

**EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN
AMERICA**

Church Council

MINUTES

Nov. 14–17, 2024

**Prepared by the
Office of the Secretary**

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**EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA
CHURCH COUNCIL**

**MINUTES
Nov. 14–17, 2024**

The 117th meeting of the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) convened Nov. 14–17, 2024, at the Lutheran Center in Chicago, Ill.

The Executive Committee of the Church Council met in the morning and early afternoon on Thursday, Nov. 14. The meeting of the Church Council began with worship with Holy Communion at 3:00 p.m. (all times Central Standard Time unless otherwise noted). The Rev. James S. Dunlop, bishop of the Lower Susquehanna Synod, presided and preached, Mr. Imran Siddiqui, vice president of the ELCA, served as assisting minister, and Mr. David M. Lenz served as lector.

ORGANIZATION OF THE MEETING

The following people were present for all or part of the meeting:

Voting members

Officers:

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton, presiding bishop
Mr. Imran Siddiqui, vice president
Deacon Sue E. Rothmeyer, secretary
Ms. Lori S. Fedyk, treasurer

Chair of the Conference of Bishops:

The Rev. Yehiel Curry, bishop of the Metropolitan Chicago Synod

Church Council:

The Rev. A. Elizabeth (Lisa) Ahlness	Mr. Rindra Josoa
Mr. Kevin Anderson	The Rev. Gwendolyn S. King
Ms. Tracey A. Beasley	Mr. David M. Lenz
The Rev. Benjamin B. Bergren	The Rev. Tara R. Lynn
The Rev. Marcus A. Bigott	Ms. Olivia L. Martin-Call
The Rev. Nicholas M. Billardello III	Mr. Mitch S. McCartney
Ms. Susan Boxberger	Mr. Joel A. Miller
The Rev. Heather E. Brown	Mr. Ethan G. Miller-Perez (<i>excused</i>)
Ms. Jamie Bruesehoff	Mr. Keoni Newman
The Rev. William H. Callister	Deacon Kari A. Olsen
The Rev. Leroy Cannon	Mr. Iván A. Pérez
Ms. Divine	Ms. Linda C. Rivera (<i>excused</i>)
The Rev. Joanne E. Engquist	Mr. Noah F. Roux
Ms. Kerry A. Fehrman	Ms. Valerie J. Shaw
Ms. Sheena R. Foster	Ms. Andraine A. Sinaga
Mr. Hans W. Giller	Mr. Loren A. Solberg
The Rev. Emily K. Hartner	The Rev. Kjersten L. Sullivan
Ms. Kristy K. Henriksen	Ms. Loni Taylor
The Rev. Pamela J. Hoh	Ms. Jennifer E. Trom
Ms. Cherrish Holland	

Representatives of the Conference of Bishops:

Bishop Laurie A. Jungling, Region 1	Bishop Suzanne D. Dillahunt, Region 6
Bishop Brenda K. Bos, Region 2	Bishop Christopher deForest, Region 7
Bishop Craig A. Schweitzer, Region 3	Bishop James S. Dunlop, Region 8
Bishop Scott Johnson, Region 4	Bishop Pedro M. Suárez, Region 9
Bishop Amy L. Current, Region 5	

Advisory members of the Church Council:

The Rev. Jesse W. Brown Jr., president, African Descent Lutheran Association
The Rev. Joan Conroy, president, American Indian and Alaska Native Lutheran Association
Mr. Ryan Lahurd, president, Association of Lutherans of Arab and Middle Eastern Heritage
The Rev. Bimen Limbong, vice president, Association of Asian and Pacific Islanders
The Rev. Alejandro Mejía, president, Asociación de Ministerios Latinos de la ELCA
Ms. Aubrey Thonvold, executive director, Reconciling Works
The Rev. Michael Wilker, representative, Association of White Lutherans for Racial Justice

Churchwide Staff Resource People:

Office of the Presiding Bishop:

The Rev. Wyvetta Bullock, executive for administration
Mr. Aaron Cooper, senior director, strategic communications
Ms. Jennifer G. DeLeon, director for racial justice
Ms. Victoria Flood, director for Mission Support
The Rev. Ernie Hinojosa, associate executive for vision
The Rev. Louise N. Johnson, executive for vision
Ms. Rhondean Johnson, executive for people solutions and diversity, equity, and inclusion
Ms. Kathryn M. Lohre, executive for ecumenical and inter-religious relations and theological discernment
Ms. Jackie Pepin-Baumhover, director for strategy
Ms. Judith E. Roberts, senior director for diversity, equity, and inclusion
Ms. Mary J. Streufert, director for gender justice and women's empowerment and director for Quality of Call Initiative
Deacon John Weit, executive for worship
The Rev. Roger A. Willer, director for theological ethics
Ms. Rachel K. Wind, executive for development

Office of the Secretary:

Mr. Thomas A. Cunniff, general counsel
Mr. Dan F. Eppley, manager for official documentation
The Rev. N. Keith Fry, executive for Office of the Secretary administration
Mr. Paul K. Irwin, associate general counsel
Deacon MaryAnn Schwabe, executive for synod relations
Ms. Jodi L. Slattery, executive for governance

Christian Community and Leadership:

The Rev. Philip C. Hirsch, executive director
The Rev. Sara A. Cutter, senior director for operational effectiveness
The Rev. Lamont Wells, program director, Network of ELCA Colleges and Universities

Service and Justice:

The Rev. Khader El-Yateem, executive director
The Rev. Barbara Lund, senior director for operations and innovation

Innovation:

Mr. Iain Chester, executive director

Media:

Ms. Candice Hill Buchbinder, public relations manager

Separately Incorporated Ministries:

Mr. Tim Blevins, president and CEO, Augsburg Fortress Publishers
Ms. Jennifer Hockenbery, interim executive director, Women of the ELCA
Mr. Christopher Johnson, president and CEO, Portico Benefit Services
Ms. Annette Shoemaker, interim president and CEO, ELCA Foundation

Ecumenical Guests:

The Rev. Mark Goodman, The Episcopal Church (USA)

Guests:

The Rev. Carla Christopher, co-chair of the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church
Mr. Leon Schwartz, co-chair of the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church

Thursday, Nov. 14, 2024
PLENARY SESSION I

CALL TO ORDER AND ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

(Agenda I.A.)

Mr. Imran Siddiqui, vice president of the ELCA and chair of the Church Council, called the meeting to order at 4:15 p.m. The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton, presiding bishop of the ELCA, opened the meeting with prayer.

Agenda items were distributed to council members electronically prior to the meeting. A motion was made to adopt the agenda. There being no discussion, the chair called for the vote.

VOTED:

CC24.11.11 To adopt the agenda and to permit the chair to call for consideration of agenda items in the order the chair deems most appropriate.

REPORT OF THE PRESIDING BISHOP

(Agenda I.B.)

Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton highlighted elements from her report, calling attention to the God's Love Made Real initiative, which is focused on supporting both existing congregations and innovative forms of ministry emerging within this church that do not conform to traditional congregational models of Christian community. The presiding bishop and Ms. Rachel K. Wind, executive for development, provided information on the Church Property Resource Hub, a resource for synods and congregations considering how better to utilize properties under their stewardship. Presiding Bishop Eaton updated the council on the work of the Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery Task Force. She reported on progress toward a memorandum of understanding between this church and Global Refuge to enhance cooperation and better meet the needs of migrants, and gave an update on efforts to enhance communication and strengthen the relationship between this church and the ELCA Endowment Fund.

UPDATE ON THE GOD'S LOVE MADE REAL INITIATIVE

(Agenda I.C.)

Ms. Jackie Pepin-Baumhover, director for strategy, provided more detail on the facet of the God's Love Made Real initiative focused on supporting existing congregations, highlighting innovative ways the churchwide organization is supporting congregations that welcome diverse communities.

Q&A ON REPORTS OF THE VICE PRESIDENT, SECRETARY, AND CHAIR OF THE CONFERENCE OF BISHOPS

(Agenda I.D.)

Vice President Siddiqui invited questions from members related to the written reports provided prior to the meeting by the vice president of the ELCA, secretary of the ELCA, and the chair of the Conference of Bishops. Deacon Sue E. Rothmeyer, secretary, and Ms. Jodi L. Slattery, executive for governance, provided details about Church Council responsibilities at the 2025 Churchwide Assembly. Secretary Rothmeyer announced that she will not allow her name to be put forward for possible election to another term as secretary of the ELCA.

RECESS

The first plenary session of the 117th meeting of the Church Council recessed at 5:03 p.m. and reconvened at 5:15 p.m.

UPDATE ON THE COMMISSION FOR A RENEWED LUTHERAN CHURCH

(Agenda I.E.)

Mr. Leon Schwartz, co-chair of the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church (CRLC), provided an update on the commission's work, highlighting alignment between that work and the mandate given to the CRLC by the 2022 Churchwide Assembly. He noted that the Church Council had also tasked the commission with considering a possible name change for the ELCA and provided a summary of CRLC reflections on a possible name change. He reported

that the commission was not prepared to make a formal recommendation regarding a name change, adding that rationales for and against changing the name will be included in the final report of the commission to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly. Mr. Schwartz provided an overview of action items being brought to the Church Council from the CRLC at this meeting, particularly proposed amendments to the Articles of Incorporation and the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA*. He also outlined materials that were being brought from the commission for consultation and discussion related to the organizational structure of the churchwide organization and the purpose statements in the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA*.

Mr. Schwartz and Mr. David M. Lenz, a member of the CRLC, laid out the future work of the commission, particularly related to the purpose statements in the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA*, and responded to questions and comments from Church Council members related to ongoing reflection within the commission related to the reorganization of the churchwide organization.

ADJOURNMENT

The first plenary session of the 117th meeting of the Church Council of the ELCA adjourned at 6:25 p.m. on Nov. 14, 2024, following announcements, prayer, and a hymn.

Friday, Nov. 15, 2024
PLENARY SESSION II

COMMITTEE MEETINGS AND MID-DAY PRAYER

The Board Development Committee met at 8:00 a.m. at the Lutheran Center. The following committees met at 2:00 p.m. at the Lutheran Center: Budget and Finance; Christian Community and Leadership; Faith, Society, and Innovation; Legal and Constitutional Review; and Service and Justice. A mid-day prayer gathering led by the Rev. Pamela J. Hoh was held at 12:15 p.m.

RACIAL AND GENDER JUSTICE EDUCATION

(Agenda II.A.)

Ms. Mary J. Streufert, director for gender justice and women's empowerment and director for Quality of Call Initiative, and Ms. Jennifer G. DeLeon, director for racial justice, led a Bible study and educational session on gender and racial justice.

ADJOURNMENT

The second plenary session of the 117th meeting of the Church Council of the ELCA adjourned at 12:00 p.m. on Nov. 15, 2024.

Saturday, Nov. 16, 2024
PLENARY SESSION III

CALL TO ORDER

Vice President Siddiqui called the third plenary session to order at 8:32 a.m. The session opened with a hymn and prayer.

REPORT OF THE LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL REVIEW COMMITTEE

(Agenda III.A.)

Mr. Kevin Anderson, chair of the Legal and Constitutional Review Committee, introduced actions recommended by the committee related to constitutional amendments.

CONTINUING RESOLUTION AMENDMENTS TO CHAPTER 5 OF THE CONSTITUTION, BYLAWS, AND CONTINUING RESOLUTIONS OF THE ELCA

(Agenda III.A.1a.)

Mr. Anderson provided an overview of proposed amendments to continuing resolutions in Chapter 5 of the *Constitution, Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA* recommended by the committee. On behalf of the committee, he introduced a motion to adopt the amendments. Council members discussed the definitions and goals articulated in the proposed amendments, and Mr. Anderson answered questions about the process by which the proposed amendments had been formulated.

Moved;

[Seconded]: **To adopt the amendments to Chapter 5 of the *Constitution, Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* as described in “Proposed Amendments – Continuing Resolutions.”**

A member introduced a motion to amend 5.01.J24.b.

Moved;

Seconded: *To amend 5.01.J24.b.:*

Persons of diverse gender identities and persons of diverse sexual orientations means individuals who ~~do not conform to a~~ identify outside the sex and gender binary, individuals whose gender identity may be fluid, and individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, or other sex, gender, and sexual identities that are more complex than sex, gender, and sexuality binaries.

Another member introduced a motion to amend the amendment.

Moved;

Seconded;

Carried: *To amend the proposed amendment to 5.01.J24.b.:*

Persons of diverse gender identities and persons of diverse sexual orientations means individuals who ~~do not conform to a~~ identify outside beyond the sex and gender binary, individuals whose gender identity may be fluid, and individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, or other sex, gender, and sexual identities that are more complex than sex, gender, and sexuality binaries.

Vice President Siddiqui announced that the motion to amend the amendment had passed and invited further discussion of the motion to amend. There being none, the vice president called for a vote on the amendment as amended.

Moved;
Seconded;
Carried:

To amend 5.01.J24.b.:

Persons of diverse gender identities and persons of diverse sexual orientations means individuals who ~~do not conform to a~~ identify beyond the sex and gender binary, individuals whose gender identity may be fluid, and individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, or other sex, gender, and sexual identities that are more complex than sex, gender, and sexuality binaries.

Vice President Siddiqui announced that the motion to amend had passed. A member called the question, and the council voted to end debate. Vice President Siddiqui called for a vote on the amendments to Chapter 5 of the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA* as amended.

VOTED: **TWO-THIRDS VOTE REQUIRED**
CC24.11.12 **To adopt the amendments to Chapter 5 of the *Constitution, Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* as described in “Proposed Amendments – Continuing Resolutions” as amended.**

GENERAL CONTINUING RESOLUTION AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION, BYLAWS, AND CONTINUING RESOLUTIONS OF THE ELCA

(Agenda III.A.1b.)

Mr. Anderson introduced additional amendments to continuing resolutions of the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA*. On behalf of the committee, he introduced a motion to adopt the amendments.

VOTED: **TWO-THIRDS VOTE REQUIRED**
CC24.11.13 **To adopt the amendments, other than amendments to Chapter 5, to the *Constitution, Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* as described in “Proposed Amendments – Continuing Resolutions.”**

AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTIONS, BYLAWS, AND CONTINUING RESOLUTIONS OF THE ELCA PROPOSED BY THE COMMISSION FOR A RENEWED LUTHERAN CHURCH

(Agenda III.A.2.)

Mr. Anderson introduced amendments to the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA* that were being proposed by the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church. On behalf of the committee, he introduced a motion to recommend adoption of the amendments by the 2025 Churchwide Assembly.

VOTED:
CC24.11.14 **To recommend the following for adoption by the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the *Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*:**
To adopt, *en bloc*, with the exception of such amendments as may be considered separately, certain amendments recommended by the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church to the Articles of Incorporation and *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*; and
To authorize the Office of the Secretary to make appropriate changes in the *Constitution for Synods* and the *Model Constitution for Congregations* congruent with the ELCA Constitution as amended.

ADJOURNMENT

The third plenary session of the 117th meeting of the Church Council of the ELCA adjourned at 9:44 a.m. on Nov. 16, 2024.

Saturday, Nov. 16, 2024
PLENARY SESSION IV

CALL TO ORDER

Vice President Siddiqui called the fourth plenary session to order at 10:01 a.m.

UPDATE ON THE PORTICO BENEFITS REEXAMINED PROJECT

(Agenda IV.A.)

A team of Portico Benefit Services and ELCA leaders has been reexamining the ELCA benefits program in light of changes to the healthcare landscape in the United States and demographic trends within this church. Ms. Stacey Kruse, chief operating and financial officer for Portico Benefits Services, and Ms. Lindsey Holman, senior director for head of products for Portico Benefits Services, provided an update on the work of the team and answered questions of Church Council members.

REPORT OF THE TREASURER

(Agenda IV.B.)

Ms. Lori S. Fedyk, treasurer of the ELCA, reported that, through September 2024, revenue was favorable to expenses by about \$340,000 compared to a budgeted loss of \$9.8 million over the same period. This favorability comes largely from two sources: higher-than-projected investment income and lower-than-projected expenses. Treasurer Fedyk reported that investment income is favorable to plan by about \$5 million, noting the volatility of this revenue stream and that much investment income is unrealized gains. She also said that churchwide organization spending has been below budget by about \$5 million, though she noted that spending for the fiscal year will probably finish closer to budget projections. The Office of the Treasurer is currently predicting that the churchwide organization will finish the year with a roughly \$3.6 million deficit, she reported. The treasurer provided an overview of revenue streams of this church, noting an increase in direct gifts to this church in FY24. The treasurer summarized churchwide organization expenditures by home area and office, noting that churchwide organization spending is currently 88% of budget with a projection that expenditures will end the year at about 95% of budget.

Treasurer Fedyk reported that, through the end of September 2024, spending for ELCA World Hunger was about \$14.4 million and revenue was about \$9.3 million, noting that this imbalance is consistent with the plan, which anticipates increased giving later in the fiscal year. She said that in the period 2022–2024, World Hunger spending intentionally exceeded projected revenues to spend down unduly high World Hunger cash reserves. The treasurer added that the plan is for spending to align with revenue in 2025.

Treasurer Fedyk provided an update on the work of the Budget Prioritization Task Force, which completed its work in August, concluding that current expenses do align with priorities. The churchwide organization is implementing changes to the budgeting process to better align projected expenses with actual expenses, making more resources available for support of innovation. The new budgeting processes are being implemented in building churchwide organization budgets for FY25.

REPORT OF THE BUDGET AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

(Agenda IV.C.)

Ms. Cherrish Holland, chair of the Budget and Finance Committee, updated the council on recent work of the committee. She provided an overview of the churchwide organization and World Hunger budgets proposed by the committee for FY25, noting that additional motions were brought forward by the committee in *en bloc* items.

REVISION OF THE FY25 CURRENT FUND SPENDING AUTHORIZATION AND ELCA WORLD HUNGER SPENDING AUTHORIZATION

(Agenda IV.C.1.-2.)

On behalf of the Budget and Finance Committee, Ms. Holland introduced motions to authorize FY25 current fund spending and ELCA World Hunger spending.

VOTED:
CC24.11.15 **To approve a 2025 fiscal year current fund spending authorization of \$67,875,000.**

VOTED:
CC24.11.16 **To approve a 2025 ELCA World Hunger spending authorization of \$21,500,000.**

DEVELOPMENT OF A FINANCIAL COMPLIANCE POLICY

(Agenda IV.C.3.)

On behalf of the Budget and Finance Committee, Ms. Holland introduced a motion to approve a financial compliance policy for separately incorporated ministries and other affiliated organizations supported by the churchwide organization. Treasurer Fedyk provided background information on the proposed policy and its importance.

VOTED:
CC24.11.17 **To approve the financial compliance policy for separately incorporated ministries and other affiliated organizations.**

GENERAL AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTIONS, BYLAWS, AND CONTINUING RESOLUTIONS OF THE ELCA

(Agenda IV.D.)

Continuing the report of the Legal and Constitutional Review Committee, Mr. Anderson introduced general amendments to the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA* recommended by the committee and made a motion to recommend adoption of the amendments by the 2025 Churchwide Assembly.

Moved;

[Seconded]: *To recommend the following for adoption by the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America:*

To adopt, en bloc, with the exception of such amendments as may be considered separately, the amendments to the Articles of Incorporation and the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* as amended; and

To authorize the Office of the Secretary to make appropriate changes in the *Constitution for Synods* and the *Model Constitution for Congregations* congruent with the ELCA Constitution as amended.

A member moved to amend the proposed amendment of 15.21.

Moved;

Seconded: *To amend the amendment of 15.21.:*

15.21. The churchwide organization shall employ staff according to churchwide policies. Processes shall be developed that will assure that in selecting staff there will be a balance of women and men, persons of color and/or persons whose primary language is other than English, historically underrepresented groups, laypersons, and persons on the rosters of this church. This balance is to be evident in the selection of staff consistent with the inclusive policy of this church.

A member then moved to further amend the amendment.

Moved;

Seconded;

Carried: *To further amend the amendment of 15.21.:*

15.21. The churchwide organization shall employ staff according to churchwide policies. Processes shall be developed that will assure that in selecting staff there will be a balance of women and men, persons of color and/or persons whose primary language is other than

English, members of historically underrepresented groups, laypersons, and persons on the rosters of this church. This balance is to be evident in the selection of staff consistent with the inclusive policy of this church.

Vice President Siddiqui announced that the motion to further amend the amendment had passed and invited discussion of the motion to amend as further amended. There being none, the vice president called for the vote.

Moved;
Seconded;
Carried:

To amend the amendment of 15.21.:

- 15.21. The churchwide organization shall employ staff according to churchwide policies. Processes shall be developed that will assure that in selecting staff there will be a balance of women and men, persons of color and/or persons whose primary language is other than English, members of historically underrepresented groups, laypersons, and persons on the rosters of this church. This balance is to be evident in the selection of staff consistent with the inclusive policy of this church.

A member moved to divide the question of the main motion.

Moved;
Seconded;
Carried:

To consider proposed bylaws 7.31.12. and 7.61.08. separately.

Vice President Siddiqui declared that the motion to divide had passed and invited discussion of proposed bylaws 7.31.12. and 7.61.08. Because the proposed bylaws deal with matters outlined in *Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline*, a member moved to refer consideration of proposed bylaws 7.31.12. and 7.61.08. to the Committee on Appeals.

VOTED:

- CC24.11.18 **To refer consideration of proposed bylaws 7.31.12. and 7.61.08. to the Committee on Appeals for further consideration with a report back to the April 2025 meeting of the Church Council.**

A member then moved to amend the proposed amendment of 10.52.

Moved;
Seconded;
Carried:

To amend the proposed amendment of 10.52.:

- 10.52. The Synod Council shall consist of the four officers of the synod ~~and~~, 10 to 24 other members, ~~with a goal of~~ at least one young adult, and with a goal of at least one youth, all elected by the Synod Assembly.

Vice President Siddiqui declared that the motion to amend had passed and invited further discussion. There being none, the vice president called for a vote on the motion as amended.

VOTED:

- CC24.11.19 **To recommend the following for adoption by the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America:**
To adopt, en bloc, with the exception of such amendments as may be considered separately, the amendments to the Articles of Incorporation and the Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America;
and

To authorize the Office of the Secretary to make appropriate changes in the *Constitution for Synods and the Model Constitution for Congregations* congruent with the ELCA Constitution as amended.

PERSONAL REFLECTION ON FAITH

(Agenda IV.E.)

Ms. Andraine A. Sinaga shared personal reflections on faith.

ADJOURNMENT

The fourth plenary session of the 117th meeting of the Church Council of the ELCA adjourned at 12:26 p.m. on Nov. 16, 2024, following announcements and prayer.

Saturday, Nov. 16, 2024
PLENARY SESSION V

PRESENTATIONS BY SEPARATELY INCORPORATED MINISTRIES

During the lunch break, members attended presentations hosted by the separately incorporated ministries of the ELCA.

CALL TO ORDER AND LEGAL BRIEFING

(Agenda V.A.)

Vice President Siddiqui called the fifth plenary session to order at 2:01 p.m., and the council entered into executive session for a legal briefing. Minutes were not kept during executive session. The council returned to open session at 2:21 p.m.

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

(Agenda V.B.)

Vice President Siddiqui reported on recent activities of the Executive Committee of the Church Council, including activities in preparation for the 2025 Churchwide Assembly. He called attention to actions brought forward by the Executive Committee among the *en bloc* items.

UPDATE ON THE COMMISSION FOR A RENEWED LUTHERAN CHURCH (CONT.)

(Agenda V.C.)

Mr. Leon Schwartz and the Rev. Carla Christopher, co-chairs of the CRLC, continued the update on the work of the commission. Mr. Schwartz provided an overview of matters being considered by the CRLC but not brought forward for Church Council action at this meeting, particularly related to the organizational structure of the churchwide organization and reconsideration of the churchwide, synod, and congregation purpose statements in the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA*.

Church Council members offered feedback regarding possible revisions to the purpose statements. Mr. Schwartz stated that the commission will take the feedback from the council into account moving forward. He added that one goal of the commission is to identify matters that will require further study and reflection after 2025.

Mr. Schwartz reported that the CRLC has been considering recommendations for reorganization of the churchwide organization and introduced alternative organizational structures being considered. Council members expressed concerns about the possible creation of a chief executive officer (CEO) position at the churchwide organization, particularly related to the authority of the presiding bishop, the nature of the ELCA as a church, and the ELCA's ecumenical partnerships. At the request of a council member, Ms. Kathryn M. Lohre, executive for ecumenical and inter-religious relations and theological discernment, explained that the reorganization being considered by the commission could have serious detrimental consequences for ecumenical relationships, and expressed her concern that the proposed restructuring was at odds with theological and ecumenical commitments of this church.

Pastor Christopher stated that there are shortfalls in communication, financial support, and accountability within this church leading to a lack of unified vision and challenges in accomplishing goals. This could be ameliorated, she argued, by creation of a CEO position in the churchwide organization to handle legal, financial, and business aspects, leaving the presiding bishop to focus on liturgical, theological, and ecclesiastical duties separate from the "NGO non-profit that is the churchwide organization." She invited council members to share concerns about communication and availability of resources within this church that they feel the commission should address.

Presiding Bishop Eaton noted that the churchwide organization already has an executive for administration who in effect serves as chief operating officer (COO), as well as persons with expertise in and responsibility for legal matters, financial matters, etc. She expressed concern that the proposed reorganization would not address issues around communication and would render the presiding bishop a figurehead rather than someone who can coordinate the entire vision and move it forward, relying on people who are trained professionals for support. She also noted that the Executive Committee of the Church Council meets monthly.

Council members continued to express concerns about the CRLC's ideas for restructuring of the churchwide organization. Vice President Siddiqui called for the orders of the day.

ADJOURNMENT

The fifth plenary session of the 117th meeting of the Church Council of the ELCA adjourned at 3:47 p.m. on Nov. 16, 2024.

**Saturday, Nov. 16, 2024
PLENARY SESSION VI**

CALL TO ORDER

Vice President Siddiqui called the sixth plenary session to order at 4:06 p.m.

UPDATE FROM THE ELCA VISION TEAM

(Agenda VI.A.)

The Rev. Louise N. Johnson, executive for vision, and the Rev. Ernie Hinojosa, associate executive for vision, provided an overview of the work of the ELCA Vision Team, clarifying that the focus of the Vision Team is the facet of the God’s Love Made Real initiative that supports “the church that is becoming.” The Vision Team supports emerging forms of ministry, they said, emphasizing that if a form of ministry is to be a part of this church, the ministry must center on creating disciples for Jesus. Pastor Johnson and Pastor Hinojosa detailed some innovative forms of ministry the team is supporting and received feedback from council members.

REPORT FROM THE ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM

(Agenda VI.B.)

The Rev. Wyvetta Bullock, executive for administration, introduced members of the Administrative Team, who then led the Church Council in reflection on the leadership transition in this church that will occur in 2025 with the election of a new presiding bishop and a new secretary. Council members discussed the following questions in small groups and then shared insights from group discussions with the entire council.

- What are the potential benefits you see for the churchwide organization with the upcoming transition?
- What are the potential risks?
- What do you advise to mitigate the risks?
- What communication patterns, and with whom, would you like to see from the churchwide organization following the Churchwide Assembly and into 2026?

Following small group discussions, Church Council members shared some of the responses from their discussions, and Pastor Bullock invited council members to share additional responses with churchwide organization staff electronically.

PERSONAL REFLECTION ON FAITH

(Agenda VI.C.)

Mr. Loren A. Solberg shared personal reflections on faith.

ADJOURNMENT

The sixth plenary session of the 117th meeting of the Church Council of the ELCA adjourned at 5:23 p.m. on Nov. 16, 2024, following announcements, prayer, and a hymn.

Sunday, Nov. 17, 2024
PLENARY SESSION VII

The seventh plenary session of the 117th meeting of the Church Council was preceded by worship with Holy Communion at 9:00 a.m. The Rev. Tara R. Lynn presided, the Rev. Marcus A. Bigott preached, Ms. Kristy K. Henriksen served as assisting minister, and Mr. Rindra Josoa served as lector.

CALL TO ORDER

Vice President Siddiqui called the seventh plenary session to order at 10:21 a.m.

PERSONAL REFLECTION ON FAITH

(Agenda VII.A.)

The Rev. Nicholas M. Billardello III shared personal reflections on faith.

REPORTS FROM VARIOUS COMMITTEES

(Agenda VII.B.)

The Rev. Joanne E. Engquist, chair of the Service and Justice Committee, reflected on challenges facing this church and expressed particular concern about challenges arising from the current political climate as this church strives to serve diverse communities and migrant communities. Ms. Rhondean Johnson, executive for people solutions and diversity, equity, and inclusion, reported that the churchwide organization is working with legal partners to determine what steps can be taken to protect churchwide organization employees living in the United States through the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program.

The Rev. Kjersten L. Sullivan, chair of the Christian Community and Leadership Committee, updated the council on recent work of the committee and alerted members to an action being brought before the council from the committee in the *en bloc* items. The Rev. Philip C. Hirsch, executive director for the Christian Community and Leadership home area, provided additional detail on outreach work of members of this church that is supported by the Christian Community and Leadership home area.

The Rev. Tara R. Lynn, chair of the Faith, Society, and Innovation Committee, reported on recent activities of the committee and reminded council members of the variety of ways they are encouraged to engage in the life of this church. She notified council members of an action coming before the council from the committee in the *en bloc* items.

The Rev. Marcus A. Bigott, chair of the Board Development Committee, alerted council members to upcoming activities in which they are encouraged to participate.

NEW BUSINESS

(Agenda VII.C.)

Secretary Rothmeyer announced that there was no new business.

CONSIDERATION OF ITEMS REMOVED FROM *EN BLOC*

(Agenda VII.D.)

Secretary Rothmeyer announced that no items had been removed from *en bloc*.

***EN BLOC* APPROVAL OF CERTAIN ITEMS**

(Agenda VII.E.)

The *en bloc* resolution includes agenda items that were judged to be non-controversial in nature and did not require plenary discussion and a separate vote. As the items were voted on *en bloc*, there was no discussion.

VOTED:

CC24.11.20

To take action *en bloc* on the items listed in *En Bloc* Items, Responses to Churchwide Assembly Actions, Responses to Synod Actions, and Responses to Previous Church Council Actions.

ACTIONS OF THE CHURCH COUNCIL

A. Audit Committee Report

VOTED: *EN BLOC*
CC24.11.20a **To approve the report of the ELCA Audit Committee describing their approval from June 2024 of the audited financial statements for the churchwide organization’s fiscal year ended Jan. 31, 2024.**

B. Engagement of Crowe LLP

VOTED: *EN BLOC*
CC24.11.20b **To approve the engagement of Crowe LLP to perform the audit service plan for the churchwide organization’s fiscal year ending Jan. 31, 2025.**

C. ELCA Supplemental Retirement Plan for Government Chaplains

At its Aug. 2024 meeting, Portico Benefit Services Board of Trustees supported the termination of the ELCA Supplemental Retirement Plan for Government Chaplains and the ELCA Supplemental Retirement Trust for Government Chaplains. In recent years, there have been very few applications, and none have been found to be eligible for the plan.

VOTED: *EN BLOC*
CC24.11.20c **To approve the termination of the ELCA Supplemental Retirement Plan for Government Chaplains and the ELCA Supplemental Retirement Trust for Government Chaplains.**

D. Amendments to Investment Policies

VOTED: *EN BLOC*
CC24.11.20d1 **To approve changes to the Cash Management Policy.**

VOTED: *EN BLOC*
CC24.11.20d2 **To approve changes to the Operating Investment Policy.**

VOTED: *EN BLOC*
CC24.11.20d3 **To approve changes to the Core Investment Policy.**

E. Appointment of Memorials Committee

Churchwide bylaw 12.51.02. provides for the appointment of a Memorials Committee of the Churchwide Assembly to review memorials from synod assemblies and make recommendations for assembly action. The 15-member committee includes members of the Church Council, voting members of the assembly, and representatives of the Conference of Bishops.

VOTED: *EN BLOC*
CC24.11.20e **To appoint the members of the Memorials Committee for the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly:**

1. **The Rev. Emily Hartner [9B] (co-chair)**
2. **Mr. Noah Roux [8E] (co-chair)**
3. **Ms. Sheena Foster [8G]**
4. **Bishop Patricia Lull [3H]**
5. **Bishop Christopher deForest [7E]**
6. **Ms. Rachel Pritchett [1B]**
7. **Mr. Jeffrey Pennington [2A]**
8. **Ms. Elna Solvang [3B]**
9. **Deacon Timothy Siburg [4A]**

10. The Rev. Michael Schmidt [5D]
11. The Rev. Katherine “Kate” Van Valkenburg [6B]
12. Ms. Janasia Carter [7A]
13. Ms. Sylvia Black [9B]; and

To authorize the Executive Committee of the Church Council to appoint additional members to the Memorials Committee for the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly as needed.

F. Appointment of Reference and Counsel Committee

Churchwide bylaw 12.51.01. provides for the appointment of a Reference and Counsel Committee of the Churchwide Assembly to review items that are not germane to items contained in the stated agenda of the assembly and also to review all changes or additions to the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA* submitted by voting members at the assembly. The 15-member committee includes Church Council members, assembly voting members, and representatives of the Conference of Bishops.

VOTED:

EN BLOC

CC24.11.20f To appoint the members of the Reference and Counsel Committee for the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly:

1. Pr. Gwendolyn King [7F] (co-chair)
2. Mr. Mitchell McCartney [5E] (co-chair)
3. Pr. Lisa Ahlness [3A]
4. Bp. Stacie Fidler [5B]
5. Bp. Michael Lozano [8A]
6. Mr. Mondo Davila [1D]
7. Mr. Jeff Cours [2C]
8. Deacon Sarah Bjornebo [2E]
9. Ms. Carolyn Davis [3G]
10. Ms. Lorie Garcia [4E]
11. Dayle Matheny [6A; NB]
12. Ms. Rachel Faulkner [8B]
13. Pr. Matthew Henning [9D]; and

To authorize the Executive Committee of the Church Council to appoint additional members to the Reference and Counsel Committee for the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly as needed.

G. 2025 Churchwide Assembly Process for Elections

At the 2025 Churchwide Assembly, elections will be held for a presiding bishop and secretary of the ELCA. The procedure for these elections is established in the ELCA constitution, specifically in bylaws 19.01.02. and 19.01.04. as well as continuing resolutions 19.01.A24., 19.01.B09., and 19.01.C19. In addition to these constitutional procedures, the Rules of Organization and Procedure for the Churchwide Assembly usually provide opportunities during the balloting process for voting members to hear nominees’ views on matters relevant to this church and the office for which they have been nominated.

For the 2025 elections, it is proposed that the Church Council delegate to the Executive Committee the authority to review, evaluate, and make possible recommendations for Part 16 of the draft Rules of Organization and Procedure for the 2025 Churchwide Assembly, particularly the assembly discernment process.

VOTED:

EN BLOC

CC24.11.20g To delegate to the Executive Committee of the Church Council responsibility for review and evaluation of and recommendations for Part 16 of the draft Rules of Organization and Procedure for the 2025 Churchwide Assembly, particularly the assembly discernment process; and

To bring to the Church Council recommendations for Part 16 of the Rules of Organization and Procedure for the 2025 Churchwide Assembly no later than the April 2025 meeting.

H. Site for the 2028 Churchwide Assembly

The Office of the Secretary is responsible to “arrange for and manage churchwide meetings, including the Churchwide Assembly...” (13.41.02.i.) and presents its recommendation for a Churchwide Assembly site to the Church Council for approval.

VOTED: *EN BLOC*
CC24.11.20h **To designate the Iowa Events Center, 730 Third Street, Des Moines, Iowa – subject to the satisfactory completion of negotiations in the judgment of the secretary of this church – as the site for the Eighteenth Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Aug. 7–11, 2028; and**
 To authorize the Executive Committee to select another venue, if negotiations are not successful.

I. Synod Constitution Amendments

Provision 10.12. of the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA* stipulates: “Each synod shall have a constitution, which shall become effective upon ratification by the Church Council. Amendments thereto shall be subject to like ratification...” Amendments to synod constitutions were provided to Church Council members electronically prior to the meeting.

VOTED: *EN BLOC*
CC24.11.20i1 **To ratify the amendments to the constitution of the Pacifica Synod (2C); and**
 To request that the secretary of this church notify the synod of this action.

VOTED: *EN BLOC*
CC24.11.20i2 **To ratify the amendments to the constitution of the Nebraska Synod (4A); and**
 To request that the secretary of this church notify the synod of this action.

VOTED: *EN BLOC*
CC24.11.20i3 **To ratify the amendments to the constitution of the New Jersey Synod (7A); and**
 To request that the secretary of this church notify the synod of this action.

VOTED: *EN BLOC*
CC24.11.20i4 **To ratify the amendments to the constitution of the Upstate New York (4D); and**
 To request that the secretary of this church notify the synod of this action.

VOTED: *EN BLOC*
CC24.11.20i5 **To ratify the amendments to the constitution of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod**
(7E); and
 To request that the secretary of this church notify the synod of this action.

VOTED: *EN BLOC*
CC24.11.20i6 **To ratify the amendments to the constitution of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod**
(7F); and
 To request that the secretary of this church notify the synod of this action.

VOTED: *EN BLOC*
CC24.11.20i7 **To ratify the amendments to the constitution of the Upper Susquehanna Synod (8E); and**
 To request that the secretary of this church notify the synod of this action.

J. National Lutheran Campus Ministry, Inc., Articles of Incorporation and Bylaw Amendments

The changes to the National Lutheran Campus Ministry, Inc. (NLCM) Restated Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws were approved by the NLCM, Inc., board at its meeting on Oct. 4, 2024. The proposed amendments and their rationales were provided to Church Council members electronically prior to the meeting.

VOTED: *EN BLOC*
CC24.11.20j **To ratify the amended articles of incorporation and bylaws of the National Lutheran Campus Ministry, Incorporated.**

K. Terms and Conditions of Support for Long-Term Global Personnel

The Church Council is responsible for reviewing the “Terms and Conditions of Support for Long-Term Global Personnel” document. The Service and Justice home area, in consultation with legal counsel, People Solutions, and the Service and Justice Administration and Global Mission, is bringing amendments to Article 9.0 [Home Assignment] to bring the document into alignment with current practices. Amendments to the “Terms and Conditions” document were provided to Church Council members electronically prior to the meeting.

VOTED: *EN BLOC*
CC24.11.20k **To approve the amendments to Article 9 in “Terms and Conditions of Support for Long-Term Global Personnel.”**

L. Amendments to Corporate Social Responsibility Documents

The Church Council is responsible for reviewing this church’s ongoing work in corporate social responsibility. Proposed amendments to three issue papers and three social criteria investment screens were provided to Church Council members electronically prior to the meeting.

VOTED: *EN BLOC*
CC24.11.20l **To approve the amendments to the following corporate social responsibility documents to serve as the basis for ongoing corporate social responsibility work in this church:**

- **Human Rights Issue Paper**
- **Freed in Christ: Nondiscrimination in Business Activities Issue Paper**
- **Violence in Our World Issue Paper**
- **Environment Social Criteria Investment Screen**
- **Human Rights Social Criteria Investment Screen**
- **Military Weapons Social Criteria Investment Screen; and**

To request that the original issue papers be archived for historical and research purposes.

M. Outdoor Ministry Affiliation

Affiliation is the way the ELCA establishes and maintains its relationship with the outdoor ministries of this church. The criteria in the “Outdoor Ministry Affiliation” document describes the benefits, requirements and procedures for affiliation. It has been approved by the Lutheran Outdoor Ministry board and the Office of the Secretary. The “Outdoor Ministry Affiliation” document was provided to Church Council members electronically prior to the meeting.

VOTED: *EN BLOC*
CC24.11.20m **To approve the criteria described in the “Outdoor Ministry Affiliation” document for the ELCA to use as it establishes and maintains its relationship with the outdoor ministries of this church.**

N. ELCA Advocacy for Peace & Justice in the Middle East and Dismantling Christian Zionism in our Churches

Association of Lutherans of Arab and Middle Eastern Heritage Biennial Assembly [2024]

Be it Resolved, The Association of Lutherans of Arab and Middle Eastern Heritage in Assembly laments both the destruction of Gaza’s and Lebanon’s infrastructure, housing, schools and universities, hospitals, and places of worship; and the millions of people who are experiencing displacement, facing malnutrition, and starvation, as a result primarily of the government of Israel’s continuing air strikes and blocking entry of humanitarian aid into Gaza; and

Be it further Resolved, That individuals and congregations of the [Evangelical] Lutheran Church in America are recommended to:

- Become informed about the SUMUD initiative of the ELCA: <http://elca.org/sumud>;
- To learn more about the conflict and occupation, and its effects using books, articles video or online ELCA approved resources provided by Palestineportal.org or SUMUD;
- To build awareness of the scriptural errors of Christian Zionism and its negative impact on the people of the Holy Land and be engaged in dismantling it;

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- Become informed that there are Christians and Christian Churches in Gaza and Lebanon;
- Use ELCA, SUMUD, Kairos Document, and other recommended resources to learn about the history of the region and current causes for conflict;
- Consider signing up for ELCA Advocacy Alerts - “Middle East Network” at <http://elca.org/sumud>;
- Pray for Palestinians and Israelis who work to create a future of justice, equality, reconciliation, and peace for all in both communities; and

Stand in solidarity with all who are suffering in Palestine and Israel and support the work of the ELCJHL (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land), LWF (Lutheran World Federation), ALAMEH (Association of Lutherans of Arab and Middle Eastern Heritage), in bringing comfort, support, accountability, justice, equity, and relief.

VOTED:

EN BLOC

CC24.11.20n

To thank the Association of Lutherans of Arab and Middle Eastern Heritage in its Biannual Assembly for the “ELCA Advocacy for Peace & Justice in the Middle East and Dismantling of Christian Zionism in our Churches” resolution; and

To encourage the congregations and members of the ELCA to implement the following recommendations identified in the resolution:

- **Become informed about the SUMUD initiative of the ELCA: <http://elca.org/sumud>;**
- **Learn more about the conflict and occupation, and its effects using books, articles video or online ELCA approved resources provided by Palestineportal.org or SUMUD;**
- **Build awareness of the scriptural errors of Christian Zionism and its negative impact on the people of the Holy Land and be engaged in dismantling it;**
- **Become informed that there are Christians and Christian churches in Gaza and Lebanon;**
- **Use ELCA, SUMUD, Kairos Document, and other recommended resources to learn about the history of the region and current causes for conflict;**
- **Consider signing up for ELCA advocacy alerts about the Middle East at <http://elca.org/sumud>;**
- **Pray for Palestinians and Israelis who work to create a future of justice, equality, reconciliation, and peace for all in both communities; and**
- **Stand in solidarity with all who are suffering in Palestine and Israel and support the work of the ELCJHL (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land), LWF (Lutheran World Federation), ALAMEH (Association of Lutherans of Arab and Middle Eastern Heritage), in bringing comfort, support, accountability, justice, equity, and relief**

O. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the Church Council meeting on April 11–14, 2024, were provided to Church Council members electronically prior to the meeting.

The minutes of the council’s Executive Committee meetings on April 11, 2024, April 29, 2024, May 21, 2024, June 12, 2024, July 23, 2024, Aug. 21, 2024, and Sept. 18, 2024, were provided to members of the Church Council electronically prior to the meeting.

Council members were invited to provide notations or typographical errors in the distributed text of the minutes to the Office of the Secretary prior to the meeting.

VOTED:

EN BLOC

CC24.11.20o

**To approve the minutes of the April 11–14, 2024, meeting of the Church Council; and
To ratify actions of the council’s Executive Committee as indicated in the minutes of the April 11, 2024, April 29, 2024, May 21, 2024, June 12, 2024, July 23, 2024, Aug. 21, 2024, and Sept. 18, 2024, meetings.**

P. Church Council Appointments and Elections

The Church Council has the responsibility for electing people to fill terms on boards of Separately Incorporated Ministries (SIMs), social ministry organizations, and seminaries. Bylaws 8.21.03. and 8.21.04. outline basic parameters for the election of members to the boards of ELCA seminaries. Pursuant to 14.22. of the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA*, the Church Council is also to elect nominees to a vacancy on a board or committee of the churchwide organization.

Biographical information for nominees was provided to Church Council members electronically prior to the meeting.

VOTED: *EN BLOC*
CC24.11.20p1 To re-elect to the board of directors of Wartburg Theological Seminary to a term beginning Jan. 1, 2025, and expiring Dec. 31, 2028: the Rev. Andrea F. DeGroot-Nesdahl and Ms. Debra Ann Hibbard.

VOTED: *EN BLOC*
CC24.11.20p2 To elect to the board of directors of Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago to a term beginning Oct. 1, 2024, and expiring Sept. 30, 2028: Mr. Laurence John Tietjen and Ms. Patricia Zoe Cornelius Woods.
To re-elect to the board of directors of Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago to a term beginning Oct. 1, 2024, and expiring Sept. 30, 2028: Mr. DeWayne Allen Cook and Mr. Oswald Gregory Lewis.

VOTED: *EN BLOC*
CC24.11.20p3 To elect to the advisory board of Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary to a term expiring in June 2027: Bishop Jeff R. Johnson and the Rev. Marjorie Ann Funk-Pihl.

VOTED: *EN BLOC*
CC24.11.20p4 To elect to the Publishing House of the ELCA Board of Trustees to a term expiring in Aug. 2025: Ms. Shelly Talcott.

VOTED: *EN BLOC*
CC24.11.20p5 To appoint to the National Lutheran Campus Ministry, Inc., Board of Directors to a term beginning March 2025 and expiring March 2029: Ms. Anne Marie Gerriets, Mr. David Neas Schaeffer, and the Rev. Herb G. Wounded Head.

RESPONSES TO CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY ACTIONS

Q. Holy Communion Practices

Churchwide Assembly Action [CA22.01.05n]

To receive with gratitude the memorial on “Holy Communion Practices in Unusual Circumstances and in Pandemic Times” from the Pacifica Synod;

To request that the Worship team of the Christian Community and Leadership home area, in collaboration with the Conference of Bishops, the Office of the Presiding Bishop, and teaching theologians, facilitate continued conversation and study regarding Holy Communion practices; and

To request that a report be provided to the Church Council no later than its Fall 2024 meeting.

Response from the Worship Team in the Office of the Presiding Bishop (November 2024)

[The Worship Team moved from the Christian Community and Leadership home area to the Office of the Presiding Bishop]

The COVID-19 pandemic introduced online worship to many congregations and worshipping communities for the first time. The pandemic also introduced a time when it was not safe to participate in the sacrament of Holy Communion in many places for a lengthy period. Congregations experimented in how to offer worship, sacraments, and pastoral care during trying times. Questions about whether it is appropriate to have Holy Communion in online situations quickly became at the forefront of congregations, pastors, bishops, and church leaders around the world.

These questions continue even beyond pandemic times as some worshipping communities continue to experiment with online sacramental practice.

The ELCA is grounded in the Lutheran Confessions that define the church as “the assembly of all believers among whom the gospel is purely preached and the holy sacraments are administered according to the gospel.”¹ “The Use of the Means of Grace: A Statement on the Practice of Word and Sacrament,” adopted by the 1997 Churchwide Assembly, continues to guide the practice of word and sacrament in the ELCA. However, neither this statement nor the confessions offer explicit guidance for the questions at hand.

Early in the pandemic, Bishop Eaton and the Worship Team of the churchwide organization organized a conversation among liturgical scholars. Based on that consultation, a statement was issued encouraging congregations to fast from the sacrament for what was thought would be a short time. As the pandemic continued to lengthen, many pastors (who, in conversation with their councils and under the supervision of their bishops, bear the ultimate responsibility of Word and Sacrament ministry in their context) experimented with diverse ways to offer Holy Communion mediated by video technology. Bishops, leaders, and liturgical scholars from the ELCA and among ecumenical and global partners offered a wide variety of opinions and guidance. Disagreement among leaders and liturgical scholars often led to confusion and frustration for those desiring to make informed decisions while navigating unprecedented circumstances.

The ELCA Conference of Bishops engaged in conversation about sacramental practice since early in the pandemic, long before this 2022 memorial. Similar conversations have occurred among other connected groups, including those convened by ELCA seminaries, the Lutheran participants in the North American Academy of Liturgy, ecumenical partners, and others. These dialogues continue to raise important questions and acknowledge that this is a topic that will not be settled quickly.

There are multiple areas of discernment about online Holy Communion, like layers of an onion. Once one peels back one layer of the conversation, another theological question or concern becomes apparent. Certain “layers” may be theological “sticking points,” while others may be seen as opportunities for further conversation and study. These areas of conversation among theologians and the Conference of Bishops include:

- **Defining the Christian Assembly:** Principle 39 of “The Use of the Means of Grace” states that “The gathered people of God celebrate the sacrament.” There are differing views as to what constitutes a gathered assembly. If God promises to show up and encounter people where they are, many conclude that God is fully present in the assembly gathering for worship mediated in an online format. Others note that being connected electronically is meaningful and important, but not the same “assembly.”
- **Technology Format:** Is online Holy Communion possible in more participatory, synchronous situations (i.e., on the Zoom platform) vs. less participatory or asynchronous situations (i.e., watching a YouTube livestream or recording)?
- **Elements:** There are concerns about the choice of elements used by individuals in online communion. Are only bread and wine/juice acceptable?
- **Experience and Community:** Does online-only community lead to isolation? How does the sacrament create community? What is the community missing if online Holy Communion is not offered?
- **Pastoral Care:** Is there adequate pastoral care in online-only worshipping communities? How do online worship opportunities replace or supplement the church’s ministry of providing for the sending of communion from the gathered [onsite] assembly to the absent (See ELCA Worship FAQ: How can we provide for communion of the ill, homebound, and imprisoned)?
- **Normative Practice:** Are there circumstances when online Holy Communion is the best thing this church can do? Are “emergency” situations treated differently than “non-emergency” times? Is there an expectation that online communion is always required or necessary?
- **Justice:** Who is excluded in online communion? Who is excluded without online communion? For example, what about those who lack access to the Internet?

¹ Augsburg Confession, Article VII, from *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000), 42. This Article is quoted from an older translation as Principle 3 in “The Use of the Means of Grace: A Statement on the Practice of Word and Sacrament” (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 1997).

- **Role of the bishop** as the synod’s pastor... to “administer the sacraments” ... and with “primary responsibility for the ministry of Word and Sacrament in [the] synod and its congregations.”² How might a synod bishop teach about sacraments? How does a bishop oversee sacramental practice in their synod?
- **Other rites of the church:** How does this conversation affect other rites that call for some level of physical proximity such as Holy Baptism and ordination?

While this list is not exhaustive, it demonstrates some of the complex questions and concerns that arise when discerning sacramental practice in online situations.

Following multiple presentations and discussions among the Conference of Bishops, a poll in Fall 2023 gauged bishops’ positions on the acceptability of online Holy Communion. Among fifty votes, 34% leaned “Strongly toward yes,” 42% leaned “Strongly toward no,” and 24% were “Somewhere in the middle.” These results reveal a wide diversity of thought within the conference, as in other church leadership, regarding online communion. Some bishops noted that the idea of “leaning” on this issue might itself be problematic, highlighting an underlying concern that the sacrament is sometimes viewed as “our own thing” rather than a shared holy practice. While some bishops call for further conversation and education, encouraging physical gathering, when possible, others consider online Holy Communion potentially acceptable in “emergency” situations—noting that the “emergency” period has ended. Some lean “no” but remain open to further discussion, while others struggle to reconcile online communion with the church’s confessions. Concerns were raised about the implications of online communion, with some arguing that it assumes privilege, fosters individualism, and contributes to fragmentation. Meanwhile, those with a strong leaning toward “yes” advocate for best practices, such as ensuring synchronous, two-way participation in online worship.

ELCA global companions and ecumenical partners are engaging in similar discernment regarding online communion, though direct guidance has been limited, with only a few instances of clear prohibitions. The ELCA’s discernment on this issue also has potential implications for its relationships with Catholic and Orthodox dialogue partners. Insights from ecumenical and global partners will continue to offer insight and foster mutual respect for diverse theological perspectives.

“The Use of the Means of Grace” notes that the statement itself “seeks to encourage unity among us in the administration of the means of grace and to foster common understanding and practice. It does not seek to impose uniformity among us” (Principle 4). Further, this statement “does not address our practice of Word and Sacrament out of antiquarian or legalistic interests but rather to ground the practice of our church in the Gospel and to encourage good order within our church” (Application 4A). Although much has been learned regarding online worship experiences in this time since the COVID-19 pandemic, there is not a clear consensus on the implications of online Holy Communion. Along with this church’s global and ecumenical partners, it will take time to seek unity in the administration of the means of grace in online and other situations.

The memorial to the Churchwide Assembly asked the ELCA “to consider with great faith, flexibility, and theological reflection how to speak, write, and teach about Holy Communion concerning participants who are worshipping online remotely, and other alternative communion practices.” The memorial did not direct this church to reach a decision one way or another at this time. As this church continues to learn from those within the ELCA and this church’s partners, it is clear that this deeply complex conversation and discernment will continue.

Appendix: A sampling of resources on the topic of online Holy Communion:

- *Currents in Theology in Mission*, Vol. 50 No. 1 (2023): “Eucharist and Online Worship: Toward Extended Theological Reflection”
- *CrossAccent*, Vol. 28 No. 2 (2020): “In the Emptiness, God Is”
- Dirk G. Lange, “Digital Worship and Sacramental Life in a Time of Pandemic,” The Lutheran World Federation website
- Deanna A. Thompson, “Christ is Really Present Virtually: A Proposal for Virtual Communion,” The Lutheran Center for Faith, Values and Community at St. Olaf College

VOTED:

CC24.11.20q

To receive the response on “Holy Communion Practices” from the Worship Team in the Office of the Presiding Bishop;

EN BLOC

² ELCA *Constitution for Synods*, S8.12.a; S8.12.b

To thank those who contributed to the conversation including teaching theologians, the Conference of Bishops, and others;

To commend congregations and worshiping communities for their ongoing care of the ministry of Word and Sacrament, and especially for the flexibility and resilience required during the COVID-19 pandemic, and

To encourage continued dialogue and discernment on sacramental practice, especially as it relates to online Holy Communion, throughout this church and with global and ecumenical partners; and

To request that the secretary inform the synod of this action.

R. Motion I: Nominations and Elections Processes

Submitted by: The Rev. Kathy Gerking [Nebraska Synod, 4A]

RESOLVED, that the Church Council appoint a Task Force to explore and analyze nomination and election processes used by synods and the churchwide organization, including but not limited to the ecclesiastical ballot, in order to determine best practices and to make practical recommendations concerning options for the selection of all synod and churchwide officers; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Task Force report to the Conference of Bishops and Church Council in sufficient time that potential governing document amendments and/or a report on best practices can be prepared in time for the 2025 Churchwide Assembly.

Churchwide Assembly action [CA22.04.27]

To adopt Motion I as submitted.

Executive Committee action [EC22.09.23b11]

To refer the 2022 Churchwide Assembly action on “Motion I: Nominations and Elections Process” to the Office of the Secretary for a report or a timeline on when this will receive further attention.

Response from the Office of the Secretary (November 2022)

The Office of the Secretary plans to provide a report to the Church Council in November 2023, with a final report and recommendations to be brought to the Church Council at its November 2024 meeting.

Church Council Action [CC22.11.34.w.]

To receive the timeline on “Motion I: Nominations and Elections Process” from the Office of the Secretary on when the resolution will receive further attention; and

To request a progress report by the Fall 2023 Church Council meeting, with a final report and recommendations by the Fall 2024 Church Council meeting.

Response from the Office of the Secretary (November 2024)

At its November 2023 meeting, the Church Council authorized the Executive Committee to appoint members to the task force [CC23.11.20q] and the individuals were appointed at the December 2023 meeting of the Executive Committee [EC23.12.57].

The Task Force on Synod Nominations and Elections met over the past several months to consider the nominations and elections process currently outlined in the governing documents and policies, including the question of use of the ecclesiastical ballot. Included in the consideration were questions of pre-identification processes for nominees that are being used by synods and the Churchwide Assembly. After much discussion, the task force determined that no changes to the existing process will be recommended at this time. Members of the task force, all of whom have served as leaders in their own synods’ elections, are compiling a set of best practices regarding discernment processes, nominations, pre-identification, and education of voting members that will be published as a standalone document as well as being incorporated into the Bishop Election Toolkit that will be made available to all synods as they prepare for their synod assemblies.

VOTED:

CC24.11.20r

To receive the response on “Motion I: Nominations and Elections Process” from the Office of the Secretary;

EN BLOC

**To thank the Task Force on Synod Nominations and Elections for their diligent exploration and analysis of nomination and election processes used by synods; and
To commend to synods the document on best practices regarding discernment processes, nominations, pre-identification, and education of voting members for their use in nominations and elections processes.**

S. Specialized Ministries and On-Leave-from-Call Status

Churchwide Assembly Action [CA22.04.26]

To receive with gratitude the memorials from the Southwest California Synod, South Dakota Synod, Metropolitan Chicago Synod, Northern Illinois Synod, La Crosse Area Synod, Indiana-Kentucky Synod, Northwestern Ohio Synod, and Lower Susquehanna Synod concerning specialized ministries and on-leave-from-call status;

To direct the Church Council to direct the appropriate churchwide unit to initiate a review process of the “Manual of Policies and Procedures for Management of the Rosters of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America” and the constitutional provisions and policies and procedures as they relate to interim, transition, bridge, specialized, non-parish-based, and innovative calls, as well as on-leave-from-call status, protocols for removal from the rosters, and communication protocols;

To direct the Church Council to ensure that this review process include in its scope of inquiry, but not be limited to: the time limits given for on-leave-from-call, steps for requesting a roster status, and a process by which an action or lack of recommendation from a bishop may be appealed, including the possibility of an appeal in a judicatory other than the synod from which they were removed from the roster;

To require that those involved in the review process include a diverse group representing both the roster of Word and Sacrament and the roster of Word and Service who are or have recently been involved in specialized ministries (e.g., interim, transition, campus, outdoor, college or seminary faculty, chaplains, mission developers, etc.), and those currently or recently on leave from call for a variety of reasons (e.g., between calls, family, disability, study, healing from abuse, etc.);

To urge bishops and synod councils to use sparingly any action by which a minister is removed from the roster for non-disciplinary reasons, unless the minister requests removal, until this review is complete, especially for those serving contract calls, as supply preachers, and in other ELCA ministries that don't qualify as a call; and

To require that the appropriate unit of the churchwide organization prepare a report and recommendations for consideration by the Fall 2024 meeting of the ELCA Church Council.

*Report and recommendations to include above as well as response to the following resolutions:

- “Guidance on Retired or Retiring Ministers for the Roster of the ELCA” (CC22.11.34.ee.)
- “Extending Pastoral Counseling through Private Practice” (CC22.11.34.gg.)
- “Providing for Ordination of Candidates serving as Interim Pastors” (CC23.11.20cc)
- “Revisions to Roster Manual” regarding roster appeals (EC23.11.53c1)
- “Extending OLFC to six years” (EC22.03.10c); and
- recommendations to current discipline process shared by Task Force on the ELCA Discipline Process for Rostered Ministers of Color (CC23.04.05)

Response from the Office of the Secretary (November 2024)

A Task Force on On-Leave-from-Call and Specialized Ministry was appointed by the Executive Committee of the Church Council [EC23.09.40] to initiate the review process. The task force was also requested to address related topics as cited in the various resolutions listed above.

The Task Force on On-Leave-from-Call and Specialized Ministries has prepared a preliminary report and recommendations that are included in the materials for this meeting of the Church Council, along with proposed amendments to the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA* for presentation by the Church Council to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly. (The proposed amendments are included as an appendix to the task force's report and also appear among the amendments proposed by the Office of the Secretary, which will be offered to the Church Council at this meeting by the Legal and Constitutional Review Committee.)

The current recommendations relate to the questions concerning On Leave from Call (OLFC) protocols and protocols for granting and continuing retired status that are included in the memorial and in the various resolutions listed above. They also were informed by and respond to the recommendations that came from the Task Force on the

ELCA Discipline Process for Rostered Ministers of Color, as the recommendations of that task force included reform of the protocols for granting OLF and retired status, given that the existing protocols hold potential for unfair application. The recommendations propose substantive changes to the existing policy, some of which will be addressed through bylaw changes while others will be addressed through policy changes to the *Manual of Policies and Procedures for Management of the Rosters* that will be presented for approval following successful adoption of the revised bylaws by the 2025 Churchwide Assembly.

Still to be addressed in the next few months are questions related to specialized ministry. In January, the task force will be convening listening sessions with rostered ministers engaged in specialized ministry, with a further report and recommendations to be presented to the Conference of Bishops for consultation at its February 2025 meeting and a final report and recommendations to be presented to the Church Council at the April 2025 meeting. The issues concerning pastoral counseling through private practice will be part of those recommendations, as will the question of allowing for candidates to be ordained to interim ministry.

VOTED:

EN BLOC

CC24.11.20s

To receive the response and preliminary report on the memorial concerning specialized ministries and on-leave-from-call status from the Office of the Secretary and the Task Force on On-Leave-from-Call and Specialized Ministries;

To thank the Task Force on On-Leave-from-Call and Specialized Ministries for their faithful work in the review process;

To affirm the recommendations for On-Leave-from-Call Status, interim ministry, retired roster status, and average time requirements for calls that are identified in the preliminary report;

To anticipate another report and recommendations regarding specialized ministries to be presented at the April 2025 Church Council meeting; and

To request that the secretary inform the synods of this action.

T. Black Migrant Strategy

Churchwide Assembly Action [CA22.01.09]

To receive with gratitude the memorial on “ELCA Strategy Regarding Black Migrants” from the Delaware-Maryland Synod;

To direct the Service and Justice home area, in consultation with the program directors for African Descent Ministries, African Nationals, and Latino Ministries; African Descent Strategy Team; African Descent Lutheran Association; Association of Latino Ministries of the ELCA; and Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation, and Opportunities (AMMPARO), to prepare a proposal for the strengthening of advocacy, protection, and accompaniment of Black migrants, that includes cost estimates, for Church Council consideration by its Spring 2024 meeting;

To strengthen the current protection and accompaniment of Black migrants through AMMPARO in partnership with ecumenical and interfaith partners both domestically and internationally;

To recommit this church to advocating for Temporary Protected Status and just and humane immigration policy through the Witness in Society team within the Service and Justice home area; and

To encourage congregations to affirm the aims of the African Descent Strategy Implementation Plan for 2020–2025 and the United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent.

Response from the Service and Justice home area (April 2024)

The Service and Justice (S&J) home area received the 2022 Churchwide Assembly action requesting the preparation of a proposal for the strengthening of advocacy, protection, and accompaniment of Black migrants, including cost estimates, for Church Council consideration by its Spring 2024 meeting. However, upon further review of the strategy’s scope, it was determined that S&J would benefit from more input from stakeholders. It was clear that more time would be needed to prepare a well-rounded proposal. The program director for Migration Policy, in consultation with the Service and Justice interim executive director, and program director for African Descent Ministries, initiated a process to obtain more input from stakeholders with direct relationships with people and communities of African descent. In November, S&J formally invited stakeholders from across the ELCA to form part of a task force dedicated to “advising, developing, and implementing” the Black Migrant Strategy.

As stated in the assembly action, representatives from these groups were invited to form part of the Black Migrant Strategy Task Force: African Descent Ministries, Latino Ministries, Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation, and Opportunities (AMMPARO), African National, African Descent Strategy Team, African Descent Lutheran Association, and the Association of Latino Ministries of the ELCA. The task force met for the first time on Jan. 8, 2024. The first task force meeting set expectations for the work, provided an opportunity for participants to share why they were motivated to work on this proposal, and laid out the next steps.

The proposal will receive further attention at the next meeting of the task force this spring. The Program Director for Migration, in consultation with the task force, aims to provide a proposal for the strengthening of advocacy, protection, and accompaniment of Black migrants, that includes cost estimates, for Church Council consideration by its Fall 2024 meeting. In the meantime, a report summarizing projects and programs, through AMMPARO, that address migrants of African descent from 2021-2023 is being developed to share with the task force to aid the development of the proposal.

Proposal Timeline:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Status</u>
Nov. 10, 2023	Initiate task force	Completed
Jan. 8, 2024	Task force meeting	Completed
March 18, 2024	Deadline for Church Council response	Completed
April-May 2024	Task force meeting	
Summer 2024	Draft Proposal	
Fall 2024	Finalize Proposal	

Church Council Action [CC24.04.09g]

- To receive the response on “ELCA Strategy Regarding Black Migrants” from the Service and Justice home area;
- To request a final proposal for the strengthening of advocacy, protection, and accompaniment of Black migrants, including cost estimates, for Church Council consideration by its November 2024 meeting; and
- To request that the secretary inform the synod of this action.

Response from the Service and Justice home area (November 2024)

Below is a final proposal from the Service and Justice (S&J) home area for the strengthening of advocacy, protection, and accompaniment of Black migrants, including cost estimates

Proposal

A) Advocacy

ELCA advocacy is led through the Witness in Society Team, which works for national and international public policy change based on the experience of Lutheran ministries, programs and projects around the world, including Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation, and Opportunities (AMMPARO).

To strengthen and support advocacy around Black Migrants, it is recommended:

- 1) Witness in Society will continue to advocate for just and humane immigration laws and policies in consultation with global companions and partners and in collaboration with national ecumenical and interfaith partners.
- 2) Witness in Society will continue to vigorously pursue legislation and policies supported by ELCA social teaching, resolutions, and actions impacting migrants that may include immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, in collaboration with Black immigrant-led organizations such as UndocuBlack, Haitian Bridge Alliance, African Communities Together, Cameroonian Advocacy Network, Black Alliance for Just Immigration, and others.

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- 3) Witness in Society will continue to encourage local advocacy by international partners and companions as well as contribute to advocacy in solidarity with these partners and companions, including by utilizing the Lutheran Office for World Community to promote civic society engagement on Black migrants' issues at the multi-lateral level.
- 4) Witness in Society will continue to provide advocacy information and advocacy opportunities through action alerts, blogs, social media, and network updates so that ELCA members can become more informed about Black migrants, in the U.S., and around the world.
- 5) Witness in Society through the Program Director for Migration Policy will initiate a regular consultation process with stakeholders such as African Descent Ministries, Latino Ministries, AMMPARO, African National, African Descent Strategy Team, African Descent Lutheran Association, and the Association of Latino Ministries of the ELCA, and others to inform advocacy strategies that incorporate information of relevance on Black migrants.
 - a. Others: Association of Liberian Lutherans in the Americas (ALLIA); ELCA African Nationals Caucuses
- 6) To further protect and accompany Black migrants, Witness in Society will recommit to advocating for Temporary Protected Status (TPS), especially for Haitian migrants, for those unable to safely return to their homelands. The Secretary of Homeland Security can designate a country for TPS if the country is experiencing ongoing armed conflict, natural disaster, or other extraordinary and temporary conditions. TPS allows its beneficiaries to stay in the U.S. during the designation period and receive work permits. Sending these migrants back to their country of origin, if TPS were to be terminated or not extended, would be dangerous for their safety and impact their current community.

There are **no additional financial costs** associated with these activities, which will be handled as part of existing responsibilities.

B) Protection

Protection may refer to protection provided to people outside of their country of origin, ratified by international legal instruments and treaties, and reinforced through advocacy from civic society. Per the United Nations, all migrants are entitled to the protection as well as respect and fulfillment of all human rights, regardless of status, with only narrowly defined and limited exceptions. Advocating for the basic human rights and protection of migrants is a just response to the plight of people forced to flee their countries of origin. It is also well-recognized, through research and anecdotal evidence collected through years of engaging with partners on the ground, that people of African descent often face disproportionate obstacles availing of protection and avoiding discrimination in immigration processes. Everyone should be able to enjoy the fulfillment of their God-given dignity without prejudice.

To strengthen and support advocacy around Black migrants, it is recommended:

- 1) Witness in Society will continue to advocate to strengthen the human rights of migrants in countries of origin, transit, destination, and return and will work to prevent systematic discrimination, including racism, xenophobia, and intolerance toward migrants in federal migration management, as well as internationally.

To strengthen and support protection for Black migrants in the U.S.,

- 1) AMMPARO has and will continue to encourage congregations and synods to sponsor Black migrant families through their asylum process.

There are **no additional financial costs** associated with these activities, which will be handled as part of existing responsibilities.

C) Accompaniment

At the ELCA, accompaniment is defined as “walking together in a solidarity that practices mutuality and interdependence in mission.” The AMMPARO strategy is uniquely positioned to be a strategy to advocate with, support, and encourage others to walk with Black migrants, who may include immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers at various stages of the migrant journey. Since its inception in 2016, AMMPARO has strived to live out these values with ELCA welcoming and sanctuary congregations, synod immigration taskforces, and international synodical companions and partners. Increasingly, AMMPARO is engaged with more ELCA companions and partners around the world as the strategy goes global. An accompaniment model is especially important in building relationships that honor, promote, and maintain the dignity of marginalized people, including Black migrants. The culture and values of accompaniment are crucial to reflect in current and future work surrounding Black migrants with global companions and partners.

Specific ELCA supported activities to accompany Black migrants:

- 1) For the 2021-2024 and renewing proposal for 2025-2027 in 2025, Fundación de Educación Popular en Salud (EPES) with support from ELCA AMMPARO carried out various activities and projects to support the integral development and psychosocial needs of Haitian migrants in Chile, particularly children and women in the El Bosque community in Santiago.
- 2) For the 2021-2026 period, Pastoral de Migración, Iglesia Luterana Mexicana, with support from ELCA AMMPARO, provided know-your-rights information, assisted with basic needs, and led worship and Bible studies to address racism and xenophobia in Mexico.
- 3) For a significant period of time to 2025, St. Andrew's Refugee Service, Cairo, Egypt, has accompanied Black migrants from Sudan, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other countries on the continent of Africa with integrated services including psychosocial and legal support. These services are offered to families, individuals, and a significant number of unaccompanied minors.
- 4) Through World Hunger support, several organizations in the European context have accompanied Black migrants, some as they decide to remain in various European countries and others in transit.

To strengthen and support accompaniment around Black migrants, it is recommended for:

- 1) Service & Justice to continue to invest in programs and initiatives led by companions and partners, through the AMMPARO strategy, that accompany migrants in country of origin, transit, destination, and return.
- 2) AMMPARO to develop resources, documents, and other materials to assist ELCA members and asylum-seeker co-sponsoring congregations to become more strongly aware of anti-Black racist and xenophobic rhetoric, how to address it, and how to accompany migrants.
- 3) AMMPARO to identify additional places for information sharing, capacity building, and scaling up of initiatives brought under AMMPARO with companions and partners.
- 4) Service & Justice to utilize social media and traditional media to raise awareness about the stories of Black migrants and the work of companions and partners with ELCA members and other audiences.
- 5) ELCA to promote advocacy among ELCA members as a vehicle to support public policy change to improve the lives and conditions of people before they have to migrate, as well as after they do. The aim is for would-be migrants to be free to remain in their homeland, support their families, and contribute to their communities.

For AMMPARO to further support initiatives and partners serving all populations, but especially African and African-descent migrants, a **sustained investment** is necessary to cover the associated activities.

New Funding

With additional funding, the Service and Justice home area could facilitate additional spaces to strengthen advocacy, protection, and accompaniment of Black migrants.

Proposal #1: Contractor/organizer/advisor to help facilitate a panel or webinar conversation with policy experts and community members to review the issues that are important to Black migrants.

Possible Outcomes: Policy recommendations; create a training/toolkit for action for advocates; letter writing campaigns.

Estimated Cost: This is a contractor position with compensation of \$5,000 for the work necessary to create one event and one impact report.

Proposal #2: Contractor/organizer to help facilitate community-led discussions about how the ELCA can better support African and African-Descent migrants and refugees.

Possible Outcomes: Create several virtual or in-person spaces for dialogue; collect and create resources concerning legal services, social services, mental health services, and more; create guidance for rostered ministers to directly spiritually and emotionally support/accompany Black migrants and refugees; and/or create a toolkit for local advocacy for local community development, housing, and human needs of newcomers and residents.

Estimated Cost: This is a contractor position with compensation of \$15,000 for the work necessary to organize several small-group conversations, and create one public event, one resource, and one impact report.

Definitions

Immigrant: In common usage, immigrants may refer to all newcomers who now live in this country.

Migrant: There is no universal, legal definition of a 'migrant.' 'Migrant' is thereby used as a neutral term to describe a group of people who have in common a lack of citizenship attachment to their host

country. It is without prejudice to the protection regimes that exist under international law for specific legal categories of people, such as refugees, stateless persons, trafficked persons, and migrant workers.

Refugee: Persons who have “a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.” This definition from the United Nations’ 1951 “Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees” was adopted by the United States in the Refugee Act of 1980.

Asylum-Seekers: Persons who have fled their country because of personal danger, who arrive in the United States without legal protection, and who must prove a “credible fear of persecution” to receive an opportunity to seek legal protective status or asylum.

VOTED:

EN BLOC

CC24.11.20t

To receive the response and proposal with cost estimates on "ELCA Strategy Regarding Black Migrants" from the Service and Justice home area;

To affirm the recommended strategies and activities for strengthening and supporting advocacy, protection, and accompaniment around Black Migrants as identified in the proposal;

To refer the proposed cost estimates to the Office of the Treasurer and the Office of the Presiding Bishop, in consultation with the Service and Justice home area, to determine the necessary additional funding to cover the associated activities; and

To request that the secretary inform the synod of this action.

RESPONSES TO SYNOD ACTIONS

U. ELCA Name Change

Southwest California Synod (2B) [2022]

(The Southwest California Synod Assembly ran out of time to act on the “ELCA Name Change” as a memorial. Therefore, the Southwest California Synod Council has forwarded it as a Synod Council resolution to the Church Council for its action.)

WHEREAS, the word “evangelical” appears in the name of our denomination (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America: ELCA) and our primary worship book (Evangelical Lutheran Worship: ELW); and

WHEREAS, the constituting members of the ELCA and the Commission for a New Lutheran Church which led into the ELCA’s formation held to the historic view and value of the word “evangelical” as meaning “pertaining to the Gospel;” and

WHEREAS, the word “evangelical” was hoped to be maintained in its historic usage and sense at the time of the ELCA’s formation; and

WHEREAS, the word “evangelical” has become culturally synonymous in the U.S. with a religious expression and belief that is not compatible with the ELCA; and

WHEREAS, the word “evangelical” in the U.S. now culturally refers to fundamentalist Christianity including many forms of exclusion which we find to be contrary to the “evangel” (gospel) including the ordination of women and LGBTQ persons; and

WHEREAS, the word “evangelical” is now representative of a narrow swath of conservative Christian denominations and sects rather than a broad notion of being Gospel-centric and inclusive of all persons; therefore, be it

RESOLVED that the word “evangelical” be discontinued in use and stricken from the name of our denomination and future books of worship; and be it further

RESOLVED that ELCA Church Council determine the nature of the transition in the use of the word “evangelical” in our denominational title leading up to the 2022 ELCA Churchwide Assembly; and be it further

RESOLVED that the Southwest California Synod memorialize the 2022 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to discontinue the use the use of the word “evangelical” in our denomination name and to adopt a new name for the denomination which more faithfully reflects its identity in the U.S.

Executive Committee action [EC22.06.19c8]

To refer the “ELCA Name Change” resolution from the Southwest California Synod to the Office of the Presiding Bishop and the Office of the Secretary for a report or for a timeline on when this will receive further attention, particularly in light of certain memorials that are coming before the 2022 Churchwide Assembly; and

To request that the secretary of this church inform the synod of this action.

Response from the Office of the Presiding Bishop and Office of the Secretary (November 2022)

On April 6, 2018, *Living Lutheran* published an article written by the Rev. Robert C. Blezard titled, “The ‘e’ word: Why does the ELCA have the word “evangelical” in its name?” where he addressed the historical significance of using the word “evangelical” in this church’s denominational name and the challenges of using a word where society and culture has shifted the word’s original meaning.

In light of the pending work to be accomplished with the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church, the Office of the Presiding Bishop and the Office of the Secretary recommends the reconsideration of a denominational name change be given to the commission.

Church Council action [CC22.11.34.cc.]

To receive the response on “ELCA Name Change” from the Office of the Presiding Bishop and Office of the Secretary;

To request the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church consider the question of whether the denomination name, “Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,” should be changed;

To anticipate a recommendation when the commission presents its findings for the 2025 Churchwide Assembly; and

To request that the secretary inform the synod of this action.

Response from the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church (November 2024)

In 2022, the ELCA Churchwide Assembly passed a resolution leading to the creation of the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church (CRLC) and charged it with addressing issues relating to the ELCA Constitution. The CRLC was later asked to consider an additional question, whether the name “Evangelical Lutheran Church in America” should continue to be utilized for this church body. [CC22.11.34.cc.]

The CRLC engaged in significant discussion of a possible change of name. As the members of the CRLC considered this issue, the conversations highlighted a range of opinions about the significance of the term “evangelical” and the larger implications that any new name might create.

In the end, no strong consensus emerged among members of the CRLC as to whether the name ELCA should be changed.

Some participants maintain that the term “evangelical” has shifted significantly in meaning in the present day and may hinder the proclamation of the gospel, due to its associations with more conservative forms of Christianity and even, in some quarters, with Christian nationalism. Eliminating the term “evangelical,” they believe, would avoid these initial negative perceptions and indicate a more welcoming stance.

Others, however, support maintaining the term “evangelical” because of its deep scriptural and theological roots (the term comes from the root word of “gospel” and literally means, “good news”), and argue that to eliminate the term “evangelical” would actually diminish the church’s core identity and mission. The term also connects the ELCA with the larger global Lutheran communion: the large majority of individual LWF church bodies utilize “Evangelical” in their names.

While the CRLC did not come to consensus on this matter, they make the following observations:

- The CRLC believes that this question reflects larger issues of identity. Changing the name alone will not address deeper issues within the denomination and may in fact lead to unintended consequences for various groups.
- If a change of name is to be considered, the Commission recommends engaging a broader range of voices in deeper conversation about the church’s core identity before making final recommendations.
- If, after thoughtful discussion the name ELCA is kept, the CRLC would recommend an effort to lean more intentionally into our understanding and definition of what it means to be “evangelical,” and that new branding might assist with this emphasis.
- If, after thoughtful discussion the name ELCA were to be changed, a possible approach might be to consider retaining the legal name of the ELCA, while creating a new name under which it would be known (a “Doing Business As” [DBA]).
- Discussions regarding a name change should be separated from the work of the CRLC to avoid distraction from the original charge given to the CRLC.

- The CRLC will present a summary of this issue to the Church Council.

Overall, the CRLC acknowledges the complexities surrounding the term “evangelical” and its implications for this church’s identity, emphasizing that thoughtful dialogue and understanding are essential before any decisions are made on this significant matter. The document “Historical Reflections on the Name, ELCA” was appended to the CRLC report.

VOTED:

EN BLOC

CC24.11.20u **To receive with gratitude the response on “ELCA Name Change” from the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church;**
 To defer consideration of the question of whether the denomination name, “Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,” should be changed until after the 2025 Churchwide Assembly when at such time a task force may be authorized to address the matter; and
 To request that the secretary inform the synod of this action.

V. Concurrent Calling of Pastors by More than One Congregation

Upstate New York Synod (7D) [2022]

WHEREAS, ELCA Constitution 7.44.A19 “Sources of Calls for Ministers of Word and Sacrament” b. “Table of Sources of Calls for Ministers of Word and Sacrament” 1.2 reads:

Setting	Calling Body
1.2 Multiple-congregation parish	Congregation meetings, acting on a common proposal
1.21 Pastor	One of the participating congregations
1.22 Other pastoral arrangements	One of the participating congregations;

and

WHEREAS, pastors more and more are being asked to serve more than one congregation; and

WHEREAS, each congregation, as a place where the Promises of Jesus are proclaimed to gathered people, has the authority to call a person to be their proclaimer of those promises of Jesus; therefore, be it

RESOLVED that the ELCA Church Council work up a resolution to be presented at the next ELCA Churchwide Assembly that allows more than one congregation concurrently to call the same person as pastor, and to make all necessary changes to its constitution.

Executive Committee action [EC22.06.19c3]

To refer the “Concurrent Calling of Pastors by More than One Congregation” resolution from the Upstate New York Synod to the Office of the Secretary, in consultation with the appropriate churchwide organization office or home area, for a report or for a timeline on when this will receive further attention; and

To request that the secretary of this church inform the synod of this action.

Response from the Office of the Secretary (November 2022)

This question will need to be discerned with the Conference of Bishops, in consultation with the Leadership Committee and the Roster Committee of that body. Any change would require amendments to the governing documents and revision of the roster manual.

After discussion with the Christian Community and Leadership home area, the Office of the Secretary plans to bring a report and proposed timeline to the Church Council at its November 2023 meeting, with a final report and recommendations to be brought to the Church Council at its November 2024 meeting.

Church Council action [CC22.11.34.ff.]

To receive the timeline on “Concurrent Calling of Pastors by More than One Congregation” from the Office of the Secretary on when the resolution will receive further attention;

To request a progress report by the Fall 2023 Church Council meeting, with a final report and recommendations by the Fall 2024 Church Council meeting; and

To request that the secretary inform the synod of this action.

Response from the Office of the Secretary (November 2023)

The energy and focus of the Conference of Bishops (COB) and its Leadership Committee over the past year has been on the restructuring of the candidacy process. As that work is coming to fruition, it will be possible for the Leadership and Roster Committees of the COB to begin to address this question. Conversation with the bishops will

be scheduled for the spring 2024 COB. As any change to these policies would require amendments to the ELCA Constitution, a report and recommendations will come to the Church Council at its November 2024 meeting.

Church Council action [CC23.11.20z]

To receive the progress report on “Concurrent Calling of Pastors by More than One Congregation” from the Office of the Secretary and to anticipate a report and recommendations at the November 2024 Church Council meeting; and

To request that the secretary inform the synod of this action.

Response from the Office of the Secretary (November 2024)

Because of ongoing discernment about the candidacy process and about the protocols for leave, there has not been an opportunity for full discussion of the question of allowing for concurrent calls for rostered ministers. The question will be put before the Roster and the Leadership Committees of the Conference of Bishops in coming months. A report and recommendation will be made to the Church Council at its April 2025 meeting.

VOTED:

EN BLOC

**CC24.11.20v To receive the progress report on “Concurrent Calling of Pastors by More than One Congregation” from the Office of the Secretary;
To request a report and recommendation be presented at the April 2025 Church Council meeting; and
To request that the secretary inform the synod of this action.**

W. Non-Binary Inclusion

Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod (8G) [2024]

(Originally submitted as a memorial to the Office of the Secretary, but the secretary has determined that the action should be reclassified as a resolution so the Church Council can consider it with other possible constitutional amendments.)

WHEREAS, in *Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Call to Action* and its accompanying implementing resolutions the ELCA is “To call upon rostered and lay congregational leaders, synodical and CWO staff, social ministry organizations, and faculty and staff at ELCA colleges, seminaries, and universities to renew their efforts to welcome, care for, and support the lives and gifts of LGBTQIA+ persons and to oppose discrimination against these persons so that they may live into the promise of gender justice envisioned in this social statement”; and

WHEREAS, the church representational principles of this church are: At least 60 percent of voting members shall be laypersons—as nearly as possible, at least 45% shall be women and, as nearly as possible, at least 45% shall be men. The percentage of laypersons not allocated to women or men may be allocated to persons who identify as gender non-binary, gender fluid, women, men, or other genders. About 40 percent or fewer shall be rostered ministers and shall include both women and men. Note that this category includes deacons. Ten percent of the voting members are to be persons of color or persons whose primary language is other than English; and,

WHEREAS, 24 of the 65 synods of the ELCA have less than 10 voting members allotted for Churchwide Assembly; and,

WHEREAS, a minimum of at least 10 members are necessary for a person who identifies as gender non-binary, gender fluid, women, men, or other non-cisgender to be considered for participation on assemblies, councils, committees, boards, and other organizational units based on the current representative percentages; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has set a priority to “A Welcoming Church: Engaging new, young and diverse people” with the goal to “engage 1 million new, young, diverse members by the end of the decade”; and

WHEREAS, according to a Pew research study 5% of young adults in the U.S. say their gender is different than their assigned sex at birth; and

WHEREAS, “75% of LGBTQ youth reported that they had experienced discrimination based on their sexual orientation or gender identity at least once in their lifetime. More than half of LGBTQ youth reported that they had experienced discrimination based on their sexual orientation or gender identity in the past year.”; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod in assembly memorializes the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to refine proportional representation to allow, as closely as possible, equal representation between male and female with space for gender non-conforming identities to serve as well.

Executive Committee action [EC24.07.26a2]

To refer the “Non-Binary Inclusion” resolution from the Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod to the Office of the Secretary and the Legal and Constitutional Review Committee as it considers proposed constitutional amendments to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly; and

To request that the secretary of this church inform the synod of this action.

Response from the Office of the Secretary (November 2024)

The representational principles in Chapter 5 of the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA* are the subject of a number of recommendations coming both from the Office of the Secretary and from the diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) audit that has been considered by both the Church Council and the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church (CRLC). Proposed amendments are included in the materials for this meeting. The Office of the Secretary would like to point out that provision 5.01.f. already has been amended to delineate gender representation on the basis of “as nearly as possible, at least 45 percent of the lay members ... shall be women and, as nearly as possible, at least 45 percent shall be men,” with 5.01.H21. further specifying that “the percentage of laypersons that is not allocated to women or men may be allocated to persons who identify as gender non-binary, gender fluid, women, men, or other genders.” In addition, among the recommended amendments being proposed is an expansion of the categories of gender identity that are currently listed.

VOTED:

EN BLOC

CC24.11.20w **To receive the response on “Non-Binary Inclusion” resolution from the Office of the Secretary;**

To acknowledge the action on the amendments to continuing resolutions in Chapter 5 of the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA* as the response of the Church Council to the resolution from the Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod; and

To request that the secretary inform the synod of this action.

X. Seasonal Membership

Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod (8G) [2024]

(Originally submitted as a memorial to the Office of the Secretary, but the secretary has determined that the action should be reclassified as a resolution so the Church Council can consider it with other possible constitutional amendments.)

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) Model Constitution for Congregations (MCC), Chapter 8, “Membership”, Section *C8.02.e, Seasonal, does not provide full privileged membership status for “Seasonal members”; and

WHEREAS, in an era of generational change for both the ELCA and the population of the United States, the generations born in the 1940-1950s have become a highly mobile, dual-location retiree population; and

WHEREAS, many ELCA congregations are experiencing declining membership and are increasingly dependent on “shared” members to provide a necessary pool of eligible members and participants to meet governance, operational, and functional requirements; and

WHEREAS, section C8.02.e does recognize the existence of generational change, but otherwise fails to allow “Seasonal members” to share their talent, experience, and abilities in the crucial matter of congregational governance and for congregations to benefit from shared membership; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod in assembly memorializes the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to amend section *C8.02.e (1-6) of the Model Constitution for Congregations to read:

“e. *Seasonal* members are voting members of other congregations of this church who wish to retain such membership but desire to participate in the life and mission of this congregation, including exercising limited full voting rights in this congregation once acknowledgment is received from the home congregation. The Congregation Council may grant seasonal membership to such persons provided that this congregation is a member of a synod where the Synod Council has approved seasonal member voting on its territory. Seasonal members shall only be counted in the home congregation for ELCA membership statistics. Such seasonal members shall have all the privileges and duties of voting members except that:

1) they shall not be eligible for elected office in, or for membership on the Congregation Council or on a call committee of, this congregation;

- 2) they shall not have the right to vote on any matter concerning or affecting the call or termination of call of any minister of this congregation;
- 3) they shall not have the right to vote on any matter concerning or affecting the affiliation of this congregation with this church;
- 4) they shall not be eligible to serve as voting members from this congregation of the Synod Assembly or the Churchwide Assembly;
- 5) they shall not, even if otherwise permitted by this congregation, vote by proxy or by absentee ballot; and
- 6) they shall not, within any two calendar month period, exercise voting rights in this congregation and in the congregation where they remain voting members.”

Executive Committee Action [EC24.07.26a3]

To refer the “Seasonal Membership” resolution from the Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod to the Office of the Secretary and the Legal and Constitutional Review Committee as it considers proposed constitutional amendments to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly; and

To request that the secretary of this church inform the synod of this action.

Response from the Office of the Secretary (November 2024)

The Office of the Secretary considered the proposed amendments to the existing provision of the *Model Constitution for Congregations* concerning seasonal membership that were forwarded by the Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod. The proposed amendments differ in two primary aspects from the existing provision: 1) a granting of “limited full voting rights” that requires receipt of acknowledgment from the home congregation and 2) specification of where membership is to be counted. The first includes an inherently contradictory designation of voting rights, which cannot be both “full” and “limited” at the same time; furthermore, the list of exclusions of voting rights already appears in the numbered list, so the proposed change is redundant and potentially confusing. The second is a matter that is best handled in the Annual Congregation Report and its instructions to congregations, as that is where it is most likely to be conveyed to those who maintain congregation records. The Office of the Secretary therefore declines to recommend these amendments.

VOTED:

EN BLOC

CC24.11.20x

To receive the response on “Seasonal Membership” resolution from the Office of the Secretary;

To decline to propose the constitutional amendments to Chapter 8 in the *Model Constitution for Congregations* for the reasons stated in the response; and

To request that the secretary inform the synod of this action.

Y. Including Creation Care

Greater Milwaukee Synod Council (5J) [July 2023]

WHEREAS, the Greater Milwaukee 2023 Synod Assembly (Resolution 1) called for amendments to the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, to request the Church Council and the Office of the Secretary to develop amendments to the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* to be presented at the 2025 Churchwide Assembly that add “care for creation” to the purposes of this church; and be it further

RESOLVED, that these amendments should include adding the purpose “care for creation” to 4.02., 4.03., 7.31.02., 7.61.02., 9.41., 11.21., 16.12.D21., †S6.02., †S14.12., †S14.32., *C4.02., *C4.03., *C9.03., and *C9.23., as well as any other applicable places within the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*; and be it further

RESOLVED, to request the Church Council and the Office of the Secretary add a new provision on “the purpose of membership” to “Chapter C8. Members” and/or amend *C8.04., the privileges and duties of members, to include the visions laid out in 4.03.b. of the Constitution, stating that members of this church will be equipped “to be stewards of the earth, their lives, and the Gospel”, and in the liturgies of baptism and affirmation of baptism as printed in Evangelical Lutheran Worship, especially the hope that the baptized will “care for others and the world God has made”.

Executive Committee action [EC23.09.41b]

To refer the “Including Creation Care” resolution from the Greater Milwaukee Synod to the Legal and Constitutional Review Committee and the Office of the Secretary for a report or for a timeline on when this will receive further attention; and

To request that the secretary of this church inform the synod of this action.

Response from the Office of the Secretary (November 2023)

The question of amending constitutional provisions and bylaws to include “care for creation” among the purposes of this church will need to be discerned along with other constitutional amendment changes. The Office of the Secretary plans to include consideration of this request when it presents the slate of proposed ELCA Constitution amendments to the Legal and Constitutional Review Committee in the summer of 2024. The Church Council will forward proposed amendments to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly at its November 2024 meeting.

Church Council action [CC23.11.20aa]

To receive the response on the “Including Creation Care” resolution from the Office of the Secretary;

To anticipate possible amendments related to this resolution when the Legal and Constitutional Review Committee reviews proposed amendments to the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* at the November 2024 Church Council meeting; and

To request that the secretary of this church inform the synod of this action.

Response from the Office of the Secretary (November 2024)

Because the provisions and bylaws listed in the resolution from the Greater Milwaukee Synod Council generally fall within the definition of purposes of the expressions of this church, the Office of the Secretary is deferring this discussion to the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church to consider among its recommendations.

VOTED:

EN BLOC

CC24.11.20y **To receive the response on “Including Creation Care” resolution from the Office of the Secretary;**

To acknowledge the constitutional amendments identified in the resolution are under the general purview of the purposes of the expressions of this church and to refer this discussion to the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church as it considers the purposes; and

To request that the secretary inform the synod of this action

Z. Supporting Vulnerable Youth

Greater Milwaukee Synod Council (5J) [2023]

WHEREAS, the Greater Milwaukee 2023 Synod Assembly (Resolution 5) called for amendments to the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, to request the Church Council and the Office of the Secretary to develop amendments to 4.02.c., †S6.02.c., and *C4.02.d. of the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, as well as any other applicable places, to be presented at the 2025 Churchwide Assembly that adds “supporting children and vulnerable youth” to the purposes of this church.

Executive Committee action [EC23.09.41c]

To refer the “Supporting Vulnerable Youth” resolution from the Greater Milwaukee Synod to the Legal and Constitutional Review Committee and the Office of the Secretary for a report or for a timeline on when this will receive further attention; and

To request that the secretary of this church inform the synod of this action.

Response from the Office of the Secretary (November 2023)

The question of adding “supporting children and vulnerable youth” to the purposes of all three expressions of this church will need to be discerned along with other constitutional amendment changes. The Office of the Secretary plans to include consideration of this request when it presents the slate of proposed ELCA Constitution amendments to the Legal and Constitutional Review Committee in the summer of 2024. The Church Council will forward proposed amendments to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly at its November 2024 meeting.

Church Council action [CC23.11.20bb]

To receive the response on the “Supporting Vulnerable Youth” resolution from the Office of the Secretary;

To anticipate possible amendments related to this resolution when the Legal and Constitutional Review Committee reviews proposed amendments to the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* at the November 2024 Church Council meeting; and

To request that the secretary of this church inform the synod of this action.

Response from the Office of the Secretary (November 2024)

Because the provisions and bylaws listed in the resolution from the Greater Milwaukee Synod Council generally fall within the definition of purposes of the expressions of this church, the Office of the Secretary is deferring this discussion to the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church to consider among its recommendations.

VOTED:

EN BLOC

CC24.11.20z

To receive the response on “Supporting Vulnerable Youth” resolution from the Office of the Secretary;

To acknowledge the constitutional amendments identified in the resolution are under the general purview of the purposes of the expressions of this church and to refer this discussion to the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church as it considers the purposes; and

To request that the secretary inform the synod of this action.

AA. Amending Gendered Constitutional Language

Greater Milwaukee Synod (5J) [2022]

WHEREAS the Greater Milwaukee 2021 Synod Assembly called for amendments to the binary language related to gender in this church’s and this synod’s governing documents (2021 SA Resolution 2); we, the Synod Council of the Greater Milwaukee Synod,

RESOLVE, that the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America consider and recommend the following amendments to the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* to the 2022 Churchwide Assembly; and authorize the Office of the Secretary to make appropriate changes in the *Constitution for Synods* and the *Model Constitution for Congregations* congruent with the ELCA Constitution as amended.

5.01.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America shall be one church. This church recognizes that all power and authority in the Church belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ, its head. Therefore, all actions of this church by congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization shall be carried out under his rule and authority in accordance with the following principles:

- e. Except as otherwise provided in this constitution and bylaws, the appropriate office or unit of the churchwide organization, through the Church Council, shall establish processes that will ensure that at least 60 percent of the members of its assemblies, councils, committees, boards, and other organizational units shall be laypersons; that, **as nearly as possible**, at least ~~45~~ **50** percent of the lay members of these assemblies, councils, committees, boards, or other organizational units shall be **people who identify as: women, transgender, non-binary, gender queer, agender, bigender, gender non-conforming, or gender expansive** and, **as nearly as possible**, at least 45 percent shall be men, and that, **where possible**, the representation of **rostered ministers of Word and Sacrament** shall include **many genders. ~~both men and women~~**. At least 10 percent of the members of these assemblies, councils, committees, boards, or other organizational units shall be persons of color and/or persons whose primary language is other than English. Processes shall be developed that will assure that in selecting staff there will be a balance of **gender diversity ~~women and men~~**, persons of color and persons whose primary language is other than English, laypersons, and persons on the rosters of this church. This balance is to be evident in the selection of staff consistent with the inclusive policy of this church.
- f. Except as otherwise provided in this constitution and bylaws, synods, through synod councils, shall establish processes that will ensure that at least 60 percent of the members of their assemblies, councils, committees, boards, and other organizational units shall be laypersons; that, **as nearly as possible**, at least ~~50~~ **45** percent of the lay members of their assemblies, councils, committees, boards,

or other organizational units shall be **people who identify as: women; transgender, non-binary, gender queer, agender, bigender, gender non-conforming, or gender expansive;** and, as nearly as possible, at least 45 percent shall be men, and that, **where possible,** the representation of **rostered ministers of Word and Sacrament** shall include **many genders. ~~both women and men.~~** Each synod shall establish processes that will enable it to reach a minimum goal that 10 percent of the membership of its assemblies, councils, committees, boards, or other organizational units be persons of color and/or persons whose primary language is other than English.

~~5.01.H21. For purposes of the representational principles set forth in 5.01.e. and f., the percentage of laypersons that is not allocated to women or men may be allocated to persons who identify as gender non-binary, gender fluid, women, men, or other genders.~~

10.21.03. In strengthening interdependent relationships among congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization, and in fostering relationships with agencies and institutions affiliated with or related to this church as well as with ecumenical and global companions, the responsibilities of the synod include the following:

b. fostering organizations for **people of all ages and genders ~~youth, women, and men,~~** and organizations for language or ethnic communities;

10.41.01. Membership of the Synod Assembly, of which at least 60 percent of the voting membership shall be composed of laypersons, shall be constituted as follows:

c. A minimum of one lay member elected by each congregation with fewer than 175 baptized members and a minimum of two lay members elected by each congregation with 175 or more baptized members related to the synod, **typically at least one of whom shall be a person who identifies as: a woman, transgender, non-binary, gender queer, agender, bigender, gender non-conforming, or gender expansive; shall be voting members. ~~typically one of whom shall be a man and one of whom shall be a woman,~~** shall be voting members. The Synod Council shall establish a formula to provide additional lay representation from congregations on the basis of the number of baptized members in the congregation. The Synod Council shall seek to ensure that, **as nearly as possible,** at least ~~45~~ **50** percent of the lay members of the assembly shall be **women, transgender, non-binary, gender queer, agender, bigender, gender non-conforming, or gender expansive,** and, as nearly as possible, at least 45 percent shall be men.

17.50.03. Constitutional provision 16.12. and bylaws 11.34.01., 14.21.02., and 14.21.06. shall apply to this organization. Bylaw ~~16.11.04~~ **15.21.03.** shall apply to the women's organization with the exception of the balance provisions for **multiple genders ~~women and men~~** and for laypersons and rostered ministers.

And, be it further,

RESOLVED, that the ELCA Church Council, with guidance from the Office of the Secretary, shall establish a formal process to review the gender-specific language in this church's governing documents, social statements, and policies no less than every three years.

Executive Committee action [EC22.02.06b]

To refer the "Amending Gendered Constitutional Language" resolution from the Greater Milwaukee Synod to the Office of the Secretary for a report or for a timeline on when this will receive further attention; and

To request that the secretary of this church inform the synod of this action.

Response from Office of the Secretary (Spring 2022)

The Office of the Secretary notes that the proposed amendments to constitutional provisions called for by the Greater Milwaukee Synod Council were received too late to meet the constitutionally mandated notification period detailed in 22.11.a. of the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA*. For the Church Council to propose to the Churchwide Assembly an amendment to a provision, there must be official notice sent to the synods at least six months prior to the next regular meeting of the Churchwide Assembly. Such amendments thus would have needed to be forwarded to the Church Council for consideration prior to its November 2021 meeting; if the Council chose to propose amendments to the Churchwide Assembly, notification would have had to be presented to the synods no later than Feb. 8, 2022. While bylaws and continuing resolution amendments function under different requirements, the language proposed in the Greater Milwaukee Synod Council resolution would require first that the constitutional

provisions to which these refer be amended. The Office of the Secretary will take these proposed amendments under review for possible consideration by the 2025 Churchwide Assembly.

In regard to the request for a formal review process for gender-specific language in this church's governing and other documents, the Office of the Secretary has been actively involved in a recent revision of the Style Guidelines for the ELCA, which addresses use of gendered language in ELCA communications and documents. In addition, many of the proposed amendments to the governing documents that have been proposed by the Church Council to the 2022 Churchwide Assembly eliminate gendered references to people, and were based on an extensive review of the constitutions of this church by Office of the Secretary staff.

Church Council action [CC22.04.17p]

To receive the response on “Amending Gendered Constitutional Language” resolution from the Office of the Secretary;

To request that the Office of the Secretary consider the amendment to the constitutional provision 5.01. and related bylaw and continuing resolution references as it reviews possible amendments to the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* for the 2025 Churchwide Assembly;...

Response from the Office of the Secretary (November 2024)

The representational principles in Chapter 5 of the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA* are the subject of a number of recommendations coming both from the Office of the Secretary and from the diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) audit that has been considered by both the Church Council and the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church (CRLC). Proposed amendments are included in the materials for this meeting.

VOTED:

EN BLOC

CC24.11.20aa To receive the response on “Amending Gendered Constitutional Language” resolution from the Office of the Secretary;

To acknowledge the action on the amendments to the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA* as the response of the Church Council to the resolution from the Greater Milwaukee Synod; and

To request that the secretary inform the synod of this action.

BB. Support of Jubilee Network USA

Upstate New York Synod (7D) [2023]

[Originally submitted as a memorial to the Office of the Secretary, but the resolution did not memorialize the Churchwide Assembly. The secretary has determined that the action should be reclassified as a resolution.]

RESOLVED, that the Synod Council of the Upstate New York Synod memorialize the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to reaffirm its support of the Jubilee USA Network in an updated social policy resolution.

Executive Committee action [EC23.11.53c2]

To refer the “Support of Jubilee USA Network” resolution from the Upstate New York Synod to the Witness and Society team in the Service and Justice home area for a report or a timeline on when this will receive further attention; and

To request that the secretary of this church inform the synod of this action.

Response from Service and Justice, Witness and Society Team (April 2024)

The ELCA is a founding member of the Jubilee USA Network, a coalition of interreligious partners who work together to tackle the structural causes of poverty and toward canceling the debt of poor countries around the world so that resources may be redirected to reduce poverty and provide healthcare and education for those most in need.

In recent years, Jubilee USA won debt relief in Haiti and the three Ebola-impacted West African countries, bankruptcy legislation for Puerto Rico, three international agreements to promote responsible lending and stop predatory lending, two victories to keep student loan interest rates low, G7 and G20 agreements to curb tax evasion and corruption and promoted trade agreements that help end poverty. The work of Jubilee USA Network deepens and

extends the advocacy work of the ELCA by providing expertise and capacity and targeted work on debt, tax, trade, and transparency policies that help end poverty.

Witness in Society (WIS) staff and Jubilee USA Network's staff are in regular conversation and engage in joint advocacy efforts. In recent years, they have held joint advocacy meetings with various entities of the federal government and multilateral organizations, including with staff at the U.S. Department of the Treasury, the International Monetary Fund, and the U.S. Federal Reserve. During the COVID-19 pandemic, WIS and Jubilee USA Network's staff collaborated on advocacy efforts to ensure low-income countries had access to COVID-19 vaccines. This included facilitation of Bishop Eaton's participation in a high-level meeting on global vaccine access with the U.S. Secretary of the Treasury, Janet Yellen. Other advocacy activities have included joining together on targeted sign-on letters to policymakers to highlight concerns related to structural causes of poverty and high levels of debt in low-income countries and Puerto Rico. In addition, WIS staff represent the ELCA on the Board of Directors for Jubilee USA Network. Jubilee USA Network receives an annual ELCA Advocacy Partnership Grant to support its advocacy activities.

The 1999 Churchwide Assembly adopted a resolution in support of the Jubilee 2000: USA Campaign.

The Witness in Society team recommends that the Church Council reaffirm the ELCA's support of the Jubilee USA Network in a new social policy resolution (SPR), in the spirit of the resolution by the Upstate New York Synod Council. All SPRs that are 25 years old are reviewed and often archived and the Jubilee 2000: USA Campaign (CA99.03.06) SPR will automatically be reviewed because of its age. The Church Council would need to authorize the development of a new SPR. In consultation with Theological Ethics in the Office of the Presiding Bishop, it has been determined that an April authorization could likely mean a resolution for consideration at the November 2024 Church Council meeting.

Church Council action [CC24.04.09i]

Resolved, that a social policy resolution on affirming Jubilee USA Network be presented to the November 2024 Church Council meeting in accordance with "Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns" (2018); and

To request that the secretary of this church inform the synod of this action

The social policy resolution was provided to Church Council members electronically prior to the meeting.

VOTED:

EN BLOC

CC24.11.20bb To adopt the Social Policy Resolution on Jubilee Network USA.

RESPONSES TO PREVIOUS CHURCH COUNCIL ACTIONS

CC. Creation of a Racial Justice Ombudsperson

Church Council action [CC22.06.20]

To receive the request to explore creation of the position of a Racial Justice Ombudsperson with a report from the Office of the Presiding Bishop delivered to the Church Council at its Fall 2022 meeting;

To acknowledge the previous action of the council to create "a task force charged with reviewing the current process for discipline and its impact on persons of color and other historically marginalized groups, considering recommendations for staffing, community healing and restoration, and learning best practices from full communion partners" (CC22.04.04); and

To review the role and membership of the ELCA Response Team.

Response from the Office of the Presiding Bishop (November 2022)

The Task Force Addressing Disciplinary Concerns of Leaders of Color held its first Microsoft Teams meeting on Oct. 4, 2022. Judith Roberts, senior director for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, facilitated the conversation with task force members. The agenda opened with a devotion, prayer, an introduction of task force members, and a review of the 2019 Strategy Towards Authentic Diversity recommendation for the creation of an ombudsperson position within the churchwide organization. The conversation was followed by examples of the impact for leaders of color and communities they served when disciplinary actions occur. The task force received a brief presentation on the current churchwide DEI (diversity, equity, inclusion) portfolios, and where an ombudsperson position might be housed within the current organization. The meeting concluded with a conversation regarding expectations of work, timeline

for completion, and engagement with additional churchwide staff. The task force is scheduled to meet again virtually on Dec. 1, 2022.

Church Council action [CC22.11.34.x]

To receive the report from the Office of the Presiding Bishop concerning the exploration of a Racial Justice Ombudsperson position; and

To encourage the continued conversation within the Task Force Addressing Disciplinary Concerns of Leaders of Color.

Recommendations regarding the creation of an ombudsperson position/office:

The Task Force on the ELCA Discipline Process for Rostered Ministers of Color supports the creation of an ombudsperson/office to help this church more faithfully demonstrate equity and justice in its dealings with rostered ministers, especially those within communities of color and LGBTQIA+ communities.

As this position/office is being considered, the following questions and issues should be addressed:

1. Where will this position/office be located in the churchwide organization structure?
2. What will be the areas of focus for this position/office?
 - a. Training and education (prevention)
 - b. Advice and accompaniment (guiding rostered ministers, bishops, and others as they navigate challenging situations)
 - c. Oversight and appeal (receiving and investigating complaints and working for resolution and adjudication)
 - d. Information and reporting (gathering data on allegations of discrimination experienced by rostered ministers and making recommendations for systemic changes)
3. How will rostered ministers have access to this position/office?

This task force also recognizes that situations in which conflict exists between a rostered minister and their congregation and/or the bishop's office or others are often complex, sensitive, and multi-faceted. Care and attention will need to be given to balance the demands of transparency, confidentiality, and integrity. Above all, this position/office should be dedicated to promoting reconciliation, healing, justice, and growth.

Church Council action [CC23.04.05]

To receive the report and recommendations from the Task Force on the ELCA Discipline Process for Rostered Ministers of Color and thank the members of the task force for their care and due diligence to the work;

....

To refer the recommendations regarding the creation of an ombudsperson position/office to the Administrative Team, in consultation with the Conference of Bishops, with a report to be made to the Church Council at its November 2023 meeting; and

....

Response from the Administrative Team (November 2023)

The Administrative Team consulted with the Conference of Bishops at the Fall 2023 meeting. More time is needed for conversation and research before the Administrative Team can decide on the creation of an ombudsperson position.

Church Council action [CC23.11.20r]

To receive the report from the Administrative Team regarding the creation of an ombudsperson position and to anticipate a report in 2024.

Response from the Administrative Team (November 2024)

The Administrative Team recommends further collaboration with the Conference of Bishops in 2025 to clarify the roles, responsibilities, and accountability of an Ombuds position within the churchwide organization.

In addition, the churchwide organization is beginning an investigative reporting hotline that allows employees to anonymously report fraud, ethics, and compliance issues 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with IntegraReport Powered by Forvis. This external whistleblower service works to maintain professional conduct in the workplace through confidential reporting of issues of harassment, discrimination, and misconduct in the workplace. Results from this service could assist in shaping the reporting of an Ombuds position that could serve as a resource for rostered

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ministers. The Administrative Team wishes to learn from this reporting tool and how it might be used to support the intent of the request for an Ombuds position, as it continues to dialogue with the Conference of Bishops regarding this matter.

VOTED: *EN BLOC*
CC24.11.20cc **To receive the report from the Administrative Team regarding the ongoing conversation on the creation of an ombudsperson position;**
 To affirm the churchwide organization's efforts in utilizing an investigative reporting hotline to allow employees to anonymously report fraud, ethics, and compliance issues; and
 To encourage the Administrative Team to research how such a reporting tool might be used to support the intent of the request for an ombudsperson position as it continues its dialogue with the Conference of Bishops regarding this matter.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

(Agenda VII.F.)

Vice President Siddiqui announced that there was no unfinished business before the council.

GREETINGS FROM THE REV. MARK GOODMAN

(Agenda VII.G.)

The Rev. Mark Goodman has completed his service as ecumenical liaison of The Episcopal Church to the ELCA Church Council. He brought parting wishes to the council, and Presiding Bishop Eaton expressed appreciation on behalf of the council for his service as liaison.

EVALUATION AND DEBRIEFING

(Agenda VII.H.)

Vice President Siddiqui led the council in discussion of the flow of the meeting, reflection on the work carried out, and areas for possible improvement. A council member expressed concern that the Church Council did not have enough time in discussion with the CRLC. Mr. Schwartz affirmed the importance of communication and stated that the co-chairs of the commission would take comments from the council to the CRLC for consideration. He invited council members to share written feedback on the work of the commission with him and Pastor Christopher. Vice President Siddiqui called the attention of council members to the meeting evaluation form available electronically and encouraged council members to complete the form.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

(Agenda VII.I.)

Secretary Rothmeyer and Vice President Siddiqui made various announcements.

ADJOURNMENT

The 117th meeting of the Church Council of the ELCA adjourned at 11:27 a.m. on Nov. 17, 2024, following a hymn and prayer.