

ELCIC Village Voices



By participating in the following discussion, you become part of the ELCIC Village Voices. The Tenth Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation will be gathering in Winnipeg, in July 2003, under the theme, "For the Healing of the World." During the Assembly, participants will be discussing this topic and nine others in what is referred to as Village Groups. You become part of the village by sharing your thoughts on this topic with the ELCIC Assembly delegates, including ELCIC National Bishop Ray Schultz. Thank you for sharing your voices so that we become part of the healing of the world.

Village Voice #7: Justice and Healing in Families

We love because he first loved us. ... The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also. Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the parent loves the child. (1 John 4:19-5:1)

God intends human beings to find meaning and healing through intimate relationships or families, which take many forms throughout the world. All cultures institutionalize certain understandings of marriage, family and gender, but across cultures, what constitutes a family varies considerably. The definition of family has implications for who is included and who is excluded, and on what basis. Within families we are expected to learn our basic sense of justice, especially of what is right and wrong, but families can also be places where blatant injustices rage, especially against those who are vulnerable. Families often need healing due to the deep wounds members inflict upon one another, but families also can be healing havens from the ravages of economic, political and social stress.

Consider why we, as a communion of churches, should focus on families:

1. What are the most important qualities or features of family for you?

2. How do we minister to families when they become places of injustice and pain?

3. Policies are needed for the sake of greater justice for families. For what kinds of policies should the ELCIC be advocating?

Bishop Ray's Musings on Justice and Healing in Families: Families come in many shapes and sizes today. Family relationships experience many intense pressures: long work hours, maintaining excessive consumer lifestyles, designation of time and priorities, less extended family support. Is it any wonder that half the marriages in Canada end in divorce or that the levels of mental and physical abuse in families are alarming? Families are the building blocks of sustainable communities.

As Lutherans in Canada prepare for the Tenth Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation in Winnipeg, in what ways can the church insure greater support and justice for families? Tell me what you think.

Prayer: Father, you recognized from the very beginning that we humans do better with the companionship and love of others. Help us to respect all the different forms that "family" takes; and teach us to be indignant when individuals or cultures exclude some from that network of support. Guide our church as we reach out to help. In Jesus' name, amen.

Indicate the type of group that participated in this discussion (ELW, adult forum, youth group, etc.):

**Return by April 30, 2003 to:
ELCIC Village Voices, c/o ELW, 302-393 Portage Ave., Winnipeg MB R3B 3H6.**