

Last Sunday I attended a short workshop at Spirit in the Desert Retreat Center in Carefree, Arizona for the second annual LAMA Summit. I went to learn more about how to be a voice in declaring our common needs for advocacy in the public square, activating our faith in love.

At the event we heard from Rev. Amy Reumann, Director of Advocacy for the ELCA. Reumann leads domestic, international, environmental, and corporate social responsibility portfolios in Washington D.C, New York, and 15 state capitols. **Lutheran Advocacy Ministry Arizona (LAMA)** joins with the most vulnerable of our society to voice our common needs in the public square, activating our faith in love.

As an advocacy ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), Lutheran Advocacy Ministry Arizona (LAMA) derives its purpose from the Constitution of the ELCA, which states:

To participate in God's mission, this church shall: . . . Serve in response to God's love to meet human needs, caring for the sick and the aged, advocating justice and dignity for all people, working for peace and reconciliation among the nations, and standing with the poor and the powerless and committing itself to their needs. (4.02.c)

The purpose of LAMA is to advocate for justice and care of God's creation by speaking with and for those who have little or no political power. LAMA will work with congregations in Arizona — ELCA Lutherans and others — to create and use networks for advocacy on these issues.

Now, some would suggest that the church should stay away from politics and that we should separate church and state. The separation from the church and state does not mean the church should stay out of politics. I agree that, No, pastors should not tell people how to vote nor discuss political parties behind the pulpit. However, when we talk about humanitarian needs in our world, the church needs to claim a voice. By acknowledging that we're discussing "political," issues is NOT saying that we're about to get "partisan." Luther said the church is not fulfilling it's role in the world if we aren't doing advocacy on behalf of the poor, discriminated and the disenfranchised. We believe the church is not only permitted but is required to help her members think through complicated issues in a biblically-rooted, appropriately nuanced manner.

The Lutheran reformation transformed not only theology and the church, but law and the state as well. Beginning in the 1520s, Luther joined up with various jurists and political leaders to craft ambitious legal reforms of church, state, and society on the strength of Luther's new theology. Luther wanted the church to know that charity simply isn't enough when it comes to the poor and helpless.

Luther ultimately realized that he needed the law to stabilize and enforce the new Protestant teachings. Radical theological reforms had made possible fundamental legal reforms. Fundamental legal reforms, in turn, would make palpable radical theological reforms. In the course of the 1530s onwards, the Lutheran Reformation became in its essence both a theological and a legal reform movement. It struck new balances between law and Gospel, rule and equity, order and faith, structure and spirit.

Reverend Amy made these points in her discussion with our role of discipleship in our democracy:

1. No one needs to do social justice on their own. There is a church behind you and resources to help. See our ELCA social statement as a place to start.
2. Government officials and leaders have God given gifts too. They are called to make a difference!

3. Advocacy in the church really does help make a difference. We have a track record to prove that!
4. We don't have to save the whole world.... Find an issue that you are compassionate about and focus on that issue... such as world hunger.
5. Everything has a connection to a racial and gender issue in our world. Our history demonstrates that for us!
6. Lutherans need to be in partnership ecumenically with other denominations and even religions to make even a great difference.
7. We can't affect everything that needs change but we can celebrate the things we have affected to make a change and a difference in the world. Encourage those who are willing to take risks!
8. Advocacy is about HOPE. We can embody HOPE for those who are numb to indifference and see no hope.
9. We are responsible for what we say AND what we DO NOT say. We are called to denounce the idols people claim. We obey our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We are in service to God.
10. Advocacy is building relationships NOT tearing them down. It is important we communicate with our elected officials and to tell our stories. They want to hear from us! We are their constituents!

If you are interested in hearing more about how we as a church ... or even YOU... can make a difference in advocacy, please contact our congregational representative: **Tina Gilson – 414-517-6505**