

NB. Lutheran CORE is a group of pastors, lay people and congregations throughout the ELCA who worked to maintain the previously held standards for ordination which were overturned by the actions taken at the recent Churchwide Assembly. Bishop Paul Spring (retired) serves as the Chair of Lutheran CORE. Further information on this group can be found on their web site [www.lutherancore.org](http://www.lutherancore.org)

August 26, 2009

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

“We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies. For while we live, we are always being given up to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh” (2 Corinthians 4:8-11).

With these eloquent words the Apostle Paul describes his ministry and apostleship. He has experienced distress, pain, suffering, and rejection. He bears the marks of the crucified Jesus. But Paul also is lifted up and sustained by his hope and confidence. The life, and especially the resurrection of Jesus, is the source of Paul’s hope and confidence: “the life of Jesus made visible in our bodies.”

The words of Paul describe my feelings as I reflect on the decisions of the recent Churchwide Assembly. Yes, I am distressed that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has now endorsed blessings and ordinations for active gays and lesbians in spite of the clear teaching of Scripture on marriage and homosexual behavior.

But I am not crushed down nor in despair.

For one thing, we now have clarity. We now know where the ELCA is going, and we have a strong sense of where God is leading us. Then, too, we know that we are not alone. We have each other. The tireless efforts of our faithful supporters at the Churchwide Assembly, too many to name, underscore how we are “surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses.”

Most of all, I am buoyed up by the confident words of the Apostle Paul. I am not crushed, driven to despair. I am neither forsaken nor destroyed. I place myself where the Church at its best has always placed herself -- in the arms of the crucified Jesus, whom God raised from the dead. Jesus’ own resurrection and the promise of my own resurrection on the last day sustain me and give me hope for today. “Death is at work in us,” but, much more, the life of Jesus.

Many of us are now asking ourselves, what we should do now?

As faithful Christians, all of us will want to be intentional in our prayer life. We will pray for those who disagree with us. We will pray for one another. We will pray for God's guidance and leading as we seek to move forward in our Christian life and discipleship.

We will want to give ourselves time for patient and careful reflection. Now is not the time to make rash, hasty decisions. Most people make serious mistakes when they make decisions under pressure. We do not want to make this mistake now. Our relationship with the ELCA is a serious matter for us. I ask that we all take time to reflect patiently with ourselves and with others and not to make rash decisions now. We all have the time for God to disclose his will for us. Lutheran CORE and our supporters have consistently urged us to maintain at least a formal relationship with the ELCA. The question now before us is the level of our participation within the ELCA.

I encourage you to write to your synodical bishop and let him/her know how you feel about the decisions of the churchwide assembly. I also encourage you to be in touch with other orthodox supporters in your congregation or community. We need to support and encourage one another now.

You may also feel drawn to redirect your personal (and congregational) giving outside the framework of the regular budget of the ELCA. My wife and I have already done so ourselves. Both synods and the ELCA have ministries -- camps, nursing homes and relief agencies -- that merit our financial support. There are other ministries within and beyond the ELCA.

You may well consider whether your offerings to these other ministries are to be preferred over the regular mission support of the ELCA.

I note in passing that contributions for Lutheran CORE will be greatly appreciated at this time. If we are to re-form ourselves as a confessional movement, Lutheran CORE will need a significant increase in ongoing financial support for our work.

On September 25 and 26 Lutheran CORE will assemble as a convocation at Christ the Savior Lutheran Church, Fishers, Indiana (suburban Indianapolis). Registration forms are available on our website. At this convocation we will consider the future direction for Lutheran CORE and adopt a constitution for a re-formed and re-newed Lutheran CORE. Our goal is to become more intentional about our ministry. We will become a confessional and confessing movement and will carry out many functions that characterize a synod. We anticipate a large attendance at Fishers, and you are invited to attend.

I invite you to visit Lutheran CORE's website, [www.lutherancore.org](http://www.lutherancore.org), for more information about our ministry.

I join my prayers with those of other Christians throughout the world. I especially remember in my prayers those of us who have been hurt and are scandalized by the actions of the churchwide assembly. Please join with me in prayer for our work and ministry.

In Christ's Name,  
Paul E. Spring  
Lutheran CORE Chair