

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

Church Council

MINUTES

April 16, 2026

**Prepared by the
Office of the Secretary**

DRAFT

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**EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA
CHURCH COUNCIL**

**MINUTES
April 16, 2026**

The 122nd meeting of the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) convened electronically April 16, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. (all times Central Daylight Time unless otherwise noted).

ORGANIZATION OF THE MEETING

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

Voting members

Officers:

The Rev. Yehiel Curry, presiding bishop
Mr. Imran Siddiqui, vice president

The Rev. Lucille “CeCee” Mills, secretary
Ms. Lori S. Fedyk, treasurer

Vice Chair of the Conference of Bishops:

The Rev. Deborah K. Hutterer, bishop of the Grand Canyon Synod

Church Council:

Mr. Jeffrey D. Ackerson (*nominated*)
The Rev. A. Elizabeth (Lisa) Ahlness
The Rev. Ryan H. Anderson
Ms. Denise Beumer (*nominated*)
The Rev. Heather E. Brown
Ms. Jamie Bruesehoff (*excused*)
The Rev. Leroy Cannon
Mr. Benjamin J. Caseley (*absent*)
The Rev. Ralph Dunkin
Ms. Sheena R. Foster
Mr. Hans W. Giller
Ms. Jessi Grieser
Ms. Patricia P. Harper
Ms. Deidre D. Hayes
Ms. Kristy K. Henriksen
Mr. Timothy Hiller
The Rev. Chad M. Huebner
Mr. Rindra Josoa (*excused*)

Mr. Moses Kavishe (*absent*)
The Rev. Gwendolyn S. King
Ms. Olivia L. Martin-Call
Mr. Mitch S. McCartney
Mr. Joel A. Miller
The Rev. Alvaro Nova
Ms. Deborah M. Nyquist
Deacon Kari A. Olsen
The Rev. Moses P. Penumaka
Mr. Iván A. Pérez
Ms. Terri L. Robertson
The Rev. Barbara R. Rossing
Ms. Spencer Sanders (*absent*)
Mr. Andrew W. Stevens
Ms. Jillian C. Stierwalt (*absent*)
Ms. Jennifer E. Trom
Mr. Christopher A. Vergara
Ms. Emma L. Witt

Liaisons from the Conference of Bishops:

Bishop Jeff Johnson, Region 2 (*absent*)
Bishop Joy F. Mortensen-Wiebe, Region 5
Bishop Nathan Piphon, Region 7
Bishop Suzanne D. Dillahunt, Region 6
Bishop William J. Gohl, Region 8 (*absent*)

Bishop Scott Johnson, Region 4
Bishop Meggan Manlove, Region 1
Bishop Craig A. Schweitzer, Region 3
Bishop Kevin L. Strickland, Region 9

Advisory members of the Church Council:

Ms. Desta Goehner, president, Association of White Lutherans for Racial Justice
The Rev. Alejandro Mejía, president, Asociación de Ministerios Latinos – ELCA (*excused*)
The Rev. Bimen Limbong, president, Association of Asian and Pacific Islanders
Mr. Ryan LaHurd, president, Association of Lutherans of Arab and Middle Eastern Heritage (*absent*)
Ms. Aubrey Thonvold, executive director, ReconcilingWorks
Patterson Yazzie, interim president, American Indian and Alaska Native Lutheran Association (*absent*)
Keith Youngblood, vice president, African Descent Lutheran Association

Churchwide Staff Resource People:

Office of the Presiding Bishop:

The Rev. M. Wyvetta Bullock, interim executive for administration
Mr. Aaron Cooper, senior director for strategic communications
Mr. Ryan P. Cumming, director for theological ethics
Ms. Mary J. Streufert, executive director for theological discernment
Deacon John E. Weit, executive for worship
Ms. Rachel K. Wind, executive for development
Ms. Andrea Young, interim executive for human resources

Office of the Secretary:

Mr. Thomas A. Cunniff, general counsel
Mr. Dan F. Eppley, manager for official documentation
Mr. Paul K. Irwin, associate general counsel
Mr. Joseph Schmidt, Administrative Assistant III
Ms. Katharyn L. Wheeler, executive for Office of the Secretary administration
Ms. Jodi L. Slattery, executive for governance

Christian Community and Leadership:

The Rev. Sara A. Cutter, interim executive director

Service and Justice:

The Rev. Khader El-Yateem, executive director

Innovation:

Ms. Rahel Mwitula-Williams, interim executive director

Media:

Ms. Candice Hill Buchbinder, public relations manager

Separately Incorporated Ministries:

The Rev. Suzanne Burke, Publisher, Congregational Resources, Augsburg Fortress Publishers
Ms. Jennifer Hockenbery, interim executive director, Women of the ELCA
Mr. Christopher Johnson, president and CEO, Portico Benefit Services

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 6:07 p.m. and led council members in a land acknowledgment. Ms. Jodi L. Slattery, executive for governance, led the council in an opening devotion.

Vice President Siddiqui provided an overview of the organization of the meeting, and a motion was made to adopt the agenda. Vice President Siddiqui invited discussion and, there being none, called for a vote.

VOTED:

CC26.04.01 To adopt the agenda and to permit the chair to call for consideration of agenda items in the order the chair deems most appropriate.

ADOPTION OF THE STANDING RULES

(Agenda I.B.)

The Church Council conducted this electronic meeting using standing rules. The proposed standing rules were shared with council members electronically prior to the meeting. Vice President Siddiqui reviewed the standing rules, invited discussion and, when questions had been answered, called for the vote.

VOTED:

CC26.04.02 To adopt the standing rules for the April 2026 Church Council meeting.

REPORTS FROM THE OFFICERS

REPORT OF THE PRESIDING BISHOP

(Agenda I.C.1.)

The Rev. Yehiel Curry, presiding bishop of the ELCA, highlighted elements from his written report, including his focus on three themes for the coming triennium: Connection for 2026; Sustainability for 2027; and Reforming for 2028. He provided an update on implementation of the return to office policy at the churchwide organization and announced developments related to the work of the Exploration team, formerly known as the Vision team. The presiding bishop announced that in September 2026 the Rev. Craig A. Schweitzer, bishop of the Western North Dakota Synod, would begin leading the Christian Community and Leadership unit. He reported that work is beginning on churchwide organization strategic planning for 2027 and 2028. The presiding bishop called on the Rev. M. Wyvetta Bullock, interim executive for administration, who shared information related to the All-Staff Retreat July 2026.

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY

(Agenda I.C.2)

The Rev. Lucille "CeCee" Mills, secretary of the ELCA, announced that Ms. Katharyn L. Wheeler has begun her tenure as executive for Office of the Secretary administration and shared reflections on implementation of the return to office policy in the Office of the Secretary. She highlighted the importance of committing Office of the Secretary processes to writing to ensure that information is not lost during personnel transitions.

REPORT OF THE VICE PRESIDENT

(Agenda I.C.3)

Vice President Siddiqui invited Presiding Bishop Curry to assume the chair. Presiding Bishop Curry assumed the chair and invited Vice President Siddiqui to deliver his report. The vice president shared reflections on the Church Council retreat in March 2026, emphasizing the value he saw in the experience. He invited council members to share suggestions for future events with the Board Development Committee. Vice President Siddiqui stressed that mutual respect and openness to questions is essential to the operation of the Church Council, even when “uncomfortable” questions are discussed. Following the report, Presiding Bishop Curry returned the chair to Vice President Siddiqui.

REPORT OF THE TREASURER

(Agenda I.C.4)

Ms. Lori S. Fedyk, treasurer of the ELCA, reported that the audit of churchwide organization finances for the 2025 fiscal year (FY2025) is in progress and provided an overview of FY2025 results. She said that the churchwide organization unrestricted budget closed FY2025 with a deficit of almost \$2.5 million compared to a budgeted loss of about \$8.2 million, and she reviewed favorable revenue and spending accounting for the better-than-expected results. The treasurer outlined revisions to the 2026 churchwide organization budget, noting that the revisions do not require Church Council approval because they do not involve an increase to the spending authorization.

Treasurer Fedyk announced the launch of a new online financial portal to enhance communication between the churchwide organization and synods, and she said that a call process portal is being developed. Treasurer Fedyk announced that changes to the way administrative costs associated with the ELCA Fund for Leaders are handled are being considered, adding that the revisions will require Church Council approval.

REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF THE CONFERENCE OF BISHOPS

(Agenda I.C.5)

The Rev. Deborah K. Hutterer, bishop of the Grand Canyon Synod and chair of the Conference of Bishops, provided a written report to the council and was available for questions. Vice President Siddiqui invited questions for Bishop Hutterer.

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

(Agenda I.D.)

ELECTION OF CHURCH COUNCIL MEMBERS

(Agenda I.D.1.)

Mr. Matthew Schur, Nebraska Synod [4A], resigned from the Church Council in December 2025, and a vacancy was declared by the secretary. The Executive Committee of the Nebraska Synod Council nominated Mr. Jeffrey Dennis Akerson of Bellevue, Neb., to fulfill the remainder of the term ending in 2031. The Executive Committee forwarded the nomination to the Church Council for consideration.

VOTED:

CC26.04.03 To elect Mr. Jeffrey Dennis Akerson of Bellevue, Neb. [4A], to the Church Council for completion of a six-year term ending in August 2031.

In addition, Ms. Linda Rivera, Florida-Bahamas Synod [9E], resigned from the Church Council in February 2026, and a vacancy was declared by the secretary. The Executive Committee of the Florida-

Bahamas Synod Council nominated Ms. Denise Beumer of Maitland, Fla., to fulfill the remainder of the term ending in 2028. The Executive Committee forwarded the nomination to the Church Council for consideration.

VOTED:

CC26.04.04 To elect Ms. Denise Beumer of Maitland, Fla. [9E], to the Church Council for completion of a six-year term ending in August 2028.

Vice President Siddiqui declared Mr. Akerson and Ms. Beumer elected and welcomed them to the Church Council.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The 122nd meeting of the Church Council entered executive session to discuss personnel matters at 7:00 p.m. Minutes for meetings held in executive session are added to the protocol file in the Office of the Secretary. The council exited executive session at 7:08 p.m.

**ACTION FROM EXECUTIVE SESSION
ELECTION OF EXECUTIVE FOR ADMINISTRATION
(Agenda I.D.2.)**

The executive for administration is the chief administrator of the churchwide organization. According to ELCA continuing resolution 15.12.A25., "The executive for administration shall be elected by the Church Council upon nomination of the presiding bishop and shall serve coterminous with the term of the presiding bishop." Presiding Bishop Curry presented a nominee for the position to the Executive Committee, which forwarded the name to the Church Council. Biographical information for the nominee was shared with council members prior to the meeting.

VOTED:

CCES26.04.05 To elect Ms. Rachel K. Wind as the executive for administration for a term coterminous with the term of the presiding bishop, as provided in churchwide continuing resolution 15.12.A25.

Vice President Siddiqui declared Ms. Wind elected, and Ms. Wind briefly addressed the council. Vice President Siddiqui thanked Pastor Bullock for her service as interim executive for administration, and Pastor Bullock briefly addressed the council.

**UPDATE ON THE TASK FORCE ON INTERDEPENDENCE AND PURPOSE
(Agenda I.D.3.)**

The Task Force on Interdependence and Purpose has been meeting to fulfill its charge as defined by the Church Council [CC25.04.07] on the recommendation of the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church (CRLC) and augmented by the 2025 Churchwide Assembly [CA25.01.06h, CA25.01.06m, CA25.01.06n]. Mr. Mitch S. McCartney, convener of the task force, provided an update on the work of the task force, noting that the scope of the task force is much narrower than that of the CRLC. He provided a timeline for the work of the task force, emphasizing points at which the task force will consult with the Church Council and the Conference of Bishops.

Mr. McCartney announced that he intends to end his tenure as convener of the task force in May 2026 when the task force is expected to elect co-chairs. He stated that there are 13 members on the task force and highlighted the diversity reflected in the composition of the task force.

UPDATE ON FINANCIAL COORDINATING TASK FORCE

(Agenda I.D.4.)

At its April 2025 meeting, the Church Council authorized the Executive Committee to create a Financial Coordinating Task Force [CC25.04.08] on the recommendation of the CRLC. The Executive Committee appointed task force members at its April 14, 2026, meeting, and Vice President Siddiqui shared that a report on the work of the task force is expected at the Spring 2027 Church Council meeting. Noting that the names of persons appointed to the task force were not being shared in the meeting because not all had been contacted yet, the vice president said that the names of appointees would be shared with council members electronically following the meeting.

RECESS

The 122nd meeting of the Church Council recessed at 7:31 p.m. and reconvened at 7:42 p.m.

REPORT OF THE BUDGET AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

(Agenda I.E.)

The Rev. A. Elizabeth (Lisa) Ahlness, chair of the Budget and Finance Committee, provided the report of the committee. The report was shared with Church Council members electronically prior to the meeting. Pastor Ahlness highlighted information from the report related to recommended changes to churchwide organization investment policies.

REPORT OF THE SERVICE AND JUSTICE COMMITTEE

(Agenda I.F.)

Mr. Iván A. Pérez, chair of the Service and Justice Committee, provided the report of the committee. The report was shared with Church Council members electronically prior to the meeting. The Rev. Khader El-Yateem, executive director of the Service and Justice unit, called attention to impacts of elimination of USAID as well as the war in Gaza and responses of this church to mitigate these impacts.

ASIAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER MINISTRY STRATEGY OF THE ELCA

(Agenda I.F.2.)

The Asian and Pacific Islander (API) Ministry Strategy approved at the 2001 Churchwide Assembly no longer meets the needs of the communities and leaders. In 2024 and 2025, API Ministries held listening sessions attended by their diverse communities and results were compiled and used to create a draft API Ministry Strategy (2026–2030). API Ministries received feedback on the draft to create the new strategy plan. The revised Asian and Pacific Islander Ministry Strategy of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (2026–2030) was shared with Church Council members electronically prior to the meeting.

VOTED:

CC26.04.06 To affirm the new Asian and Pacific Islander Ministry Strategy of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America;

To express solidarity and deep gratitude for the ministries of the ELCA with the Asian and Pacific Islander community and for the Asians and Pacific

Islanders of the ELCA who have enriched and blessed this church with all they generously have given, shared, and cultivated for mission and ministry; and

To commend the ELCA to accompany the Asian and Pacific Islander congregations and to utilize this new strategic plan in responding to a changing world and embodying this church's faithful discipleship.

PLAN TO ADDRESS BARRIERS TO YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT PARTICIPATION

(Agenda I.F.3.)

At the 2025 Churchwide Assembly, an amendment was made to ELCA Constitution continuing resolution 5.01.E19. (now 5.01.E25.) to increase the percentage goal of youth and young adult voting membership of churchwide assembly, Church Council, and churchwide boards and committees from 10 percent to 20 percent. In addition, the assembly directed the Church Council “to develop and present a plan for implementation of this continuing resolution at its April 2026 meeting that also addresses barriers to youth and young adult participation” (CA25.05.28). Mr. Pérez announced that he has gathered a working group that began meeting in April 2026 to develop a plan and shared the names of the members of the working group.

MOVED;

[SECONDED]; To defer the presentation of a plan that addresses implementation of ELCA continuing resolution 5.01.E25. until the November 2026 Church Council meeting.

A voting member spoke in opposition to the motion.

VOTED:

CC26.04.07 To defer the presentation of a plan that addresses implementation of ELCA continuing resolution 5.01.E25. until the November 2026 Church Council meeting.

REPORT OF THE LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL REVIEW COMMITTEE

(Agenda I.G.)

Mr. McCartney, chair of the Legal and Constitutional Review Committee, provided the report of the committee. The report was shared with Church Council members electronically prior to the meeting. Mr. McCartney reported that the committee is beginning work related to matters referred to it by the 2025 Churchwide Assembly and the Conference of Bishops.

REPORT OF THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY AND LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE

(Agenda I.H.)

Ms. Sheena R. Foster, chair of the Christian Community and Leadership Committee, provided the report of the committee. The report was shared with Church Council members electronically prior to the meeting.

UPDATE ON THE CANDIDACY PROCESS EXPERIMENT

(Agenda I.H.1.)

At its April 2025 meeting, the Church Council affirmed a one-year experiment with several synods to finalize proposed revisions to the candidacy process (CC25.04.24g). Ms. Foster reported on key elements

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of the “Reimagined Candidacy Process” and updated the council on implementation of the revised process that was launched in February 2026 involving ten synods and the seven ELCA seminaries. The launch with this smaller group of synods will allow for reflection and adaptation of the process before the full roll-out of the process to all 65 synods by 2029. The Rev. Sara A. Cutter, interim executive director of the Christian Community and Leadership unit, provided additional detail related to the design and implementation of the program, adding that the experiment has been put on pause.

REPORT OF THE FAITH, SOCIETY, AND INNOVATION COMMITTEE

(Agenda I.I.)

Ms. Olivia L. Martin-Call, vice chair of the Faith, Society, and Innovation Committee, provided the report of the committee. The report was shared with Church Council members electronically prior to the meeting.

WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES ECUMENICAL DECADE OF CLIMATE JUSTICE ACTION

(Agenda I.I.1.)

On June 21, 2025, the World Council of Churches, of which the ELCA is a member church, launched the Ecumenical Decade of Climate Justice Action (2025–2034) (EDCJA) providing an ecumenical opportunity for “an unprecedented commitment by the global church—a bold and prayerful response to the climate emergency.” At its April 2023 meeting, the Church Council adopted the “Message on Earth’s Climate Crisis.” Calling the climate crisis a “kairos moment,” the message “puts forward convictions to guide discernment and actions toward the challenges posed by the climate kairos” and challenges all expressions of the ELCA to “join with ecumenical, interfaith, and secular partners working to address the climate crisis.” Information about the EDCJA, was distributed to council members electronically prior to the meeting.

VOTED:

CC26.04.08

To affirm the commitment of the ELCA to support the “World Council of Churches Ecumenical Decade of Climate Justice Action” (2025–2034), “answering the prophetic call to care for our common home and stand in solidarity with those who suffer most from climate injustice;” and

To urge this church in all its expressions to seek out ways to engage in systemic transformation, including consideration of implementation of the World Council of Churches “pathways to climate justice.”

NEW BUSINESS

(Agenda I.J.)

Secretary Mills announced that no new business had been brought to the Church Council.

CONSIDERATION OF ITEMS REMOVED FROM *EN BLOC*

(Agenda I.K.)

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

EN BLOC APPROVAL OF CERTAIN ITEMS
(Agenda I.L.)

The *en bloc* resolution includes agenda items that were judged to be non-controversial in nature that do not require plenary discussion and a separate vote. As the items were voted on *en bloc*, there was no discussion. The text of *en bloc* items and associated background information were shared with Church Council members electronically prior to the meeting. Vice President Siddiqui announced that, because one of the *en bloc* actions related to amendment of a continuing resolution requiring a two-thirds vote, *en bloc* items would be considered in two actions.

AMENDMENT OF A CONTINUING RESOLUTION

VOTED: **TWO-THIRDS VOTE REQUIRED**

CC26.04.09 To adopt *en bloc* the amendment to 14.41.F22. in the *Constitution, Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* as described in “Proposed Amendments – Continuing Resolutions”:

14.41.F226. Audit Committee

An Audit Committee—composed of five to seven members appointed by the Budget and Finance Committee and approved by the Church Council for two-year, renewable terms—shall assist the Budget and Finance Committee and the Church Council in fulfilling oversight of the churchwide organization’s accounting and financial reporting, internal control systems, and audit functions, consistent with its responsibilities as specified in the charter recommended by the Audit Committee, reviewed by the Budget and Finance Committee, and approved by the Church Council. A minimum of two members of the Audit Committee shall be members of the Budget and Finance Committee. The chair of the Audit Committee shall be a member of the Budget and Finance Committee and shall be appointed by the chair of the Budget and Finance Committee. In consultation with the executive for administration, the Audit Committee approves the selection of and dismissal of the internal auditors.

VOTED:
CC26.04.10 To take action *en bloc* on the remaining items listed in *En Bloc Items and Responses to Churchwide Assembly Actions*.

ACTIONS OF THE CHURCH COUNCIL

A. Updating Churchwide Organization Assistant Officers

Background:

In April 2024, the Church Council adopted CC24.04.09a regarding the Appointment of Assistant Officers. A revision is being proposed to update the appointments in response to changes of churchwide organization personnel.

VOTED: **EN BLOC**

CC26.04.10a **RESOLVED**, that for the sole purpose of executing, when necessary, documents approved and authorized in accordance with actions of the Church Council, the following are hereby appointed as assistant treasurers of this corporation: Santiago Padilla, Annette Roman, and Stephanie Ulba to serve until replaced or removed by

subsequent appointments, with such subsequent appointments to be based upon the nomination and recommendation of the Treasurer;

RESOLVED, that for the sole purpose of executing or attesting, when necessary, documents approved and authorized in accordance with actions of the Church Council, the following are hereby appointed as assistant secretaries of this corporation: Thomas A. Cunniff, ~~Norman K. Fry~~, ~~Katharyn L. Wheeler~~, and Paul K. Irwin to serve until replaced or removed by subsequent appointments, with such subsequent appointments to be based upon the nomination and recommendation of the Secretary.

RESOLVED, that prior resolutions adopted by this Council, including CC24.04.09a and the prior actions identified in CC15.04.31b, are hereby rescinded and replaced by this action.

B. Revision of Investment Policies

The Church Council approved changes to investment policies in November 2024, and the Office of the Treasurer recommended revision of the ELCA Core Investment Policy Statement.

VOTED:

EN BLOC

CC26.04.10b To approve the revised ELCA Core Investment Policy Statement dated March 19, 2026.

C. Rules Governing Disciplinary Proceedings

Background:

The Committee on Appeals is responsible for recommending rules of procedure for the performance of its duties. The rules become effective when ratified by the Church Council as stated in ELCA Constitution provision 20.21. The Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church (CRLC) recommended amendment of bylaw 20.22.04. and, following adoption of that amended bylaw, amendment of Rule D2 of the "Rules Governing Disciplinary Proceedings Against Rostered Ministers and Congregations of the ELCA." The 2025 Churchwide Assembly amended the bylaw as recommended by the CRLC [CA25.04.14].

The Committee on Appeals considered amendments to Rule D2 proposed by the CRLC and recommended additional amendments. Text highlighted in yellow indicates amendments proposed by the CRLC, and text highlighted in green indicates further amendments proposed by the Committee on Appeals.

D. Consultation: The Process Before Charges Are Brought by the Synod Bishop

- D2. In addition to, or in lieu of, a consultation panel or an advisory panel, a synod bishop may utilize the assistance of one of the synod bishop's assistants or other staff persons or any other individual appointed by the synod bishop for this purpose. In addition, a bishop may request investigatory assistance under 20.22.04., which may include, but is not limited to, contracting for investigatory expertise in matters of alleged sexual abuse, forensic accounting in matters of alleged fiscal misconduct, or other specialized professional services.
- a. Any contractors providing services in such investigations will work under the supervision of the general counsel or synod attorney at the discretion of the synod bishop.

- b. The result of such investigation shall typically be the preparation of a written report delivered to the general counsel and to the synod bishop requesting the investigation and the supervising attorney. The synod bishop may dispense with the requirement of a written report, however, if, in their sole discretion, it is in the best interest of those involved.
- c. The synod bishop need not follow or disclose the contents of the report or any recommendations contained therein.

VOTED: *EN BLOC*

CC26.04.10c To ratify the amendments to the “Rules Governing Disciplinary Proceedings against Rostered Ministers and Congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America”; and
To authorize the Office of the Secretary to make any necessary editorial corrections for accuracy.

D. Accountability within the ELCA: Recommendation 2.2 from the CRLC

At its April 2025 meeting, the Church Council requested that the Committee on Appeals “develop resources to help synods identify candidates with the appropriate spiritual gifts and demonstrated competencies in working with varied ethnic backgrounds to serve on synod consultation committees, referring, as appropriate, to the considerations outlined in the rationale of ‘Accountability within the ELCA;’ consult with the Conference of Bishops on such resources; and present a report by the Fall 2026 meeting of the Church Council;” (CC25.04.06)

A working group of the Committee on Appeals developed two such resources that have been shared with the Conference of Bishops: “Guidance for the Formation of Synod Consultation Committees in the ELCA” and “A Rubric for Selecting Synod Consultation Committee Members.”

VOTED: *EN BLOC*

CC26.04.10d To affirm the use of the following resources to help synods identify candidates to serve on consultation committees: “Guidance for the Formation of Synod Consultation Committees in the ELCA” and “A Rubric for Selecting Synod Consultation Committee Members.”

E. Revision of Church Council Committee Charters

VOTED: *EN BLOC*

CC26.04.10e To approve the revised committee charters; and
To authorize the Office of the Secretary to make any necessary editorial corrections for accuracy.

F. Ratification of Synod Constitution Amendments

VOTED: *EN BLOC*

CC26.04.10f To ratify the amendments to the constitution of the West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod (8H); and
To request that the secretary of this church notify the synod of this action.

G. Amendment of Churchwide Organization Personnel Policies

Background:

Proposed amendments to the Personnel Policies of the Churchwide Organization were shared with council members electronically prior to the meeting. Employees of the ELCA churchwide organization are expected to comply with churchwide organization personnel policies adopted by the Church Council in accordance with bylaw 14.21.06.

VOTED:

EN BLOC

**CC26.04.10g To approve the amended Churchwide Organization Personnel Policies; and
To authorize the Office of the Secretary, in consultation with Human Resources in
the Office of the Presiding Bishop, to make any necessary editorial corrections for
accuracy.**

H. Deferment of Rural Life and Ministry Social Message

Background:

The 2025 Churchwide Assembly ended before the assembly had time to consider three memorials received from synod assemblies. In accordance with the "Rules of Organization and Procedure" adopted by the 2025 Churchwide Assembly, unfinished business of the assembly was referred to the Church Council for disposition. One of these memorials related to the creation of a social message on rural life and ministry.

Montana Synod (1F) [2025]

WHEREAS, nearly one-third of ELCA congregations minister in rural and remote communities; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Census marks a significant population movement from rural to urban communities indicating challenges for rural congregations to maintain membership and giving; and

WHEREAS, rural communities face significant inequities in health, education, and economic opportunity when compared to urban communities; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has not produced materials for theological reflection on the challenges facing and gifts provided by rural communities since its inception; and

WHEREAS, rural and remote congregations offer models of innovation and adaptation to economic and sociological constraints for ministry; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Montana Synod memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly to commission a study and the production of a social message on the challenges facing rural and remote communities and gifts provided by ministry in rural and remote contexts; furthermore, be it

RESOLVED, that Montana Synod memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly to encourage and equip synods and member congregations to dedicate a time of study on rural and remote issues and rural ministry; and be it further

RESOLVED that this message reflect the diversity of rural communities across geographic regions to include consideration of remote communities and sovereign tribal nations.

Church Council action (CC25.10.34):

To receive with gratitude the memorial from the Montana Synod for development of a new social message on the challenges facing rural, remote communities, and sovereign Tribal Nations, and gifts provided by ministry in rural and remote contexts;

To direct Theological Discernment staff in the ELCA churchwide organization to review the request for a new social message on rural, remote communities, and sovereign Tribal Nations and bring a

recommendation to the ELCA Church Council no later than the Spring 2026 meeting on what means should be authorized to address the questions involved; and

To direct Christian Community and Leadership staff in the ELCA churchwide organization to assess available resources on rural congregations and communities and to provide a report and recommendation for resource development to the ELCA Church Council no later than Fall 2026.

Theological Discernment Team Response:

The Theological Discernment team is recommending deferment at this time to allow for an assessment of this request along with continued assessment of other pending requests.

VOTED: *EN BLOC*

CC26.04.10h **To defer the question of development of a social message on rural, remote communities, and sovereign Tribal Nations until the November 2026 Church Council meeting in order to allow for a careful and thorough assessment of that request along with continued assessment of the other pending requests. This assessment will include input from relevant leadership circles as well as the availability of staff capacity, and finances; and**

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

I. Timeline on Development of Social Policy Resolution on Abortion and Study Resources

Background:

The 2025 Churchwide Assembly ended before the assembly had time to consider three memorials received from synod assemblies. In accordance with the “Rules of Organization and Procedure” adopted by the 2025 Churchwide Assembly, unfinished business of the assembly was referred to the Church Council for disposition. One of these memorials related to updating the social statement on *Abortion* (1991).

Northern Illinois Synod (5B) [2023]

WHEREAS, the 1991 Social Statement on Abortion (SSoA) may have been adequate for its time allowing for and addressing diversity of perspectives; and

WHEREAS, SSoA does not directly address more current medical perspectives; and

WHEREAS, SSoA does not address the historical ecclesiastical understanding of when human life begins; and

WHEREAS, SSoA does not address the broader understanding of ‘family’—regarding sexual orientation and 21st century family units; and

WHEREAS, SSoA might consider expanding on how to right the injustices regarding life before and after birth—namely such things as pre-natal care, a living wage, family leave, social networks to support children and their families; and

WHEREAS, SSoA might consider expanding the extenuating circumstances that may call for an abortion in the light of more recent social conditions; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Northern Illinois Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America memorializes the 2025 Churchwide Assembly to revise, update, or create a new Social Statement on Abortion; and be it further

RESOLVED, this process should include the partnership of clergy, deacons, and lay people who have or have had uterus as well as medical professionals, including genetic counselors, perinatologist/maternal fetal medicine doctors, NICU providers, fetal palliative care providers, and OBGYNs of our synods and congregations.

Church Council action (CC25.10.33):

To receive with gratitude the memorial from the Northern Illinois Synod on updating the social statement on *Abortion* (1991) or to create a new social statement on this issue;

To re-affirm the theological and ethical teachings of the social statement on *Abortion* and its study guide because of its attention to complexity and nuance and its continued use in discernment and conversation;

To encourage study of recent resources such as the book *ReEngaging ELCA Social Teaching on Abortion* by Caryn D. Riswold (Augsburg Fortress, 2024) that analyzes the foundations and contemporary applications of this social statement;

To refer the memorial to churchwide organization staff members of Theological Ethics and Gender Justice and Women's Empowerment to develop additional study resources to address the concerns expressed in this memorial;

To decline at this time the request to update, revise, or create a new social statement on abortion; and

To direct that the ELCA Church Council authorize the development of a social policy resolution that applies the ELCA statement on *Abortion* to the challenging personal struggles and pastoral issues brought about because some social conditions have changed since 1991.

Theological Discernment Team Response:

The Theological Discernment team reviewed the topic and provided a timeline response for its further consideration.

VOTED:

EN BLOC

CC26.04.10i

To receive the assessment and anticipated timeline from the Theological Discernment team in the Office of the Presiding Bishop for developing a social policy resolution regarding abortion and additional study resources;

To request the Theological Discernment team in the Office of the Presiding Bishop begin development on a descriptive social policy resolution on the issue of abortion to be presented to the November 2026 Church Council meeting;

To direct the Theological Discernment team to bring a recommendation concerning additional resources related to the *Abortion* (1991) social statement to the November 2026 Church Council meeting; and

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

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

Background:

The Church Council is responsible for reviewing the "Terms and Conditions of Support for Long-Term Global Personnel." The Service and Justice unit, in consultation with legal counsel, Human Resources, the Office of the Treasurer, and the Service and Justice Administration, recommended a revised policy for long-term mission personnel.

VOTED:

EN BLOC

CC26.04.10j

To approve the updated "Terms and Conditions of Support for Long-Term Global Personnel" policy.

K. Approval of Church Council Minutes

VOTED: *EN BLOC*
CC26.04.10k To approve the minutes of the Oct. 2–3, 2025, and Nov. 12, 2025, meetings of the Church Council; and
To ratify actions of the council’s Executive Committee as indicated in the minutes of the Oct. 1–3, 2025, Nov. 4, 2025, Dec. 16, 2025, Jan. 22, 2026, Feb. 10, 2026, and March 19, 2026, meetings.

L. Church Council Nominations and Elections

Background:

Pursuant to ELCA Constitution provision 14.22., the Church Council is to elect nominees to vacancies on boards or committees of the churchwide organization.

VOTED: *EN BLOC*
CC26.04.10I1 To re-elect to the board of trustees of Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago to a second four-year term beginning Oct. 1, 2026, and ending Sept. 30, 2030: Mr. Anthony Peter Johnston.

VOTED: *EN BLOC*
CC26.04.10I2 To elect to the board of trustees of Luther Seminary to a term beginning July 1, 2026, and ending June 30, 2030: Ms. Julie Van Cleave.

VOTED: *EN BLOC*
CC26.04.10I3 To elect to the advisory council of Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary of Lenoir-Rhyne University to a term beginning June 1, 2026, and ending May 31, 2030: Ms. Cindy Moss and the Rev. Brian Stamm; and
To elect to the advisory council of Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary of Lenoir-Rhyne University to a term beginning June 1, 2026, and ending May 31, 2028: the Rev. Rachel Connelly.

VOTED: *EN BLOC*
CC26.04.10I4 To elect Ms. Cherrish Holland to the Mission Investment Fund board of trustees for a term expiring in 2028.

VOTED: *EN BLOC*
CC26.04.10I5 To appoint to the board of directors of Mosaic, Inc., with a three-year term expiring in 2028: Ms. Mercy Ndosì-Shoo.

CHURCH COUNCIL RESPONSES TO ACTIONS OF THE CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY

M. Confession of Faith in Our Time

Churchwide Assembly Action [CA25.02.06x]

To receive with gratitude the memorials on “A Confession of Faith for Our Time” from the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin and on “Theological Imagination and ELCA Public Witness” from the Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod;

To reaffirm the ELCA's official Confession of Faith as described in this church's constitution and the use of ELCA social teaching as speaking for the ELCA in its public witness, and as a guide to moral deliberation among members about societal issues and challenges;

To consider action taken by the 2025 Churchwide Assembly on the recommended proposed social statement, *Faith and Civic Life: Seeking the Well-being of All* as the response to these memorials, since it addresses many of the concerns it lifted up, such as authoritarianism, political idolatry, deceptive speech, and Christian Nationalism;

To request that the Office of the Presiding Bishop consider the concerns expressed in these memorials in future social writing processes and social teaching resources;

To refer the memorials' concerns to the Theological Discernment, Justice, and Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations teams in the Office of the Presiding Bishop and the Witness in Society team for assessment and a report to the Church Council by its Spring 2026 meeting;

To encourage ELCA congregations, rostered ministers, and lay leaders to utilize social teaching, preaching resources, and ecumenical and interreligious partnerships to publicly resist political violence, voter suppression, racial scapegoating, and any use of faith to justify autocracy; and

To encourage ELCA bishops and synods to create spaces for discernment, lament, and repentance for the church's complicity in systems of political idolatry, and to accompany congregations seeking to rediscover their prophetic vocation in this time.

Response from Office of the Presiding Bishop and Witness in Society Team (April 2026)

The spirit of the memorial on "Confession of Faith in Our Time" speaks to upheaval in the nation and is taut with the grief and fear of many in this church and in this country. The memorial's intent clearly is aimed at serving God and neighbor for the sake of Christ through bold proclamation and a faith active in love. It expresses the conviction that public witness to God's love, justice, and peace is required for this church to meet the moment. The ELCA has spoken and acted in ways commensurate with these concerns, including through public statements from former Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton and current Presiding Bishop Yehiel Curry.

Memorials are received from synods to the Churchwide Assembly as requests. The synod memorials forwarded to the Churchwide Assembly call for several actions, centrally, the adoption of "A Confession of Faith for Our Time" or "a theological and public statement in opposition to authoritarianism." Chapter 2 of the ELCA's Constitution specifies what confessions of faith this church affirms, naming specifically three creeds and the confessional writings in the *Book of Concord*. Elsewhere it is clear that contemporary ELCA writings of the type called for by these memorials are grounded in ELCA social teaching.

Social teaching governs the institutional life of the ELCA and this church's public witness and messaging. To be clear, such documents are "not new creeds or confessions" ("Policies and Procedures of the ELCA Addressing Social Concerns", p. 11). Moreover, the ELCA Constitution reserves to the ELCA as a community of moral deliberation the creation of official documents through a process of widespread discernment. This includes all theological statements or declarations of this church. Synods, then, are encouraged to bring memorials calling for the development of such documents to this whole church, rather than presenting a document to be considered or adopted by a Churchwide Assembly.

While we believe that it is not through our own efforts to follow Jesus' life that we are redeemed, we confess and trust that God works in and through us to love as Jesus Christ loves in word and action. What we do in the public sphere is shaped by what we believe and confess as Lutheran Christians about God's law and the gospel. "The gospel does not overthrow the secular government, public order, and

marriage but instead intends that a person keep all this as a true order of God and demonstrate in these walks of life Christian love and true good works according to each person's calling; Christians, therefore, are obliged to be subject to political authority and to obey its commands and laws in all that may be done without sin. But if a command of the political authority cannot be followed without sin, one must obey God rather than any human beings (Acts 5[:29])" (Augsburg Confession, XVI, German text, Kolb and Wengert, pp. 48, 50). In fact, it is God's will that Christians do good works. (See Articles VI and XX.)

Considerations:

In this time, the ELCA has and continues to make declarations about U.S. civic life because of its confession that Jesus Christ is Lord and its teaching "that the God who justifies expects all people to do justice" (*Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective*, p. 3). This church has indicated repeatedly that there are certain proceedings and decisions of the current administration that are contrary to God's intention for the well-being of all since they dramatically harm rather than serve neighbors, especially the oppressed and vulnerable. This church also notes the harm caused to the common good through disregard of constitutional limits on executive power at the expense of other branches of government, nongovernmental institutions, and individual rights. The concerns expressed and the urgency felt in these memorials are palpable and certainly speak for others besides those who crafted and supported them in synod assembly.

Many of the concerns named are addressed in existing social teaching or public messaging, and a significant number of others are front-and-center in the recently adopted social statement, *Faith and Civic Life: Seeking the Well-being of All* (2025). In the social statement, the ELCA repudiates Christian nationalism as a distortion of the gospel (Art. 38), provides a theological analysis of power, declares as sin dominating uses of political power, and affirms the calling of the church to participate in civic life for the good of the neighbor, grounded in the scriptures and the Lutheran confessions. The social statement also provides extensive analysis and teaching on deceptive and hateful speech (Art. 41 and 42), freedom of religion, and voter suppression (Art. 44).

A study guide written in collaboration between Theological Ethics and Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Pennsylvania (LAMPa) is available online.

As a social statement of the ELCA, *Faith and Civic Life: Seeking the Well-being of All* (2025) will provide grounding teaching and policy direction for future social teachings, public messages, and advocacy within this church. Thus, the analysis of concerns in the social statement will continue to shape the teaching and policy of the ELCA.

VOTED:

EN BLOC

CC26.04.10m To receive the response on "Confession of Faith in Our Time" from the Office of the Presiding Bishop Theological Discernment team and Service and Justice unit Witness in Society team;

To encourage study and use of the social statement on *Faith and Civic Life: Seeking the Well-being of All* (2025) in teaching, preaching, and moral discernment in this church; and

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

N. Motion J: AI in the Church

Submitted by: William Platnick [Upstate New York, 7D]

Whereas, we believe that "God created humankind in [God's] image" (Genesis 1:27) and that every human being bears the imago Dei, endowed with intrinsic dignity, creativity, and moral responsibility;

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Whereas, the ELCA's social message Faith, Science and Technology: Environment, Medicine, and Genetics reminds us that "God works through human creativity," and calls the church to exercise wise stewardship of all God-given gifts;

Whereas, artificial intelligence (AI)—broadly defined as computer systems capable of tasks once thought to require human intelligence—has seen rapid advances in areas such as language processing, decision-making, and pattern recognition, with profound implications for work, relationships, worship, and public life;

Whereas, AI raises urgent ethical and theological questions around human dignity, agency, bias, privacy, justice, the nature of vocation, and the safe deployment of powerful new tools—especially for those most vulnerable to technological displacement or surveillance;

Whereas, AI-driven automation threatens to displace workers across industries, exacerbating economic inequity and calling the church to stand in solidarity with those affected;

Whereas, congregations, rostered leaders, and church institutions increasingly encounter AI-driven tools in pastoral care, education, administration, and global mission, yet lack consistent frameworks to discern where such tools may augment human ministry—and where they risk undermining the gospel and human flourishing;

Whereas, the ELCA Churchwide Assembly has called for ongoing socio-ethical reflection on emerging technologies and directs its Division for Church in Society to resource this church in engaging public policy, advocacy, and education;

Therefore, be it resolved, that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America:

1. Affirms that human beings alone—created by God, redeemed in Christ, and guided by the Holy Spirit—remain the ultimate bearers of moral responsibility; no AI system can replace the vocation, compassion, or discernment entrusted to God's people.
2. Directs the ELCA Division for Church in Society, in partnership with the ELCA Advocacy Office and the seminary network, to develop and publish by March 2026:
 - a. A concise "AI and Faith" study guide for small groups and adult forums, with discussion questions rooted in Lutheran theology.
 - b. Ethical and Safe-Use Guidelines for AI in worship planning, pastoral care tools, educational settings, administrative functions, and social ministry programs—emphasizing transparency, accountability, data privacy, bias mitigation, and safeguards against unintended harm.
3. Encourages all ELCA councils (congregational, synod, and churchwide) to utilize the following Values Framework—originally adopted by the PC (USA) 226th General Assembly—in order to interpret and apply the Ethical and Safe-Use Guidelines (see 2) as they arise in new or unanticipated contexts, while more comprehensive policy is under development:
 - a. Recognize the fundamental, inherent dignity of every human.
 - b. Ensure no human or human community is subjected to harm at any stage in the AI lifecycle and mitigate disruptive impacts.
 - c. Acknowledge AI's potential to assist at every stage of the human life cycle.
 - d. Insist on preservation, promotion, and expansion of fundamental freedoms and rights for individuals and communities in AI-assisted contexts.
 - e. Implement environmental and ecosystem safeguards to ensure the flourishing of creation.
 - f. Foster participative and enabling roles for all actors, in building peaceful and just societies.
 - g. Promote peace, inclusivity, justice, equity, and interconnectedness throughout the AI lifecycle.
 - h. Commit to engaging AI's broader implications in a theologically responsible manner.
4. Encourages ELCA seminaries and partner institutions to establish or expand interdisciplinary courses and research initiatives at the intersection of theology, ethics, computer science, and

social justice—preparing future rostered ministers and church professionals to navigate AI’s challenges faithfully and safely.

5. Urges the ELCA to:
 - Advocate, with ecumenical and interfaith partners, for public policies that protect workers displaced by automation, uphold data privacy, prohibit lethal autonomous weapons, and promote responsible innovation.
 - Partner with global companion churches to ensure AI-enabled tools (e.g., translation, health diagnostics, educational platforms) advance the gospel, human well-being, and equitable access, rather than entrench existing inequities.
6. Requests that by the 2028 Churchwide Assembly, the Church Council report on progress made, lessons learned, and recommend any further actions needed to ensure ELCA ministries remain rooted in the gospel, responsive—and safe—in an age of rapid technological change and ecological challenge.

Churchwide Assembly Action [CA25.06.30]

To refer the “Resolution on Artificial Intelligence in the Church” to the Office of the Presiding Bishop (Theological Discernment) and to the Service and Justice unit (Advocacy), in consultation with the Office of the Treasurer (Information Technology), and to request a progress report to the Church Council.

Response from Office of the Presiding Bishop and Service and Justice Unit (April 2026)

This report is intended to inform the Church Council of activities related specifically to engaging Artificial Intelligence within or tethered to the churchwide organization (CWO). A fair portion of the activity described was underway prior to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly’s adoption of Motion J.¹ However, this report responds to Churchwide Assembly Motion J and provides the occasion to articulate all CWO work being done now or anticipated in the near future.

Rapid and widespread developments in AI are widely acknowledged, and in the judgment of the Theological Discernment team in the Office of the Presiding Bishop, these developments require this church’s sustained attention. A key underlying concern of this progress report is if and how this church will engage developments in AI with sustained attention as this technology increasingly infuses civic life. This church has overarching principles of social teaching that are applicable. Foremost among these teachings, this church urges any powerful new technology to be guided by a just and wise use that respects and promotes the community of life under God (*Genetics, Faith, and Responsibility* [2011], p. 15.)

Six areas of CWO activity are overviewed briefly. The six areas are:

1. Information Technology’s attention to how and which AI tools will be used within the CWO structure.
2. The CWO’s Data Governance interunit team’s development of User Guidelines.
3. Corporate Social Responsibility’s (Service and Justice unit) preparation of an issue paper, adopted by Church Council, October 2025.

¹ *Motion J* (CA25.06.30, adopted [584-15]): The resolution refers to the Office of the Presiding Bishop, Theological Discernment, Service and Justice and ELCA Witness in Society, in consultation with the Office of the Treasurer and Information Technology, consideration of the ethics and morality surrounding AI, including creating safeguards both in privacy and usage, as well as to develop a “faith and AI” study guide, among other steps, to try to keep up with the rapidly-evolving technology.

4. Projects anticipated by Theological Ethics (Theological Discernment, OB).
5. The ELCA Consulting Group on AI and the Church, convened by the Theological Ethics desk.
6. The AI and the Church Summit, an ecumenical effort in which the ELCA participates; the Summit is related to the AI and Faith network. The Innovation unit of CWO serves as liaison with this project.

1. Information Technology

IT staff have spent significant time this past year building structures, practices, and value guidance for CWO staff use of AI with a focus on human-centeredness while seeking to enable greater work efficiency. The full report from Jonathan Beyer (Executive Director, IT and Digital Solutions) was made available, but it should be noted that a new section on AI has been added to the CWO's official policies.

2. Data Governance

The AI data governance interunit team is developing an AI ethical use policy for the CWO to guide staff and programs in adapting to an AI-infused workplace and public space. The parameters set forth will provide a framework for evaluating CWO's emerging and expanding use of the technology in ways that enable safe and wise practices. For example, there will be an emphasis on restricting AI's use so that it does not replace human creativity and influence. In another example, the guidelines will implement safeguards against illusions, poorly crafted reports, or any public content that hasn't undergone human review at key stages. Additionally, environmental and economic factors will be considered. These guidelines are consciously grounded in ELCA theological principles. A draft policy should be ready for review by the Data Governance Team in April 2026, which hopes to submit in May to the CWO Administrative Team for their consideration.

3. Corporate Social Responsibility

In October 2025, the Church Council approved an Issue Paper on Artificial Intelligence (CC25.10.42) prepared by Witness in Society's desk for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and developed in consultation with Theological Ethics. (CSR issue papers lay out ways that ELCA social teachings are to be used to support interaction with corporations, whether through dialogues or filing shareholder resolutions. Issue papers foreground ethical concerns and relevant ELCA social teachings, without directing specific actions. These papers may be used by other actors, but Portico, in particular, uses them as the basis for its interactions with corporations.) This AI issue paper provides guidance for ethical questions and reflections by individuals and groups across the ELCA's three expressions.

4. Theological Ethics

The Theological Ethics desk annually holds a gathering of Lutheran ethicists with an open invitation to anyone interested in the particular topic. This gathering is the primary event of the Lutheran Ethicists' Network, which supports the work of Theological Ethics. The topic for the January 6–7, 2027, gathering is AI, and it will provide one important occasion sponsored by Theological Ethics for leadership conversation. Typically, papers and conversations from the gathering then are published in the subsequent issue of the *Journal of Lutheran Ethics*, with discussion questions that make the materials more widely useful. The Theological Ethics desk is considering other projects and is providing lead responsibility for the ELCA consulting group (see below, 5.) and its contributions.

5. The ELCA Consulting Group on AI and the Church

This new ELCA consulting group is an *ad hoc* gathering of ELCA members convened by staff of the Theological Ethics desk. The intent is an informal and fluid gathering of specialists to help the ELCA engage questions about AI across its ecology. The criteria for invitation include ELCA representational

principles and a diversity of perspectives. Participants bring callings of expertise and connection from each of the three expressions of this church—CWO, synod, and congregations. Members are committed to sharing their various expertise and experience to foster the use of moral-value frameworks of justice and practical wisdom as guided by ELCA theological and ethical principles.² The group has met online bi-monthly since November 2025 to identify priorities. In March and April 2026, working groups will be set up to contribute toward education resource development, AI governance and policies, development of resources with theological, ethical, and social analysis, and long-range recommendations. A resource information clearinghouse for the ELCA is also being discussed.

6. AI and Church Ecumenical Summit

The AI and the Church Summit is an ecumenical effort under the umbrella of the AI and Faith network. There have been two summits—2024 in Seattle and 2025 in Minneapolis. A third is being planned with hopes of several more. The CWO Innovation unit has a seat on the planning team and has supported participation by selected staff and ELCA members. The summits have involved theological and ethical presentations and futurist simulations as well as generating ecumenical working groups that are to prepare publications and resources. The summit currently involves selected staff and members from the ELCA, The Episcopal Church, USA; United Methodist Church; and Presbyterian Church (USA) with hopes for additional denominational partners. The ELCA is seen as the bridge among these participants because of this church's Communion agreements and official ongoing conversations with each of these denominations. (It is not the case that the other three denominations have the same agreements or formal conversations with each other.)

VOTED:

EN BLOC

CC26.04.10n To receive the progress report on the "Resolution on Artificial Intelligence in the Church" from the Office of the Presiding Bishop and Service and Justice unit and to anticipate a final response be presented to the Church Council by its Spring 2027 meeting;

To re-affirm this church's belief that "the use of any technology should be subject to moral assessment" and the moral imperative "to respect and promote the community of life through the exercise of justice and wisdom" in the assessment or use of technology (Genetics, Faith, and Responsibility [2011], p. 8 and 3);

To commend the activity underway by the churchwide organization; and

To encourage this church in all its expressions to learn about developments in Artificial Intelligence, to "pray for God's guidance" and to be guided by "wisdom,

² "The ELCA consulting group is a volunteer *ad hoc* group of ELCA members convened by staff of the Theological Ethics desk to serve as an informal and fluid set of consultants to aid this church as it engages Artificial Intelligence. They are committed to sharing their various expertise and experience to foster the use of moral value frameworks of justice and practical wisdom that respect and promote the community of life under God as we engage artificial intelligence across the ELCA ecology. The intent is to foster theological judgment, ethical values, useful guidelines, and practical innovation. This work is focused on the ELCA ecology as a whole but remains mindful of how this church must contribute to a Church Catholic and a society increasingly infused by the various kinds of AI. The group's activities and involvement will vary, but the overall purpose is guided by Motion J from the ELCA CWA 2025 as a consulting group that aids coordination of activity and information and serves as a clearing house for cross fertilization." (Working Charter of the ELCA Consulting Group on AI and the Church)

humility and courage in deliberation, decision-making and action” (Genetics, Faith, and Responsibility [2011], p. 35).

O. Immigration Detention

Churchwide Assembly Action [CA25.01.06a]

To receive with gratitude the memorials from the Southwest California Synod and the Pacifica Synod on ceasing the use of private for-profit companies for immigration detention;

To reaffirm this church’s commitment to the AMMPARO strategy to accompany migrants and advocate for recognition and respect for their human dignity including through the protection of their human rights;

To affirm this church’s ongoing screening out of private prison companies from social purpose funds and look for engagement opportunities with private prison companies;

To request that the Service and Justice unit identify and act on opportunities for this church to publicly call for an end to the U.S. government practice of contracting out the management of U.S. immigration detention centers to private for-profit companies; and

To request that the Service and Justice unit provide a report on the implementation of this work to the Church Council at its Spring 2026 meeting.

Response from the Service and Justice Unit (April 2026)

The Service and Justice unit, through the Witness in Society team and the AMMPARO strategy, continues to advocate for an end to the U.S. government practice of contracting out the management of U.S. immigration detention centers to private for-profit companies by raising awareness about the harms and violation of rights of private detention and how this practice contradicts social teaching on immigration, human rights, criminal justice, and sufficient, sustainable livelihoods.

The Service and Justice unit has identified the following opportunities for public engagement and anticipates continuing this work.

- Witness in Society and AMMPARO staff developed an educational resource that covers the history and current practice of private immigration detention, scheduled to be released and promoted in Spring 2026. This resource includes an accompanying Bible study and action guide for individuals and congregations.
- AMMPARO joined the Free Families coalition, which is focused on ending the practice of child and family detention. Nearly all children and families who are in detention are held in for-profit detention centers. Action as part of this coalition includes virtual rallies, sharing of educational resources and webinars, and joint advocacy outreach via sign-on letters.
- Witness in Society advocacy staff drafted public messaging opposing abuse in detention facilities, including through an ecumenical letter led by Presiding Bishop Yehiel Curry, sign-on letters, and public statements. Staff reinforced these requests via meetings with the offices of members of Congress.
- ELCA-affiliated State Public Policy Offices have supported local and state-level work to oppose the construction and operation of new privately-run detention facilities across the U.S.
- The ELCA Corporate Social Responsibility team confirmed with Portico Benefit Services that its funds screen out private prison companies from all funds, not just social purpose funds. This is a positive advancement; it also precludes shareholder advocacy with private prison companies because ELCA has no investments in these companies.

The Service and Justice unit will remain attentive to opportunities to publicly call for an end to the practice of for-profit immigration detention. FY27 appropriations for the Department of Homeland Security and legislation concerning oversight of detention facilities are two avenues to continue this advocacy work.

VOTED: *EN BLOC*

CC26.04.10o To receive the response on “Immigration Detention” from the Service and Justice unit;

To commend the Service and Justice unit for its public engagement in advocating an end to the U.S. government practice of contracting out the management of U.S. immigration detention centers to private for-profit companies; and

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

P. Review of ELCA Investments and Procurement

Churchwide Assembly Action [CA25.02.06t]

To reaffirm this church’s commitment to using the tools of corporate social responsibility to call corporations to treat people fairly and with dignity and create sustainable communities through the screening of social purpose funds through social criteria investment screens; and

To direct the Service and Justice unit and ELCA Corporate Social Responsibility Review team to provide guidance in regard to current concerns and advice on best practices to encourage responsible and just corporate behavior and provide to the ELCA Church Council a summary of findings and options for action.

Response from Service and Justice Unit, Corporate Social Responsibility Review Team (October 2025)

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in the ELCA uses the tools of screening of investments, shareholder advocacy, and community investing to work with corporations, calling them to ensure that people are treated fairly and with dignity and to create sustainable communities. The CSR program is guided by staff in the ELCA’s Service and Justice unit and a team of advisors with experience in CSR or expertise in the topic at hand. The team meets regularly to discuss drafts of documents and possible topics for CSR work. The *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA* places CSR oversight with the Church Council, which “may direct the churchwide organization to exercise the corporate social responsibility of this church by filing shareholder resolutions, casting proxy ballots, and taking other actions as it deems appropriate” (14.21.14.).

ELCA CSR staff consult the CSR Review team regularly on the topics of screening, shareholder advocacy, and boycotts, with the goal of supporting Portico Benefit Services in its endeavor to encourage responsible corporate behavior.

ELCA CSR does not determine procurement on the part of the ELCA; however, CSR has cooperated with ELCA IT on its AI policies, and IT has consulted with CSR on its buying guides.

At the October 2025 and the January 2026 meetings of the CSR Review team, the group will consider whether additional resources are needed to fulfill this directive from the Churchwide Assembly and report back to the Church Council in the spring of 2026.

Additional costs, if any, would be related to any resources recommended by the CSR Review team, or would be related to publicizing of current resources such as the shareholder advocacy issue papers and ELCA consumer purchasing guides.

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Church Council Action [CC25.10.43g]

To receive the timeline on “Review of ELCA Investments and Procurement” from the Service and Justice unit and to anticipate a response at the Spring 2026 Church Council meeting; and

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

Response from the Service and Justice Unit, Corporate Social Responsibility Review Team (April 2026)

Individuals

Shareholder advocacy, which is a direct route to engagement with corporations over their behavior, is not something that is limited to institutional investors. Individuals can take action based on understanding how shareholder advocacy works.

- **Outcome:** ELCA CSR will produce a resource along the lines of the PCUSA advocacy toolkit to help guide individuals in their own investments and shareholder advocacy.

Consumers

ELCA CSR has already written purchasing guides to encourage thoughtful consumer purchasing. Given that corporations depend upon consumers, this is one way to influence corporate behavior.

- **Outcome:** ELCA CSR will look for ways to publicize the consumer purchasing guides and make them more visible, whether through social media or blog posts.

Institutional investment

An impactful way to encourage responsible and just behavior by corporations is through shareholder advocacy, screening out investments in corporations that violate social criteria investment screens, and positive investing in socially responsible ways. Portico Benefit Services engages in all of these, and insofar as they invest with Portico, the ELCA Foundation also encourages responsible and just corporate behavior.

- **Outcome:** ELCA CSR will present to Church Council on the work of Portico and ELCA CSR.
- **Outcome:** ELCA CSR will work with Portico and other ELCA institutional partners to encourage investment in Portico’s socially responsible funds.
- **Outcome:** Church Council can consider whether shareholder advocacy on specific issues is warranted*

Guidance in regard to current concerns would be ever-evolving. The current administration has engaged in undermining shareholder rights from every angle in an unprecedented way.

- **Outcome:** ELCA CSR will give an annual update to the CSR Review Team that can be shared with Church Council on current concerns in shareholder advocacy.

* The Church Council may explore direct engagement in shareholder advocacy in order to advance ELCA commitments to advocating for dignity, justice, and equity for all people, as described in the ELCA Constitution.

The ELCA Constitution contains the following bylaw:

14.21.14. The Church Council may direct the churchwide organization to exercise the corporate social responsibility of this church by filing shareholder resolutions, casting proxy ballots, and taking other actions as it deems appropriate.

In order to engage a corporation as a shareholder, which is required to file a shareholder resolution or cast a proxy ballot, the Church Council would have to cooperate with one of the ELCA’s separately incorporated ministries.

Following are some avenues that have been considered in the past for engaging in corporate social responsibility on behalf of the ELCA:

- Communicating directly with specific corporations around ELCA social teaching as the ELCA Church Council;
- Requesting Portico Benefit Services or the ELCA Foundation to file specific shareholder resolutions or vote a specific way on a shareholder resolution; and
- Requesting use of endowed stock to engage specific corporations directly around ELCA social teaching.

It should be noted that the Church Council can make requests of both separately incorporated ministries but cannot compel them. Both organizations are financial fiduciaries, which implies a specific set of responsibilities.

VOTED:

EN BLOC

CC26.04.10p

To receive the response on “Review of ELCA Investments and Procurement” from the Service and Justice unit;

To commend the guidance and best practices from ELCA Corporate Social Responsibility to encourage responsible and just corporate behavior and affirm the outcomes identified in its response; and

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

Q. Stand for Palestinian Rights and End to Occupation of Palestine

Churchwide Assembly Action [CA25.03.13]

To direct the Office of the Presiding Bishop, in consultation with the Witness in Society Advocacy team, to write to the President and Vice President of the United States, the Secretary of State, and the majority and minority leaders of the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives calling on the U.S. government:

- to recognize and work to end the genocide against the Palestinian people, to halt military assistance to Israel used to devastate Gaza, and to investigate the use of U.S. military aid to Israel to ensure compliance with U.S. and international human rights law;
- to redouble its efforts to end human rights violations in Gaza and the West Bank, focusing on the most egregious and ongoing violations, including: indiscriminate and disproportionate bombing of Gaza resulting in the deaths of tens of thousands of children, women, and men; deprivation of adequate access to drinking water, food, medical care, and electricity; destruction of buildings—including hospitals, places of worship, homes, and schools—and the destruction of electricity, sewerage, and water infrastructure essential for survival; and, the detention of hostages and political prisoners;
- to recognize Palestine as a sovereign state, and support Palestine’s full membership in the United Nations, and
- to reject proposals to remove Palestinians from Gaza and the West Bank, to address the catastrophic living conditions that could force Palestinians to leave, and to work to end the rampant settler violence and vandalism against Palestinians in the West Bank;

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Response from Service and Justice Unit (October 2025)

The Witness in Society team will prioritize these focus points for public policy advocacy and action:

1. Write letter from the presiding bishop to the White House as instructed (completed, August 2025).
2. Opposing unrestricted military aid to Israel
3. U.N. Security Council Resolutions 242, 338, 1397, 1515, 2334
4. Upholding of Human Rights Law
5. U.S. government recognition of Palestinian Statehood in coordination with Lutheran Office for World Community (LOWC)
6. Protection of 1967 Borders and Territorial Integrity
7. Opposition to Settler Violence
8. Amplification of Palestinian Voices
9. Opposition to displacement/forcible transfer of Palestinians from Gaza and the West Bank
10. Continued support of financial security of Augusta Victoria Hospital
11. Review and consider the ELCA's interfaith advocacy relationships—especially within the Jewish community—that would ensure values alignment of partnerships with the ELCA's updated position on Israel-Palestine

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Team will engage these awareness focus points:

1. Education around U.N. Security Council Resolutions 242, 338, 1397, 1515, 2334
2. History and significance of international definitions of military occupation and genocide
3. Education around displacement and forcible transfer
4. Distinction between Jewish siblings and the government of Israel
5. Palestinian sovereignty
6. Accompaniment relationships with ELCA partners in Palestine/Israel
7. Building relationship and shared understanding of Palestine-Israel context with WCC statement on Gaza as baseline

The MENA Team will engage these accompaniment focus points:

1. Amplification of Palestinian Voices
2. Meeting with ELCJHL stakeholders and ALAMEH (Association of Lutherans of Arab and Middle Eastern Heritage) to present resolution and hear feedback
3. Ensuring ongoing financial support to ELCJHL and local partners—March 2026

A final report to Church Council will be brought to its April 2026 meeting. There is no anticipated budgetary impact as the work will be done as part of existing staff portfolios.

Church Council Action [CC25.10.43n]

To receive the response on “Stand for Palestinian Rights and End to Occupation of Palestine” from the Service and Justice unit;

To request a final response at the April 2026 Church Council meeting; and

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

Response from the Service and Justice Unit (April 2026)

The Witness in Society team engagement on advocacy focus points are as follows:

1. *Wrote letter from the Presiding Bishop to the White House as instructed (completed, August 2025):* Witness in Society team (WiS), in coordination with the MENA Desk, worked to support

former Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton in drafting a letter to the White House addressing key points directed within CA25.03.13 and imploring the US Government to use all of its available leverage with the Israeli Government to end the genocide in Gaza, in addition to five additional requests designed to support peace in the Holy Land, provide humanitarian aid into Gaza, and end the war. A copy of the letter was made available.

2. *Opposing unrestricted military aid to Israel:* WiS team, in coordination with numerous interfaith and humanitarian aid organizations and various coalitions, continues to support and advocate for specific legislative mechanisms which oppose unrestricted military aid to the State of Israel, including advocacy and support for the “Block the Bombs Act” and other previous legislation such as the Senate Joint Resolutions of Disapproval (JRDs), which were designed to block US weapons transfers to the State of Israel. WiS will continue to support future JRDs and other legislation designed to oppose unrestricted military aid to the State of Israel.
3. *UN Security Council Resolutions 242, 338, 1397, 1515, 2334:* WiS continues to support and advocate for any legislative mechanisms that support and reaffirm the US Government’s commitment to the creation of a Palestinian State, living side by side in peace, with the State of Israel. WiS will continue to coordinate with the MENA Desk and the Sumud initiative in furthering internal ELCA education and awareness of these United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolutions and how they help to underpin Palestinian sovereignty rights.
4. *Upholding of Human Rights Law:* WiS will continue to support, advocate and push for US legislation designed to uplift human rights law and more broadly, international law, with the purpose and aim of protecting civilians in conflict and ensuring sovereign states (the US included) abide by international law. In the past this has taken the form of advocating for and supporting certain US Congressional and Executive Branch oversight mechanisms, such as a “national security memorandum 20” which was supposed to help determine if US arms transfers were in violation of section 620I of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961.
5. *US government recognition of Palestinian Statehood in coordination with LOWC:* As mentioned in focus point #3, WiS continues to support and advocate for any legislative mechanisms that support and reaffirm the US Government’s commitment to the creation of the Palestinian State, and will continue to coordinate with LOWC (Lutheran Office for World Community) as opportunities within the UN system (UN Security Council and/or General Assembly or affiliated organs) arise to support and reaffirm Palestinian Statehood and right to sovereignty.
6. *Protection of 1967 Borders and Territorial Integrity:* As mentioned in focus point #3, WiS continues to support and advocate for any legislative mechanisms that support and reaffirm the US Government’s commitment to the creation of the Palestinian State.
7. *Opposition to Settler Violence:* WiS continues to support and advocate for legislative and executive branch mechanisms that penalize, enact punitive measures designed to pursue settlers who engage in violence, and disincentivize the State of Israel to continue its policy of allowing said settler violence to continue without any legal consequences. This includes support for an Executive Branch sanctions designation by the previous administration for specific settlers identified as committing violence. WiS is currently supporting and advocating for several bills and resolutions designed to counter settler violence including: 1) H.Res.1092 2) H.R.3045 3) S.2667 and 4) S.2672
8. *Amplification of Palestinian Voices:* WiS continues in coordination with the MENA Desk and the Sumud initiative to support and host Palestinian voices from the ELCJHL and other affiliated

organizations in Washington, D.C., as part of an ongoing advocacy and engagement campaign to ensure Congress hears directly from the Palestinian community itself. In 2025, this campaign resulted in WiS supporting one delegation from the LWF/AVH, two delegations from ELCJHL pastors and affiliated ELCJHL ministries, one delegation from local ELCA staff based in Palestine, and one delegation from an ELCJHL affiliated NGO. Collectively, these advocacy engagements resulted in 40 meetings with congressional offices, two meetings with the US Department of State, and several education and awareness engagements with ELCA congregations in Washington, D.C.

9. *Opposition to displacement/forcible transfer of Palestinians from Gaza and the West Bank:* Embedded in all WiS advocacy is a commitment to the right of the Palestinian people to their homeland and the international legal frameworks that forbid displacement and forcible transfer of a civilian population away from their homes. WiS will continue to support and advocate for any future legislative mechanism or Executive Branch mechanism that supports and reinforces opposition to the displacement and/or forcible transfer of Palestinians from Gaza and the West Bank.
10. *Continued support for financial security of Augusta Victoria Hospital:* WiS devotes consistent time and energy to supporting the financial security of the Augusta Victoria Hospital, through engagement and advocacy in the appropriations process. This included working with congressional offices to support funding and reporting language in the FY26 appropriations bill designed to direct the US Department of State to support new funding to AVH, as Congress has done on a bipartisan basis in the past. WiS continues to work on adding funding and reporting language into the upcoming FY27 appropriations bills in support of AVH and continues to coordinate with LWF and AVH on joint advocacy priorities, including the resumption of the EJHN medical corridor and funding for AVH.
11. *Review and consider the ELCA's interfaith advocacy relationships—especially within the Jewish community—that would ensure values alignment of partnerships with the ELCA's updated position on Israel-Palestine:* WiS continues to evaluate and determine the best path forward in terms of identifying interfaith relationships as apply to advocacy on the issue of Israel-Palestine. WiS staff recently attended the J Street Conference to understand potential partnerships in the Jewish community that would align well with the ELCA's updated positions on Israel-Palestine, and worked with the Churches for Middle East Peace to support a closed door session between representatives of various denominations and leaders of the Standing Together movement, which now has US chapters around the country. WiS hopes to engage in meaningful advocacy work with new interfaith partners moving forward.

Middle East North Africa (MENA) Team engagement on awareness focus points are as follows:

Service and Justice unit through the Middle East North Africa (MENA) Desk, including ELCA Sumud: for Justice in Palestine and Israel, has begun engaging the focus points listed below through awareness-raising work. Below are each of the predetermined focus points as directed by CA25.03.13, and the activities, resources, or events facilitated by ELCA Service and Justice's MENA Desk, which respond to these foci. Each of these foci reflects points of the CA25.03.13 Social Policy Resolution (SPR) that direct ELCA Service and Justice's ministry and engagement with the Church.

1. Education around UN Security Council Resolutions 242, 338, 1397, 1515, 2334
 - a. Bishop's Solidarity and Accompaniment Visit to the ELCJHL, January 2026

4. Distinction between Jewish siblings and government of Israel
 - a. Sumud Webinar Series, November 2025
 - i. Recordings made available
 - b. Sumud Presentation Southeastern Synod, October 2025
 - i. In October 2025, ELCA Sumud Program Director Maddi Froiland presented about Sumud, including the ELCA's longstanding distinction between this church's Jewish siblings and the government of Israel.
 - c. Sumud Presentation Rocky Mountain Synod, December 2025
 - i. In December 2025, MENA Desk Director Rev. Gabi Aelabouni and Sumud Program Director Maddi Froiland presented the work of the MENA Desk and ELCA Sumud to the Rocky Mountain Synod Sumud group, which covered the clear distinction between Jewish siblings and the government of Israel.
 - d. Sumud Video Educational Resource, 2026
 - i. Explained in point 3g.
 - e. Bishop Holy Land Video Resource (created January 2026, plan for release April 2026)
 - i. ELCA synodical bishops reflect on their discussions and experiences in the Holy Land with partners from the ELCJHL in short, 2-minute videos, which ELCA Sumud will publish at the conclusion of the 2026 Lent season. These videos address topics including distinction between the nation-state of Israel, the biblical "Israel", and our Jewish siblings, as well as important topics of accompaniment, solidarity, working for justice, and relationship with our siblings in Palestine.
 - f. CA25.03.13 SPR Resource
 - i. Explained in point 1b.
5. Education about Palestinian sovereignty
 - a. Sumud Video Resource, 2026
 - i. Explained in point 3g.
 - b. CA25.03.13 SPR Resource
 - i. Explained in point 1b.
6. Accompaniment of ELCA partners in Palestine/Israel and the relationship
 - a. Sumud Webinar Series, November 2025
 - i. Linked in point 3a.
 - b. Sumud Advent Series, December 2025
 - i. Linked in point 3d.
 - c. MENA Desk Solidarity Visit, November 2025
 - i. Explained in point 3b.
 - d. Bishop's Solidarity and Accompaniment Visit to the ELCJHL, January 2026
 - i. Explained in point 1a.
7. Building relationship and shared understanding of Palestine-Israel context with WCC statement on Gaza as baseline
 - a. Sumud Webinar Series, November 2025
 - i. Linked in point 3a.
 - b. Sumud Advent Series, December 2025
 - i. Linked in point 3d.

- c. Sumud Christmas Children's Book, December 2025
 - i. Linked in point 3e.
- d. Sumud Presentations Southeastern Synod, Rocky Mountain Synod, Fall 2026
 - i. Explained in point 4c.
- e. Sumud Newsletters, October 2025, January 2026
- f. Sumud Action Alert, December 2025
- g. Sumud Action Alert, February 2026
- h. MENA Desk Solidarity Visit, November 2025
 - i. Explained in point 3b.
- i. Bishop's Solidarity and Accompaniment Visit to the ELCJHL, January 2026
 - i. Explained in point 1a.

Middle East North Africa team engagement of accompaniment focus points are as follows:

Service and Justice unit, through the Middle East North Africa team, including ELCA Sumud, has begun engaging the focus points listed below through its accompaniment work. Below are each of the predetermined focus points as directed by CA25.03.13, and the activities, resources, or events facilitated by ELCA Service and Justice's MENA Desk, which respond to these foci.

1. Amplification of Palestinian Voices
 - a. MENA Desk Solidarity Visit, November 2025
 - i. Explained in point 3.
 - b. MENA Desk Bishops Solidarity Visit, January 2026
 - i. Explained in point 1.
 - c. Sumud Webinar Series, November 2025
 - i. Linked in point 3.
 - d. Sumud Advent Series, December 2025
 - i. Linked in point 3.
 - e. Sumud Christmas Children's Book, December 2025
 - i. Linked in point 3.
2. Meeting with ELCJHL stakeholders to present resolution and hear feedback
 - a. ELCA MENA Desk met with Bishop Dr. Imad Haddad to lift up the CA25.03.13 SPR and heard his feedback. This is an ongoing conversation between the ELCA and the ELCJHL as part of their church-to-church relationship as daily realities on the ground in Palestine and Israel continue to change.
3. Meeting with Association of Lutherans of Arab and Middle East Heritage (ALAMEH) stakeholders to present resolution and hear feedback
 - a. Pastor Khader Khalila met with ALAMEH and presented the resolution for their feedback.
 - b. Official minutes from this review meeting made available.
 - c. Notable points of feedback include:
 - i. Need for youth/young adult engagement about the Palestine and Israel justice context
 - ii. Interest in Arab and Middle East Community (AMEC) representation in Jewish-Muslim-Christian ELCA relationships
 - iii. Interest in AMEC representation in ELCA Advocacy to Congress

4. Ensuring ongoing financial support to ELCJHL and local partners, March 2026
 - a. The ELCA is committed to the work and the ministry of the indigenous Christian community through the ELCJHL. Part of this ELCA priority is to support their work through financial means. This has continued from August 2025 until the present day.

VOTED:

EN BLOC

CC26.04.10q To receive the final report on “Stand for Palestinian Rights and End to Occupation of Palestine” from the Service and Justice unit;
To thank the Middle East North Africa team and the Witness in Society team in the Service and Justice unit for their deep commitment and ongoing engagement of awareness, accompaniment and advocacy; and
To request that the secretary inform the synods of this action.

R. Justice for Palestinians and Israelis

Church Council Action [CC25.10.35]

To receive with gratitude the memorial on “Justice for Palestinians and Israelis” from the Metropolitan Chicago Synod;

To reaffirm this church’s commitment, set forth in the social statement *For Peace in God’s World* (1995), to serve as a reconciling presence, including through promoting respect for human rights, particularly for “groups most susceptible to violations, especially all minorities, women, and children”:

To lament the trauma experienced by Palestinians and Israelis and encourage congregations to recognize and respond to the need to confess shared responsibility for the suffering;

To reaffirm this church’s sense of urgency for ongoing advocacy, awareness, and accompaniment through the Sumud initiative;

To request that the Service and Justice unit, in consultation with the Office of the Presiding Bishop, implement the recommendations in the memorial for continuing accompaniment, awareness-raising, and advocacy efforts to end the Israeli occupation in Palestine, to stop the unconditional supply of weapons and military aid to Israel, and to support and participate fully in the restoration of infrastructure in the Gaza Strip; and

To request that the Service and Justice unit provide a report to the Church Council at its Spring 2026 meeting.

Response from the Service and Justice Unit (April 2026)

The Service and Justice unit, through the Middle East North Africa (MENA) Desk including ELCA Sumud: for Justice in Palestine and Israel, and ELCA Witness in Society, has begun engaging the focus points listed below as directed by the Church Council (CC25.10.35), and the activities, resources, or events facilitated by ELCA Service and Justice’s MENA Desk or ELCA Witness in Society that respond to these foci. Each of these foci reflects points of the CC25.10.13 Social Policy Resolution (SPR) which direct ELCA Service and Justice’s ministry and engagement with the church.

1. Reaffirm ELCA commitment as set forth in *For Peace in God’s World* (1995), to serve as a reconciling presence, including through promoting respect for human rights, particularly for “groups most susceptible to violations, especially all minorities, women, and children”
 - a. Presiding Bishop’s Letter to U.S. President
 - i. Witness in Society (WiS) in coordination with the MENA Desk worked to support the Presiding Bishop in drafting a letter to the White House imploring the US Government

to use all of its available leverage with the Israeli Government to end the genocide in Gaza, in addition to 5 additional requests designed to support peace in the Holy Land, provide humanitarian aid into Gaza, and end the war.

- b. CA25.03.13 Social Policy Resolution (SPR) Resource
 - i. The MENA team created a Resolution Resource about CA25.03.13 SPR Toward Ending the Occupation of Palestine. This resource is designed to offer accessible details and information regarding the CA25.03.13 SPR passed by the 2025 Churchwide Assembly. This resource serves to connect lay leaders, rostered ministers, and bishops to the content of the SPR and the impact it can have on ministry.
- c. ELCA Sumud “Get to Know the ELCJHL” Webinar series, November 2025
 - i. Recordings made available
- d. MENA Desk facilitated Latin American Church Leaders visit to ELCJHL, November 2025
 - i. In November 2025, Desk Director Rev. Gabi Aelabouni of the ELCA Middle East North Africa (MENA) Desk facilitated a visit of thirteen bishops and pastors from Latin American ELCA Church Partners led by Paulina Dasse, ELCA Senior Director for Companion Engagement and Global Personnel, and Rev. Jaime Dubon, director of the ELCA Latin American and Caribbean Desk, to visit and accompany the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL).
- e. Bishop’s Solidarity and Accompaniment Visit to the ELCJHL, January 2026
 - i. In January 2026, the MENA Desk coordinated a Solidarity and Accompaniment visit to the Holy Land for newly elected synodical bishops, as well as the ELCA presiding bishop, to build meaningful relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) and its leaders to raise awareness, including discussing the significance of U.N. Security Council Resolutions and their impact on the dignity and rights of Palestinians, and about the daily realities on the ground.
- f. ELCA Sumud Advent Series, December 2025
- g. ELCA Sumud Children’s Christmas Book, 2025
- h. ELCA Advocacy Action Alert “Express Opposition to Threat of New Yatziv Settlement to Christians in Palestine”
- i. ELCA Sumud Action Alert “Block the Bombs”
- j. ELCA Sumud Action Alert in favor of War Powers Act SJ Res 118
- k. “Faith and Occupation” Webinar, February 2026
 - i. Bishop Jen Nagel of the Minneapolis Area Synod and Rami Khader who works with youth detained by occupation forces in Bethlehem, Palestine, spoke about faith and occupation in their contexts for an hour-long webinar attended by 150 participants.
- l. Sumud Video Educational Resource, 2026
 - i. The ELCA MENA Desk’s ELCA Sumud initiative is working with a local filmmaker in Bethlehem to create a six-video series which will cover important historical context of Palestine and Israel from the 1930s to present day. This resource will offer an in-depth introduction from Christian Palestinian voices in the Holy Land, including many voices from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land. This resource is set to be available Spring 2026.

- m. ELCA 2026 Lenten Series “Body of Christ”
- 2. Lament the trauma experienced by Palestinians and Israelis and encourage congregations to recognize and respond to the need to confess shared responsibility for the suffering
 - a. ELCA Sumud “Get to Know the ELCJHL” Webinar
 - i. Explained in point 1c
 - b. MENA Desk facilitated Latin American Church Leaders visit to ELCJHL, November 2025
 - i. Explained in point 1d
 - c. Bishop’s Solidarity and Accompaniment Visit to the ELCJHL, January 2026
 - i. Explained in point 1e
 - d. ELCA Sumud Advent Series, December 2025
 - e. ELCA Sumud Children’s Christmas Book, 2025
 - f. ELCA Advocacy Action Alert “Express Opposition to Threat of New Yatziv Settlement to Christians in Palestine”
 - g. ELCA Sumud Action Alert “Block the Bombs”
 - h. Sumud Video Educational Resource, 2026
 - i. Explained in point 1l
 - i. ELCA 2026 Lenten Series “Body of Christ”
- 3. Reaffirm ELCA’s sense of urgency for ongoing advocacy, awareness, and accompaniment through the Sumud initiative.
 - a. Presiding Bishop’s Letter to U.S. President
 - i. Explained in 1a
 - b. CA25.03.13 Social Policy Resolution (SPR) Resource
 - i. Explained in 1b
 - c. ELCA Sumud “Get to Know the ELCJHL” Webinar series, November 2025
 - i. Explained in 1c
 - d. MENA Desk facilitated Latin American Church Leaders visit to ELCJHL, November 2025
 - i. Explained in 1d
 - e. Bishop’s Solidarity and Accompaniment Visit to the ELCJHL, January 2026
 - i. Explained in 1e
 - f. ELCA Sumud Advent Series, December 2025
 - g. ELCA Sumud Children’s Christmas Book, 2025
 - h. ELCA Advocacy Action Alert “Express Opposition to Threat of New Yatziv Settlement to Christians in Palestine”
 - i. ELCA Sumud Action Alert “Block the Bombs”
 - j. ELCA Sumud Action Alert in favor of War Powers Act SJ Res 118
 - k. “Faith and Occupation” Webinar, February 2026
 - i. Explained in 1k
 - l. Sumud Video Educational Resource 2026
 - i. Explained in 1i
 - m. ELCA 2026 Lenten Series “Body of Christ”
- 4. Continue accompaniment, awareness-raising, and advocacy efforts to end Israeli occupation in Palestine, to stop the unconditional supply of weapons and military aid to Israel, and to support and participate fully in the restoration of infrastructure in the Gaza Strip

- a. Presiding Bishop's Letter to U.S. President
 - i. Explained in 1a
- b. CA25.03.13 Social Policy Resolution (SPR) Resource
 - i. Explained in 1b
- c. ELCA Sumud "Get to Know the ELCJHL" Webinar series, November 2025
 - i. Explained in 1c
- d. MENA Desk facilitated Latin American Church Leaders visit to ELCJHL, November 2025
 - i. Explained in 1d
- e. Bishop's Solidarity and Accompaniment Visit to the ELCJHL, January 2026
 - i. Explained in 1e
- f. ELCA Sumud Advent Series, December 2025
- g. ELCA Sumud Children's Christmas Book, 2025
- h. ELCA Advocacy Action Alert "Express Opposition to Threat of New Yatziv Settlement to Christians in Palestine"
- i. ELCA Sumud Action Alert "Block the Bombs"
- j. ELCA Sumud Action Alert in favor of War Powers Act SJ Res 118
- k. "Faith and Occupation" Webinar February 2026
 - i. Explained in 1k
- l. Sumud Video Educational Resource 2026
 - i. Explained in 1i
- m. ELCA 2026 Lenten Series "Body of Christ"

VOTED:

EN BLOC

CC26.04.10r To receive the report on "Justice for Palestinians and Israelis" from the Service and Justice unit;

To commend the Service and Justice unit for its effective implementation of the recommendations in the memorial as well as its continued accompaniment, awareness-raising, and advocacy efforts; and

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

S. Mission Development Process

Churchwide Assembly Action [CA22.01.10]

To receive with gratitude the memorial on "Equity and Clarity in the Mission Development Process" from the Delaware-Maryland Synod;

To refer this memorial to the Congregational Vitality Training and Development team in the Christian Community and Leadership home area to establish a working group in partnership with the appropriate leaders in the Delaware-Maryland Synod to study and refine current ELCA guidelines and systems for appointments, calls, funds, and support mechanisms for mission developers and new ministries; and

To request that the working group consult with and provide regular reports to the Church Council beginning by Fall 2023 to ensure that the purposes and objectives of this memorial are being fulfilled.

Response from the Christian Community and Leadership Home Area (November 2022)

The ELCA Christian Community and Leadership home area Congregational Vitality Training and Development team leaders have contacted Delaware-Maryland Synod staff to create a working group in partnership with Delaware-Maryland Synod leaders who composed this memorial. The Rev. Sandra

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Chrostowski, senior director, Congregational Vitality, and New Ministry Training and Development, and the Rev. Ruben Duran, senior advisor for New Ministry Development, have been appointed as conveners of this working group which will identify partners across this church for consultation and collaboration with the goal of scheduling an online meeting during the first quarter of 2023.

This working group will study and refine current ELCA guidelines and systems in place for appointments, calls, funding, and support mechanisms for mission developers and new ministries. The working group will also provide regular reports, beginning at the Fall 2023 Church Council meeting, to ensure that the purposes and objectives of this memorial are being fulfilled.

Church Council Action [CC22.11.34.q]

To receive the progress report on “Equity and Clarity in the Mission Development Process” from the Christian Community and Leadership home area;

To request a progress report on the work by the Fall 2023 Church Council meeting; and

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

Response from the Christian Community and Leadership Home Area (November 2023)

In the beginning of 2023, there was a leadership transition and team realignment. Late in June the new senior director was hired. With a new senior director came new priorities, one of which was to gain understanding of the grants and grants processes. An audit of the New Starts grants began in July and is nearing completion, then a team will evaluate and redesign the granting process. This team will be made of current Directors for Evangelical Mission, including the Rev. Alejandro Mejia of Delaware-Maryland Synod. The new grants process is scheduled to start next fiscal year. More will be reported by the next spring Church Council meeting.

Church Council Action [CC23.11.20o]

To receive the response on “Equity and Clarity in the Mission Development Process” from the Christian Community and Leadership home area;

To request a progress report on the work by the Spring 2024 Church Council meeting; and

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

Response from the Christian Community and Leadership Home Area (April 2024)

Audit of New Starts grants was finished at the beginning of November 2023. On Nov. 10, the audit results were presented to the Christian Community and Leadership (CCL) Committee of the Church Council. Recruitment of team members was delayed due to the rolling out of the information so it could be shared with the Conference of Bishops (COB). On Feb. 8, 2024, the CCL Committee of the COB was briefed about the audit results and then shared with the whole COB.

On Feb. 22, 2024, the audit results were shared with the Directors for Evangelical Mission (DEMs). Once that was complete DEMs were identified who would be invited to be a part of the Grants Restructure team. Those who accepted the invitation were the Rev. Alejandro Mejia (Delaware-Maryland Synod), Mr. Joey Ager (Southwestern Washington Synod), the Rev. Herb Shao (Northwest Washington Synod), Mr. Branden Dupree (Metropolitan New York Synod), the Rev. Rebel Hurd (Northwestern Minnesota Synod), the Rev. Matt Short (Greater Milwaukee Synod), and the Rev. Miguel F. Gomez-Acosta (CCL). Two bishops will be invited into the conversations but have yet to be identified. All team members have agreed to meet in fiscal year 2024 to have final results for fiscal year 2025.

Church Council Action [CC24.04.09d]

To receive the response on “Equity and Clarity in the Mission Development Process” from the Christian Community and Leadership home area;

To request a final report by the Spring 2026 Church Council meeting; and

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

Response from the Christian Community and Leadership Unit (April 2026)

In June 2025, CCL formed a task force comprising DEMs and New Ministry Development and Evangelism staff designed to respond directly to Delaware-Maryland Synod’s memorial adopted by the 2022 Churchwide Assembly [CA22.01.10]. This task force evolved from the grant restructuring working group. In 2025, this task force determined that supporting mission developments requires accompanying the lay leadership teams of new ministries, not only the appointed leader, and it revised annual CCL documents accordingly. In winter 2025, the task force invited three recent mission developers to join the task force. This task force will deliver a final report to Church Council with recommendations by Oct. 31, 2026.

Below is a summary of this task force’s upcoming work and preliminary recommendations.

- The task force will conduct needs assessment and resource gathering surveys of SAWC (Synod Authorized Worshiping Community) and SAOM (Synod Authorized Outdoor Ministry) leaders and DEMs to revise the content of CCL’s mission leadership training workshops and provide more robust resource support outside of training events.
- By Dec. 31, 2026, this task force will work with S&J to develop and distribute a standardized Listening and Learning Engagement Resource Toolkit designed to support DEMs and bishops in culturally responsive engagement with SAWCs and SAOMs, to be piloted in at least two synods in 2027. The objective is to develop a deeper understanding of the unique identity, community values, and leadership model of each ministry.
- The task force recommends coach training for DEMs with a clear expected outcome articulated.
- The task force is thinking about recommending an independent study of cases where ELCA policies and/or procedures have led to mistrust and abuse in SAWCs to identify which policies to change.

The task force members are as follows:

Rev. Miguel Gómez-Acosta, Senior Director, New Ministry Development and Evangelism

Rev. Guillermo Arboleda, Program Manager, New Starts

Rev. Emily Wiles, Manager, New Ministry Development and Evangelism

Rev. Alejandro Mejia, DEM, Delaware-Maryland Synod

Rev. Judy Brennan, DEM, Northwest Washington Synod

Rev. Jonathan Vehar, DEM, South Dakota Synod

Rev. Jenny Kim, Light of Grace Korean Ministry, Southwest Washington Synod

Rev. Shanitria Cuthbertson, Emmaus, North Carolina Synod

Rev. Patty Avila, Assistant to the Bishop, Metropolitan New York Synod

VOTED:

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CC26.04.10s To receive the response on “Equity and Clarity in the Mission Development Process” from the Christian Community and Leadership unit and to anticipate a final report from the Mission Development Support Task Force to be presented to the November 2026 Church Council meeting; and

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION: LEGAL BRIEFING

(Agenda I.M.)

The 122nd meeting of the Church Council entered into executive session for a legal briefing at 8:35 p.m. Minutes for meetings held in executive session are added to the protocol file in the Office of the Secretary. The council exited executive session at 8:46 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Following a closing prayer, the 122nd meeting of the Church Council of the ELCA adjourned at 8:48 p.m. on April 16, 2026.

DRAFT