

# Weekly News ~~ June 24, 2022

## FROM THE OREGON SYNOD BISHOP:

Yet again, Beloveds, we stand in hard and polarized times.

I realize many of us have strong feelings about Roe v. Wade and whether or not women should have the right to access safe and legal termination of pregnancy. Please pray for our nation, for the most vulnerable among us, and that justice would roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. Wherever you stand, I encourage you and your congregation to read this pastoral word from Bp. Elizabeth Eaton below, and to revisit our [social statement on abortion](#).

Bishop Laurie

## FROM THE PRESIDING BISHOP OF THE ELCA:

### **Bishop Eaton issues pastoral message on SCOTUS ruling regarding Roe v. Wade**

Dear church,

Whatever personal perspective one might take on the June 24 abortion ruling from the Supreme Court, it is the legal framework in which we now minister, and I wish to speak a pastoral word at this time.

The Supreme Court has voted to overturn Roe v. Wade, removing federal constitutional protection for safe and legal abortion and leaving decisions about abortion law largely to the states. As a result, safe and legal abortion will likely not be [accessible in every state](#). This church's 1991 social statement [Abortion](#) argues that "the number of induced abortions is a source of deep concern" but teaches that the practice should be legal (pp. 3, 9-10). In other words, "Laws should be enacted and enforced justly for the preservation and enhancement of life, and should avoid unduly encumbering or endangering the lives of women" (p. 9). Overturning Roe v. Wade and placing decisions about abortion regulation at the state level encumbers and endangers the lives of all persons who need to make decisions about unexpected pregnancies.

First, as a pastor of this church, I want to acknowledge that this decision affects many people, especially those whose pregnancies unfold in complex situations and the people who love them. Many now find their moral agency restricted because federal law no longer guarantees access to legal and safe abortion. They already face difficult moral questions, and the Supreme Court decision only adds to their anguish. As our social statement reminds us, we have both the freedom and the

obligation to serve neighbors in complex situations. As a church, we are called at this moment to recognize and spiritually support people who are struggling with decisions around pregnancy.

Second, as presiding bishop, I want to remind this church that, despite this new legal landscape, we continue to depend on our social teaching for guidance. Our social statement provides the moral framework for our church's communal discernment and ministry, holding in tension both the strong Christian presumption to preserve and protect all life as well as the complex moral situations in which pregnancy sometimes occurs. Our social teaching is complex and does not hew to clear categories or labels such as "pro-abortion" or "anti-abortion."

That complexity is reflected in several points. The statement recognizes that pregnant persons have moral agency; they are the ones to make decisions about a pregnancy (see pp. 5-6). This church and its ministers trust them to decide but expect them to make such decisions in relationship—with God, self, partner, family, ministers and others.

I also want to underscore for the whole body of Christ the statement's exhortation "that those who counsel persons faced with unintended pregnancies respect how deeply the woman's pregnancy involves her whole person—body, mind and spirit—in relation to all the commitments that comprise her stewardship of life" (p. 5).

Further, our church teaching holds that there are no exclusive rights in pregnancy. A pregnant person does not have an exclusive right to abort a fetus at all points during the pregnancy. A developing life does not have an exclusive right to be born (p. 2). This church does not support abortion as a normative form of birth control but rather understands it as necessary in some morally responsible circumstances. This church does not condone late-term abortions except in extreme circumstances, which must be determined by the individual with their medical caregivers (p. 7).

This church acknowledges that individuals and religious traditions hold divergent viewpoints over when life begins. These divergent views are not only scientific but also biblical and cultural. The ELCA social statement acknowledges these ethical ambiguities and states that "the closer the life in the womb comes to full term the more serious such [moral] issues become." (p. 7).

As we live into this new legal framework, we can respond to and minister in the current situation, for instance, by ministering to individuals who seek abortions; advocating for laws that provide free or affordable health care, child care and education; providing and promoting sex education; continuing to be a community of discernment where thoughtful and diverse perspectives can be shared and heard; and advocating for state laws that provide legal, safe and affordable abortions, and against legislation that would outlaw abortion in all circumstances (p. 9).

Finally, I wish to remind everyone that this church supports peaceful means of expression within a diverse society. Peaceful protest is a crucial element of civic engagement; violent protest is not, and this church reproves it. Likewise, this church is on record against hate speech. Let us be instruments

for peace where there is none. Let us listen to one another. Let us serve the needs of neighbors in all the complexities life presents. God calls us to be *for* others, just as God in Christ is for us.

In Christ,

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton

Presiding Bishop

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

### **VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL!**

VBS is coming soon! We hope you'll spread the word for kids grade K - 5 to pre-register. (Registration forms are in the church office.)

The morning sessions will be the week of July 11 - 15, 9:30 - 11:30. We'll be following the ELCA World Hunger curriculum, "Tree of Healing". Each morning we'll have singing, Bible lesson, crafts, and games & simulation activities from other countries of the world served by ELCA World Hunger.

Please prayerfully consider helping with this fun ministry, even if you're not available to participate each day. We'll need teacher assistants, older youth assistants, help with snacks. Please let Pastor Alyssa know if you'd like to help.

### **SAVE THE DATE!**

"God's Work, Our Hands" Sunday is September 11. Save the date and watch for more info as we get closer to the day. New resources are available this year; if you would like to help organize this day of service to our community in conjunction with Lutherans nationwide, please let the office know.



**LAST WEEK'S ATTENDANCE: 52 in person, 11 online**

**STEWARDSHIP IS... Using water wisely.**

Water your garden in the morning or the evening, or set up a drip system! Planting native plants helps, too!