, *Lutherans in America: A New History* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015).

9. Two excellent books that thoroughly discuss the topic of the Bible and its teaching about homosexuality are: Robert A. J. Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001); and Kevin DeYoung, *What Does the Bible Really Teach about Homosexuality?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015).

10. See <https://files.lcms.org/file/preview/512D50BE-E3C6-4F78-869C-D095AA9A46C9>; accessed 8 July 2024.

11. CTCR, *Human Sexuality*, 32-33.

12. CTCR, *Human Sexuality*, 34-35.

13. CTCR, *Human Sexuality*, 36.

14. See <https://files.lcms.org/file/preview/wcX5cr3H0wytovaarXqF5O4f-hvvG3wOG>; accessed 8 July 2024.

15. See <https://files.lcms.org/file/preview/F47D5455-58F5-4AA0-B6AA-CD-F5E9CF21ED>; accessed 8 July 2024. Other reports and documents on this subject may be found at the synod's website, under the CTCR at this page: <https://www.lcms.org/about/leadership/commission-on-theology-and-church-relations/documents/marriage-and-sexuality>; you may also find other documents on the matter of marriage and sexuality at this page: <https://www.lcms.org/social-issues/marriage>; all web-pages accessed 8 July 2024.

16. See *A Chaste and Decent Life*, p. 25 n. 128. The CTCR document "Response to Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust" can be found under the CTCR page here: <https://files.lcms.org/file/preview/097FB019-A398-4AA5-A6DE-FC611BFA06C6>; accessed 8 July 2024; Gagnon's book was previously noted above, note #9; and the other authors' documents can be found at the web-addresses given on p. 25 n. 128.

17. See CTCR, "Response to Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust" (Saint Louis: LCMS, 2012), 22 n. 69.

LUTHERAN CONCERNS ASSOCIATION ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Monday, January 20, 2025

“Do not be conformed to this world.” Romans 12:2 (NKJV)

The Conference will be held on Monday, January 20, 2025, on the Concordia Theological Seminary campus at Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Dine with the Speakers and the LCA Board of Directors! On Sunday evening, January 19 at 5:30 pm, Luther Hall will be reserved for a private dinner for LCA Conference attendees. Be sure to reserve your place right away on the form below. LCA Dinners afford attendees the opportunity to relax and enjoy fellowship with other participants at the Conference. The Sunday night dinner will consist of Beef Tenderloin and Chicken Marsala served buffet style with salad, vegetable, potato, dessert, and beverage. A cafeteria lunch is included for full-day attendees. Half-day attendees may attend the cafeteria lunch by remitting \$10, as noted on the registration form below.

Forget about the cold winter and enjoy this warm and cheerful occasion with fellow Christians.

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE	Bldg: Loehe Hall	Room: Loehe 1
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MORNING SESSION:

06:45 am: Registration Opens
 07:30 am – 07:40 am: **LCA Opening Devotion**
 07:40 am – 07:50 am: **Welcome from the LCA** (Mr. Mark Franke)
 and **Greetings from the Indiana District**

 07:50 am – 08:35 am: **Textual Criticism: Influence
 and Application**
 Dr. E. Christian Kopff
 08:35 am – 08:50 am: Questions and Answers

 08:50 am – 09:35 am: **What is Narrative Criticism and
 How Is It Being Used Today?**
 Pastor Philip Hale
 09:35 am – 09:50 am: Questions and Answers

 09:50 am – 11:15 am: **Break for Chapel Service/Coffee
 with CTSFW Students & Faculty**

 11:15 am – 12:00 pm: **CUS Focus on Future Lutheran
 Pastors and Teachers**
 Dr. Douglas Spittel
 12:00 pm – 12:15 pm: Questions and Answers

 12:15 pm – 01:30 pm: ***** LUNCH *****

AFTERNOON SESSION:

01:30 pm – 02:15 pm: **Classical Education and Free Speech on Campus**
 Dr. Scott Yenor
 02:15 pm – 02:30 pm: Questions and Answers

 02:30 pm – 03:15 pm: **Due Process and the Mission of the Church**
 Pastor Edward Naumann
 03:15 pm – 03:30 pm: Questions and Answers

 03:30 pm – 03:45 pm: ***** BREAK*****

 03:45 pm – 04:25 pm: **Panel Discussion** (All Speakers)

 04:25 pm – 04:30 pm: **Closing Remarks**

 04:45 pm – 5:45 pm: **Annual LCA Meeting** – for LCA Members

 06:00 pm: **Dinner**
 Pay at the line in the Dining Hall

 08:00 pm: **LCA Board Meeting**

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2025 LCA Conference Registration Form

Concordia Theological Seminary – Fort Wayne, Indiana

Name _____	Annual LCA Membership Fee (\$60) enclosed _____
Address _____	Paid LCA Member Conference registration fee (\$110) encl. _____
Phone _____	Paid LCA Member half-day registration fee (\$44) encl. _____
Email _____	Non-Member Conference registration fee (\$120) encl. _____
	Non-Member half-day registration fee (\$49) encl. _____
	Seminary Students & Personnel registration fees waived _____
	Cafeteria lunch for half-day attendees if desired (\$10) encl. _____
	Dinner, Sunday, January 19, 5:30 pm (\$40) encl. _____

Check box for Dinner on Sunday, January 19.

Buffet (\$40): beef tenderloin and chicken marsala
 (price includes tax)

Total Enclosed:

Even if you pay at the door, please send in your registration form.

Please indicate any dietary restrictions. If your plans change,
 email jpanzigrau@comcast.net as soon as possible.



Make check payable to the Lutheran Concerns Association. Please detach this registration form and mail to
 The Lutheran Concerns Association, 149 Glenview Drive, New Kensington, PA 15068-4921

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Lutheran Concerns Association
November 2024

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In This Issue:

Luther Classical College: Why Now?

**The LGBT Policies of Mainline Protestantism:
An Analysis and Response**

Updated Mailing List

January 20, 2025

LCA Conference

Registration Form

Published regularly to support issues and causes in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod which build faithfulness to the true Confessional Lutheranism and to be a clear voice of Christian concern against actions and causes which conflict with faithfulness to the One True Faith. LCA consents to readers reproducing articles provided the entire article, plus footnotes, is included in the reproduction and full attribution given.

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Faithful Lutherans who are members of LCMS congregations are invited to submit articles for consideration. Inquires are welcome. Manuscripts will be edited. Views and judgments expressed in articles are the author's own and do not necessarily represent those of LCA. Please email articles to John F. Lang (johnflang1000@gmail.com; 419.849.2610).

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