

# Series Foreword

The concept of a “priesthood of all believers” is a core tenet of Lutheran theology. Saved by God’s grace, we are called to live out our faith in our communities and our world. This book series is intended to equip the saints—that’s all of us!—to embody our Lutheran faith commitments.

Since its beginning in 1988, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has developed social statements and social messages. These documents help us make sense of complex moral and ethical concerns. Social statements are teaching and policy documents that provide biblical and theological contexts and insights for moral formation, discernment, and engagement. These statements guide ELCA advocacy. Social statements are developed through an extensive process of listening, participation, and deliberation and are adopted by a two-thirds vote of an ELCA

churchwide assembly. Social messages, on the other hand, are adopted by the ELCA Church Council. Rather than establishing new teaching or policy, social messages build upon previously adopted materials, and especially upon the social statements.

These policy documents are a blessing! In them we recognize the gift of reading the scripture through the lens of the gospel of Jesus Christ and we hear the call to thoughtfully engage the world around us. This ongoing process involves seeing our history as clearly as we can. This includes recognizing the ways that some Lutheran perspectives have harmed our neighbors. ELCA social teaching helps us commit to ongoing reformation.

In the *For the Sake of the World* books, readers encounter carefully written analyses written by scholars and church leaders. Each volume asks us to consider how these documents can guide our faith and deepen our moral discernment regarding today's complex ethical issues. We hope these volumes equip congregations, students, and other readers to participate in God's redeeming work in the world.

Deacon Laura Gifford, PhD  
Series Editor