

To:
ELCL Collegium of Bishops
ELCL Capitula
ELCL Executive Board

From:
Association of Lutheran Women
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Copies to:
Archbishop E.E. Rozitis,
LELC Outside Latvia
LWF, Women's Desk

18 January 2010

Proposal

The proposals of the 11 November 2009 Pastors' Conference have provoked discussions about women's ordination. Discussions have started again in the ELCL after a more than 10 year interruption. A simple majority of conference participants, due to inadequate preparation, voted to change the provision of the Constitution concerning the ordination of clergy to include as a requirement the candidate's gender. According to publicly available information that archbishop J. Vanags expressed to the news agency LETA 2 January 2010, the ELCL plans to organize a broad discussion of the theological basis of women's ordination in time for the 2010 Synod.

In order for the discussions in the ELCL about women's ordination to be effective, constructive and honest, we Latvian women theologians, who have joined together in the Association of Lutheran Women Theologians in Latvia (ALWTL), hope for and await the opportunity to cooperate with the ELCL in organizing these discussions. One of the objectives of our association, as stated in the ALWTL Statutes, is the stimulation of theological discussions concerning the work of theologically educated professional women in the ELCL. In order to achieve this objective, the Association uses as a basis the understanding of Christian ministry expressed in the Lima Document (1982).

In the past 10-15 years the study of women's ordination by the Theological Commission of the ELCL has not been pursued and stopped without achieving any results that are formulated in writing and available within the ELCL. Our proposal, following the example

of SELK (Selbständige Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche), would be to determine a long enough and concrete time period for study and discussions, for example, until the following Synod in 2013.

Our suggestions for how the theological discussions could be organized are as follows:

- 1) The formation of two theological commissions – the first one would do studies and develop arguments “for” women’s ordination, and the second one would do studies and develop arguments “against” women’s ordination. Both commissions will prepare arguments according to a unified plan, if that is possible, and will work with this issue for, for example, two years.
- 2) The ALWTL is prepared to suggest candidates for the commission that develops arguments “for”. We are servants called by God and so we are ready to fulfill our duty, because this issue affects in the most direct manner the calling and fate of women serving in the ELCL both in the past and present, as well as the fate of those women, who were capable of and will be capable of serving in the ELCL.
- 3) The ALWTL is resolved to open and maintain a Web page www.sieviesuordinacija.lv that will be devoted solely to this issue and will include studies of “for” and “against” arguments.
- 4) Only when both theological commissions have concluded their work and the Web page includes available material in Latvian meant for a wide audience in the ELCL congregations, then in our view the ELCL could begin truthful and many-sided debates in other instances stipulated by para. 76 of the Constitution – pastors’ conferences, meetings in the deaneries, as well as voting in the Synod on the proposed changes in the Constitution.

We are pleased that in the ECLC “Forum” discussions about the issue of women’s ordination have been going on for the past three months. However, the content of the discussions proves the lack of academically prepared studies and their availability in the Latvian language.

We look forward to the ELCL’s positive reply to our proposal and to our effective cooperation and hope to receive a reply in one month’s time .

May God help us all in our efforts!

Respectfully yours,

On behalf of the ALWTL

Board President

Rudīte Losāne

(Signature & ALWTL stamp)

The ALWTL was founded in 1995. It currently joins together 40 members. 7 are active ELCL evangelists and chaplains; 1 is an active pastor, 1 – assistant pastor, 1 – pastor emeritus; 8 women who were once ELCL evangelists, deaconesses, serving students but left active work due to the ELCL's attitude toward women's ordination; 9 are women theologians from Latvia who have in the past 14 years emigrated and become pastors in the Latvian Church Outside Latvia; 2 are women who were ordained in the Latvian Church Outside Latvia, but who have returned to their homeland but have not been allowed to serve in the ELCL; 9 are serving the Latvian Church Outside Latvia as pastors, deaconesses and deans. Within our midst are 4 women with doctor of theology degrees. The number of ALWTL members, since its founding, has not diminished, but grows and continues to grow.