



Report of the Memorials Committee

Consideration of Synod Memorials

The proposed Rules of Organization and Procedure (*2016 Pre-Assembly Report*, Section I) define memorials as “proposals for action involving broad policy issues submitted by synod assemblies to the churchwide organization.” To assist the Churchwide Assembly in its task of responding to these proposals, its Memorials Committee reviews all memorials and proposes recommendations for assembly action.

The process for consideration of memorials outlined in this report is intended to assist the assembly in responding to a large number of memorials and will facilitate the scheduling of discussion. It also will make it possible to reproduce substitute motions for distribution to assembly members prior to debate.

The Memorials Committee may recommend that the 2016 Churchwide Assembly:

- vote separately on the proposed responses to certain synodical memorials, allowing the co-chairs to determine the order in which the recommendations are considered; and
- vote on the recommended responses to the remaining synodical memorials as a group (*en bloc*). Note that some memorials are included in this *en bloc* action because the subject matter will come to the floor of the assembly for discussion elsewhere on the agenda.

Recommendation of the Memorials Committee

To approve *en bloc*, with the exception of those memorials considered separately, the following responses to 2014, 2015 and 2016 synod memorials printed in the Report of the Memorials Committee (*2016 Pre-Assembly Report*, Section VII, pages as listed):

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For Separate Consideration

The Memorials Committee recommends that the Churchwide Assembly consider separately the following responses to 2014, 2015 and 2016 synod memorials:

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Category B3: Toward a Responsible Energy Future.	<u>43</u>
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If a voting member desires the assembly to discuss a synod memorial or the Memorials Committee’s response that is proposed for *en bloc* consideration, she or he may request that it be removed from the proposed *en bloc* resolution, provided the member’s request is supported by 10 other voting members. The voting member must submit notification electronically or on a paper form to the secretary of this church or the secretary’s deputy no later than 9:45 p.m., Monday, August 8, 2016, on the form titled Notice Related to Recommendations of the Memorials Committee. The form is available in the ELCA Guidebook app, and paper forms are available from the secretary’s deputy. The assembly then will consider separately the proposed response of the Memorials Committee.

A voting member who desires to offer an amendment or a substitute to a recommendation of the Memorials Committee must submit electronically or on a paper form the Notice Related to Recommendations of Memorials Committee. The text of the proposed amendment or substitute also must be submitted on the Motion Form electronically or on a paper form to the secretary or the secretary’s deputy. Copies of the paper Motion Form may be requested from the secretary’s deputy. Amendments and substitute recommendations must be submitted to the secretary of this church or the secretary’s deputy no later than 9:45 p.m., Monday, August 8, 2016, as established in the Rules of Organization and Procedure for this assembly.

Consultation with at least one of the co-chairs of the Memorials Committee is *required* when a substitute to the response recommended by the Memorials Committee will be proposed. Consultation with one of the co-chairs is *recommended* when proposing an amendment.

Ms. Marjorie B. Ellis, *co-chair*
 Pr. Stephen R. Herr, *co-chair*

Synod Memorials: A Word of Explanation

According to the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, the Churchwide Assembly shall “receive and consider proposals from synod assemblies” (ELCA 12.21.c.). To assist the assembly in carrying out this task, “A Memorials Committee, appointed by the Church Council, shall review memorials from synod assemblies and make appropriate recommendations for assembly action” (ELCA 12.51.21.).

A *memorial* is understood to mean an action of a Synod Assembly *specifically addressed to the Churchwide Assembly*, requesting that a particular action be taken by that body. (Note: *Resolutions* adopted by a Synod Assembly address the ELCA Church Council or a churchwide unit through referral by the Synod Council.)

Meeting in late June 2016, the Memorials Committee reviewed the 111 memorials received from 2014, 2015 and 2016 synod assemblies. The committee grouped those memorials that address the same topic or related concerns in order to facilitate the assembly’s consideration. In each part of this Report of the Memorials Committee you will find three components:

1. Memorials Adopted by 2014, 2015 and 2016 Synod Assemblies

Memorials are listed by region and synod number, according to their constitutional designation. The year in which each memorial was adopted is listed in brackets. Where more than one synod approved the same or a similar memorial, the synods taking such action are listed together.

The memorials are reproduced here in the form in which they were submitted to the secretary of this church. The preamble (the “WHEREAS” clauses) provides information to assist readers to understand the context of the synod’s discussion of the memorial. Attention should be focused, however, on the resolutions (the “RESOLVED” clauses), which make the actual request for action by the Churchwide Assembly.

2. Background Information Provided by the Memorials Committee

The Memorials Committee received information and advice from churchwide staff on the subjects addressed in the various synod memorials. In reporting its recommendations, the committee provides this background information, which voting members may find helpful in making decisions related to the memorials. The Memorials Committee may provide rationale for its recommendations to the Churchwide Assembly where appropriate.

3. Recommendation of the Memorials Committee for Action by the Churchwide Assembly

In each section, the committee’s recommendation for assembly action is printed in boldface type. In certain instances, the proposed action may be to affirm or to decline to approve the action proposed by the synod. In other instances, the committee may recommend referral to the Church Council or to a churchwide unit. In yet other instances, the recommendation may be to convey to the synod the material provided to the assembly as “Background” as the assembly’s response to the memorial.

A synod memorial may address an issue that already is scheduled to be discussed by the assembly at an identified point on its agenda. Rather than suggesting that the Churchwide Assembly discuss an issue twice, the committee recommends that the assembly’s separate action on that issue also serve as the assembly’s response to the synod memorial on that topic.

The Memorials Committee will recommend that some memorials be considered *en bloc*. Action will be taken upon all of the memorials contained in the *en bloc* section by a single vote, without floor debate.

By 9:45 p.m., Monday, August 8, 2016, voting members who wish to remove from the *en bloc* action the Memorial Committee’s response to a synod memorial must notify the secretary of this church or the secretary’s deputy. Likewise, persons intending to offer an amendment or substitution for the committee’s response must notify the secretary and submit a Motion Form with the text of the proposed amendment.

The Order of Business will indicate the times when the recommendations of the Memorials Committee are scheduled to be brought to the floor of the assembly.

NOTE: Synod assemblies also may adopt resolutions on churchwide issues that are *not* considered memorials since they do not address broad policy matters or the Churchwide Assembly directly. For example, a Synod Assembly may adopt a resolution addressed to a particular churchwide unit; the appropriate route for this action is through the Synod Council to the Church Council’s Executive Committee for appropriate referral to churchwide units. Those resolutions addressed to the Church Council will be considered by the Church Council at subsequent meetings. The reader, therefore, may not find in this report all synod assembly actions related to churchwide issues, since some are addressed through other channels.

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Section A Congregational and Synodical Concerns

Category A1: Life of Faith Initiative

1. Nebraska Synod (4A) [2015]

WHEREAS, we seek to embody ever more fully Luther's Reformation call to the ministry of all the baptized; and

WHEREAS, the gospel of Jesus Christ sets God's people free to serve their neighbors in their daily lives in the various arenas God provides — in families, at work and in civil society — working for the common good; and

WHEREAS, all the baptized share a single vocation of loving God and loving neighbors (Matthew 22:36-40) as lived out in various roles and relationships; and

WHEREAS, there is deep yearning, especially among young people, to live meaningful lives; and

WHEREAS, the church, as a gathered and scattered community, needs the leadership of bishops, pastors, associates in ministry, deaconesses and diaconal ministers to reorient the ministries of the institutional church to equip the saints for the work of ministry in daily neighborliness (Ephesians 4:12); and

WHEREAS, the Book of Faith initiative is a model for a grassroots movement in engaging the Bible, the Life of Faith initiative will build upon and extend this effort with a focus on Christian vocation; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has a robust theological education network, including seminaries, colleges, universities, lay schools for ministry, synodical schools, outdoor ministries, campus ministries, a Christian Education Network, congregations and many other entities; and

WHEREAS, this church is rich with a variety of resources for teaching and learning, including print, electronic media, service learning, faith practices, spiritual formation, mentoring, congregational education programs, immersions, experiential learning and other forms of learning; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Nebraska Synod in assembly "reaffirm the universal priesthood of all believers, namely, that all baptized Christians are called to minister in the name of Christ and, empowered by the Holy Spirit, to proclaim the promise of God in the world and in their various callings and to bear God's creative and redeeming word to all the world, to meet human needs, to work for dignity and justice for all people, and peace and reconciliation among the nations..." [1993 Churchwide Assembly action (CA93.6.17), Study of Ministry, Section II. "Ministry of the Baptized," citing the first recommendation, and ELCA constitution 7.11., Ministry of the Baptized People of God]; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Nebraska Synod in assembly encourage its congregations to foster Christian vocation by encouraging and equipping people, from children to adults, to discern and claim their call to speak and live the faith in their daily lives through their many varied forms of service with our neighbors in the family, the workplace and in civil society; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Nebraska Synod in assembly encourage its theological education partners to equip rostered leaders as ministers of the Word to claim their vocation as teachers, forming congregations as teaching and learning communities at the interface of faith and life; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Nebraska Synod in assembly encourage its congregations to experiment, create, and innovate so that the Life of Faith initiative becomes a vital part of their own ministries; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Nebraska Synod in assembly memorialize the Churchwide Assembly to make the Life of Faith initiative a central priority in all ELCA expressions — congregations, synods and churchwide organization; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Nebraska Synod endorse the Life of Faith initiative.

2. Central States Synod (4B) [2015]

WHEREAS, the Reformation was a people's movement built on the conviction that through baptism into Jesus Christ we all have equal status as the beloved and gifted people of God. We live out this baptismal calling by loving and serving the neighbors God gives us in the varied stations of our lives: family, school, workplace, local communities, global engagement and for all of creation. Unfortunately, we risk missing the full potential of this Reformation promise when we primarily focus only on ministry and mission within congregations; and

WHEREAS, the gospel of Jesus Christ sets God's people free to serve their neighbors in their daily lives in the various arenas God provides. All the baptized share that single vocation of loving God and loving neighbors (Matthew 22:36-40) as lived out in various roles and relationships. There exists among us a deep yearning to live meaningful lives. That yearning is often felt strongly by youth, those experiencing life transitions, and all those feeling the nagging tug of the Holy Spirit. To better serve these people, our brothers and sisters in Christ, we seek to embody ever more fully Luther's Reformation call to the ministry of all the baptized. The church as a gathered and scattered community needs the leadership of bishops, pastors, associates in ministry, deaconesses and diaconal ministers to reorient the ministries of the institutional church in order to equip the saints for the work of ministry in daily neighborliness (Ephesians 4:12); and

WHEREAS, the first resolution of the 1993 ELCA Churchwide Assembly action [CA93.6.17], Study of Ministry, Section II. “Ministry of the Baptized,” called for this church to “reaffirm the universal priesthood of all believers, namely, that all baptized Christians are called to minister in the name of Christ and, empowered by the Holy Spirit, to proclaim the promise of God in the world and in their various callings and to bear God’s creative and redeeming Word to all the world, to meet human needs, to work for dignity and justice for all people, and peace and reconciliation among the nations.” This sentiment also reflects provision 7.11. of the ELCA constitution, The Ministry of the Baptized People of God; and

WHEREAS, as the Book of Faith initiative has proven to be a model movement in engaging people of faith with God’s written Word in the Bible, the Life of Faith initiative will build upon and extend this effort with a focus on Christian vocation. This church is already rich with a variety of resources for teaching and learning, including each and every congregation in its local setting, seminaries, colleges, universities, lay schools for ministry, synodical schools, outdoor ministries, campus ministries, a Christian Education Network, print and electronic media and other forms and means of learning; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the 2015 Central States Synod Assembly call upon its congregations to:

- foster Christian vocation by encouraging and equipping people, from children to adults, to discern and claim their call to speak and live the faith in their daily lives through their many varied forms of service with our neighbors in the family, the workplace and in civil society;
- partner with the robust theological education network of the ELCA (including Augsburg Fortress, Publishers) in sharing and curating a wide range of resources that foster the life of faith in the world;
- experiment, create and innovate so that the Life of Faith initiative becomes a vital part of their own ministries; and be it further

RESOLVED, that this assembly memorialize the ELCA Churchwide Assembly to make the Life of Faith initiative a central priority in all its expressions — congregations, synods and churchwide organization — and to ask and encourage the theological education network of the ELCA to collaborate closely in promoting the ministry of all the baptized for the sake of the life of the world and to equip rostered leaders as ministers of the Word to claim their vocation as teachers, forming congregations as teaching and learning communities at the interface of faith and life.

3. Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod (4C) [2015]

WHEREAS, we seek to embody ever more fully Luther’s Reformation call to the ministry of all the baptized; and

WHEREAS, the gospel of Jesus Christ sets God’s people free to serve their neighbors in their daily lives in the various arenas God provides — in families, at work and in civil society — working for the common good; and

WHEREAS, all the baptized share a single vocation of loving God and loving neighbors (Matthew 22:36-40) as lived out in various roles and relationships; and

WHEREAS, there is deep yearning, especially among young people, to live meaningful lives; and

WHEREAS, the church, as a gathered and scattered community, needs the leadership of bishops, pastors, associates in ministry, deaconesses and diaconal ministers to reorient the ministries of the institutional church to equip the saints for the work of ministry in daily neighborliness (Ephesians 4:12); and

WHEREAS, the Book of Faith initiative is a model for a grassroots movement in engaging the Bible, the Life of Faith initiative will build upon and extend this effort with a focus on Christian vocation; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has a robust theological education network, including seminaries, colleges, universities, lay schools for ministry, synodical schools, outdoor ministries, campus ministries, a Christian Education Network, congregations and many other entities; and

WHEREAS, this church is rich with a variety of resources for teaching and learning, including print, electronic media, service learning, faith practices, spiritual formation, mentoring, congregational education programs, immersions, experiential learning and other forms of learning; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod “reaffirm the universal priesthood of all believers, namely, that all baptized Christians are called to minister in the name of Christ and, empowered by the Holy Spirit, to proclaim the promise of God in the world and in their various callings and to bear God’s creative and redeeming word to all the world, to meet human needs, to work for dignity and justice for all people, and peace and reconciliation among the nations...” [1993 Churchwide Assembly action (CA93.6.17), Study of Ministry, Section II. “Ministry of the Baptized,” citing the first recommendation, and ELCA constitution 7.11., Ministry of the Baptized People of God]; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod call upon its congregations to foster Christian vocation by encouraging and equipping people, from children to adults, to discern and claim their call to speak and live the faith in their daily lives through their many varied forms of service with their neighbors in the family, the workplace and civil society; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod ask the theological education network — seminaries, colleges, universities, campus ministries, lay schools and outdoor ministries — to collaborate closely in promoting the ministry of all the baptized for the sake of the life of the world; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod ask its congregations to join in this grassroots initiative in partnership with the robust theological education network of the ELCA (including Augsburg Fortress, Publishers) in sharing and curating a wide range of resources that foster the life of faith in the world; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod encourage the theological education network of the ELCA to equip rostered leaders as ministers of the Word to claim their vocation as teachers, forming congregations as teaching and learning communities at the interface of faith and life; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod call upon its congregations to experiment, create and innovate so that the Life of Faith initiative becomes a vital part of their own ministries; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod memorialize the Churchwide Assembly to make the Life of Faith initiative a central priority in all ELCA expressions — congregations, synods and churchwide organization; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod commit itself to the Life of Faith initiative and report at its next synod assembly the steps taken to implement this resolution.

4. Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod (4F) [2015]

WHEREAS, we seek to embody ever more fully Luther's Reformation call to the ministry of all the baptized; and

WHEREAS, the gospel of Jesus Christ sets God's people free to serve their neighbors in their daily lives in the various arenas God provides: in families, at work and in civil society, working for the common good; and

WHEREAS, all the baptized share a single vocation of loving God and loving neighbors (Matthew 22:33-40) as lived out in various roles and relationships; and

WHEREAS, there is deep yearning, among people, to live meaningful lives; and

WHEREAS, the church, as a gathered and scattered community, needs the leadership of bishops and rostered leaders to reorient the ministries of the institutional church to equip the saints for the work of ministry in daily neighborliness (Ephesians 4:12); and

WHEREAS, the Book of Faith initiative is a model for a grassroots movement in engaging the Bible, the Life of Faith initiative will build upon and extend this effort with a focus on Christian vocation; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has a robust theological education network, including seminaries, colleges, universities, lay schools for ministry, synodical schools, outdoor ministries, campus ministries, a Christian Education Network, congregations and many other entities; and

WHEREAS, our church is rich with a variety of resources for teaching and learning; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the 2015 Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod Assembly call upon congregations to foster Christian vocation by encouraging and equipping people, from children to adults, to discern and claim their call to speak and live the faith in their daily lives through their many varied forms of service with our neighbors in the family, the workplace and in civil society; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2015 Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod Assembly ask the theological education network — seminaries, colleges, universities, campus ministries, lay schools and outdoor ministries — to collaborate closely in promoting the ministry of all the baptized for the sake of the life of the world; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2015 Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod Assembly encourage the theological education network of the ELCA to equip rostered leaders as ministers of the Word to claim their vocation as teachers, forming congregations as teaching and learning communities at the interface of faith and life; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2015 Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod Assembly call upon congregations to experiment, create and innovate so that the Life of Faith initiative becomes a vital part of their own ministries; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2015 Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod Assembly memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to make the Life of Faith initiative a central priority in all its expressions — congregations, synods and churchwide organization.

5. Southeastern Iowa Synod (5D) [2016]

WHEREAS, all the baptized share a single vocation of loving God and loving neighbors (Matthew 22:36-40) as lived out in various roles and relationships of our daily lives; and

WHEREAS, the 2015 Southeastern Iowa Synod Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) reaffirmed the universal priesthood of all believers as a central tenet of our life together as God's people, and urged the commissions, conferences and congregations in the synod to join in conversation and exploration that will lead to new possibilities for equipping all the baptized in our synod for their God-given ministries; and

WHEREAS, the recently released report of the Theological Education Advisory Council (TEAC) calls upon this church to "explore with imagination and resolve how we can organize and unleash the resources of our church to equip the baptized to be voices that speak of love and grace, hope and reconciliation, inclusion and compassion — voices that call for us to heal the world God loves so much," and calls upon this church "to reinvigorate its teaching ministry to equip the baptized for this ministry"; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has a robust theological education network, including seminaries, colleges and universities, lay schools for ministry, synodical schools, outdoor ministries, campus ministries, a Christian Education Network, congregations and many other entities; and

WHEREAS, our church is rich with a variety of resources for teaching and learning, including print, electronic media, service learning, faith practices, spiritual formation, mentoring, congregational education programs, immersions, experiential learning and other forms of learning; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Iowa Synod Assembly affirms the call to action in the recent TEAC report, and directs the Southeastern Iowa Synod Council to ask the new Church Council advisory committee, that was created as a result of the TEAC report, to work with the seminaries to make the ministry of all the baptized a central and fully supported learning outcome in their respective curriculums in order that leaders are able to form congregations as teaching and learning communities that support the interface of faith and life; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Iowa Synod Assembly affirms the recommendation in the TEAC report to “form a common theological education enterprise” that will “support lifelong learning for all the baptized,” and the assembly directs the Southeastern Iowa Synod Council to call upon the new Church Council advisory committee to engage and convene all theological education providers in order that our rich variety of resources for teaching and learning might reach their full potential in the work of equipping all the saints for the work of ministry; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Iowa Synod Assembly memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA to call upon the appropriate churchwide units, agencies, synods, seminaries, congregations and others to fulfill this church’s constitutional commitment to “the equipping and supporting of all its members for their ministries in the world” (ELCA constitutional provision 7.11.) by making the Life of Faith Initiative a priority in all its expressions.

6. Western Iowa Synod (5E) [2015]

WHEREAS, the Gospel of Jesus Christ sets God’s people free to serve their neighbors in their daily lives in the various arenas God provides: in families, at work, and in civil society, working for the common good; and

WHEREAS, all the baptized share a single vocation of loving God and loving neighbors (Matthew 22:36-40) as lived out in various roles and relationships; and

WHEREAS, we seek to embody ever more fully Luther’s Reformation call to the ministry of all the baptized; and

WHEREAS, the church as a gathered and scattered community needs leadership to reorient the ministries of the institutional church to equip the saints for the work of ministry in daily neighborliness (Ephesians 4:12); and

WHEREAS, the ELCA’s ongoing Book of Faith initiative has been an excellent model, and provided quality resources, for a grassroots movement in engaging the Bible, and the Covenant Cluster Task Force on Lay Theological Education is developing a Life of Faith initiative as a continuation of the Book of Faith work; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has a robust theological education network, including congregations, seminaries, colleges and universities, synodical lay schools for ministry, outdoor ministries, campus ministries and many other entities; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Western Iowa Synod “reaffirm the universal priesthood of all believers, namely, that all baptized Christians are called to minister in the name of Christ and, empowered by the Holy Spirit, to proclaim the promise of God in the world and in their various callings and to bear God’s creative and redeeming Word to all the world, to meet human needs, to work for dignity and justice for all people, and peace and reconciliation among the nations” (Study of Ministry: Action of the 1993 Churchwide Assembly); and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Western Iowa Synod call upon congregations to foster Christian vocation by encouraging and equipping people, from children to adults, to discern and claim their call to speak and live the faith in their daily lives through their many varied forms of service with our neighbors in the family, the workplace, and in civil society; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Western Iowa Synod encourage congregations to support the Western Iowa Synod Lay School of Ministry by inviting members to attend and offering them financial and prayer support; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Western Iowa Synod encourage the theological education networks of the ELCA to equip rostered leaders as ministers of the Word to claim their vocation as teachers, forming congregations as teaching and learning communities at the interface of faith and life; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Western Iowa Synod encourage congregational and rostered leaders to participate in theological learning opportunities provided through the synod (i.e., fall convocation, pre-assembly convocation, leadership academy, etc.); and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Western Iowa Synod memorialize the ELCA Churchwide Assembly to make the Life of Faith Initiative a central priority in all its expressions — congregations, synods and the churchwide organization.

7. Northwest Synod of Wisconsin (5H) [2015]

WHEREAS, we seek to embody ever more fully Luther's Reformation call to the ministry of all the baptized; and

WHEREAS, the gospel of Jesus Christ sets God's people free to serve their neighbors in their daily lives in the various arenas God provides — in families, at work and in civil society — working for the common good; and

WHEREAS, all the baptized share a single vocation of loving God and loving neighbors (Matthew 22:36-40) as lived out in various roles and relationships; and

WHEREAS, there is deep yearning, especially among young people, to live meaningful lives; and

WHEREAS, the church, as a gathered and scattered community, needs the leadership of bishops, pastors, associates in ministry, deaconesses and diaconal ministers to reorient the ministries of the institutional church to equip the saints for the work of ministry in daily neighborliness (Ephesians 4:12); and

WHEREAS, the Book of Faith initiative is a model for a grassroots movement in engaging the Bible, the Life of Faith initiative will build upon and extend this effort with a focus on Christian vocation; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has a robust theological education network, including seminaries, colleges, universities, lay schools for ministry, synodical schools, outdoor ministries, campus ministries, a Christian Education Network, congregations and many other entities; and

WHEREAS, this church is rich with a variety of resources for teaching and learning, including print, electronic media, service learning, faith practices, spiritual formation, mentoring, congregational education programs, immersions, experiential learning and other forms of learning; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin "reaffirm the universal priesthood of all believers, namely, that all baptized Christians are called to minister in the name of Christ and, empowered by the Holy Spirit, to proclaim the promise of God in the world and in their various callings and to bear God's creative and redeeming word to all the world, to meet human needs, to work for dignity and justice for all people, and peace and reconciliation among the nations..." [1993 Churchwide Assembly action (CA93.6.17), Study of Ministry, Section II. "Ministry of the Baptized," citing the first recommendation, and ELCA constitution 7.11., Ministry of the Baptized People of God]; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin call upon its congregations to foster Christian vocation by encouraging and equipping people, from children to adults, to discern and claim their call to speak and live the faith in their daily lives through their many varied forms of service with their neighbors in the family, the workplace and civil society; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin ask the theological education network — seminaries, colleges, universities, campus ministries, lay schools and outdoor ministries — to collaborate closely in promoting the ministry of all the baptized for the sake of the life of the world; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin ask its congregations to join in this grassroots initiative in partnership with the robust theological education network of the ELCA (including Augsburg Fortress, Publishers) in sharing and curating a wide range of resources that foster the life of faith in the world; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin encourage the theological education network of the ELCA to equip rostered leaders as ministers of the Word to claim their vocation as teachers, forming congregations as teaching and learning communities at the interface of faith and life; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin call upon its congregations to experiment, create and innovate so that the Life of Faith initiative becomes a vital part of their own ministries; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin memorialize the Churchwide Assembly to make the Life of Faith initiative a central priority in all ELCA expressions — congregations, synods and churchwide organization; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin commit itself to the Life of Faith initiative and report at its next synod assembly the steps taken to implement this resolution.

8. Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod (8A) [2015]

WHEREAS, we seek to embody ever more fully Luther's Reformation call to the ministry of all the baptized; and

WHEREAS, the gospel of Jesus Christ sets God's people free to serve their neighbors in their daily lives in the various arenas God provides — in families, at work and in civil society — working for the common good; and

WHEREAS, all the baptized share a single vocation of loving God and loving neighbors (Matthew 22:36-40) as lived out in various roles and relationships; and

WHEREAS, there is deep yearning, especially among young people, to live meaningful lives; and

WHEREAS, the church, as a gathered and scattered community, needs the leadership of bishops, pastors, associates in ministry, deaconesses and diaconal ministers to reorient the ministries of the institutional church to equip the saints for the work of ministry in daily neighborliness (Ephesians 4:12); and

WHEREAS, the Book of Faith initiative is a model for a grassroots movement in engaging the Bible, the Life of Faith initiative will build upon and extend this effort with a focus on Christian vocation; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has a robust theological education network, including seminaries, colleges, universities, lay schools for ministry, synodical schools, outdoor ministries, campus ministries, a Christian Education Network, congregations and many other entities; and

WHEREAS, this church is rich with a variety of resources for teaching and learning, including print, electronic media, service learning, faith practices, spiritual formation, mentoring, congregational education programs, immersions, experiential learning and other forms of learning; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod “reaffirm the universal priesthood of all believers, namely, that all baptized Christians are called to minister in the name of Christ and, empowered by the Holy Spirit, to proclaim the promise of God in the world and in their various callings and to bear God’s creative and redeeming word to all the world, to meet human needs, to work for dignity and justice for all people, and peace and reconciliation among the nations...” [1993 Churchwide Assembly action (CA93.6.17), Study of Ministry, Section II. “Ministry of the Baptized,” citing the first recommendation, and ELCA constitution 7.11., Ministry of the Baptized People of God]; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod call upon its congregations to foster Christian vocation by encouraging and equipping people, from children to adults, to discern and claim their call to speak and live the faith in their daily lives through their many varied forms of service with their neighbors in the family, the workplace and civil society; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod ask the theological education network — seminaries, colleges, universities, campus ministries, lay schools and outdoor ministries — to collaborate closely in promoting the ministry of all the baptized for the sake of the life of the world; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod ask its congregations to join in this grassroots initiative in partnership with the robust theological education network of the ELCA (including Augsburg Fortress, Publishers) in sharing and curating a wide range of resources that foster the life of faith in the world; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod encourage the theological education network of the ELCA to equip rostered leaders as ministers of the Word to claim their vocation as teachers, forming congregations as teaching and learning communities at the interface of faith and life; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod call upon its congregations to experiment, create and innovate so that the Life of Faith initiative becomes a vital part of their own ministries; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to make the Life of Faith initiative a central priority in all ELCA expressions — congregations, synods and churchwide organization; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod commit itself to the Life of Faith initiative and report at its next synod assembly the steps taken to implement this resolution; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod Committee on Leadership Support address the concerns and spirit of this resolution through the 2015-2017 synodwide wellness emphasis, “Life of Faith: God’s Call. Your Vocation.”

Background

The Life of Faith initiative began out of conversations at the Covenant Cluster Network Gathering in February 2014. A small group of people, convened by the Rev. Craig L. Nesson, academic dean at Wartburg Theological Seminary, Dubuque, Iowa, gathered to go deeper into a conversation of the Cluster Network meeting related to Martin Luther’s notion of the universal priesthood. (Baptism is the source of every baptized Christian’s call to ministry, not ordination.) The intention of the group was to move this discussion into public conversations around the ELCA and not simply leave it as an academic discussion. This group was given the status of a task group of the Covenant Cluster Network and consensus was reached that the Life of Faith Initiative would be an effort of the Covenant Cluster, with hopes that interest would spread to the other Cluster Networks over time. The group was clear that it wanted to remain a grassroots movement within the ELCA and not immediately become a program directed by the ELCA Churchwide Organization. The group was also clear that it wanted to be a logical next step of the Book of Faith, another grassroots movement in the ELCA. Leaders of the Book of Faith Initiative joined early in the discussions of the Life of Faith Initiative.

Early members of the group came from the Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast, Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana Mission Area, Central States synods in Iowa, as well as the Metropolitan Chicago, Northwest Synod of Wisconsin, Indiana-Kentucky and Southwest California synods. Members represented synods, colleges, seminaries, lay schools for ministry and the Book of Faith Initiative. The group expanded over time.

Three major efforts were taken on by this group: 1. Develop a social media presence (a website and Facebook page), 2. Develop a research proposal on congregations that are successful in manifesting this theological tenet in its ministry in order to seek funding from the Louisville Institute and 3. Develop a model resolution for synods to consider at their synod assemblies in 2015 and 2016. The research proposal was not accepted by the Louisville Institute, but the other two goals have been accomplished.

Some current and future plans include a regional event in 2017 that will celebrate the Reformation roots of the Life of Faith Initiative, including the doctrine of universal priesthood. Synods that have adopted Life of Faith memorials will be invited to this gathering. Participants from throughout the ELCA will be welcome, as well. The task group is updating and re-introducing some popular Ministry in Daily Life resources from earlier days of the ELCA, too. Further information, including purpose and vision statements, goals and actions can be found on the Life of Faith Initiative website (www.lifeoffaith.info).

The most comprehensive of the resolutions adopted by synod assemblies came from the Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod. This resolution contains nine resolves, which mirror many of the resolves from the other synods who adopted this resolution. The model resolution created by the Covenant Cluster Network Task Group was not intended solely to be a memorial to the Churchwide Assembly or to elicit action only from the churchwide organization. Thus, some of the resolves direct the congregations and governance structures of the synods who adopted the resolution. The general response to these resolves is a heartfelt gratitude for the partnership and interdependence of these synods and their congregations. This is a grassroots movement to expand awareness of this effort and encourage the ELCA to embrace the universal priesthood through all its expressions.

As the Life of Faith Initiative has been introduced, among rostered and lay persons alike, an implicit assumption persists that a “Life of Faith” conversation is an “us vs. them” conversation. The intention of this resolution is to challenge this assumption, not to entrench it. It addresses this assumption by lifting up our even stronger Lutheran understanding that ministry is meant for all and done by all in the body of Christ, as our governing documents show. We are all in this together, rostered and lay alike. First, the Greek word *laos* signifies the whole people of God, not a subset of the people. Rostered leaders are *laos*, just as every Christian is *laos*! Second, Martin Luther’s insistence, in the notion of universal priesthood, is that the whole *laos* are “priests, bishops and popes.” We are not all on a roster, but, in baptism, we all receive the call to ministry from God in Christ for the sake of the world. In baptism, there is no separation of the body of Christ in “closeness” to God or God’s call, because we are, all of us, Christians. We differ in the roles we have been given (offices), not in where or how each person’s ministry is manifested.

Resolutions adopted by several synod assemblies ground the intention of the resolution and the basis for action within the established documents of the ELCA. It refers to the section on “Ministry of the Baptized” in the Study on Ministry and the first provision in Chapter 7 of the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA* (7.11.) on “Ministry of the Baptized People of God.” It also calls on congregations to “foster Christian vocation” and to live out their faith in their daily lives through varied forms of service to the neighbor.

With regards to making the Life of Faith initiative a central priority, we recognize that Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton, with affirmation from the Church Council and Conference of Bishops, has called this whole church into a time of discernment to consider our future directions and priorities. The communal discernment process is titled, “Called Forward Together in Christ.” This Life of Faith initiative is an important part in the life of this church and should be considered as we continue the conversation of the future of the ELCA.

Recommendation for Assembly Action

To receive with gratitude the memorials of the Nebraska, Central States, Arkansas-Oklahoma, Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast, Southeastern Iowa, Western Iowa, Northwest Wisconsin and Northwestern Pennsylvania synods regarding the Life of Faith Initiative;

To reaffirm the universal priesthood of all believers, namely, that all baptized Christians are called to minister in the name of Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit to proclaim the promise of God in the world and in their various callings, to bear God’s creative and redeeming word to all the world to meet human needs, and to work for dignity and justice for all people, and peace and reconciliation among the nations; and

To acknowledge the November 2015 Church Council action calling for a future directions discernment process now titled “Called Forward Together in Christ” and to commend the Life of Faith initiative to that process.

Category A2: Worship Resources to Bless Same Gender Couples

1. Southeastern Synod (9D) [2014]

WHEREAS, in response to the Southeastern Synod's memorial and memorials from other synods, the ELCA, meeting in assembly (2009), resolved to "commit itself to finding ways to allow congregations that choose to do so to recognize, support, and hold publicly accountable lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships;" and

WHEREAS, since the decision of the Southeastern Synod Assembly of 2000, this synod has been a Reconciled in Christ Synod, which publicly welcomes lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender believers; and

WHEREAS, marriage for same-gender couples is recognized in many states and the District of Columbia; and

WHEREAS, state and federal courts in a number of other states have ruled in favor of extending marriage to same-gender couples; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA, meeting in assembly (2013), overwhelmingly affirmed the commitment made in the social statement *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* toward pastoral responsibilities and advocacy for public policies that support and protect families (pp. 19, 24) and "invited and encouraged conversations and resource sharing" among this church's congregations, and rostered and lay leaders regarding same-gender marriage and its impact on society and ministry [CA13.03.12]; and

WHEREAS, the Church Council has authorized a working group to explore the ELCA's appropriate next steps in carrying out these commitments to pastoral care and to advocacy for public policies that support and protect same-gender couples and their families; and

WHEREAS, as part of the call to this whole church to be engaged in this conversation within various contexts, members and congregations of this synod are encouraged to join the conversation in ways that are meaningful to each; and

WHEREAS, rostered leaders and congregations of this synod seeking guidance in developing effective ways to minister to and with same-gender couples and their families would also benefit from structured opportunities to develop ways to identify and share resources; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod Assembly memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to consider providing worship resources for blessing of same-gender unions that could be used in congregations that choose to participate in a liturgical rite that holds same-gender couples publicly accountable and celebrates their lifelong commitments of love and fidelity.

Background

This memorial is already in the process of being addressed. In addition, the landscape changed dramatically when the Supreme Court of the United States rendered its decision to allow marriage for all persons.

At its November 2015 meeting, the Church Council approved the report of the Ministry to and with Same-Gender Couples and Their Families (M2SGF) working group (in Section VI of the *Pre-Assembly Report*) and referred the group's recommendations to the appropriate units of the churchwide organization for implementation (CC15.11.41). One of the recommendations was the following:

"In light of the dilemma presented in the above preface (see Report and Recommendations of M2SGF Working Group, pg. 15-17) and with a commitment to continue to live in the tension presented therein, the Working Group recommends that the Office of the Presiding Bishop take lead responsibility for identifying or preparing a small collection of supplemental liturgical resources for pastoral use that includes:

- A collection of prayers and words of support to welcome a married same-gender couple in a pastoral setting in which a congregation has chosen not to conduct marriage liturgies.
- Supplemental liturgical resources appropriate for same-gender couples for use within the marriage service of Evangelical Lutheran Worship as a way to continue to live into our commitment 'to finding ways to allow congregations that choose to do so to recognize, support and hold publicly accountable lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships' (CA09.05.24, Resolution 2)." (Report and Recommendations of M2SGF Working Group, pg. 17)

Currently, under the direction of the Office of the Presiding Bishop and the executive for worship, a writing team is working on supplemental liturgical resources. These resources should be made available and publicly released by late summer/early fall 2016. They will be located on the ELCA website, as well as through the websites of Augsburg Fortress and ReconcilingWorks.

Recommendation for Assembly Action

To receive with gratitude the memorial of the Southeastern Synod concerning worship resources for blessing same-gender couples; and

To acknowledge the action of the Church Council to implement through the Office of the Presiding Bishop the recommendations regarding supplemental worship resources for same-gender couples provided by the Ministry to and with Same Gender Couples and Their Families Working Group.

Category A3: Deepening Relationships with Historic Black Churches

1. Southwestern Texas Synod (4E) [2016]

WHEREAS, our Lord Jesus Christ prayed for the unity of the people of God, that they may become completely one (John 17:20-23) and that they be filled with the love of God to give testimony to the world; and

WHEREAS, a central document to Lutherans is the Augsburg Confession. Article VII of the Augsburg Confession states that “the true unity of the church” is present where the gospel is rightly preached and sacraments rightly administered. The ELCA is committed to this model of full communion as an authentic expression of Christian unity; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has formed full communion partnerships with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (1997), the Reformed Church in America (1997), the United Church of Christ (1997), The Episcopal Church (1999), the Moravian Church (1999) and The United Methodist Church (2009); and

WHEREAS, for the ELCA, the characteristics of full communion relationships imply that the gospel allows variety and flexibility in carrying out the theology and mission that we share. These characteristics stress that the church act ecumenically for the sake of the world, not for itself alone. They will include at least the following, some of which exist at earlier stages:

- common confessing of the Christian faith
- mutual recognition of Baptism and a sharing of the Lord’s Supper, allowing for joint worship and an exchangeability of members
- mutual recognition and availability of ordained ministers to the service of all, subject to the disciplinary regulations of other denominations
- common commitment to evangelism, witness and service
- means of common decision-making on critical common issues of faith and life
- mutual lifting of any condemnations that exist between denominations

(<https://www.ELCA.org/Faith/Ecumenical-and-Inter-Religious-Relations/Full-Communion>); and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has affirmed that “to be ecumenical means to be committed to the oneness to which God calls the world in the saving gift of Jesus Christ. It also means to recognize the brokenness of the Church in history and the call of God, especially in this century, to heal this disunity of Christ’s people” (Ecumenism: The Vision of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 1991 policy statement); and

WHEREAS, full communion allows full participation in and full acceptance of the ministries of the other ecumenical partners; and

WHEREAS, we are in a cultural time of strife and disunity due to the effects of the sin of racism and the failure to equally value the lives of people of all races; and

WHEREAS, the leadership of the ELCA has called its membership: to shared confession of the church’s sinful complicity in racism, and to commit itself to confronting and combating racism in church and society, claiming that “because we are sinners as well as saints, we rebuild walls broken down by Christ. We fall back into enslaving patterns of injustice. We betray the truth that sets us free. Because we are saints as well as sinners, we reach for the freedom that is ours in Christ” (Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture, 1993 social statement); and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has engaged in bilateral discourse with both the African Methodist Episcopal Church (1999-2006) and the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (2007-present), resulting in increased mutual understanding and shared commitments, such as the 2006 resource produced jointly by the ELCA and AME Church discourse partners, *Understanding One Another*, and the 2010 *Statement of Mission* adopted by the ELCA Conference of Bishops and the AME Zion Church’s Council of Bishops; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has engaged in seeking racial justice and reconciliation in partnership with national coalitions convened by the Historic Black Churches, including the Black Methodist Coalition and the Conference of National Black Churches; and

WHEREAS, various pastors and congregations within the Southwestern Texas Synod have already begun to answer Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton’s call to confront racism in our communities and our church in the wake of the June 17, 2015, shooting at Mother Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, S.C., by building relationships with local leaders and congregations of Historic Black Churches (one such relationship being shared worship and Bible study between Grace Lutheran and Shorter Chapel AME Church in Giddings); therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Bishop’s Office of the Southwestern Texas Synod appoint an Ecumenical Task Force and chairperson to initiate conversation with leaders of the AME Church in Texas, foster mutual respect and relationship as fellow members of the body of the Christ and explore the possible call to shared ministry; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the rostered leaders of the Southwestern Texas Synod be encouraged to find or create opportunities to worship and study with, pray for, and support leaders and congregations of Historic Black Churches in our synod area; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Texas Synod memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA to call upon the presiding bishop and Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations staff, the Conference of Bishops, and rostered and lay leaders across this church to strengthen and expand our partnerships with Historic Black Churches — building especially upon steps previously taken with our AME Church and AME Zion Church discourse partners – through relationship building, initiatives to confront and combat racism, joint social witness to the gospel through mission and ministry in local and regional settings, and mutual discernment of the possibilities for full communion where it might be appropriate churchwide.

Background

“Ecumenism: The Vision of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,” a policy statement adopted by the 1991 Churchwide Assembly describes several forms and stages of ecumenical relations: 1) ecumenical cooperation; 2) bilateral and multilateral dialogues; 3) preliminary recognition; and 4) full communion. Our engagement to date with the Historic Black Churches has been in the first two stages of ecumenical relations. (See Section VI of the *Pre-Assembly Report*.)

Ecumenical cooperation is when the ELCA “enters into ecumenical relations with church bodies, councils of churches, or other ecumenical agencies based on the evangelical and representative principles” (“Ecumenism,” p. 13). From the outset, the ELCA has engaged in ecumenical cooperation with several of the Historic Black Churches in the United States through conciliar bodies, including The National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA (NCC), the World Council of Churches, and more recently Christian Churches Together.

The ELCA’s responses to the several recent high-profile occurrences of racially motivated discrimination, hatred and violence across our nation have had an important ecumenical dimension. Oftentimes by direct invitation from one or more of the Historic Black Churches, we have participated in several ecumenical events and coalitions seeking to confront racism. In November 2014, the ELCA joined other members of the NCC in making a public statement in Ferguson, Mo., on the eve of the grand jury’s non-indictment ruling. The next month, the ELCA joined the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME Church), the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (AME Zion Church), the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church (CME Church) and other ecumenical partners in Black Lives Matter Sunday.

In June 2015, the tragic shootings at Mother Emmanuel AME Church in Charleston took place at the same time the council of The Lutheran World Federation was meeting. From the Ecumenical Center in Geneva, Switzerland, ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton issued a statement calling for a “day of repentance and mourning,” and the LWF also issued a public statement on the sin of racism. After returning to the United States, Presiding Bishop Eaton was invited to be part of the funeral procession for the Rev. Clementa Pinckney, a graduate of Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary. This was a powerful gesture from AME Church partners, and this moment has continued to resonate within the ELCA and beyond.

In September 2015, ELCA staff and other leaders participated in the Black Methodist Coalition events convened by the AME Church, AME Zion Church, CME Church and the Union American Methodist Episcopal Churches in Washington, D.C. Ms. Kathryn M. Lohre, assistant to the presiding bishop for ecumenical and inter-religious relations, gave a statement at the National Press Club on behalf of Presiding Bishop Eaton and the ELCA. In December 2015, the ELCA co-sponsored the Conference of National Black Churches’ Cross-Racial Dialogue in Charleston, S.C. These and other initiatives will continue to be an important part of our witness to Christian unity in the face of racism. Several heads of churches and ecumenical bodies are currently exploring the possibility of a truth and reconciliation commission to address racism in the United States.

The mandates of bilateral dialogues vary but are entered into “with those who agree with the evangelical and representative principles, confess the Triune God, and share a commitment to ‘ecumenical conversion’...[including] an openness to new possibilities under the guidance of God’s Spirit” (“Ecumenism,” pp. 13-14). The ELCA has bilateral dialogues with the AME Church and the AME Zion Church.

In 1999, the ELCA and the AME Church established a bilateral dialogue that initially sought to address the question: “How has the American experience affected and/or shaped the life of my church?” Subsequent meetings explored topics such as “Protest and Reform: A Study of Martin Luther and Richard Allen,” “Marginality in the Biblical Witness,” and “The Role of the AME Church in American Political Culture.” In 2006, *Understanding One Another: A Congregational Resource* was published in the hope that congregations from both churches would use it to accomplish the goal of manifesting unity. This bilateral discourse has not met since 2006, in part due to budgetary limitations and leadership transitions. In 2016, the ELCA will participate in the AME Church’s celebrations of its bicentennial.

In 2007, the ELCA and the AME Zion Church began a bilateral dialogue that had grown out of engagement between church leaders who became neighbors when Hood Theological Seminary of the AMEZ Church moved to a campus next

to the offices of the ELCA North Carolina Synod in Salisbury. Topics have included the nature of the church, HIV and AIDS-related ministries, seminarian education, and how the complex history of race-relations shapes the mission and ministry of our churches in the North American context today. In 2010, the churches developed a Statement of Mission. (See Section VI of the *Pre-Assembly Report*.) In 2011, a Summit was held to celebrate relationships, explore common mission and present the Statement of Mission. A 2015 meeting of the churches' leaders sought to identify new areas of collaboration, including lifting up the Statement of Mission in new ways and initial planning toward a grassroots engagement strategy. It is with special joy that the 2016 Churchwide Assembly will receive AMEZ Church's Senior Bishop George E. Battle Jr. as one of the preachers, and to welcome along with him several AMEZ Church bishops and leaders as a sign of our growing partnership.

This memorial honors the complex web of relationships, including the important place of our existing bilateral dialogue partners, and the more recent partnerships the ELCA has strengthened with a broader group of ecumenical partners, specifically with regard to our shared anti-racism commitments. It leaves the door open to progress toward further stages of ecumenical relations, without making that the first or sole focus.

It will be important to renew contacts with our Historic Black Church partners at all levels – locally, synodically, and churchwide in order to establish a shared commitment to our relationships and to develop a common vision for any next steps. The African Descent Lutheran Association provides strategic leadership for deepening and expanding these relationships with clergy and lay leaders of Historic Black Churches. The Lutheran Theological Center in Atlanta (LTCA), on the campus of the Interdenominational Theological Center, should increasingly be utilized as a key site for convening and deepening ecumenical relations with the Historic Black Churches and other communions. The LTCA exists as evidence of the ways in which the ELCA has recognized the importance relationship with the Historic Black Churches.

It will also be important to engage in internal dialogue and discernment about our ELCA commitments to anti-racism, as well as to ecumenism. Presiding Bishop Eaton's recent initiatives to confront racism, and other synodical and congregational efforts (both longstanding and more recent) can be built upon. New models for ecumenical relations may need to be explored as we consider how to manifest visible unity in light of the necessity for racial justice and reconciliation in church and society. Staff capacity and budget are limitations, but should not be understood as stumbling blocks to cultivating and nourishing these precious relationships.

Recommendation for Assembly Action

To receive with gratitude the memorial of the Southwestern Texas Synod calling for the Deepening of Relationships with the Historic Black Churches;

To refer the memorial to the presiding bishop and appropriate churchwide staff to develop a churchwide strategy for deepening relationships with Historic Black Churches in consultation with the African Descent Lutheran Association, Conference of Bishops, Church Council and ecumenical partners;

To encourage synod leaders to initiate and/or continue local efforts to strengthen and expand partnerships with Historic Black Churches in consultation with synod bishops, synod leaders of the African Descent Lutheran Association and synod members of the Lutheran Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Representatives Network; and

To encourage congregations to initiate and/or continue their efforts to strengthen and expand partnerships with Historic Black Churches.

Category A4: African Descent Lutherans

1. Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod (4C) [2016]

RESOLVED, that the Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod Assembly memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) to include as part of its observance of the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation and the commemoration of the United Nation's International Decade of People of African Descent the following:

1. Direct the Church Council to create a "Declaration of the ELCA to the African Descent Community" similar to the "Declaration of the ELCA to the Jewish Community" (April 18, 1994) acknowledging the Lutheran church's complicity in more than 400 years of slavery and the oppression of other marginalized groups; that people of African descent were victims of slavery, the slave trade and colonialism and continue to be victims of its consequences; and, the ELCA has perpetuated racism and discrimination through attitudes, actions, policies and practices these communities still endure. The council will bring this "Declaration" to the 2019

Churchwide Assembly for its consideration and action with a recommendation to include this Declaration in the governing documents of the ELCA;

2. Direct the Church Council to work with the seminaries and other academic institutions of our church in partnership with the Conference of International Black Lutherans (CIBL) to recognize and dismantle white hegemony by lifting up, encouraging and incorporating the academic exploration of Black Liberation Theology and required anti-racism training as part of their curriculum and to develop resources for accomplishing this by the 2019 Churchwide Assembly; and
3. Direct the Church Council to require the Domestic Mission unit of the ELCA, to work in partnership with the African Descent Lutheran Association to increase by 10 percent the number of African descent leaders, congregations and communities served, thereby renewing its commitment (African Descent Ministry Strategy, 2005 Churchwide Assembly, CA05.04.16) to create, sustain, reinvest in and support this plan of action by the 2019 Churchwide Assembly.

2. Metropolitan Chicago Synod (5A) [2016]

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan Chicago Synod Assembly memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) to include as part of its observance of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation and the commemoration of the United Nation's International Decade of People of African Descent the following:

1. Direct the Church Council to create a "Declaration of the ELCA to the African Descent Community" similar to the "Declaration of the ELCA to the Jewish Community (April 18, 1994)" acknowledging the Lutheran church's complicity in more than 400 years of slavery and the oppression of other marginalized groups; that people of African descent were victims of slavery, the slave trade and colonialism and continue to be victims of its consequences; and that the ELCA has perpetuated racism and discrimination through attitudes, actions, policies and practices these communities still endure. The Church Council will bring this "Declaration" to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly for its consideration and action with a recommendation to include this Declaration in the governing documents of the ELCA;
2. Direct the Church Council to require the Theological Education Advisory Council in partnership with the Conference of International Black Lutherans (CIBL) to recognize and dismantle white hegemony by lifting up, encouraging and incorporating academic exploration of Black Liberation theology across ELCA educational expressions, to allocate funds for the development of resources and to accomplish this by the 2019 Churchwide Assembly; and
3. Direct the Church Council to require the Domestic Mission unit of the ELCA to work in partnership with the African Descent Lutheran Association to increase by 10 percent the number of African descent leaders, congregations and communities served, thereby renewing its commitment (African Descent Ministry Strategy, 2005 Churchwide Assembly, CA05.04.16) to create, sustain, reinvest in and support this plan of action by the 2019 Churchwide Assembly and to encourage synods and congregations to do likewise.

3. Southeast Michigan Synod (6A) [2016]

RESOLVED, that the Southeast Michigan Synod Assembly memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) to include, as part of its observance of the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation and the commemoration of the United Nation's International Decade of People of African Descent, the following:

1. Direct the Church Council to create a "Declaration of the ELCA to the African Descent Community" similar to the "Declaration of the ELCA to the Jewish Community" (4/18/1994), acknowledging the Lutheran church's complicity in the more than 400 years of slavery and the oppression of other marginalized groups; that people of African descent were victims of slavery, the slave trade and colonialism and continue to be victims of its consequences; and the ELCA has perpetuated racism and discrimination through attitudes, actions, policies and practices these communities still endure. The Council will bring this "Declaration" to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly for its consideration and action with a recommendation to include this Declaration in the governing documents of the ELCA.
2. Direct the Church Council to require the Theological Education Advisory Council (TEAC) in partnership with the Conference of International Black Lutherans (CIBL) to recognize and dismantle white hegemony by lifting up, encouraging and incorporating academic exploration of Black Liberation theology across ELCA educational

expressions, to allocate funds for the development of resources and to accomplish this by the 2019 Churchwide Assembly.

3. Direct the Church Council to require the Domestic Mission unit of the ELCA to work in partnership with the African Descent Lutheran Association to increase by 10 percent the number of African Descent leaders, congregations and communities served, thereby renewing its commitment (African Descent Ministry Strategy, 2005 Churchwide Assembly, CA05.04.16) to create, sustain, reinvest in and support this plan of action by the 2019 Churchwide Assembly and to encourage synods and congregations to do likewise.

4. New Jersey Synod (7A) [2016]

WHEREAS, the United Nations declared 2015-2024 the “International Decade for People of African Descent.” African American, African Caribbean and African national communities of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) are gifted and culturally diverse, represented by more than 200 million people living in the Americas. Whether as descendants of the transatlantic slave trade or as more recent migrants, people of African descent constitute some of the poorest and most marginalized groups with limited access to quality education, health services, housing and social services; and

WHEREAS, people of African descent represent 13 percent of the total population of the United States of America. Within the ELCA more than 46,100 members identify as people of African descent — 1.9 percent of the ELCA’s total membership; and

WHEREAS, as the ELCA prepares to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, the political, social and economic injustices affecting African descent communities still remain largely invisible to a society indifferent to black life. The legacy of slavery, post-Reconstruction “Jim Crow” laws and racial subordination in the United States remains a “serious challenge,” as there has been no real commitment to recognition and reparations for people of African descent. Despite many advances by people of African descent within the ELCA and society, racism and racial discrimination, both direct and indirect, *de facto* and *de jure*, continue to manifest themselves in inequality and disadvantage; and

WHEREAS, the 1993 Churchwide Assembly adopted the social statement “Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture” as a confession of the sin of racism. However, Black Liberation Theology is often rejected and avoided within not all but many Lutheran academic institutions. African descent rostered leaders acquire higher education debt, wait longer to receive calls, are less likely to receive full-time calls and are less likely to reach synod compensation guidelines; and

WHEREAS, the majority of African descent ELCA congregations were birthed out of “white flight,” a divestment from urban areas, taking socioeconomic resources and abandoning a connection, call and witness. What is left are deteriorating, debt-filled buildings with shrinking memberships, in part due to the systemic and structural issues of discrimination and lack of full inclusion of all gifts of leadership and worship styles; and

WHEREAS, the African descent community is within a denomination that affirms, “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28). We are called to be a church that embraces each person and confronts racial, ethnic, cultural, religious, age, gender, familial, sexual orientation, physical, personal and class barriers that often manifest themselves in unjust treatment, inequalities, exclusion and violence. According to ELCA bylaw 7.31.12., “Consistent with the faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, every ordained minister shall speak publicly to the world in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, calling for justice and proclaiming God’s love for the world.” Justification by faith is a principle of scripture and Lutheran identity for all races, ethnicities, genders, gender identities, sexual orientation, class, cultures or nationalities; and

WHEREAS, people of African descent acknowledge the experiences of other communities of color and the oppression they have suffered, i.e., the Doctrine of Discovery (1493), the Indian Removal Act (1830), the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882), Executive Order of 1942 (Japanese internment) and numerous other institutional acts of discrimination, and stand together with them as they strive for justice and complete inclusion in the world and Christ’s Church; and

WHEREAS, the New Jersey Synod in assembly has proclaimed and affirmed that diversity and respect are among the Core Values of the New Jersey Synod; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the New Jersey Synod Assembly memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) to be intentional in the inclusion of the contributions of African descent Lutherans as part of the ELCA’s observation of the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the New Jersey Synod Assembly memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA to:

1. Direct the Church Council to create a “Declaration of the ELCA to the African Descent Community” similar to the “Declaration of the ELCA to the Jewish Community” (April 18, 1994) acknowledging the Lutheran church’s complicity in more than 400 years of slavery and the oppression of other marginalized groups; that people of African descent were victims of slavery, the slave trade and colonialism and continue to be victims of its consequences; and, the ELCA has perpetuated racism and discrimination through attitudes, actions, policies and practices these communities still endure. The council will bring this “Declaration” to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly for its consideration and action with a recommendation to include this Declaration in the governing documents of the ELCA;

2. Require the Church Council to direct the Theological Education Advisory Council (TEAC) in partnership with the Conference of International Black Lutherans (CIBL) to recognize and dismantle white hegemony by lifting up, encouraging and incorporating academic exploration of Black theologies across ELCA educational expressions, to allocate funds for the development of resources and to accomplish this by the 2019 Churchwide Assembly; and
3. Require the Church Council to direct the Domestic Mission unit of the ELCA to work in partnership with the African Descent Lutheran Association, with the goal of increasing by 10 percent the number of African descent leaders, congregations and communities served, thereby renewing its commitment to create, sustain, reinvest in and support this plan of action by the 2019 Churchwide Assembly and to encourage synods and congregations to do likewise; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Church Council direct synods and congregations to provide clear policies on workplace harassment and discrimination (including racial harassment and discrimination) and to create clear procedures on how to proceed with any complaints that may arise.

5. Metropolitan New York Synod (7C) [2016]

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan New York Synod Assembly memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) to include as part of the ELCA's observance of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation and the commemoration of the United Nation's International Decade of People of African Descent the following:

1. Request the Church Council to create a "Declaration of the ELCA to the African Descent Community" similar to the "Declaration of the ELCA to the Jewish Community (April 18, 1994)" acknowledging the Lutheran church's complicity in more than 400 years of slavery and the oppression of other marginalized groups; that people of African descent were victims of slavery, the slave trade and colonialism and continue to be victims of its consequences; and that the ELCA has perpetuated racism and discrimination through attitudes, actions, policies and practices these communities still endure. The Church Council will bring this "Declaration" to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly for its consideration and action with a recommendation to include this Declaration in the governing documents of the ELCA;
2. Request the Church Council to require the Theological Education Advisory Council in partnership with the Conference of International Black Lutherans (CIBL) to recognize and dismantle white hegemony by lifting up, encouraging and incorporating academic exploration of Black Liberation theology across ELCA educational expressions, to allocate funds for the development of resources and to accomplish this by the 2019 Churchwide Assembly; and
3. Request the Church Council to require the Domestic Mission unit of the ELCA, to work in partnership with the African Descent Lutheran Association to increase by 10 percent the number of African descent leaders, congregations and communities served, thereby renewing its commitment (African Descent Ministry Strategy, 2005 Churchwide Assembly, CA05.04.16) to create, sustain, reinvest in and support this plan of action by the 2019 Churchwide Assembly and to encourage synods and congregations to do likewise.

6. Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod (7E) [2016]

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) to include, as part of its observance of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation and the commemoration of the United Nation's International Decade of People of African Descent, the following:

1. Direct the Churchwide Assembly to create a "Declaration of the ELCA to the African Descent Community" similar to the "Declaration of the ELCA to the Jewish Community (April 18, 1994)" acknowledging the Lutheran church's complicity in more than 400 years of slavery and the oppression of other marginalized groups; that people of African descent were victims of slavery, the slave trade and colonialism and continue to be victims of its consequences; and the ELCA has perpetuated racism and discrimination through attitudes, actions, policies and practices these communities still endure. This declaration shall be brought to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly for its consideration and action with a recommendation to include this declaration in the governing documents of the ELCA;
2. Direct the Churchwide Assembly to require the Theological Education Advisory Council (TEAC) in partnership with the Conference of International Black Lutherans (CIBL) to recognize and dismantle white hegemony by lifting up, encouraging and incorporating academic exploration of Black Liberation theology across ELCA

educational expressions, to allocate funds for the development of resources and to accomplish this by the 2019 Churchwide Assembly; and

3. Direct the Churchwide Assembly to require the Domestic Mission unit of the ELCA, to work in partnership with the African Descent Lutheran Association to increase by 10 percent the number of African descent leaders, congregations and communities served, thereby renewing its commitment (African Descent Ministry Strategy, 2005 Churchwide Assembly, CA05.04.16) to create, sustain, reinvest in and support this plan of action by the 2019 Churchwide Assembly and to encourage synods and congregations to do likewise.

7. Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod (7F) [2016]

WHEREAS, the United Nations declared 2015-2024 the “International Decade for People of African Descent.” African American, African Caribbean and African national communities of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) are gifted and culturally diverse, represented by more than 200 million people living in the Americas. Whether as descendants of the transatlantic slave trade or as more recent migrants, people of African descent constitute some of the poorest and most marginalized groups with limited access to quality education, health services, housing and social services. People of African descent represent 13 percent of the total population of the United States of America. Within the ELCA more than 46,100 members identify as people of African descent — 1.9 percent of the ELCA’s total membership; and

WHEREAS, as the ELCA prepares to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, the political, social and economic injustices affecting African descent communities still remain largely invisible to a society indifferent to black life. The legacy of slavery, post-Reconstruction “Jim Crow” laws and racial subordination in the United States remains a “serious challenge,” as there has been no real commitment to recognition and reparations for people of African descent. Despite many advances by people of African descent within the ELCA and society, racism and racial discrimination, both direct and indirect, *de facto* and *de jure*, continue to manifest themselves in inequality and disadvantage; and

WHEREAS, the 1993 Churchwide Assembly adopted the social statement “Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture” as a confession of the sin of racism. However, Black Liberation Theology is often rejected and avoided within not all but many Lutheran academic institutions. African descent rostered leaders acquire higher education debt, wait longer to receive calls, are less likely to receive full-time calls and are less likely to reach synod compensation guidelines. The majority of African descent ELCA congregations were birthed out of “white flight,” a divestment from urban areas, taking socioeconomic resources and abandoning a connection, call and witness. What is left are deteriorating, debt-filled buildings with shrinking memberships, in part due to the systemic and structural issues of discrimination and lack of full inclusion of all gifts of leadership and worship styles; and

WHEREAS, the African descent community is within a denomination that affirms, “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28). We are called to be a church that embraces each person and confronts racial, ethnic, cultural, religious, age, gender, familial, sexual orientation, physical, personal and class barriers that often manifest themselves in unjust treatment, inequalities, exclusion and violence. According to ELCA bylaw 7.31.12., “Consistent with the faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, every ordained minister shall speak publicly to the world in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, calling for justice and proclaiming God’s love for the world.” Justification by faith is a principle of scripture and Lutheran identity for all races, ethnicities, genders, gender identities, sexual orientation, class, cultures or nationalities; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) to include, as part of its observance of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation and the commemoration of the United Nation’s International Decade of People of African Descent, the following:

1. Request the Churchwide Assembly to create a “Declaration of the ELCA to the African Descent Community” similar to the “Declaration of the ELCA to the Jewish Community (April 18, 1994)” acknowledging the Lutheran church’s complicity in more than 400 years of slavery and the oppression of other marginalized groups; that people of African descent were victims of slavery, the slave trade and colonialism and continue to be victims of its consequences; and the ELCA has perpetuated racism and discrimination through attitudes, actions, policies and practices these communities still endure. This declaration shall be brought to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly for its consideration and action with a recommendation to include this declaration in the governing documents of the ELCA;
2. Request the Churchwide Assembly to require those who provide oversight and support for theological education in the ELCA in partnership with the Conference of International Black Lutherans (CIBL) to recognize and dismantle white hegemony by lifting up, encouraging and incorporating academic exploration of Black Liberation theology across ELCA educational expressions, to allocate funds for the development of resources and to accomplish this by the 2019 Churchwide Assembly; and
3. Request the Churchwide Assembly to require the Domestic Mission unit of the ELCA, to work in partnership with the African Descent Lutheran Association to increase by 10 percent the number of African descent leaders,

congregations and communities served, thereby renewing its commitment (African Descent Ministry Strategy, 2005 Churchwide Assembly, CA05.04.16) to create, sustain, reinvest in and support this plan of action by the 2019 Churchwide Assembly and to encourage synods and congregations to do likewise.

8. Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod (8G) [2016]

WHEREAS, African American, African Caribbean and African national communities of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) are gifted and culturally diverse. Within the ELCA there are more than 46,100 members that identify as people of African descent, or 1.9 percent of the ELCA's total membership; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA African descent community is within a denomination that affirms: "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ" (Galatians 3:28). We are called to be a church that embraces each person and confronts racial, ethnic, cultural, religious, age, gender, familial, sexual orientation, physical, personal and class barriers that often manifest themselves in unjust treatment, inequalities, exclusion and violence; and

WHEREAS, the United Nations declared 2015-2024 the "International Decade for People of African Descent." Whether as descendants of the transatlantic slave trade or as more recent migrants, people of African descent constitute some of the poorest and most marginalized groups with limited access to quality education, health services, housing and social services; and

WHEREAS, the 1993 ELCA Churchwide Assembly adopted the social statement "Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity and Culture" as a confession of the sin of racism. Despite many advances by people of African descent within the ELCA and society, racism and racial discrimination, both direct and indirect, de facto and de jure, continue to manifest themselves in inequality and disadvantage; and

WHEREAS, African descent theologians and scholars are often rejected and avoided within not all but many Lutheran academic institutions. African descent rostered leaders acquire higher education debt, wait longer to receive calls, are less likely to receive full-time calls, and less likely to reach synod compensation guidelines; and

WHEREAS, the majority of African descent ELCA congregations were birthed out of "white flight," a divestment from urban areas, taking socioeconomic resources and abandoning a connection, call and witness. What is left are deteriorating, debt-filled buildings with shrinking memberships, in part due to the systemic and structural issues of discrimination and lack of full inclusion of African descent gifts of leadership and worship styles; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod Assembly memorialize the 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to include, as part of its observance of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation and the commemoration of the United Nation's International Decade of People of African Descent, the following:

1. Direct the ELCA Church Council to create a "Declaration of the ELCA to the African Descent Community" similar to the "Declaration of the ELCA to the Jewish Community (April 18, 1994)" acknowledging the Lutheran church's complicity in more than 400 years of slavery and the oppression of other marginalized groups; that people of African descent were victims of slavery, the slave trade and colonialism and continue to be victims of its consequences; and the ELCA has perpetuated racism and discrimination through attitudes, actions, policies and practices these communities still endure. The council will bring this declaration to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly for its consideration and action with a recommendation to include this declaration in the governing documents of the ELCA;
2. Direct the ELCA Church Council to require those who provide oversight and support for theological education in partnership with the Conference of International Black Lutherans (CIBL) to recognize and dismantle white hegemony by lifting up, encouraging and incorporating academic exploration of Black Liberation theology across ELCA educational expressions, to allocate funds for the development of resources and to accomplish this by the 2019 Churchwide Assembly; and
3. Direct the ELCA Church Council to require the Domestic Mission unit of the ELCA to work in partnership with the African Descent Lutheran Association to increase by 10 percent the number of African descent leaders, congregations and communities served, thereby renewing its commitment (African Descent Ministry Strategy, 2005 Churchwide Assembly, CA05.04.16) to create, sustain, reinvest in and support this plan of action by the 2019 Churchwide Assembly and to encourage synods and congregations to do likewise.

9. North Carolina Synod (9B) [2016]

RESOLVED, that the North Carolina Synod Assembly memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) to include as part of its observance of the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation and the commemoration of the United Nation's International Decade of People of African Descent the following actions:

1. Direct the Church Council to create a "Declaration of the ELCA to the African Descent Community" similar to the "Declaration of the ELCA to the Jewish Community" (April 18, 1994) acknowledging the Lutheran church's complicity in more than 400 years of slavery and the oppression of other marginalized groups; that

people of African descent were victims of slavery, the slave trade and colonialism and continue to be victims of its consequences; and that the ELCA has perpetuated racism and discrimination through attitudes, actions, policies and practices these communities still endure. The Church Council will bring this “Declaration” to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly for its consideration and action with a recommendation to include this declaration in the governing documents of the ELCA;

2. Direct the Church Council to direct the Theological Education Advisory Council, in partnership with the Conference of International Black Lutherans (CIBL), to recognize and dismantle white hegemony by lifting up, encouraging and incorporating academic exploration of Black Liberation Theology across ELCA educational expressions, to allocate funds for the development of resources and to accomplish this by the 2019 Churchwide Assembly; and
3. Direct the Church Council to require the Domestic Mission unit of the ELCA to work in partnership with the African Descent Lutheran Association to increase by 10 percent the number of African descent leaders, congregations and communities served, thereby renewing its commitment (African Descent Ministry Strategy, 2005 Churchwide Assembly, CA05.04.16) to create, sustain, reinvest in and support this plan of action by the 2019 Churchwide Assembly and to encourage synods and congregations to do likewise.

10. Southeastern Synod (9D) [2016]

WHEREAS, the United Nations declared 2015-2024 the “International Decade for People of African Descent”;

WHEREAS, African American, African Caribbean and African national communities of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) are gifted and culturally diverse, represented by more than 200 million people living in the Americas; and

WHEREAS, whether as descendants of the transatlantic slave trade or as more recent migrants, people of African descent constitute some of the poorest and most marginalized groups with limited access to quality education, health services, housing and social services; and

WHEREAS, people of African descent represent 13 percent of the total population of the United States of America and within the ELCA more than 46,100 members identify as people of African descent or 1.9 percent of the ELCA’s total membership; and

WHEREAS, as the ELCA prepares to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, the political, social and economic injustices affecting African descent communities still remain largely invisible to a society indifferent to black life; and

WHEREAS, the legacy of slavery, post-Reconstruction “Jim Crow” laws and racial subordination in the United States remains a “serious challenge,” as there has been no real commitment to recognition and reparations for people of African descent; and

WHEREAS, despite many advances by people of African descent within the ELCA and society, racism and racial discrimination, both direct and indirect, *de facto* and *de jure*, continue to manifest themselves in inequality and disadvantage; and

WHEREAS, despite the fact that the 1993 Churchwide Assembly adopted the social statement “Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture” as a confession of the sin of racism, Black Liberation Theology is often rejected and avoided within not all but many Lutheran academic institutions; and

WHEREAS, many African descent rostered leaders acquire higher education debt, wait longer to receive calls, are less likely to receive full-time calls and are less likely to reach synod compensation guidelines; and

WHEREAS, many African descent ELCA congregations were birthed out of “white flight,” which resulted in a divestment from urban areas, taking socioeconomic resources and leaving deteriorating, debt-filled buildings with shrinking memberships; and

WHEREAS, this abandonment was due, in part, to the systemic and structural issues of discrimination and lack of full inclusion of all gifts of leadership and worship styles; and

WHEREAS, the Lutheran African descent community is within a denomination that affirms, “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28) and believes itself called to be a church that embraces all people and confronts racial, ethnic, cultural, religious, age, gender, familial, sexual orientation, physical, personal and class barriers that often manifest themselves in unjust treatment, inequalities, exclusion and violence; and

WHEREAS, ELCA bylaw 7.31.12. states, “Consistent with the faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, every ordained minister shall speak publicly to the world in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, calling for justice and proclaiming God’s love for the world”; and

WHEREAS, justification by faith is a principle of scripture and Lutheran identity for all races, ethnicities, genders, gender identities, sexual orientation, class, cultures or nationalities; therefore, be it

RESOLVED that the Southeastern Synod Assembly memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) to include as part of its observance of the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation and the commemoration of the United Nation’s International Decade of People of African Descent the following actions:

1. Direct the Church Council to create a “Declaration of the ELCA to the African Descent Community” similar to the “Declaration of the ELCA to the Jewish Community” (April 18, 1994) acknowledging the Lutheran church’s complicity in more than 400 years of slavery and the oppression of other marginalized groups; that people of African descent were victims of slavery, the slave trade and colonialism and continue to be victims

of its consequences; and that the ELCA has perpetuated racism and discrimination through attitudes, actions, policies and practices these communities still endure; and that the Church Council bring this “Declaration” to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly for its consideration and action with a recommendation to include this declaration in the governing documents of the ELCA;

2. Direct the Church Council to direct the Advisory Committee on Theological Education, in partnership with the Conference of International Black Lutherans (CIBL), to recognize and dismantle white hegemony by lifting up, encouraging and incorporating academic exploration of Black Liberation Theology across ELCA educational expressions, to allocate funds for the development of resources and to accomplish this by the 2019 Churchwide Assembly; and
3. Direct the Church Council to direct the Domestic Mission unit of the ELCA to work in partnership with the African Descent Lutheran Association to increase by 10 percent the number of African Descent leaders, congregations and communities served, thereby renewing its commitment (African Descent Ministry Strategy, 2005 Churchwide Assembly, CA05.04.16) to create, sustain, reinvest in and support this plan of action by the 2019 Churchwide Assembly and to encourage synods and congregations to do likewise.

Background

United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent

The United Nations declared 2015-2024 the “International Decade for People of African Descent.” The theme for the decade is “Recognition, Justice and Development.” African American, African Caribbean and African National communities of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) are gifted and culturally diverse, represented by more than 200 million people living in the Americas. On its [website](#), the United Nations states, “Whether as descendants of the victims of the transatlantic slave trade or as more recent migrants, they constitute some of the poorest and most marginalized groups.... people of African descent still have limited access to quality education, health services, housing and social security.”

People of African descent represent 13 percent of the total population of the United States of America. Within the ELCA, more than 46,100 members identify as people of African descent — 1.9 percent of the ELCA’s total membership.

Black Liberation Theology

Because of the oppressed experience of African descent peoples throughout history, the image of God has often been that of a liberator. The biblical story includes a myriad of stories on oppression and deliverance. The hope for liberation lies in the covenant of God to release the captives. This idea has created theological renderings that show the parallel between the crucified Christ and the oppressed. The Rev. Dr. James Cone, a renowned black theologian, exemplifies this parallel masterfully in his book *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*. This concept of Black Liberation Theology emerged in the turbulent ‘60s when Black Lives were being publicly brutalized, disenfranchised and exterminated. God was not only a liberator, but the black bodies swinging from the lynching trees were the crucified Christ indicting the world once again. The late Rev. Dr. Albert “Pete” Pero – an African descent Lutheran Theologian – exposed the correlation of Lutheran Theology and Black Liberation Theology in *Theology and the Black Experience*, a collection of essays he edited from the September 1986 International Conference of Black Theologians from across the African diaspora. The Conference of International Black Lutherans (CIBL) continues to be a resource for African descent theological scholarship.

500th Anniversary of the Reformation

As the ELCA prepares to celebrate the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation, the political, social and economic injustices affecting African descent communities still remain largely invisible to a society indifferent to black life. The legacy of slavery, post-Reconstruction “Jim Crow” laws, and racial subordination in the United States remains a “serious challenge,” as there has been no real commitment to recognition and reparations for people of African descent. Despite many advances by people of African descent within the ELCA and society, racism and racial discrimination, both direct and indirect, *de facto* and *de jure*, continue to manifest themselves in inequality and disadvantage. The ELCA’s commitment to making space for the voices of people of different races is exemplified in the structure of Ethnic Specific Multicultural Ministries (ESMM) and the Associations for African Descent, American Indian and Alaskan Native, Arab and Middle Eastern, Asian and Pacific Islander, European, and Latino Lutherans.

ELCA Commitments/Positions on Race

Existing Constitutional Provisions, Social Statements and Resolutions

- ELCA constitutional provision **4.02.c.** states: To participate in God’s mission, this church shall “serve in response to God’s love to meet human needs, caring for the sick and the aged, advocating dignity and justice for all people, working for peace and reconciliation among the nations, and standing with the poor and powerless and committing itself to their needs.”
- Approved by the 1993 Churchwide Assembly: “[Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity and Culture](#)“ admits the historic and current complicity of the ELCA in racism.
- Adopted by the Church Council on April 18, 1994: “[Declaration to the ELCA Jewish Community](#)“ admits to complicity and commits to the “increasing cooperation and understanding between Lutheran Christians and Jews.”
- Approved by the 2005 Churchwide Assembly: “[Many Voices Tell the Story](#)“ is the African Descent Ministry Strategy. The Black church emerged in response to racism and as an affirmation of “God’s given dignity and worth because People of African descent were systemically denied full participation in every aspect of life including religion” (*page 6*). The strategy was developed as a partial attempt to address racism and other “isms.”
- Approved by the 2009 Churchwide Assembly: “Fullness of Leadership: Project Connect” resolution recognized the “immense contribution of peoples of color within and beyond the church” despite the inequity in opportunity and compensation caused by racism.

As stated above, the U.N. theme defines the three primary foci: Recognition, Justice and Development. Consistent with the “recognition” theme of the U.N.’s “International Decade for People of African Descent,” we support the resolve to acknowledge the Lutheran church’s complicity in more than 400 years of slavery, oppression and marginalization by creating a “Declaration of the ELCA to the African Descent Community” similar to the declaration made to the [Jewish Community](#) in 1994.

In light of recognizing the ELCA’s discrimination against people of African descent, it would be important to review the policies and practices which perpetuate racism and discrimination.

Regarding the resolve specific to the recent work of the Theological Education Advisory Council (TEAC), this resolve is consistent with the “justice” theme of the U.N.’s “International Decade for People of African Descent.”

The charge of TEAC was “to consider how our interdependent network of theological education providers can best serve the church as it seeks to address in a holistic manner, issues in leadership development, theological education, candidacy and call, and the rosters of this church” (CC13.04.12). At its April 2016 meeting, the Church Council took a number of actions to implement the recommendations and implementing strategies proposed by TEAC including the recommendation to develop networked theological education programs, resources and opportunities for ethnic-specific communities (TEAC Recommendation 2B). As part of its action, the council created a new advisory committee to the Church Council (hereafter the Advisory Committee) on theological education (CC16.04.05). This Advisory Committee is charged with sustaining “a robust network of theological education for the ELCA and to prioritize and oversee the implementation of the TEAC recommendations.” We affirm steps towards the fulfillment of lifting up, encouraging and incorporating academic exploration of Black theologies across ELCA educational expressions.

Another resolve in the memorials addresses the ELCA’s 1988 commitment to increase ethnic diversity in the national church to 10 percent in ten years. Almost 30 years later, the ELCA is still a 96 percent white church. This resolve walks in step with the “development” portion of the UN’s “International Decade for People of African Descent.”

Recommendation for Assembly Action

To receive with gratitude the memorials of the Arkansas-Oklahoma, Metropolitan Chicago, Southeast Michigan, New Jersey, Metropolitan New York, Southeastern Pennsylvania, North Carolina, and Southeastern synods regarding African Descent Lutheran Lives Matter;

To direct the Office of the Presiding Bishop, the Domestic Mission unit and the Global Mission unit to assist in connecting, supporting and involving ELCA representation (particularly though not exclusively) of the people of African descent with the observance of the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation and the initiatives of the U.N. International Decade of People of African Descent; to be intentional in the inclusion of the contributions of African descent Lutherans as part of these observances;

To confess and repent of the Lutheran church’s complicity in 400 years of enslavement, oppression and marginalization of African descent people and other marginalized populations;

To acknowledge with regret that the ELCA as an institution has and continues to contribute to racial harassment and discrimination against people of African descent through corporate action, policy and practices

and to request the Office of the Secretary, in consultation with appropriate churchwide organization units, to review and report on current governing documents in light of these concerns;

To encourage synods and ELCA related institutions to do the same in its review and report of current governing documents related to setting policy and procedures on workplace harassment and discrimination, including racial harassment and discrimination;

To request the Domestic Mission unit through its African Descent Ministries desk, in consultation with the African Descent Lutheran Association, to create a “Declaration of the ELCA to the African Descent Community” and to bring this declaration with recommendations of how to include the declaration in this church’s governing documents by the April 2018 meeting of the Church Council;

To urge the seminaries, colleges, universities and other academic institutions of this church to work with the Conference of International Black Lutherans (CIBL) to recognize and dismantle white hegemony by lifting up, encouraging and incorporating the academic exploration of Black Liberation Theology;

To urge the seminaries, colleges, universities and other academic institutions of this church to develop anti-racism resources;

To reaffirm the Church Council action to call upon the seminaries, in collaboration with churchwide organization units and partners, to develop networked theological education programs, resources and opportunities for ethnic-specific communities;

To reaffirm the commitment of this church to create, sustain and reinvest in African descent communities, congregations and ministries including an update of the African Descent Ministry Strategy;

To request the Domestic Mission unit, in partnership with the African Descent Lutheran Association, to find ways to increase the number of African descent leaders, congregations and communities served by at least 10 percent; and

To recommit this church to growing its ethnic and racial diversity.

Category A5: Ministries Among People Experiencing Economic Poverty

1. Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod (7E) [2016]

WHEREAS, the scriptures repeatedly call upon God’s people to open their hands to their poor and needy neighbors, stating that sharing with the “hungry” and “homeless poor” constitutes an expression of piety that pleases God (Deuteronomy 15:11; Isaiah 58:6-7; Matthew 19:21; Galatians 2:10); and

WHEREAS, the first century churches in Macedonia and Achaia, following the example of Jesus who brought “good news to the poor,” were “pleased to share” their financial resources with the economically challenged church in Jerusalem (Luke 4:18; Romans 15:26); and

WHEREAS, the strategic directions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) encourage all expressions of this church to reach out to every segment of society, including “building capacity for evangelical witness and service in the world to alleviate poverty and to work for justice and peace”; and

WHEREAS, ELCA ministries with and among the homeless and those experiencing economic poverty are rich in many ways — rich in spiritual growth; rich in worship life; rich in the building of supportive relationships; rich in listening to, learning from and showing compassion to the neighbor — but often struggling to be financially sustainable; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, gathered in assembly, memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to instruct the Budget and Finance Committee of the ELCA Church Council to develop a plan for designating 20 percent of all funds in all programmatic units, global and domestic, to support ministries among people experiencing economic poverty; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod memorialize the 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to direct institutions of this church, in particular educational institutions, to develop processes for raising up and equipping leaders to serve in ministries among people experiencing economic poverty; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod memorialize the 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to instruct the Domestic Mission unit of this church to develop faith formation and worship resources that will support those engaged in initiating and leading ministries among people experiencing economic poverty.

2. Lower Susquehanna Synod (8D) [2016]

WHEREAS, the scriptures repeatedly call upon God’s people to open their hands to their poor and needy neighbors, stating that sharing with the “hungry” and “homeless poor” constitutes an expression of piety that pleases God (Deuteronomy 15:11; Isaiah 58:6-7; Matthew 19:21; Galatians 2:10); and

WHEREAS, the first century churches in Macedonia and Achaia, following the example of Jesus who brought “good news to the poor,” were “pleased to share” their financial resources with the economically challenged church in Jerusalem (Luke 4:18; Romans 15:26); and

WHEREAS, the strategic directions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) encourage all expressions of this church to reach out to every segment of society, including “building capacity for evangelical witness and service in the world to alleviate poverty and to work for justice and peace”; and

WHEREAS, ELCA ministries with and among the homeless and those experiencing economic poverty are rich in many ways — rich in spiritual growth; rich in worship life; rich in the building of supportive relationships; rich in listening to, learning from and showing compassion to the neighbor — but often struggle to be financially sustainable; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Lower Susquehanna Synod memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to direct institutions of this church, in particular educational institutions, to develop processes for raising up and equipping leaders to serve in ministries among people experiencing economic poverty; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Lower Susquehanna Synod memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to instruct the Domestic Mission unit of this church to develop faith formation and worship resources that will support those engaged in initiating and leading ministries among people experiencing economic poverty.

Background

Faith practices of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) come from the promises we make at baptism. The ELCA Faith Practices team of the Domestic Mission unit has lifted these faith practices up as “The Five Gifts of Discipleship” since these practices are a guide for us as we grow in faith, love and obedience to God’s will, always striving to be faithful and courageous followers of Jesus Christ. The Five Gifts of Discipleship are:

1. To live among God’s faithful people,
2. To hear the word of God and share in the Lord’s Supper,
3. To proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed,
4. To serve all people following the example of Jesus,
5. To strive for justice and peace in all the earth.

As we talk about enhancing our ministries among “People Experiencing Economic Poverty,” it seems clear that the fifth gift of discipleship, “To strive for justice and peace in all the earth,” is particularly relevant. As followers of Christ, we advocate for justice in various aspects of today’s society. Racial justice, gender justice, justice for those incarcerated, justice for the ends of the age span (children and the elderly), justice around sexual orientation and a variety of other justice issues should be addressed by us as individuals and as congregations, so that no one feels “less than” anyone else but feels like the gifted child of God that he or she is. However, we know that those facing economic poverty often feel unworthy because they are told to “pick themselves up by their boot straps and seek gainful employment” so they can be financially stable.

Because of a variety of factors (systemic racism, systemic sexism, drug and alcohol addiction, mental illness, limited family support and a host of other issues), some persons in poverty are unable to get out of it, and they continue to question their worth and at times question the presence of God. Faith formation resources that focus on how Jesus challenged the status quo and was an advocate for the least of these can be one strategy to help those in economic poverty see their value in the eyes of God and in the eyes of their fellow believers. As we, the followers of Jesus, live out the faith practice “to strive for justice and peace in all the earth,” we can use faith formation resources to strengthen our call to make our world not only a world of peace but of justice for all. The Publishing House of the ELCA (Augsburg Fortress, Publishers) also has resources available regarding economic poverty that could be helpful for ministry.

In considering the resolve directed to the Budget and Finance Committee of the Church Council, it should be noted that the FY15 analysis shows a more than 20 percent spending from both Global Mission and Domestic Mission units in support of ministries among people experiencing economic poverty. In Global Mission, more than 56 percent (\$32.8 million) is spent. In Domestic Mission, more than 20 percent (\$34.4 million) is spent. The data used includes the three primary spending areas for which the churchwide organization produces monthly financial reports and have ongoing annual spending including the current fund, ELCA World Hunger and Lutheran Disaster Response. There is also spending from other designated and restricted funds.

The Domestic Mission unit currently provides support through allocated/designated funds in the following ministries:

- Twenty-seven percent of all new start ministries are located in communities of poverty.
- The Domestic Mission unit has organized a Homeless and Justice Network of new start ministries to provide support for congregational leaders working in communities of poverty.

- Annual Congregational Renewal grants to designated congregations in communities of poverty were in the amount of \$209,000. Additional renewal funds in the amount of \$684,689 go to help support congregations serving ethnic specific communities who may or may not be located in communities of poverty. In total, an estimated \$750,000 from the Congregational Renewal budget goes to help support congregations in communities of poverty.
- The 2015 Youth Gathering granted scholarships based on financial need in the amount of \$532,575.
- In addition, 50 percent of the \$527,385 from *Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA* in Youth and Young Adult Innovation Grants awarded in 2015 went to projects that promoted faith formation and leadership development programs in communities of poverty.

Through the Domestic Mission unit, the Domestic Hunger Initiative has developed a pilot that will focus on leadership development in multiple sites across the United States, which include distressed communities. The ELCA network of more than 285 affiliated social ministry organizations reaches out to people living in poverty and provides training that raises up community leaders.

Recommendation for Assembly Action

To receive with gratitude the memorials of the Northeastern Pennsylvania and Lower Susquehanna synods regarding ministries among people experiencing economic poverty;

To acknowledge the need for the ELCA to continue supporting ministry among people living in poverty;

To acknowledge with thanksgiving this church’s commitment to ministries among people experiencing poverty through churchwide ministries and to ask that the churchwide organization continue to prioritize this witness in our spending commitments;

To urge the colleges, universities, seminaries and ELCA related educational institutions to continue expanding the development of programs to equip leaders to serve in ministry among people living in poverty;

To commend the faith formation resources developed by the ELCA Faith Practices team for use across this church; and

To encourage ELCA members to support those engaged in initiating and leading ministries among people experiencing poverty.

Category A6: Examining the Opportunities and Implications of Campaign Zero, a policy platform in affirmation of Black Lives Matter

1. Northwest Washington Synod (1B) [2016]

RESOLVED, that the Northwest Washington Synod Assembly memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly:

1. to request that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) affirm that Black Lives Matter;
2. to request that the ELCA support the 10-point policy solutions of Campaign Zero (an advocacy effort of activists, protesters and researchers) as a faithful expression of public church and advocacy; and
3. to request that the ELCA encourage all congregations to engage the 10-point policy solutions in education, lobbying and direct action.

2. Greater Milwaukee Synod (5J) [2016]

WHEREAS, Scripture teaches us to “weep with those who weep” (Romans 12:15) and that, “If one member [of the body of Christ] suffers, all suffer together with it” (1 Corinthians 12:26); and

WHEREAS, the 1993 Churchwide Assembly adopted “Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture,” which includes a time of confession and a time of commitment; and

WHEREAS, the 2013 Churchwide Assembly adopted “The Church and Criminal Justice: Hearing the Cries,” which names the sin of mass incarceration and racial disparities in the criminal justice system; and

WHEREAS, Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton and many other leaders have encouraged the church to have “difficult conversations” around race; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Greater Milwaukee Synod memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly:

1. To request that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) affirm unequivocally that Black Lives Matter;
2. To request that the ELCA support the 10-point policy solutions of Campaign Zero (an advocacy effort of activists, protesters and researchers focused on police violence) as a faithful expression of public church and advocacy; and

3. To request that the ELCA encourage all congregations to engage the 10-point policy solutions in education, lobbying and direct action.

Background

ELCA constitutional provision 4.02.c. states: To participate in God’s mission, this church shall “serve in response to God’s love to meet human needs, caring for the sick and the aged, advocating dignity and justice for all people, working for peace and reconciliation among the nations, and standing with the poor and powerless and committing itself to their needs.”

Stolen and Devalued

According to [National Geographic](#), over the course of four centuries twelve to fifteen million people of African Descent were forcibly taken from their native land, their history, their family and their future. Many died resisting capture. Many died attempting escape. Many died in passage. They were classified as not human – simple commodities to be transferred throughout the world with most being shipped to the West Indies, Central America and South America. Half a million arrived (alive) to North America and another three hundred thousand were sent to Europe.

Robbed of culture, identity, innate and legal freedom, these men, women and children were survivors, yet their lives were not their own. Five hundred years later, the effects of the annihilation of the freedom of peoples of African Descent created paradigms that disregard the value of African Descent life. Those lives are treated as expendable. Those lives are portrayed as burdens on American society when in fact they are precious and pregnant with possibilities. The social statement approved by the 1993 Churchwide Assembly, “[Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity and Culture](#),” includes a time of a confession and a time of commitment.

The prostituted promise of prosperity has drawn voluntary immigrants from the continent of Africa. Despite their continued connection with their history and boldness to venture away from the continent, the disfigured histories of their co-ancestors has created an American paradigm that devalues their lives as well. Often seen as a lower class of immigrants many of the resources they bring are stolen.

Slavery by Another Name

The privatization of prisons and the sin of mass incarceration has created a new opportunity to brutalize and utilize people of African Descent. A criminal justice system that protects those who are economically affluent and demonizes those who are economically challenged is slavery. A criminal justice system that exploits those who are prosecuted and rewards those who are enriched by the process is slavery. The pipeline to prison now begins in daycare and preschool. Children’s behaviors are criminalized and the punishments are severe instead of corrective. The social statement approved by the 2013 Churchwide Assembly, “[The Church and Criminal Justice: Hearing the Cries](#),” names the sin of mass incarceration and racial disparities in the criminal justice system.

Legalized, Sanctioned and Decriminalized Murder

Historic constructs specifically dehumanized the lives of African Descent peoples in America by legal means. This led to lynching laws that sanctioned and encouraged the public slaughter of African Descent lives at will. African Descent people were demonized through laws, the media and medical misinformation. The trend to repeal laws that supported the mistreatment and murders of African Descent peoples was slow and ineffective. Mistreatment and murder simply morphed into something tolerable and more clandestine. Justifiable homicide still unjustly claims the lives of many people of African Descent through penal systems, sanctioned vigilantism and through economic starvation.

Social Movements

Historically and currently, grassroots social movements have been utilized to challenge injustices in the U.S. The Underground Railroad, the Civil Rights Movement and the emerging of the NAACP are a few of the prominent change agents for social justice.

The 2012 controversial death of Trayvon Martin spurred a new movement named Black Lives Matter. This movement does not seek to elevate Black Lives above others but wants to expose them being considered insignificant expendable prey. Out of the movement was created a chapter-based organization. It has a website: <http://www.blacklivesmatter.com/> and promotes a host of principles.

Some Black Lives Matter activists created a policy platform titled Campaign Zero. Campaign Zero seeks to help citizens by proposing a ten-point strategy to decrease or eliminate killings by police. It promotes changes in training, policy and laws. It encourages community participation and that police force demographics should reflect the

communities in which they serve. According to Campaign Zero's [website](#), the goal is to humanize the people being detained and/or arrested.

Campaign Zero offers this 10-point policy on its [website](#) as a solution:

1. **End broken windows policing**

A decades-long focus on policing minor crimes and activities - a practice called Broken Windows policing - has led to the criminalization and over-policing of communities of color and excessive force in otherwise harmless situations. In 2014, police killed at least 287 people who were involved in minor offenses and harmless activities like sleeping in parks, possessing drugs, looking "suspicious" or having a mental health crisis. These activities are often symptoms of underlying issues of drug addiction, homelessness, and mental illness which should be treated by healthcare professionals and social workers rather than the police.

2. **Community oversight**

Police usually investigate and decide what, if any, consequences their fellow officers should face in cases of police misconduct. Under this system, fewer than 1 in every 12 complaints of police misconduct nationwide results in some kind of disciplinary action against the officer(s) responsible. Communities need an urgent way to ensure police officers are held accountable for police violence.

3. **Limit use of force**

Police should have the skills and cultural competence to protect and serve our communities without killing people - just as police do in England, Germany, Japan and other developed countries. In 2014, police killed at least 253 unarmed people and 91 people who were stopped for mere traffic violations. The following policy solutions can restrict the police from using excessive force in everyday interactions with civilians.

4. **Independently investigate and prosecute**

Local prosecutors rely on local police departments to gather the evidence and testimony they need to successfully prosecute criminals. This makes it hard for them to investigate and prosecute the same police officers in cases of police violence. These cases should not rely on the police to investigate themselves and should not be prosecuted by someone who has an incentive to protect the police officers involved.

5. **Community representation**

While white men represent less than one-third of the U.S. population, they comprise about two-thirds of U.S. police officers. The police should reflect and be responsive to the cultural, racial and gender diversity of the communities they are supposed to serve.

6. **Body cams / Film the police**

While they are not a cure-all, body cameras and cell phone video have illuminated cases of police violence and have shown to be important tools for holding officers accountable. Nearly every case where a police officer has been charged with a crime for killing a civilian this year has relied on video evidence showing the officer's actions.

7. **Training**

The current training regime for police officers fails to effectively teach them how to interact with our communities in a way that protects and preserves life. For example, police recruits spend 58 hours learning how to shoot firearms and only 8 hours learning how to de-escalate situations. An intensive training regime is needed to help police officers learn the behaviors and skills to interact appropriately with communities.

8. **End for-profit policing**

Police should be working to keep people safe, not contributing to a system that profits from stopping, searching, ticketing, arresting and incarcerating people.

9. **Demilitarization**

The events in Ferguson have introduced the nation to the ways that local police departments can misuse military weaponry to intimidate and repress communities. Last year alone, militarized SWAT teams killed at least 38 people. The following policies limit police departments from obtaining or using these weapons on our streets.

10. **Fair police union contracts**

Police unions have used their influence to establish unfair protections for police officers in their contracts with local, state and federal government and in statewide Law Enforcement Officers' Bills of Rights. These provisions create one set of rules for police and another for civilians, and make it difficult for Police Chiefs or civilian oversight structures to punish police officers who are unfit to serve. Learn more about how police union contracts help officers avoid accountability [here](#).

Prior to recommending that the ELCA endorse Campaign Zero, more information would be needed to thoroughly research Campaign Zero's initiatives and actions and what the campaign purports and promotes.

Recommendation for Assembly Action

To receive with gratitude the memorials of the Greater Milwaukee and Northwest Washington synods in affirmation of Black Lives Matter; and

To refer to the Domestic Mission unit through the African Descent Ministries Desk, in partnership with the African Descent Lutheran Association, consideration of the request to examine the opportunities and implications of Campaign Zero's initiatives and actions and request a report and possible recommendations be provided to the Church Council.

Category A7: Observation of National Donor Sabbath in Support of Organ and Tissue Donation

1. Northeastern Iowa Synod (5F) [2016]

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Iowa Synod Assembly memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America that congregations in the ELCA be encouraged to observe the National Donor Sabbath which is held two weeks before Thanksgiving every year.

Background

The [Donate Life America](#) website states:

National Donor Sabbath is observed annually two weekends before Thanksgiving, from Friday through Sunday. This three-day observance seeks to include the days of worship for major religions practiced in the United States. During National Donor Sabbath, faith leaders from many religions, donor families, transplant recipients, and donation and transplantation professionals participate in services and programs to educate the public about the need for the lifesaving and healing gifts passed to others through transplantation, while also encouraging people to sign up in their state registry as organ, eye and tissue donors.

The ELCA affirms that the gift of life comes from God, that God sustains and enhances life working through the decisions, stewardship, and generosity of created beings. We support ways to bring the generosity and life-giving ministry of organ donation into the worship and prayer life of the church.

This church's [social statement on health](#) recognizes that cure and healing are shared endeavors in which care for one another may include personal sacrifice. In 2004, the Church Council adopted a social policy resolution on the [donation of organs, tissue and whole blood](#). In the resolution, the ELCA encourages its members to consider donating organs, tissue, and whole blood. The resolution also urges pastors and other rostered leaders, congregations, synods, agencies, and institutions to initiate and sponsor programs of education and moral deliberation on organ, tissue and whole blood donation.

National Donor Sabbath will be observed November 11-13, 2016. Resources for local congregational observances can be found on the Donate Life America website.

Recommendation for Assembly Action

To receive with gratitude the memorial of the Northeastern Iowa Synod concerning the observance of National Donor Sabbath;

To reaffirm this church's recognition of the donation of organs, tissue and whole blood as an act of stewardship and as an appropriate means for contributing to the health and well-being of other persons; and

To encourage congregations to observe the National Donor Sabbath, which is held two weeks before Thanksgiving every year.

Section B Social Justice Concerns

Category B1: Call to Discernment on U.S. Foreign and Military Policy

1. Minneapolis Area Synod (3G) [2015]

WHEREAS, the ELCA social teaching statement “Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective” calls for this church to engage in moral deliberations regarding governmental policy and to “discern when to support and when to confront society’s cultural patterns, values, and powers;” and

WHEREAS, the ELCA social teaching statement “For Peace in God’s World” calls for this church to engage actively in making peace not war, naming and resisting “idols that lead to false security, injustice, and war, and [calling] for repentance;” and

WHEREAS, our world finds itself simultaneously dealing with promoters of religious war and of war between nuclear powers; and

WHEREAS, since 1990, U.S. policy has expanded its targets for lethal military action to many global settings; and

WHEREAS, in waging war, harm to the next generations in environmental destruction and genetic mutation is caused as well as much acute human misery; and

WHEREAS, in waging war, great public expense is incurred removing resources from life-sustaining and vital social needs; and

WHEREAS, in waging war since Sept. 11, 2001, nearly half of American military personnel have identified themselves as suffering from chronic disabilities, according to the Veterans’ Administration, impairing life for themselves and their families/communities and causing an epidemic in suicide and early deaths; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Minneapolis Area Synod Assembly memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to call the synods, congregations, institutions and people of this church to a time of communal soul-searching on the moral impact and societal consequences of expanded U.S. war efforts, and reflection on what reacting to violence with more violence has achieved; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Minneapolis Area Synod Assembly memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to call the people of this church to re-engage and study the ELCA social teaching statements “For Peace in God’s World” and “Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective” as part of this reflection; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Minneapolis Area Synod Assembly memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to call upon the presiding bishop and the Church Council of the ELCA to communicate this church’s desire for national reflection and soul-searching on the moral impact and societal consequences of expanded U.S. war efforts to appropriate government leaders.

Background

On multiple occasions and through varied means, the ELCA has addressed issues of what promotes earthly peace. These questions include discernment around the responsibilities and limits of government for earthly peace and security, especially in terms of the use of war to deter aggression and violence since war always “represents a horrendous failure of politics.” The ELCA social statement, “[For Peace in God’s World](#)” (1995), provides a contemporary articulation of ELCA teaching drawn from the biblical witness, theological reflection and political assessment while offering guidance for discernment and pastoral care, action and advocacy.

This statement is rooted in the “just war” tradition, which Lutherans historically have embraced, even while it lifts up and respects the prophetic witness of those who seek to establish peace and justice on earth by nonviolent power alone. It accepts “just war” principles as a normative framework for political, social and personal decisions about the employment of force and for statutes and codes in ethically using military force. Most crucially, the social statement teaches that the ELCA “shares with the Church of Jesus in all times and places the calling to be peacemakers” (p. 1). It commits the ELCA to seeking both the creation of conditions that lead to peace and the search for solutions that avoid war through careful negotiation and wise political action. It describes earthly peace as relationships among and within nations that are just, harmonious and free from war.

“For Peace in God’s World” also expresses the Lutheran belief that God works through two different governing strategies in a world of sin (traditionally called the “two kingdoms doctrine”). The call to be peacemakers recognizes both strategies as God’s work. God’s work is done through both the proclamation of the gospel of God’s final peace as well as efforts that seek earthly peace through means, though marred by sin and failure, aim to limit evil and promote the common good. This dual understanding explains, for instance, why the ELCA can support both the “vocation of men and women in the military who in conscience directly face the ambiguities of relative evils,” and at the same time support “members who conscientiously object to bearing arms in military service” (p. 12).

The “just war” tradition and the call to be peacemakers *both* assume and require continued discernment and constant attention. Contributions toward peace across human boundaries and improved security and justice among people around the world are only possible through active engagement and discernment on the part of this, or any, nation. This church, then, as a community of peace interacting with the world is to be:

...a **disturbing** presence...resisting idols that lead to false security...

...a **reconciling** presence [which] creates bonds among different peoples....

...a **servicing** presence...support[ing] efforts by governments and others to secure a just peace...and...

...a **deliberating** presence...a setting of freedom and respect where believers learn...in the unity of faith (p. 5).

In multiple ways, this church lives out the calling. Lutherans participate in public life as citizens, elected officials and workers in government institutions. Given the public roles of citizenship, government service, and accepting commissions or enlisting for military service by its members, Lutheran congregations might emphasize prayer, Scripture study, and careful consideration of teaching documents to help form a people capable of living as ambassadors of the Prince of Peace. Such formation prepares for better discernment on the justifiability of war and for action toward peace in and through civic life.

Primary resources for the church in this engagement are prayer and Scripture study. Yet these tools distinctive to faith must be supplemented by astute political analysis, social data and attention to the conflicting voices of self-interest. While multiple resources are needed, congregational leaders and pastors certainly need to lift up and use the teaching resources of social statements and tools for moral deliberation. In this case, [three tools are especially useful](#): “Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective,” “For Peace in God’s World” and “Talking Together as Christians about Tough Social Issues.”

This church’s efforts toward earthly peace have also included the public voice of the church. Regularly, presiding bishops have communicated timely and urgent concerns both to members of this church and to public officials. Among actions relevant to examining the use of military force by the United States, misuse of religious language to promote violence and arrangements among nuclear-armed or nuclear-seeking states, the presiding bishops have written:

Presiding Bishop H. George Anderson letter to President George H.W. Bush, October 11, 2001

Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson statement on Iraq and the US, August 30, 2002

Presiding Bishop Hanson message to the ELCA on Iraq War, March 19, 2003

Presiding Bishop Hanson message to the ELCA on death of Bin Laden, May 2, 2011

Presiding Bishop Hanson message to the ELCA approaching 10th anniversary 9-11, May 24, 2011

Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton and other heads of communions about Ukraine, March 5, 2014

Presiding Bishop Eaton message to the ELCA on religious violence in Iraq, August 15, 2014

Presiding Bishop Eaton letter to President Barack Obama on root causes of violence in Syria and Iraq, March 16, 2015

Presiding Bishop Eaton letter to Members of Congress on Iran’s nuclear program, August 4, 2015

The Church Council has acted on behalf of the ELCA by adopting a social message on “[Living in the Age of Terrorism](#)” (April 2004). These actions by the presiding bishop and the Church Council, along with other actions by synod bishops, attest to the enduring convictions of the leadership of this church to the moral impact and social concerns of the risks and limitations of the use of force in light of the social teachings of the ELCA.

While other synods in the past have also spoken for and encouraged peacemaking, this memorial comes from the Minneapolis Area Synod as a call for re-engagement with ELCA resources and a call for robust discernment. For three consecutive years, beginning in 2014 the synod has adopted resolutions toward these concerns and now memorialized the 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to call the people, congregations, synods, institutions, presiding bishop and Church Council to soul-searching, study and reflection about the extent of war efforts by the United States of America. It urges the whole church to re-engage pastoral and teaching resources and calls for all to do soul-searching around the wisdom of United States policy on extensive military engagement for over a decade.

Recommendation for Assembly Action

To receive with gratitude the memorial of the Minneapolis Area Synod regarding their call for the ELCA to study, reflect, search and act in light of ongoing and widening war efforts;

To recognize with gratitude the efforts of the current and previous presiding bishops, the Church Council, synod bishops, clergy and the laity to engage as responsible citizens living out the baptismal calling;

To issue a call for congregations to engage in prayer, Scripture-study and communal reading of the teaching resources of this church, particularly “Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective,” “For Peace in God’s World” and “Talking Together as Christians about Tough Social Issues”;

To invite this church to a particular time of prayer and communal discernment during the election season of 2016 on the moral impact and societal consequences of current U.S. foreign and military policy; and

To direct the presiding bishop to communicate this church's time of prayer and discernment to the U.S. President and members of Congress and to encourage ELCA members in this election season of 2016 to communicate the same to candidates for federal office.

Category B2: Investing in and Encouraging Use of Clean, Renewable Energy

1. Southeastern Synod (9D) [2015]

WHEREAS, in 1993 with the “Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope and Justice” social statement, the Southeastern Synod demonstrated its awareness that urgency was already “widespread and serious, according to the preponderance of evidence from scientists worldwide [of] dangerous global warming, caused by the buildup of greenhouse gases, especially carbon dioxide” from the burning of fossil fuels, and that “action to counter degradation, especially within this decade, is essential to the future of our children and our children’s children. Time is very short”; and

WHEREAS, “Vision and Expectations” explicitly states, “The people of God are called to the care and redemption of all that God has made. This includes the need to speak on behalf of this earth, its environment and natural resources and its inhabitants”; and

WHEREAS, the most recent report by the U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change claims continued greenhouse gas emissions will cause “long-lasting changes in all components of the climate system, increasing the likelihood of severe, pervasive and irreversible impacts for people and ecosystems”; and

WHEREAS, the burning of fossil fuels is by many sources reported to be the leading source of greenhouse gas emissions causing global climate change, and therefore it is incumbent upon society to transition from fossil fuels to clean, renewable sources of energy; and

WHEREAS, as a church the ELCA should not profit from the production, distribution and use of fuels we believe to be the leading cause of climate change; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA Church Council took action in November 2014 to “recommend limiting investments made in corporations which are most egregious in terms of damage to human health or the natural environment” and to make “investments in corporations which are taking positive steps toward a sustainable environment”; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod Assembly memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to affirm the ELCA’s Corporate Social Responsibility program and encourage that program to grow its work on developing a sustainable environment; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Churchwide Assembly affirm the ELCA Foundation’s use of guidelines for socially responsible investing in the investment of assets within its Endowment Fund Pooled Trust; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Churchwide Assembly affirm the shareholder advocacy work engaged in by Portico Benefit Services and encourage Portico to support the development of clean, renewable energy sources whenever such support is consistent with its fiduciary obligations.

Background

Unlike fossil fuels, which are finite, renewable energy is derived from natural processes that regenerate. Solar, wind, geothermal, hydro and some forms of biomass (wood and waste) are common sources of renewable energy. In 2013, renewables accounted for almost 22 percent of global electricity generation, with projections for that share reaching at least a 26 percent increase in 2020.

About 13 percent of U.S. electricity was generated from [renewable energy sources in 2014](#). More than half of U.S. renewable energy use is for producing electricity. Renewable energy plays an important role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. When renewable energy sources are used, the demand for fossil fuels is reduced. Unlike fossil fuels, non-biomass renewable sources of energy (hydropower, geothermal, wind and solar) do not directly emit greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change.

Domestic production and use of biofuels and non-hydroelectric renewable energy sources doubled from 2000 to 2014, mainly because of state and federal government mandates and incentives for renewable energy. The use of renewable fuels is expected to continue to grow over the next 25 years. The U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) projects that the United States will continue to rely on nonrenewable fuels to meet most of its energy needs through 2040.

In “Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope and Justice,” this church affirmed four eco-justice principles to guide the life of the church through active participation, solidarity, sufficiency and sustainability, and states the commitments of the ELCA for pursuing wholeness for creation — commitments expressed through individual and community action, worship, learning, moral deliberation and advocacy.

ELCA congregations and ministries have expressed these principles in electing to transition to renewable energy as part of their creation care efforts that also can lower energy costs. Examples include the St. Andrew's Lutheran Church in Mahtomedi, Minnesota, a six-thousand-member congregation that is co-sponsoring a wind generator on a co-campus with a high school. Edmonds Lutheran Church in Edmonds, Wash., installed a solar photovoltaic system to generate renewable energy for their facility in mid-February, 2016. The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg installed geothermal technology on their historic campus in 2013. Camp Ewalu in Strawberry Point, Iowa, installed three geothermal systems that provide heat and air conditioning to the camp.

The Mission Investment Fund of the ELCA provides resources [encouraging investment in renewable energy](#) due to potential energy cost savings to ministries and availability of rebates as well as purchasing of green power from local utilities.

The ELCA's corporate social responsibility work is done in partnership with Portico Benefit Services. The Corporate Social Responsibility program enters into dialogue with companies on the social implications of the company's practices and strives to affect ELCA investment policy in socially responsible ways. In terms of climate change implications, the program works on developing a sustainable environment through intentional shareholder advocacy related to climate change as well as increased assistance in identifying potential positive social investments in companies taking positive steps toward a sustainable environment. Corporate Social Responsibility's "[Caring for Creation: Environmental Topics Issue Paper](#)," approved by Church Council in November 2015, includes support for "requests for reporting on the development of renewable energy sources with quantitative targets."

Portico Benefit Services follows its policy to support shareholder resolutions that are consistent with the issue papers of the ELCA and are not expected to diminish the shareholder value. Shareholder value impact is considered because Portico, within the context of the overall ELCA mission, has a fiduciary responsibility to ensure its proxy voting decisions are made in the best interests of plan members. In 2015 alone, Portico supported over 150 shareholder proposals addressing environmental issues.

Portico is investing more in companies taking positive steps toward a sustainable environment (renewable and alternative energy companies, energy efficiency, pollution control, and more). Portico increased the pace of its positive social investing thanks to Social Impact First (SIF) investing, introduced in fall 2015. While ELCA retirement plan social purpose funds currently include SIF investments, the ELCA Endowment Fund Pooled Trust – Fund A is not yet participating in SIF investing, but has taken this investment opportunity under consideration. See Portico's [website](#) for additional details on impact investing and stories of impact.

Recommendation for Assembly Action

To receive with gratitude the memorial from the Southeastern Synod regarding Transition to Clean, Renewable Energy;

To affirm the ELCA's Corporate Social Responsibility program and encourage that program to continue its work on developing a sustainable environment through focused attention on shareholder advocacy related to climate change;

To encourage the Corporate Social Responsibility program to continue identifying potential positive social investments in companies taking steps toward a sustainable environment;

To affirm the ELCA Foundation's use of guidelines for socially responsible investment of assets within its Endowment Fund Pooled Trust;

To affirm the shareholder advocacy work of Portico Benefit Services and encourage Portico Benefit Services to support the development of clean, renewable energy sources whenever such support is consistent with its fiduciary responsibilities; and

To encourage ELCA members, congregations, synods and agencies to examine lifestyles and environmental footprints as they impact climate change, improve their stewardship of energy resources, transition to renewable energy sources and promote care for God's creation.

Category B3: Toward a Responsible Energy Future

1. Saint Paul Area Synod (3H) [2015]

WHEREAS, God has created us and all that exists, given and preserves our bodies and all the necessities for life [The First Article: On Creation, The Creed, "The Small Catechism"]; and

WHEREAS, the 1993 ELCA social statement "Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice" affirms that "we are called to care for the earth as God cares for the earth;" and

WHEREAS, the 1999 ELCA social statement on economic life, “Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All,” recognizes that “the growth of economic activity during the twentieth century, and the industrialization and consumerism that fueled it, radically changed the relationship between humans and the earth. Too often the earth has been treated as a waste receptacle and a limitless storehouse of raw materials to be used up for the sake of economic growth, rather than as a finite, fragile ecological system upon which human and all other life depends;” and

WHEREAS, climate research is clear that there has been a rapid rise in the levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, with current levels (400 parts per million) the highest in the past probably 2 million years. This increase has occurred most rapidly in the past 200 years during the worldwide Industrial Revolution; and

WHEREAS, climate research is clear that burning fossil fuels is the major source of rising levels of carbon dioxide, negatively impacting our climate. Consequently, the use of fossil fuels must be dramatically reduced; and

WHEREAS, with “Caring for Creation,” the ELCA realized the urgency was already “widespread and serious, according to the preponderance of evidence from scientists worldwide [of] dangerous global warming, caused by the buildup of greenhouse gases, especially carbon dioxide” from the burning of fossil fuels, and that “action to counter degradation, especially within this decade [1993-2003], is essential to the future of our children and our children’s children;” and

WHEREAS, in “Caring for Creation,” the ELCA declares that it will seek to incorporate the principles of sufficiency and sustainability in its life. Consequently: “We will, in our budgeting and investment of church funds, demonstrate our care for creation;” and

WHEREAS, in 1990 and 2007 the ELCA Church Council approved an Environmental Social Criteria Investment Screen that recommends limiting investments made in corporations which are the most egregious in terms of damage to human health or the natural environment and investing in corporations which are taking positive steps toward a sustainable environment; and

WHEREAS, despite decades of shareholder engagement with fossil fuel companies, the industry continues to spend nearly \$2 billion dollars a day searching for additional fossil fuel reserves and over half a million dollars a day lobbying governments for subsidies and support for further extraction; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has historically divested during periods of great social need, including the movement to end apartheid in South Africa; and

WHEREAS, fossil fuel divestment can have a major influence on how society responds to climate change; and

WHEREAS, by divesting from fossil fuels, the ELCA joins with faith partners such as the United Church of Christ and the World Council of Churches as well as large institutional investors such as the Norway’s \$850 billion Government Pension Fund Global in the fastest growing divestment effort in history; and

WHEREAS, un-burnable carbon stored in fossil fuel reserves presents a material financial risk to investment funds that provide capital to these companies; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Saint Paul Area Synod memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA to request that, by December 31, 2016, the ELCA Endowment Fund:

- a) publish a list of the values of all fossil fuel investments;
- b) cease any new investments in fossil fuel companies;
- c) ensure that all securities of fossil fuel companies that are either direct holdings or holdings in commingled funds are removed from the portfolio within five years; and
- d) publish quarterly updates, available to the public, detailing progress toward divestment; and be it further

RESOLVED, that a fossil-free fund that excludes the 200 largest fossil fuel companies be added as an option for ELCA retirement plan participants.

2. Metropolitan New York Synod (7C) [2015]

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan New York Synod Assembly memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) to urge that, by May 1, 2017, all ELCA congregations and independent, cooperative and related Lutheran organizations and investment corporations:

- a) publish a list of the values of all their stock and bond holdings in companies whose primary business is the exploration, extraction, production or refining of coal, oil or natural gas, and instruct asset managers employed by those entities do the same;
- b) cease any new investments in companies whose primary business is the exploration, extraction, production or refining of coal, oil or natural gas, and instruct asset managers employed by those entities do the same;
- c) ensure that, within five years, directly held or commingled assets in companies whose primary business is the exploration, extraction, production or refining of coal, oil or natural gas are removed from portfolios related to the ELCA; and
- d) with the exception of congregations, release quarterly updates, available to the public, detailing progress toward such divestment.

3. Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod (7E) [2016]

WHEREAS, Jesus call us as his disciples to both love God and our neighbor and climate change is a direct threat to both God's creation and God's people, the church should be a leader in all efforts to preserve and protect creation; and

WHEREAS, the scientific consensus that human use of fossil fuels is a primary contributor to climate change is clear and overwhelming; and

WHEREAS, the current movement to divest from fossil fuels and reinvest in sustainable forms of energy are an important part of the overall campaign to combat climate change and protect people and the planet; and

WHEREAS, numerous church bodies, foundations, municipalities and institutions of higher learning have already divested from fossil fuels and several of our fellow synods in the ELCA have approved or are voting on similar divestment resolutions; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to request that, by December 31, 2016, the ELCA begin divestment of all fossil fuel investments held in the ELCA Endowment Fund Pooled Trust Fund A by taking the following actions:

- a) Publish a list of the values of all fossil fuel investments currently held;
- b) Cease any new investments in fossil fuel companies;
- c) Ensure that all fossil fuel holdings are removed within five years;
- d) Publish quarterly updates detailing progress towards this divestment; and
- e) Seek to reinvest any resulting monies in clean and sustainable energy investments; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to direct the ELCA to consider and recommend that the ELCA Board of Pensions add a fossil-free investment fund that excludes the 200 largest fossil fuel companies as an option for ELCA retirement plan participants; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod encourage its congregations and individual members to prayerfully consider their own divestment from fossil fuels, and consider re-investment in sustainable and clean energy.

4. Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod (8A) [2016]

WHEREAS:

we gather together because of our common faith;

our faith tells us we are to be stewards of all that God has created and given us (as affirmed in the social statement "Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice," 1993);

the 2010 document "Vision and Expectations" reminds us that, as stewards, "The people of God are called to the care and redemption of all that God has made. This includes the need to speak on behalf of this earth, its environment and natural resources and its inhabitants. This church expects that its ordained ministers will be exemplary stewards of the earth's resources, and that they will lead this church in the stewardship of God's creation";

one way of stewarding our financial gifts from God is investing wisely;

another way of stewarding is developing strategies for ceasing investments that are in conflict with our stewardship;

our stewardship of investments can be a witness to others, indicating that our faith informs and guides our financial decisions, including those decisions chosen by this church and its individual members; and

WHEREAS, the social statement "Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All" (1999) recognizes that "...the growth of economic activity during the twentieth century, and the industrialization and consumerism that fueled it, radically changed the relationship between humans and the earth. Too often the earth has been treated as a waste receptacle and a limitless storehouse of raw materials to be used up for the sake of economic growth, rather than as a finite, fragile ecological system upon which human and all other life depends"; and

WHEREAS, climate research is clear that there has been a rapid rise in the levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, with current levels (400 ppm) the highest in the past probably 2 million years. This increase has occurred most rapidly in the past 200 years during the worldwide Industrial Revolution; and

WHEREAS, climate research is clear that burning fossil fuels is the major source of rising levels of carbon dioxide, negatively impacting our climate, and therefore the use of fossil fuels must be dramatically reduced; and

WHEREAS, with "Caring for Creation," the ELCA realized the urgency was already "widespread and serious, according to the preponderance of evidence from scientists worldwide [of] dangerous global warming, caused by the buildup of greenhouse gases, especially carbon dioxide" from the burning of fossil fuels, and that "action to counter degradation, especially within this decade [1993-2003], is essential to the future of our children and our children's children;" and

WHEREAS, in "Caring for Creation," the ELCA declares that it will seek to incorporate the principles of sufficiency and sustainability in its life. Consequently: "We will, in our budgeting and investment of church funds, demonstrate our care for creation;" and

WHEREAS, in 1990 and 2007 the ELCA Church Council approved an Environmental Social Criteria Investment Screen that recommends limiting investments made in corporations which are the most egregious in terms of damage to human health or the natural environment and investing in corporations which are taking positive steps toward a sustainable environment; and

WHEREAS, “In 2007, the IPCC (U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) painted a bleak picture of the future for God’s creation and those already struggling with hunger, poverty and disease. They predicted that a changing climate will increase food insecurity in places like Africa, where food is already scarce, while reversing progress made in the fight against hunger in regions like Latin America” (ELCA: Poverty and Hunger in a Changing Climate); and

WHEREAS, in 2014 the IPCC again pointed out the continuing threat posed by climate change to all of earth, but especially the most vulnerable populations; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Northwest Pennsylvania Synod Assembly memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA to request that by May 1, 2017, the ELCA follow its published procedure titled “Social Criteria Investment Screen Policies and Procedures Development” to develop a social criteria investment screen designed to result in divestment of all fossil fuels investments held in the ELCA Endowment Fund Pooled Trust – Fund A (hereinafter “Fund A”), which includes prayerful consideration of the following recommended components:

- a) Develop an ELCA strategy for ministry, support and encouragement to workers and families affected by changing patterns of fossil fuel use and investment;
- b) Publish a list of the names and values of all fossil fuel stock and bond holdings, and instruct all asset managers of those entities to do the same;
- c) Cease any new investments in fossil fuel companies, and instruct asset managers employed by those entities to do the same;
- d) Develop a strategy to ensure that pension funds for rostered leaders and other employees of ELCA are not affected by the divestment of fossil fuel holdings of ELCA and that, within five years, directly held or commingled assets in fossil fuels are removed from portfolios related to the ELCA;
- e) Create a strategy for replacement of the divested holdings with investments that encourage the development of environmentally sustainable energy production and distribution; and
- f) Release quarterly updates, available to the public, detailing progress toward divestment.

5. Upper Susquehanna Synod (8E) [2015]

WHEREAS, God created heaven and earth and everything therein and proclaimed it good (Genesis 1:1ff.), and God has entrusted humankind with the care of the earth (Genesis 2:15); and

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has adopted social statements, “Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope and Justice” (1993) and “Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood” (1999), that call for economic and environmental justice, to protect the health and integrity of creation both for its own sake and for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations, and for economic justice, to consider how our actions affect the ability of all people to provide for their material needs and the needs of their families and communities; and

WHEREAS, in 1993 with the “Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope and Justice” social statement, this church realized the urgency was already “widespread and serious, according to the preponderance of evidence from scientists worldwide [of] dangerous global warming, caused by the buildup of greenhouse gases, especially carbon dioxide” from the burning of fossil fuels, and that “action to counter degradation, especially within this decade, is essential to the future of our children and our children’s children. Time is very short;” and

WHEREAS, climate research is clear that there has been a rapid rise in the levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, with current levels (400 parts per million) the highest in the past probably 2 million years. This increase has occurred most rapidly in the past 200 years during the worldwide Industrial Revolution; and

WHEREAS, climate research is clear that burning fossil fuels is the major source of rising levels of carbon dioxide, negatively impacting our climate. Consequently, the use of fossil fuels must be dramatically reduced; and

WHEREAS, the most recent report by the U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change claims continued greenhouse gas emissions will cause “long-lasting changes in all components of the climate system, increasing the likelihood of severe, pervasive and irreversible impacts for people and ecosystems;” and

WHEREAS, in “Caring for Creation,” the ELCA declares that it will seek to incorporate the principles of sufficiency and sustainability in its life. Consequently: “We will, in our budgeting and investment of church funds, demonstrate our care for creation;” and

WHEREAS, in 1990 and 2007 the ELCA Church Council approved an Environmental Social Criteria Investment Screen that recommends limiting investments made in corporations which are the most egregious in terms of damage to human health or the natural environment and investing in corporations which are taking positive steps toward a sustainable environment; and

WHEREAS, despite decades of shareholder engagement with fossil fuel companies, the industry continues to spend nearly \$2 billion dollars a day searching for additional fossil fuel reserves and over half a million dollars a day lobbying governments for subsidies and support for further extraction; and

WHEREAS, fossil fuel divestment can have a major influence on how society responds to climate change; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has historically divested during periods of great social need, including the movement to end apartheid in South Africa; and

WHEREAS, by divesting from fossil fuels, the ELCA joins with faith partners such as the United Church of Christ and the World Council of Churches as well as large institutional investors such as the Norway's \$850 billion Government Pension Fund Global and a growing list of colleges and universities, cities, religious institutions and foundations in the fastest growing divestment effort in history; and

WHEREAS, un-burnable carbon stored in fossil fuel reserves presents a material financial risk to investment funds that provide capital to these companies; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Upper Susquehanna Synod of the ELCA memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to call on the ELCA and its related institutions and entities, such as the ELCA Endowment Fund Pooled Trust – Fund A (hereinafter “Fund A”), the Mission Investment Fund, Portico Benefit Services, colleges, seminaries, social ministry organizations, camps, synods, congregations and individual members to take leadership and make a public commitment to transition away from investments in fossil fuels to investments in clean, renewable energy sources as expeditiously as it is financially feasible to do so; and be it further

RESOLVED, that by December 31, 2016, the ELCA follow its published procedure titled “Social Criteria Investment Screen Policies and Procedures Development” to develop a social criteria investment screen designed to result in divestment of all fossil fuels investments held in Fund A, which includes prayerful consideration of the following recommended components:

- a) publication of a list of the values of all fossil fuel investments currently held in Fund A
- b) cessation of any new investments in fossil fuel companies with respect to Fund A
- c) ensuring that all securities of fossil fuel companies that are either direct holdings or holdings in commingled funds are removed from the portfolio of Fund A within five years
- d) publication of quarterly updates, available to the public, detailing progress towards divestment of Fund A as set forth herein; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Upper Susquehanna Synod memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA, as part of the development of the new social criteria investment screen identified above, to direct the ELCA's corporate social responsibility review team to consider and recommend to the executive director of the ELCA's Congregational and Synodical Mission unit, for further review pursuant to the ELCA's published procedure titled “Social Criteria Investment Screen Policies and Procedures Development,” the addition of a fossil-free investment fund that excludes the 200 largest fossil fuel companies as an option for ELCA retirement plan participants; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Upper Susquehanna Synod memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to urge members of the ELCA and its related institutions to exemplify personal and institutional responsibility by practicing energy conservation, purchasing more energy efficient appliances and vehicles, investing in renewable energy systems, and advocating at all levels of government for public policies that support clean, renewable energy sources.

Background

In “[Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope and Justice](#),” this church affirmed four eco-justice principles to guide the life of this church through active participation, solidarity, sufficiency and sustainability, and states the commitments of the ELCA for pursuing wholeness for creation — commitments expressed through individual and community action, worship, learning, moral deliberation and advocacy.

In 2013, the Churchwide Assembly acted on memorials similar to those presented to this assembly concerning climate change and fossil fuel. As part of its action, the 2013 Churchwide Assembly referred the matter of evaluating the feasibility and advisability of developing revised or additional investment screens to the Domestic Mission unit (formerly the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit). The assembly requested that the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) team provide a report with possible recommendations to the Church Council (CA13.03.07f).

The report was submitted to the Church Council in November 2014 outlining the activities undertaken by ELCA members, congregations and the churchwide organization. The CSR team also evaluated the feasibility of developing revised or additional investment screens. Although it determined that no additional investment screens were needed at this time, it recommended a revision to “Environment: Social Criteria Investment Screen.”

The revision to “[Environment: Social Criteria Investment Screen](#)” identified “worst players” such as companies with high EPA fines, multiple toxic spills or certain fossil fuel companies. An additional revision was to ask that priority is given to investments in companies taking corrective measures such as clean tech companies. This amended screen was adopted by the Church Council (CC14.11.18) and passed on to ELCA-related organizations as guidance to be used within their fiduciary responsibility. The Church Council also affirmed the continued efforts in supporting and

encouraging all expressions of this church to reduce their use of fossil fuels and improve their stewardship of energy resources (CC14.11.34e).

The ELCA social criteria investment screens “do not constitute binding mandates or provide, for example, specific lists of corporations. It is the responsibility of the ELCA and each ELCA-related organization and individual Lutherans to develop and manage a prudent and responsible investment portfolio. The ELCA social criteria investment screens offer a context for decision-making about socially responsible investments” ([Social Criteria Investment Screen: Policies and Procedure Development](#)). In considering and implementing such screens, Portico, the ELCA Endowment Fund, and other separately incorporated ministries have a fiduciary responsibility to act in the best interests of plan members, participants, and beneficiaries, within the context of the overall ELCA mission.

The memorials submitted to the 2016 Churchwide Assembly request a number of items to be fulfilled through the ELCA Endowment Fund, which oversees the ELCA Endowment Fund Pooled Trust – Fund A. Fund A was established to provide a long-term investment fund with distributions to support ministry. The ELCA Endowment Fund, like Portico Benefit Services, is a separate corporation and has its own board of trustees. Fund A is administered by the ELCA. The investment adviser for Fund A is Portico Benefit Services.

Climate change is a complex issue with many possible solutions, so Portico uses a balanced and far-reaching approach to help transition to an economy less dependent on fossil fuels. As a separately incorporated ministry of the ELCA, Portico develops policies and practices that are consistent with the principles and directives of [this church’s social statements](#). Portico’s three-pronged approach includes shareholder advocacy (filing resolutions and voting proxies), focused investment screening and positive social investments. While some predict that shareholder advocacy will not have much traction over the long-haul, the three-pronged approach is consistent with the ELCA environment screen’s intent to focus on screening out the most egregious companies. In addition, it is an effective approach for making real differences as it relates to addressing the issue of climate change. In 2015 alone, Portico supported over 150 shareholder proposals addressing environmental issues, and Portico has filed more than 50 such resolutions over the past 13 years. One recent success is Costco’s 2015 agreement, in the face of a shareholder resolution, to agree to keep the growth of greenhouse gas emissions below sales growth for the next five years. Examples of Portico’s shareholder activism can be found on Portico’s [website](#).

Currently, Portico’s social purpose portfolios screen nearly 650 companies, 113 of which are screened for environmental reasons. The companies are excluded from future investments because they violate the environmental screen, including some of the largest multi-national fossil fuel companies. About 70 of the 113 excluded companies own thermal coal reserves, the most carbon-intensive (dirtiest) fossil fuel. In addition, there is significant overlap between the thermal coal companies being screened and the Carbon Underground Top 100 Coal Company emissions. The thermal coal companies being screened account for over 60 percent of the emissions of the Top 100 Coal companies in the [Carbon Underground list](#).

Portico’s recent screening of companies with thermal coal reserves is a direct result of the updates made by the Church Council in 2014 to “Environment: Social Criteria Investment Screen.” When a screen is approved by the ELCA, Portico considers it for approval and, once approved by the Portico board of trustees, applies that screen to investment decisions going forward.

Portico has been ramping up investments in companies taking positive steps toward a sustainable environment (renewable and alternative energy companies, energy efficiency, pollution control and more). For example, a recent addition in the social purpose funds includes investing in companies that develop solar, wind and water power generation systems, repurposing waste products and reducing toxic emissions. See Portico’s [website](#) for additional details on impact investing and stories of impact.

As mentioned earlier, the ELCA Endowment Fund uses Portico as its investment adviser and does not own individual securities. As a result, the Fund relies on Portico’s three-pronged approach to express the ELCA’s social statements and social criteria screens, and cannot directly implement what is being sought in the memorials.

Any listing of fossil fuel investments, divesting in fossil fuel companies, ensuring securities of fossil fuel companies in commingled funds are removed from the portfolio, and publishing quarterly updates would be fulfilled through Portico as the investment adviser. Keep in mind, additional lists, ongoing reporting, divestment, and other requests increase the expenses of operating the funds and ultimately are a drag on the returns and performance of the fund. Portico has already begun enhancing its reporting on environmental related issues on its website and will continue to expand the information it provides on companies being screened and proactive investments being made to help transitions to an economy less dependent on fossil fuels.

Currently, ELCA retirement plan participants have the option to invest in social purpose funds. Social impact is increased by making social impact first (SIF) investments. This includes supporting companies whose activities and

practices protect God’s creation, such as through sustainable forestry, clean air and renewable energy. Portico strives to balance financial return and social impact, investing when possible in companies and organizations making a positive, measurable difference in the community and God’s world. And as mentioned earlier, the social purpose funds already screen a significant number of fossil fuel companies consistent with the request of the memorials to limit investments in fossil fuel companies.

An additional resolve was included by the Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod to develop an ELCA strategy for ministry, support and encouragement to workers and families affected by changing patterns of fossil fuel use and investment. This speaks to the complex nature of this issue in our church. In addition to the environmental impact of fossil fuels, we are concerned for the workers and communities that are affected by the changing economy caused by the fluctuations of natural gas usage. We support the ELCA network of affiliated social ministry organizations that provide programs designed to address unemployment. We also advocate for retraining workers laid off, particularly in retraining for energy renewable jobs, and advocating for state/federal programs that would include such services as job training, educational opportunities for people affected by layoffs, and affordable housing opportunities. Congregations can also help struggling families who are affected by changing patterns of fossil fuel with ministries that assist families experiencing economic poverty such as organizing a backpack program that serves children in low-income families, developing food pantries, feeding people at a soup kitchen, or working with affordable housing projects. Doing so is one way we serve all people following the example of Jesus.

Recommendation for Assembly Action

To receive with gratitude the memorials of the Saint Paul Area, Metropolitan New York, Northeastern Pennsylvania, Upper Susquehanna and Northwestern Pennsylvania synods related to climate change and fossil fuels;

To urge all ELCA members, congregations and synods to inform and educate themselves about the effects of climate change through the lens of the “Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope and Justice” social statement, and to advocate for policies that reduce energy use and our dependence on fossil fuels and encourage development of renewable energy sources as an expression of our commitment to address climate change and caring for God’s creation;

To affirm the action of the 2013 Churchwide Assembly and subsequent action of the Church Council in 2014 related to the development of revised or additional investment screens on fossil fuels, and to support and commend ELCA members, congregations, synods, the churchwide organization, and related institutions and agencies such as ELCA Endowment Fund and Portico Benefit Services for their leadership efforts to invest in companies that are taking steps toward a sustainable environment;

To affirm Portico’s balanced approach to supporting this church’s principles and directives as stated in the social statements — including the commitment to help transition to an economy less dependent on fossil fuels. The approach includes:

- 1. shareholder advocacy (filing and supporting resolutions on environmental issues, including 150 resolutions in 2015),**
- 2. focused investment screening, which has identified 113 companies screened for environmental reasons, and**
- 3. ramping up positive social investments, such as investments in companies that develop solar, wind and water power generation systems, repurposing waste products and reducing toxic emissions;**

To support the ELCA network of affiliated social ministry organizations with programs to address unemployment caused by changing patterns of fossil fuel use, to advocate for retraining workers — especially for renewable energy jobs, to advocate for programs that will support those in transition, and to encourage congregations and ministries to address the resulting unemployment and poverty; and

To urge ELCA members, congregations and synods to set measurable goals to reduce their consumption of fossil fuels and improve their stewardship of energy resources, transition to renewable energy sources and promote care for God’s creation.

Category B4: Eco-Reformation and Renewing Creation Care Efforts

1. Northwest Washington Synod (1B) [2015]

WHEREAS, 2017 will mark observances of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, which addressed fundamental threats to human well-being and all of God’s creation in theological, social and political ways; and

WHEREAS, the 1993 ELCA social statement “Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice” affirms that “we are called to care for the earth as God cares for the earth;” and

WHEREAS, in 1993, with “Caring for Creation,” we realized the urgency was already “widespread and serious, according to the preponderance of evidence from scientists worldwide [of] dangerous global warming, caused by the buildup of greenhouse gases, especially carbon dioxide” from the burning of fossil fuels and that “action to counter degradation, especially within this decade, is essential to the future of our children and our children’s children. Time is very short;” and

WHEREAS, in the 1999 ELCA social statement “Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All,” this church declares, “Too often the earth has been treated as a waste receptacle and a limitless storehouse of raw materials to be used up for the sake of economic growth, rather than as a finite, fragile ecological system upon which human and all other life depends;” and

WHEREAS, the statement of “Vision and Expectations for Ordained Ministers in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America” stipulates, “The people of God are called to the care and redemption of all that God has made. This includes the need to speak on behalf of this earth, its environment and natural resources and its inhabitants. This church expects that its ordained ministers will be exemplary stewards of the earth’s resources, and that they will lead this church in the stewardship of God’s creation;” and

WHEREAS, Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton wrote in a pastoral letter on September 19, 2014: “Daily we see and hear the evidence of a rapidly changing climate. Glaciers are disappearing, the polar ice cap is melting, and sea levels are rising. Incidents of pollution-created dead zones in seas and the ocean and toxic algae growth in water supplies are occurring with greater frequency. Most disturbingly, the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is rising at an unprecedented rate. At the same time we also witness in too many instances how the earth’s natural beauty, a sign of God’s wonderful creativity, has been defiled by pollutants and waste. ... The present moment is a critical one, filled with both challenge and opportunity to act as faithful individuals and churches in solidarity with God’s good creation”; and

WHEREAS, the Lutheran World Federation has already, with its threefold theme “Salvation: Not for sale. Human beings: Not for sale. Creation: Not for sale.” signaled its intention to include creation at the center of global 2017 anniversary commemorations; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that this Northwest Washington Synod in assembly, recognizing the need for ongoing reformation of the ELCA, memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA to make climate change and ecological justice major themes in ELCA planning and activities leading up to and following the observance of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

2. Eastern Washington-Idaho Synod (1D) [2015]

WHEREAS, 2017 will mark observances of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, which addressed fundamental threats to human well-being and all of God’s creation in theological, social and political ways; and

WHEREAS, the 1993 ELCA social statement “Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice” affirms that “we are called to care for the earth as God cares for the earth;” and

WHEREAS, in 1993, with “Caring for Creation,” we realized the urgency was already “widespread and serious, according to the preponderance of evidence from scientists worldwide [of] dangerous global warming, caused by the buildup of greenhouse gases, especially carbon dioxide” from the burning of fossil fuels and that “action to counter degradation, especially within this decade, is essential to the future of our children and our children’s children. Time is very short;” and

WHEREAS, in the 1999 ELCA social statement “Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All,” this church declares, “Too often the earth has been treated as a waste receptacle and a limitless storehouse of raw materials to be used up for the sake of economic growth, rather than as a finite, fragile ecological system upon which human and all other life depends;” and

WHEREAS, the statement of “Vision and Expectations for Ordained Ministers in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America” stipulates, “The people of God are called to the care and redemption of all that God has made. This includes the need to speak on behalf of this earth, its environment and natural resources and its inhabitants. This church expects that its ordained ministers will be exemplary stewards of the earth’s resources, and that they will lead this church in the stewardship of God’s creation;” and

WHEREAS, Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton wrote in a pastoral letter on September 19, 2014: “Daily we see and hear the evidence of a rapidly changing climate. Glaciers are disappearing, the polar ice cap is melting, and sea levels are rising. Incidents of pollution-created dead zones in seas and the ocean and toxic algae growth in water supplies are occurring with greater frequency. Most disturbingly, the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is rising at an unprecedented rate. At the same time we also witness in too many instances how the earth’s natural beauty, a sign of God’s wonderful creativity, has been defiled by pollutants and waste. ... The present moment is a critical one, filled with both challenge and opportunity to act as faithful individuals and churches in solidarity with God’s good creation”; and

WHEREAS, the Lutheran World Federation has already, with its threefold theme “Salvation: Not for sale. Human beings: Not for sale. Creation: Not for sale.” signaled its intention to include creation at the center of global 2017 anniversary commemorations; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that this Eastern Washington-Idaho Synod, recognizing the need for ongoing reformation of the ELCA, memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA to make climate change and ecological justice major themes in ELCA planning and activities leading up to and following the observance of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

3. Southwest California Synod (2B) [2016]

WHEREAS, 2017 will mark observances of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, which addressed fundamental threats to human well-being and all of God's creation in theological, social and political ways; and

WHEREAS, the 1993 ELCA social statement "Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice" affirms that "we are called to care for the earth as God cares for the earth"; and

WHEREAS, in 1993, with "Caring for Creation," we realized the urgency was already "widespread and serious, according to the preponderance of evidence from scientists worldwide [of] dangerous global warming, caused by the buildup of greenhouse gases, especially carbon dioxide" from the burning of fossil fuels and that "action to counter degradation, especially within this decade, is essential to the future of our children and our children's children. Time is very short;" and

WHEREAS, in the 1999 ELCA social statement "Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All," this church declares, "Too often the earth has been treated as a waste receptacle and a limitless storehouse of raw materials to be used up for the sake of economic growth, rather than as a finite, fragile ecological system upon which human and all other life depends"; and

WHEREAS, the statement of "Vision and Expectations for Ordained Ministers in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America" stipulates, "The people of God are called to the care and redemption of all that God has made. This includes the need to speak on behalf of this earth, its environment and natural resources and its inhabitants. This church expects that its ordained ministers will be exemplary stewards of the earth's resources, and that they will lead this church in the stewardship of God's creation"; and

WHEREAS, Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton wrote in a pastoral letter on September 19, 2014: "Daily we see and hear the evidence of a rapidly changing climate. Glaciers are disappearing, the polar ice cap is melting, and sea levels are rising. Incidents of pollution-created dead zones in seas and the ocean and toxic algae growth in water supplies are occurring with greater frequency. Most disturbingly, the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is rising at an unprecedented rate. At the same time we also witness in too many instances how the earth's natural beauty, a sign of God's wonderful creativity, has been defiled by pollutants and waste. ... The present moment is a critical one, filled with both challenge and opportunity to act as faithful individuals and churches in solidarity with God's good creation"; and

WHEREAS, the Lutheran World Federation has already, with its threefold theme "Salvation: Not for sale. Human beings: Not for sale. Creation: Not for sale." signaled its intention to include creation at the center of global 2017 anniversary commemorations; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Southwest California Synod, recognizing the need for ongoing reformation of the ELCA, memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA to make climate change and ecological justice major themes in ELCA planning and activities leading up to and following the observance of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwest California Synod find ways to enact the 2013 Churchwide Assembly action to "support and encourage synods, congregations, members, the churchwide organization, and agencies and institutions of this church to adopt and advocate for policies that reduce energy use, and with it our dependence on fossil fuels, as an expression of this church's commitment to address climate change and to care for God's creation" and "to re-examine lifestyles and environmental footprints as they relate to the climate crisis and to improve their stewardship of energy resources and promote care for God's creation"; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwest California Synod commits itself to participate with the ELCA in becoming even more faithfully a denomination that embraces creation care throughout its life and mission.

4. Northeastern Minnesota Synod (3E) [2015]

WHEREAS, 2017 will mark observances of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, which addressed fundamental threats of God's creation in theological, social and political ways; and

WHEREAS, the 1993 ELCA social statement "Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice" affirms that "we are called to care for the earth as God cares for the earth;" and

WHEREAS, the 1993 ELCA social statement "Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice" affirms that the urgency was already "widespread and serious, according to the preponderance of evidence from scientists worldwide [of] dangerous global warming, caused by the buildup of greenhouse gases, especially carbon dioxide" from the burning of fossil fuels and that "action to counter degradation, especially within this decade, is essential to the future of our children and our children's children. Time is very short;" and

WHEREAS, the 1999 ELCA social statement "Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All" declares, "Too often the earth has been treated as a waste receptacle and a limitless storehouse of raw materials to be used up for the sake of economic growth, rather than as a finite, fragile ecological system upon which human and all other life depends;" and

WHEREAS, the ELCA's "Vision and Expectations for Ordained Ministers in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America" stipulates, "The people of God are called to the care and redemption of all that God has made. This includes the need to speak on behalf of this earth, its environment and natural resources and its inhabitants. This church expects that its ordained ministers will be exemplary stewards of the earth's resources, and that they will lead this church in the stewardship of God's creation;" and

WHEREAS, Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton wrote in a pastoral letter on September 19, 2014: "Daily we see and hear the evidence of a rapidly changing climate. Glaciers are disappearing, the polar ice cap is melting, and sea levels are rising. Incidents

of pollution-created dead zones in seas and the ocean and toxic algae growth in water supplies are occurring with greater frequency. Most disturbingly, the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is rising at an unprecedented rate. At the same time we also witness in too many instances how the earth's natural beauty, a sign of God's wonderful creativity, has been defiled by pollutants and waste. ... The present moment is a critical one, filled with both challenge and opportunity to act as faithful individuals and churches in solidarity with God's good creation;" and

WHEREAS, the Lutheran World Federation has already signaled its intention to include creation at the center of global 2017 anniversary celebrations with its threefold theme "Salvation: Not for sale. Human beings: Not for sale. Creation: Not for sale."; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Minnesota Synod, meeting in assembly and recognizing the need for ongoing reformation of the ELCA in the context of climate change, memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA to make stewardship of the earth and ecological justice major themes in ELCA planning and activities leading up to and following the observance of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

5. Central States Synod (4B) [2016]

RESOLVED, that the Central States Synod, meeting in assembly and recognizing the need for ongoing reformation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) in the context of climate change, memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA to make stewardship of the earth and ecological justice major themes in the ELCA planning and activities leading up to and following the observance of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

6. Northeastern Iowa Synod (5F) [2015]

RESOLVED, that this Northeastern Iowa Synod, recognizing the need for ongoing reformation of the ELCA, memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA to make climate change and ecological justice major themes in ELCA planning and activities leading up to and following the observance of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

7. Northwest Synod of Wisconsin (5H) [2016]

WHEREAS, 2017 will mark observances of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, which addressed fundamental threats to human well-being and all of God's creation in theological, social and political ways; and

WHEREAS, the 1993 ELCA social statement "Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice" affirms that "we are called to care for the earth as God cares for the earth"; and

WHEREAS, in 1993, with "Caring for Creation," we realized the urgency was already "widespread and serious, according to the preponderance of evidence from scientists worldwide [of] dangerous global warming, caused by the buildup of greenhouse gases, especially carbon dioxide" from the burning of fossil fuels and that "action to counter degradation, especially within this decade, is essential to the future of our children and our children's children. Time is very short"; and

WHEREAS, in the 1999 ELCA social statement "Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All," this church declares, "Too often the earth has been treated as a waste receptacle and a limitless storehouse of raw materials to be used up for the sake of economic growth, rather than as a finite, fragile ecological system upon which human and all other life depends"; and

WHEREAS, the statement of "Vision and Expectations for Ordained Ministers in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America" stipulates, "The people of God are called to the care and redemption of all that God has made. This includes the need to speak on behalf of this earth, its environment and natural resources and its inhabitants. This church expects that its ordained ministers will be exemplary stewards of the earth's resources, and that they will lead this church in the stewardship of God's creation"; and

WHEREAS, Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton wrote in a pastoral letter on September 19, 2014: "Daily we see and hear the evidence of a rapidly changing climate. Glaciers are disappearing, the polar ice cap is melting, and sea levels are rising. Incidents of pollution-created dead zones in seas and the ocean and toxic algae growth in water supplies are occurring with greater frequency. Most disturbingly, the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is rising at an unprecedented rate. At the same time we also witness in too many instances how the earth's natural beauty, a sign of God's wonderful creativity, has been defiled by pollutants and waste. ... The present moment is a critical one, filled with both challenge and opportunity to act as faithful individuals and churches in solidarity with God's good creation"; and

WHEREAS, the Lutheran World Federation has already, with its threefold theme "Salvation: Not for sale. Human beings: Not for sale. Creation: Not for sale." signaled its intention to include creation at the center of global 2017 anniversary commemorations; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin search for ways to enact the 2013 Churchwide Assembly action [CA13.03.07f] to "support and encourage synods, congregations, members, the churchwide organization, and agencies and institutions of this church to adopt and advocate for policies that reduce energy use, and with it our dependence on fossil fuels, as an expression of this church's commitment to address climate change and to care for God's creation" and "to re-examine lifestyles and environmental footprints as they relate to the climate crisis and to improve their stewardship of energy resources and promote care for God's creation"; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin, meeting in assembly and recognizing the need for ongoing reformation of the ELCA in the context of climate change, memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA to make stewardship of the earth and ecological justice major themes in ELCA planning and activities leading up to and following the observance of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

8. New England Synod (7B) [2015]

WHEREAS, 2017 will mark observances of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, which addressed fundamental threats of God's creation in theological, social and political ways; and

WHEREAS, the 1993 ELCA social statement "Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice" affirms that "we are called to care for the earth as God cares for the earth;" and

WHEREAS, in 1993, with "Caring for Creation," this church realized the urgency was already "widespread and serious, according to the preponderance of evidence from scientists worldwide [of] dangerous global warming, caused by the buildup of greenhouse gases, especially carbon dioxide" from the burning of fossil fuels and that "action to counter degradation, especially within this decade, is essential to the future of our children and our children's children. Time is very short;" and

WHEREAS, in the 1999 ELCA social statement "Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All," this church declares, "Too often the earth has been treated as a waste receptacle and a limitless storehouse of raw materials to be used up for the sake of economic growth, rather than as a finite, fragile ecological system upon which human and all other life depends;" and

WHEREAS, the ELCA's "Vision and Expectations for Ordained Ministers in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America" stipulates, "The people of God are called to the care and redemption of all that God has made. This includes the need to speak on behalf of this earth, its environment and natural resources and its inhabitants. This church expects that its ordained ministers will be exemplary stewards of the earth's resources, and that they will lead this church in the stewardship of God's creation;" and

WHEREAS, Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton wrote in a pastoral letter on September 19, 2014: "Daily we see and hear the evidence of a rapidly changing climate. Glaciers are disappearing, the polar ice cap is melting, and sea levels are rising. Incidents of pollution-created dead zones in seas and the ocean and toxic algae growth in water supplies are occurring with greater frequency. Most disturbingly, the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is rising at an unprecedented rate. At the same time we also witness in too many instances how the earth's natural beauty, a sign of God's wonderful creativity, has been defiled by pollutants and waste. ... The present moment is a critical one, filled with both challenge and opportunity to act as faithful individuals and churches in solidarity with God's good creation;" and

WHEREAS, the Lutheran World Federation has already, with its threefold theme "Salvation: Not for sale. Human beings: Not for sale. Creation: Not for sale." signaled its intention to include creation at the center of global 2017 anniversary celebrations; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the New England Synod, recognizing the need for ongoing reformation of the ELCA, memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA to request that climate change and ecological justice major themes in ELCA planning and activities leading up to and following the observance of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

9. Metropolitan New York Synod (7C) [2015]

RESOLVED, that this Metropolitan New York Synod Assembly, recognizing the need for ongoing reformation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA to make climate change and ecological justice major themes in ELCA planning and activities leading up to and following the observance of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

10. Upper Susquehanna Synod (8E) [2015]

WHEREAS, 2017 will mark observances of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, which addressed fundamental threats to human well-being and all of God's creation in theological, social and political ways; and

WHEREAS, the 1993 ELCA social statement "Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice" affirms that "we are called to care for the earth as God cares for the earth;" and

WHEREAS, in 1993, with "Caring for Creation," this church realized the urgency was already "widespread and serious, according to the preponderance of evidence from scientists worldwide [of] dangerous global warming, caused by the buildup of greenhouse gases, especially carbon dioxide" from the burning of fossil fuels and that "action to counter degradation, especially within this decade, is essential to the future of our children and our children's children. Time is very short;" and

WHEREAS, in the 1999 ELCA social statement on economic life, "Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All," this church declares, "Too often the earth has been treated as a waste receptacle and a limitless storehouse of raw materials to be used up for the sake of economic growth, rather than as a finite, fragile ecological system upon which human and all other life depends;" and

WHEREAS, the ELCA's "Vision and Expectations for Ordained Ministers in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America" stipulates, "The people of God are called to the care and redemption of all that God has made. This includes the need to speak on behalf of this earth, its environment and natural resources and its inhabitants. This church expects that its ordained ministers will be exemplary stewards of the earth's resources, and that they will lead this church in the stewardship of God's creation;" and

WHEREAS, Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton wrote in a pastoral letter on September 19, 2014: “Daily we see and hear the evidence of a rapidly changing climate. Glaciers are disappearing, the polar ice cap is melting, and sea levels are rising. Incidents of pollution-created dead zones in seas and the ocean and toxic algae growth in water supplies are occurring with greater frequency. Most disturbingly, the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is rising at an unprecedented rate. At the same time we also witness in too many instances how the earth’s natural beauty, a sign of God’s wonderful creativity, has been defiled by pollutants and waste. ... The present moment is a critical one, filled with both challenge and opportunity to act as faithful individuals and churches in solidarity with God’s good creation;” and

WHEREAS, the Lutheran World Federation has already, with its threefold theme “Salvation: Not for sale. Human beings: Not for sale. Creation: Not for sale.” signaled its intention to include creation at the center of global 2017 anniversary commemorations; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Upper Susquehanna Synod, recognizing the need for ongoing reformation of the ELCA, memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA to make climate change and ecological justice major themes in ELCA planning and activities leading up to and following the observance of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

Background

The “[Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope and Justice](#)” (1993) social statement explains the ELCA’s teachings on ecology and the environment, grounded in a biblical vision of God’s intention for the healing and wholeness of creation. It articulates a call to pursue justice for creation through active participation, solidarity, sufficiency and sustainability, expressed through action, worship, learning, moral deliberation and advocacy.

The Eco-Reformation initiative was created by a planning team of ELCA theologians, teachers, pastors and lay leaders. The initiative is to foster “an ongoing reformation of the ELCA that incorporates ecological justice into the full life, identity and mission of the ELCA.”

On November 4, 2014, a group of scholars, teachers and pastors in the ELCA wrote an open letter to Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton, copied to each synod bishop, to express support for her public commitment to address environmental issues and to propose the creation of an “eco-justice reforming movement” in the church. It was followed by issuing a statement promoting ecological justice in an ongoing reformation, the publication of a book, “Eco-Reformation: Grace and Hope for a Planet in Peril” along with congregational study guides, publications in Lutheran journals, advocacy initiatives and other resources. The Eco-Reformation group is connected with but not sponsored by Lutherans Restoring Creation (LRC). LRC hosts an expanding number of Eco-Reformation documents, plans and resources on its website.

Staff in the Office of the Presiding Bishop working on the 500th anniversary observance is encouraging creativity and initiative throughout the entire ecology of the church for marking the Reformation anniversary. They have elected not to set themes, but to help publicize new and existing initiatives and to encourage networking to share resources. For example, they have worked to connect the Central States Synod with Lutherans Restoring Creation and other synods in their 500th anniversary tree-planting project. The Reformation anniversary team does not have the capacity to undertake new initiatives without redirecting resources from other activities.

In preparation for and during the Reformation anniversary year, several avenues exist to lift up an Eco-Reformation theme in the ELCA. The Grace Gathering event in August 2016 to help Lutherans prepare for the Reformation observance will include experiential learning and workshops about creation care. ELCA advocacy will continue to address climate change, methane emissions, water and public lands in advocacy and education in 2017 and beyond. ELCA stewardship education continues to lead efforts in conservation and sustainability. Participants in The Lutheran World Federation 500th Reformation Anniversary on the theme of “Liberated by God’s Grace” will focus on a sub-theme of “Creation – Not for Sale.”

Recommendation for Assembly Action

To receive with gratitude the memorials of the Northwest Washington, Eastern Washington-Idaho, Southwest California, Northeastern Minnesota, Central States, Northeastern Iowa, Northwest Synod of Wisconsin, New England, Metropolitan New York and Upper Susquehanna synods regarding Eco-Reformation in the Context of Climate Change;

To reaffirm the commitment of this church to engage in creation care through principles of sufficiency, sustainability, solidarity and participation; and

To encourage this church’s members, congregations, synods and agencies to give renewed attention to the care of creation in their Reformation anniversary planning through education, stewardship and advocacy.

Category B5: Increase Funding for Suicide Prevention Research

1. Southeastern Synod (9D) [2015]

WHEREAS, suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in the United States and the second leading cause of death for the age group 15 to 24 years; and

WHEREAS, suicide impacts all people, including ELCA rostered persons, regardless of age, race, ethnicity, gender, sex, nationality or occupation; and

WHEREAS, more members of the armed forces died by suicide during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan than died in combat; and

WHEREAS, approximately 22 veterans die by suicide each day, and represent almost 20 percent of all suicide deaths; and

WHEREAS, the American Association of Suicidology, the oldest suicide prevention organization in the nation, estimates there are more than 5 million survivors of suicide (people who have lost a friend or loved one to suicide) in the United States today and that more than 1 million people annually act on the desire to end their lives; and

WHEREAS, the annual National Institutes of Health (NIH) investment in suicide prevention research is approximately \$56 million, less than one-seventieth of the investment in HIV and AIDS research; and

WHEREAS, the number of deaths due to HIV and AIDS has decreased approximately 50 percent over the past 13 years, and the number of suicides has increased steadily to more than 41,000 annually, an increase of approximately 37 percent, over the same time period; and

WHEREAS, this disparity between the federal research investment in suicide prevention and HIV and AIDS, when viewed against the contrasting trends in annual deaths from these two causes, represents a social injustice; and

WHEREAS, the Institute of Medicine has stated, “There is every reason to expect that a national consensus to declare war on suicide and to fund research and prevention at a level commensurate with the severity of the problem will be successful, and lead to highly significant discoveries as have the wars on cancer, Alzheimer’s disease, and AIDS” (“Reducing Suicide: A National Imperative,” Nation Academy of Sciences, 2002); and

WHEREAS, in the 1990s, Congress established the precedent of doubling the federal investment in the NIH; and

WHEREAS, the [U.S. Surgeon General’s] “National Strategy for Suicide Prevention” in 2001, and its revision 10 years later, have failed to stem the tide of increasing suicide; and

WHEREAS, a groundswell of grassroots state and federal suicide prevention efforts since 1998 has failed to stem the annual increase in completed suicides; and

WHEREAS, “This church must participate in social structures critically, for sin also is at work in the world. Social structures and processes combine life-giving and life-destroying dynamics in complex mixtures and in varying degrees. This church, therefore, must unite realism and vision, wisdom and courage, in its social responsibility. It needs constantly to discern when to support and when to confront society’s cultural patterns, values, and powers” (ELCA social statement, “Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective”); and

WHEREAS, according to the “Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA,” among the purposes of this church in participating in God’s mission are to “study social issues and trends, work to discover the causes of oppression and injustice, and develop programs of ministry and advocacy to further human dignity, freedom, justice, and peace in the world” (4.03.); therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the 2015 Southeastern Synod Assembly memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct the ELCA Washington Office to advocate that the U.S. Congress double, over five years, the federal funding to the National Institutes of Health for suicide prevention research.

Background

Suicide is the third leading cause of death among people aged 10-14, the second among people aged 15-34 years, the fourth among people aged 35-45, the fifth among people aged 45-54 years, the eighth among people 55-64 and 17th among people 65 and older. Among American Indian/Native Alaskan people aged 10-34 years, suicide is the second leading cause of death.

Mindful of the size of the problem, the lives affected, the need for naming the issue and for offering guidance, the Church Council adopted a social message on “[Suicide Prevention](#)” in 1999. The message affirms life as God’s good and precious gift, but recognizes that suicide testifies to the tragic brokenness of living experienced by some as a torment without hope. The message beckons God’s people to bear one another’s burdens (Galatians 6:2) even when it is easier to ignore, reject or shy away from those who despair of life. It proclaims that God’s boundless love in Jesus Christ will leave no one alone and abandoned. It offers suggestions for pastoral care when suicide does occur while emphasizing means for prevention through becoming aware and challenging false attitudes about suicide.

The message urges synods to support members, congregations and affiliated institutions in their efforts to prevent suicide and calls upon the church’s educational advocacy programs to make suicide prevention an important concern in their ministries. It offers specific information about receiving and giving care, and provides lists of resources and organizations dedicated to providing support.

The U.S. President's FY 2015 budget requested \$3.6 billion for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), a decrease of \$63 million from FY 2014. Adjustments to the budget subsequently did increase access to mental health services to protect the health of children and communities, and to prevent suicide and substance abuse and promote mental health, especially among American Indian and Alaska Native communities.

Of that overall budget request, \$55 million was dedicated to prevent suicide. This allocation included \$5 million to continue support for competitive grants to tribal entities to promote mental health and address substance abuse among American Indian and Alaska Native young people. The budget also included additional funding for the National Strategy for Suicide Prevention, the nation's blueprint for reducing suicide over the next decade. Organized as a public/private partnership including experts in suicide prevention, this funding will develop and test nationwide efforts such as suicide awareness, provider credentialing changes, emergency room referral processes, clinical care practice standards and other activities not currently being addressed in any other national initiative.

SAMHSA's suicide prevention programs fund states and tribes to develop and implement youth suicide prevention and early intervention strategies in partnership with education and juvenile justice systems, youth support organizations and other community settings. The budget sustains the capacity of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, a national hotline that routes calls across the country to a network of certified local crisis centers that can connect callers to local emergency, mental health and social service resources. To ensure access to the latest science and best practices, the budget also included continued funding for the Suicide Prevention Resource Center that will provide systemwide enhancements to the nation's mental health infrastructure related to suicide prevention.

National Institute on Health (NIH) funding for suicide and suicide prevention has shown a modest increase over the last five years. Among the federal agencies engaging in suicide prevention research between 2008 and 2013, the NIH received 41 percent of funding, the Department of Defense 36 percent and the Veterans Administration 17 percent. The National Institute on Health documents the following funding in dollars rounded in millions:

Suicide:	FY 2012: \$44	FY 2013: \$37	FY 2014: \$39	FY 2015: \$46	FY 2016: \$48
Suicide Prevention:	FY 2012: \$22	FY 2013: \$21	FY 2014: \$22	FY 2015: \$24	FY 2016: \$25

Lutheran Suicide Prevention Ministry (LSPM) was organized to implement the intention of the ELCA message on "Suicide Prevention." LSPM was approved to be an independent Lutheran organization by the Church Council at its November 2013 meeting. In addition, the Lutheran suicide network is supported by the disability ministries program of the Domestic Mission unit. The network works collaboratively with the churchwide organization to resource and support suicide prevention in the church.

The ELCA Washington Office monitors the federal funding appropriations by the U.S. Congress to the National Institutes of Health on behalf of the ELCA and reports that many concerned individuals and organizations believe additional funding is critical. While the ELCA Washington Office plays a significant role in advocating additional funding as directed by this church, the social message calls upon the whole church to encourage suicide prevention. In line with that dimension of the message, the recommendations below direct all expressions of the church to advocate for doubled federal funding over the course of the next five years.

Recommendation for Assembly Action

To receive with gratitude the memorial of the Southeastern Synod regarding increased funding for suicide prevention research;

To affirm the commitment of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in its social message on "Suicide Prevention" to call upon this church to advocate for efforts to prevent suicide;

To request that the presiding bishop communicate to the U.S. President and members of Congress the support of the ELCA for doubling, over five years, the federal funding to the National Institutes of Health for suicide prevention research; and

To encourage ELCA synods, congregations, members and the ELCA Advocacy Office in Washington, D.C., to add their voices in support of such action.

Category B6: Welcoming Refugees

1. Eastern Washington-Idaho Synod (1D) [2016]

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has a tradition of welcoming refugees; and

WHEREAS, continuing conflict in the Middle East has caused a refugee crisis; and

WHEREAS, God says, "You shall not wrong or oppress a resident alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt" [Exodus 22:21];

and

WHEREAS, God says, “For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the stranger, providing them food and clothing. You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt” [Deuteronomy 10:17-19]; and

WHEREAS, God says, “The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the Land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God” [Leviticus 19:34]; and

WHEREAS, Jesus says, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” [Matthew 22:39, Luke 10:27]; and

WHEREAS, Jesus says to feed the hungry, give those thirsty drink, clothe the naked, visit the sick and welcome the stranger [Matthew 25:31-46]; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Eastern Washington-Idaho Synod memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to:

1. advocate for continued aid and assistance for refugee resettlement by the federal government; and
2. encourage congregations of the ELCA to welcome refugees to their communities.

2. Metropolitan New York Synod (7C) [2016]

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan New York Synod memorialize the ELCA Churchwide Assembly to:

- Request that the presiding bishop communicate this church’s commitment to the resettlement of refugees in the United States and encourage steadfast support for this program to the President and Members of Congress; and
- Request that churchwide units, in cooperation with Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, provide easy access to resource materials for congregations to learn about and take part in ministries with refugees; and
- Request that the presiding bishop, Church Council and synod bishops speak out publicly against hateful language that targets refugees and immigrants and against actions to exclude or discriminate against them.

3. Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod (8A) [2016]

WHEREAS, today there are more than 60 million people displaced from their homes by war, violence and persecution, more than at any time since such records have been kept; and

WHEREAS, more than 16 million of those who are displaced have been forced to cross a border seeking safety and are considered refugees under humanitarian international law; and

WHEREAS, most refugees hope to return to their homeland, some are able to remain and integrate into their country of first asylum, and a small number (half of 1 percent) seek and are granted resettlement in a third country like the United States; and

WHEREAS, refugees contribute greatly to a community’s economy, culture, and diversity; and

WHEREAS, the Lutheran churches in the United States were founded by immigrants and ministry with newcomers through congregations, social ministry organizations and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service has been a hallmark of our demonstration of love of neighbors as together we have resettled more than 500,000 refugees; and

WHEREAS, God’s love for the stranger is central to the biblical faith — Exodus 22:21, “You shall not wrong or oppress a resident alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt.” Matthew 25:35, “... for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me”; and

WHEREAS, individuals and communities in the United States are sometimes struggling with their desire to welcome newcomers and fears for the change this brings in communities; and

WHEREAS, recognized hate groups in the United States are disseminating misinformation in order to fuel fear and incite actions against refugees and those that provide services to assist them; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod develop a plan and share resource materials to assist congregations in exploring their Christian calling to love and serve their refugee neighbors and to learn about the experiences and needs of refugees, the processing of refugees through the U.S. refugee program, and ways to accompany refugees; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod recommits to being an advocate and justice seeker for refugees, and request that the synodical bishop communicates our concerns to our members of Congress and other elected officials; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod encourages congregations, individuals and communities to be the church at work in the world, offering welcome and hospitality to refugees through local ministries and in partnership with Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service; and be it further

RESOLVED, that each congregation is encouraged to pray for refugees; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly memorialize the ELCA Churchwide Assembly to:

- request that the presiding bishop communicate this church’s commitment to the resettlement of refugees in the United States and encourage steadfast support for this program to the President and members of Congress;

- request that churchwide units, in cooperation with Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, provide easy access to resource materials for congregations to learn about and take part in ministries with refugees; and
- request that the presiding bishop, Church Council and synod bishops speak out publicly against hateful language that targets refugees and immigrants and actions that exclude or discriminate against them.

4. Southeastern Synod (9D) [2016]

WHEREAS, today there are more than 60 million people displaced from their homes by war, violence and persecution, more than at any time since such records have been kept; and

WHEREAS, more than 16 million of those who are displaced have been forced to cross a border seeking safety and are considered refugees under humanitarian international law; and

WHEREAS, most refugees hope to return to their homeland, some are able to remain and integrate into their country of first asylum, and a small number (half of 1 percent) seek and are granted resettlement in a third country like the United States; and

WHEREAS, refugees contribute greatly to a community's economy, culture, and diversity; and

WHEREAS, the Lutheran churches in the United States were founded by immigrants; and

WHEREAS, ministry with newcomers through congregations, social ministry organizations and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service has been a hallmark of our demonstration of love of neighbors as together we have resettled more than 500,000 refugees; and

WHEREAS, God's love for the stranger is central to the biblical faith — Exodus 22:21, "You shall not wrong or oppress a resident alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt." Matthew 25:35, "... for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me"; and

WHEREAS, individuals and communities in the United States often struggle between their desire to welcome newcomers and their fear of the changes this will bring to their communities; and

WHEREAS, recognized hate groups in the United States are disseminating misinformation in order to fuel fear and incite actions against refugees and those that provide services to assist them; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod develop a plan and share resource materials to assist congregations in exploring their Christian calling to love and serve their refugee neighbors and to learn about the experiences and needs of refugees, the processing of refugees through the U.S. refugee program, and ways to accompany refugees; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod recommit itself to being an advocate and justice seeker for refugees, and request that the synodical bishop communicate our concerns to our members of Congress and other elected officials; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the synod encourage congregations, individuals and communities to be the church at work in the world offering welcome and hospitality to refugees through local ministries and in partnership with Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service; and be it further

RESOLVED, that each congregation is encouraged to pray for refugees and annually host a Refugee Sunday (www.lirs.org/refugeesunday); and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod Assembly memorialize the ELCA Churchwide Assembly to:

- request that the presiding bishop communicate this church's commitment to the resettlement of refugees in the United States and encourage steadfast support for this program to the President and members of Congress;
- request that churchwide units, in cooperation with Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, provide easy access to resource materials for congregations to learn about and take part in ministries with refugees; and
- encourage the presiding bishop, the Church Council, and the bishops to speak out publicly against hateful language that targets refugees and immigrants and actions that exclude or discriminate against them.

Background

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has a strong history of assisting and welcoming those forced to flee their communities and seek refuge outside their countries of origin. The commitment of the church to the protection of refugees has been strengthened by our relationships with companion churches and our partnership with Lutheran and faith-based organizations, particularly Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) in the United States. Today, as the number of refugees globally is at its highest in recorded history, the ELCA continues to honor its immigrant roots by supporting efforts to assist refugees abroad and continuing to support welcoming those seeking refuge to the United States.

LIRS and the ELCA have long advocated for the protection of unaccompanied children, refugees, asylum-seekers and trafficking victims with the United Nations and the U.S. government. We believe that this joint work requires a

holistic response that includes attention to improving conditions outside the United States and to ensuring that individuals who are fleeing persecution or violence receive protection in the United States and their due process rights are respected.

LIRS is one of the nine national refugee resettlement organizations in the United States, walking alongside refugees as they establish new lives in American communities. LIRS works with migrants and refugees, U.S. Lutherans, and many other partners in service and justice to accomplish their mission. LIRS believes in the *long welcome*. This is the process of ensuring newcomers are not only protected but also become valued members of their new community.

Lutherans across the United States have been eager to address the worldwide refugee crisis, in which one in every 122 humans is either a refugee, internally displaced or seeking asylum, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. This includes an ever-increasing number of Syrian refugees as the six-year conflict in Syria has now displaced more than 11 million people, nearly 5 million of whom have crossed at least one border, confirming it as the world's single largest refugee crisis [since World War II](#).

Another challenge to the resettlement program is that over the last three decades, refugee populations arriving in the United States have changed significantly. With ongoing conflicts in almost every region of the world, we are witnessing refugees with increased needs including single-women-headed households, survivors of torture and trauma, and some with severe medical and mental health needs. However, the funding and infrastructure of the U.S. resettlement program have not kept pace with the program's evolving mandate and challenging refugee trends. ELCA congregants can advocate, through LIRS (www.lirs.org/action), for a flexible and welcoming resettlement program and robust funding that meets the needs of all vulnerable people.

The multiple actions previously taken by the ELCA through its social statements and messages show our ongoing support to protect and welcome those seeking refuge. The actions are a witness to our deeply rooted immigrant history and our commitment to put our faith into action.

In moments of crisis in Central America that cause massive displacement, the ELCA has stood alongside affected communities and our companion churches. In 1989, the ELCA adopted [a social policy resolution](#) to extend hospitality and support Central American refugees and continues working with LIRS to provide asylum. Since 2014, after thousands of children and families were displaced from their communities, the ELCA developed a comprehensive, whole church strategy to protect and welcome Central Americans forced to migrate — Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities (AMMPARO). This strategy is being recommended by the Church Council to the 2016 Churchwide Assembly.

Other key actions by the ELCA to welcome and protect refugees include the social policy resolution, "[Refugees](#)," adopted by the Church Council in 2002 that reaffirms "hope that congregations will be communities of welcome for people who are refugees and immigrants" and highlights this church's concern for the decline in refugee admissions. In addition, the 2005 Churchwide Assembly adopted a social policy resolution, "[Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and Immigrants](#)," reaffirming this church's commitment to engage in refugee and immigrant issues.

Since 2012, congregations and individuals have provided assistance through Lutheran Disaster Response (formerly ELCA's International Disaster Response) to provide assistance to forcibly displaced people who have fled their communities, attempting to find safety in Europe. Working with companion churches and partners, Lutheran Disaster Response is assisting in providing food, diapers, blankets, water, psychosocial services and other basic human needs to refugees outside the United States. As refugees are resettled, the ELCA is involved in refugee resettlement through its strong partnership with LIRS.

ELCA congregations partner closely with LIRS and its national network of local Lutheran social ministry organizations to support and help refugees and asylum seekers to adjust and feel at home in their new communities. Whether congregations are new to assisting refugees and migrants, have a history of newcomer ministry, or are newcomers themselves, congregations have joined in celebrating the power of God's love to transform the lives of those fleeing danger by designating one Sunday a year to lift up their concern for refugees (<http://refugeesunday.lirs.org>). LIRS staff regularly provide outreach to congregations to build bridges and foster meaningful relationships between Lutherans and men, women and children who have been forced to flee their homes.

In 2015, hundreds of congregants called on their elected officials to promote policies and legislation that made a positive impact on the lives of migrants and refugees.

ELCA synod bishops who serve on this church's Immigration Ready Bench participate in the Lutheran Immigration Leadership Summit, hosted by LIRS each year. During the summit, Lutheran leaders and partners come together in Washington, D.C., for a day of briefings on current policies and proposals that impact the lives of refugees and migrants before they take to Capitol Hill to call on elected officials to protect the world's most vulnerable. LIRS has cultivated a meaningful relationship with many ELCA bishops thanks to their deep commitment to welcoming those fleeing persecution. ELCA bishops and pastors have repeatedly demonstrated this commitment in their own communities and

through their own advocacy efforts. For example, the tragic attacks in Paris and the Middle East generated unprecedented fear and skepticism over refugee resettlement; and ELCA bishops issued powerful statements, calling on the spirit of welcome to counter hate.

Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton issued a statement in support of refugee resettlement on November 18, 2015. She stated: “We are not naive about possible new threats of terrorism, but denying refuge to thousands of desperate people is not who we are as Christians, nor will it guarantee our security. The United States is a welcoming country with a religiously diverse society, and our refugee resettlement program should continue to reflect this.” ([View the whole statement here.](#))

Recommendation for Assembly Action

To receive with gratitude the memorials of the Eastern Washington-Idaho, Metropolitan New York, Northwestern Pennsylvania and Southeastern synods regarding refugee resettlement;

To reaffirm the work of ELCA leaders and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service in working to welcome refugees from across the globe;

To support bishops, pastors and other Lutheran leaders as they continue to call on members of Congress and state legislators to open their hearts to the suffering of refugees around the world and support legislative actions to welcome these newcomers to new communities;

To request that the presiding bishop communicate this church’s commitment for the resettlement of refugees in the United States and encourage steadfast support for this program to the U.S. President and members of Congress;

To encourage and support all Lutherans in welcoming refugees by building awareness, volunteering, hosting refugees, speaking out against hate, advocating for a more generous U.S. response and observing Refugee Sunday; and

To request that units of the churchwide organization, in cooperation with Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, provide easy access to resource materials for congregations to learn about and take part in ministries with refugees.

Category B7: Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery

1. Alaska Synod (1A) [2016]

WHEREAS, we confess, with our Native sisters and brothers, that the whole of Creation is God’s work, that God declares it all as good and that God’s Spirit dwells within it; and

WHEREAS, we confess that Jesus Christ became incarnate in human form to show God’s love and mercy to all humanity, in all its variety, and to every race and people on every continent of the earth; and

WHEREAS, we acknowledge with pain and regret the damage done to the indigenous inhabitants of the Americas by the European conquest and migration to what Europeans called a “new world” but which was in reality already the homeland of many peoples; and

WHEREAS, we recognize that Christian churches were and remain complicit in that conquest, migration and dispossession, and that Christian churches helped develop conceptions of Native peoples that blamed them for their own ills and that continue to perpetuate prejudice and injustice against them and their descendants; and

WHEREAS, we deplore and reject the so-called “doctrine of discovery,” the legal principle, originating with Pope Alexander VI in 1493 and further entrenched in U.S. federal law in *Johnson v. McIntosh* (1823), that Native inhabitants have no property or any other rights which colonizing European nations and their sovereigns are bound to respect. This principle promotes the myth that the Americas were a largely empty land that European conquerors and migrants had a right to claim, occupy and possess simply by virtue of their Christianity and their European civilization; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Alaska Synod Assembly explicitly and clearly repudiates the European Christian-derived “doctrine of discovery” with its continuing impact upon tribal governments and individual tribal members to this day, acknowledges and repents of its complicity in the evils of colonialism in the Americas, and memorializes the 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to join with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, The Episcopal Church, The United Church of Christ, The United Methodist Church and The Moravian Church in doing the same; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Alaska Synod Assembly memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to join it in offering herewith a statement of repentance and reconciliation to Native nations in this country for damage done in the name of Christianity and “civilization,” requesting the Office of the Presiding Bishop to plan an appropriate ELCA national ceremony of repentance and reconciliation with tribal leaders, and provide resources for similar synodical and congregational observances with local tribal leaders, at all such times and places as are appropriate; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Alaska Synod Assembly memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to request that the ELCA, with the help of Native communities, commit itself to the development of resources in the next triennium to help its congregations and people understand and reduce the negative impact of the “doctrine of discovery” and its consequences for Native people in North America; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Alaska Synod Assembly memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to request that the ELCA Domestic Mission unit bring forward to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly a renewed strategy for ministry with Native people in the ELCA and accompaniment with North American Native communities generally, with a particular commitment to long-term, stable funding of ELCA American Indian and Alaska Native ministries, increasing partnerships with congregations and synods in the ELCA, and promoting efforts with the Native communities within which our congregations and synods reside.

2. Northwest Washington Synod (1B) [2016]

RESOLVED, that, joining with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, The Episcopal Church, the United Church of Christ, The United Methodist Church and the Moravian Church, the Northwest Synod of the Evangelical Church in America (ELCA) explicitly and clearly repudiates the European Christian derived “doctrine of discovery” and its continuing impact upon tribal governments and individual tribal members to this day, and acknowledges and repents of its complicity in the evils of colonialism in the Americas; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Northwest Washington Synod Assembly offers herewith a statement of repentance and reconciliation to Native nations in this country for damage done in the name of Christianity and “civilization,” calls on the 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to do the same, and requests the Office of the Presiding Bishop to plan an appropriate ELCA national ceremony of repentance and reconciliation with tribal leaders, and provide resources for similar synodical and congregational observances with local tribal leaders, at all such times and places as are appropriate; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA, with the help of Native communities, commit itself to the development of resources, in the next triennium, to help its congregations and people understand and reduce the negative impact of the “doctrine of discovery” and its consequences for Native people in North America; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA Domestic Mission unit bring forward to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly a renewed strategy for ministry with Native people in the ELCA and accompaniment with North American Native communities generally, with a particular commitment to long-term, stable funding of ELCA American Indian and Alaska Native ministries, increasing partnership with congregations and synods in the ELCA, and promoting efforts with the Native communities within which our congregations and synods reside.

3. Montana Synod (1F) [2016]

WHEREAS, we confess, with our Native sisters and brothers, that the whole of Creation is God’s work, that God declares it all as good and that God’s Spirit dwells within it; and

WHEREAS, we confess that Jesus Christ became incarnate in human form to show God’s love and mercy to all humanity, in all its variety, and to every race and people on every continent of the earth; and

WHEREAS, we acknowledge with pain and regret the damage done to the indigenous inhabitants of the Americas and to their sacred lands and resources by the European conquest and migration to what Europeans called a “new world” but which was in reality already the homeland of many peoples; and

WHEREAS, we recognize that Christian churches were and often remain complicit in that conquest, migration and dispossession, and that Christian churches helped develop conceptions of Native peoples that blamed them for their own ills and that continue to perpetuate prejudice and injustice against them and their descendants; and

WHEREAS, the Montana Synod voted in 2010 to adopt an Apology to the Tribes and to present it to the tribes within the territory that the synod serves; and

WHEREAS, we deplore and reject the so-called “doctrine of discovery,” the legal principle, originating with Pope Alexander VI in 1493 and further entrenched in U.S. federal law in *Johnson v. McIntosh* (1823), that Native inhabitants have no property or any other rights which colonizing European nations and their sovereigns are bound to respect. This principle promotes the myth that the Americas were a largely empty land that European conquerors and migrants had a right to claim, occupy and possess simply by virtue of their Christianity and their European civilization; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Montana Synod memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) to join with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, The Episcopal Church, the United Church of Christ, The United Methodist Church and the Moravian Church and explicitly and clearly repudiate the European Christian-derived “doctrine of discovery,” its inherent racism and its continuing impact upon tribal

governments and individual tribal members to this day, and to acknowledge and repent of its complicity in the evils of racism and colonialism in the Americas; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Montana Assembly reaffirms its 2010 Apology to the Tribes, and commits to continue its presentation to the seven tribal communities in the territory of the Montana Synod, and memorializes the 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to do the same for all tribal communities in this nation, and requests the Office of the Presiding Bishop to plan an appropriate ELCA national ceremony of repentance and reconciliation with tribal leaders, and provide resources for similar synodical and congregational observances with local tribal leaders, at all such times and places as are appropriate; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA, with the guidance and advice of Native communities, commit itself to the development of resources, in the next triennium, to educate its congregations and people to understand and reduce the negative impact of the “doctrine of discovery” and its consequences for Native people in North America; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA Domestic Mission unit, in solidarity with the Native communities within which our congregations and synods reside, bring forward to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly a renewed strategy for ministry with Native people in the ELCA and accompaniment with North American Native communities generally, with a particular commitment to long-term, stable funding of ELCA American Indian and Alaska Native ministries, and for increasing partnerships with Native people by congregations and synods in the ELCA.

4. Southwest California Synod (2B) [2016]

WHEREAS, we confess with our Native sisters and brothers that the whole of Creation is God’s work, that God declares it all as good, and that God’s Spirit dwells within it; and

WHEREAS, we confess that Jesus Christ became incarnate in human form to show God’s love and mercy to all humanity, in all its variety, and to every race and people on every continent of the earth; and

WHEREAS, we acknowledge with pain and regret the damage done to the indigenous inhabitants of the Americas by the European conquest and migration to what Europeans called the “new world,” but which was in reality already the homeland of many peoples; and

WHEREAS, we recognize that some Christian churches were, and remain, complicit in that conquest, migration and dispossession, and that Christian churches helped develop conceptions of Native peoples that blamed them for their own ills and that continue to perpetuate prejudice and injustice against them and their descendants; and

WHEREAS, we deplore and reject the so-called “doctrine of discovery,” the legal principle, originating with Pope Alexander VI in 1493 and further established in U.S. federal law in *Johnson v. McIntosh* (1823), that Native inhabitants have no property or any other rights which colonizing European nations and their sovereigns are bound to respect; and

WHEREAS, this principle promoted the myth that the Americas were a largely empty land that European conquerors and migrants had a right to claim, occupy, and possess simply by virtue of their European civilization; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Southwest California Synod Assembly explicitly and clearly repudiates the European Christian-derived “doctrine of discovery” with its continuing impact upon tribal governments and individual tribal members to this day, acknowledges and repents of its complicity in the evils of colonialism in the Americas, and memorialize the 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to join with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, The Episcopal Church, the United Church of Christ, The United Methodist Church and the Moravian Church in doing the same; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Southwest California Synod Assembly memorialize the 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to join it in offering herewith a statement of repentance and reconciliation to Native nations in this country for damage done in the name of Christianity and “civilization,” requesting the Office of the Presiding Bishop to plan an appropriate ELCA national ceremony of repentance and reconciliation with tribal leaders, and provide resources for similar synodical and congregational observances with local tribal leaders, at all such times and places as are appropriate; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Southwest California Synod Assembly memorialize the 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to request that the ELCA, with the help of Native communities, commit itself to the development of resources in the next triennium, to help its congregations and people understand and reduce the negative impact of the “doctrine of discovery” and its consequences for Native people in North America; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Southwest California Synod Assembly memorialize the 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to request that the ELCA Domestic Mission unit bring forward to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly a renewed strategy for ministry with Native people in the ELCA and accompaniment with North American Native communities generally, with a particular commitment to long-term, stable funding of ELCA American Indian and Alaska Native ministries, increasing partnerships with congregations and synods in the ELCA, and promoting efforts with the Native communities within which our congregations and synods reside.

5. Rocky Mountain Synod (2E) [2016]

WHEREAS, we confess with our Native sisters and brothers that the whole of Creation is God's work, that God declares it all as good, and that God's Spirit dwells within it; and

WHEREAS, we as the church confess that Jesus Christ became incarnate in human form to show God's love and mercy to all humanity, in all its variety, and to every race and people on every continent of the earth; and

WHEREAS, we acknowledge the damage done to the indigenous inhabitants of the Americas by the European migration to what Europeans called the "new world," but which was already the homeland of many peoples, and we recognize that some Christian churches were, and remain, complicit in that dispossession, and that they helped develop conceptions of Native peoples that continue to perpetuate prejudice and injustice against them and their descendants; and

WHEREAS, the historical "doctrine of discovery" is a legal principle, originating with Pope Alexander VI in 1493 and further established in U.S. federal law in *Johnson v. McIntosh* (1823), that Native inhabitants have no property or any other rights which colonizing European nations and their sovereigns are bound to respect, and that this principle promoted the myth that the Americas were a largely empty land that European conquerors and migrants had a right to claim, occupy, and possess simply by virtue of their European civilization; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Rocky Mountain Synod Assembly memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to explicitly and clearly repudiate the European-derived "doctrine of discovery" with its continuing impact upon tribal governments and individual tribal members, to acknowledge and repent of its complicity in the evils of colonialism in the Americas, and to join with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, The Episcopal Church, the United Church of Christ, The United Methodist Church and the Moravian Church in doing the same; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Rocky Mountain Synod Assembly memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to offer a statement of repentance and reconciliation to Native nations in this country for damage done in the name of Christianity and "civilization," requesting the Office of the Presiding Bishop to plan an appropriate ELCA national ceremony of repentance and reconciliation with tribal leaders, and provide resources for similar synodical and congregational observances with local tribal leaders, at all such times and places as are appropriate; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Rocky Mountain Synod Assembly memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to request that the ELCA, with the help of Native communities, commit itself to the development of resources in the next triennium, to help its congregations and people understand and reduce the negative impact of the "doctrine of discovery" and its consequences for Native people in North America; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Rocky Mountain Synod Assembly memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to request that the ELCA Domestic Mission unit bring forward to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly a renewed strategy for ministry with Native people in the ELCA and accompaniment with North American Native communities generally, with a particular commitment to long-term, stable funding of ELCA American Indian and Alaska Native ministries, increasing partnerships with congregations and synods in the ELCA, and promoting efforts with the Native communities within which our congregations and synods reside.

6. Eastern North Dakota Synod (3B) [2016]

WHEREAS, we confess, with our Native sisters and brothers, that the whole of Creation is God's work, that God declares it all as good, and that God's Spirit dwells within it; and

WHEREAS, we confess that Jesus Christ became incarnate in human form to show God's love and mercy to all humanity, in all its variety, and to every race and people on every continent of the earth; and

WHEREAS, we acknowledge with pain and regret the damage done to the indigenous inhabitants of the Americas by the European conquest and migration to what Europeans called a "new world," but which was in reality already the homeland of many peoples; and

WHEREAS, we recognize that Christian churches were and remain complicit in that conquest, migration and dispossession, and that Christian churches helped develop conceptions of Native peoples that blamed them for their own ills and that continue to perpetuate prejudice and injustice against them and their descendants; and

WHEREAS, we deplore and reject the so-called "doctrine of discovery," the legal principle, originating with Pope Alexander VI in 1493 and further entrenched in U.S. federal law in *Johnson v. McIntosh* (1823), that Native inhabitants have no property or any other rights which colonizing European nations and their sovereigns are bound to respect — a principle that promotes the myth that the Americas were a largely empty land that European conquerors and migrants had a right to claim, occupy and possess simply by virtue of their Christianity and their European civilization; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Eastern North Dakota Synod Assembly explicitly and clearly repudiates the European Christian-derived "doctrine of discovery" with its continuing impact upon tribal governments and individual tribal members to this day, acknowledges and repents of its complicity in the evils of colonialism in the Americas, and memorializes the 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to join with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, The

Episcopal Church, the United Church of Christ, The United Methodist Church and the Moravian Church in doing the same; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Eastern North Dakota Synod Assembly memorializes the 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to join it in offering herewith a statement of repentance and reconciliation to Native nations in this country for damage done in the name of Christianity and “civilization,” requesting the Office of the Presiding Bishop to plan an appropriate ELCA national ceremony of repentance and reconciliation with tribal leaders, and provide resources for similar synodical and congregational observances with local tribal leaders, at all such times and places as are appropriate; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Eastern North Dakota Synod Assembly memorializes the 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to request that the ELCA, with the help of Native communities, commit itself to the development of resources in the next triennium, to help its congregations and people understand and reduce the negative impact of the “doctrine of discovery” and its consequences for Native people in North America; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Eastern North Dakota Synod Assembly memorializes the 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to request that the ELCA Domestic Mission unit bring forward to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly a renewed strategy for ministry with Native people in the ELCA and accompaniment with North American Native communities generally, with a particular commitment to long-term, stable funding of ELCA American Indian and Alaska Native ministries, increasing partnerships with congregations and synods in the ELCA, and promoting efforts with the Native communities within which our congregations and synods reside.

7. South Dakota Synod (3C) [2016]

WHEREAS, we confess with our Native sisters and brothers that the whole of Creation is God’s work, that God declares it all as good, and that God’s Spirit dwells within it; and

WHEREAS, we confess that Jesus Christ became incarnate in human form to show God’s love and mercy to all humanity, in all its variety, and to every race and people on every continent of the earth; and

WHEREAS, we acknowledge with pain and regret the damage done to the indigenous inhabitants of the Americas by the European conquest and migration to what Europeans called a “new world,” but which was in reality already the homeland of many peoples; and

WHEREAS, we recognize that Christian churches were and remain complicit in that conquest, migration, and dispossession, and that Christian churches helped develop conceptions of Native peoples that blamed them for their own ills and that continue to perpetuate prejudice and injustice against them and their descendants; and

WHEREAS, we deplore and reject the so-called “doctrine of discovery,” the legal principle, originating with Pope Alexander VI in 1493 and further entrenched in U.S. federal law in *Johnson v. McIntosh* (1823), that Native inhabitants have no property or any other rights which colonizing European nations and their sovereigns are bound to respect. This principle promotes the myth that the Americas were a largely empty land that European conquerors and migrants had a right to claim, occupy, and possess simply by virtue of their Christianity and their European civilization; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the 2016 South Dakota Synod Assembly explicitly and clearly repudiates the European Christian-derived “doctrine of discovery” and its continuing impact upon tribal governments and individual tribal members to this day, acknowledges the unearned benefits this church has received from the evils of colonialism in the Americas, repents of this church’s complicity in this doctrine, and memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to join with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, The Episcopal Church, the United Church of Christ, The United Methodist Church and the Moravian Church in repudiating the “doctrine of discovery”; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2016 South Dakota Synod Assembly memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to join it in offering herewith a statement of repentance and reconciliation to Native nations in this country for damage done in the name of Christianity and “civilization,” requesting the Office of the Presiding Bishop to plan an appropriate ELCA national ceremony of repentance and reconciliation with tribal leaders, and provide resources for similar synodical and congregational observances with local tribal leaders, at all such times and places as are appropriate; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2016 South Dakota Synod Assembly memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to request that the ELCA, with the help of Native communities, commit itself to the development of resources in the next triennium, to help its congregations and people understand and reduce the negative impact of the “doctrine of discovery” and its consequences for Native people in North America; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2016 South Dakota Synod Assembly memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to request that the ELCA Domestic Mission unit bring forward to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly a renewed strategy for ministry with Native people in the ELCA and accompaniment with North American Native communities generally, with a particular commitment to long-term, stable funding of ELCA American Indian and Alaska Native ministries, increasing

partnerships with congregations and synods in the ELCA, and promoting efforts with the Native communities within which our congregations and synods reside.

8. Minneapolis Area Synod (3G) [2016]

WHEREAS, we confess with our Native sisters and brothers that the whole of Creation is God's work, that God declares it all as good, and that God's Spirit dwells within it; and

WHEREAS, we confess that Jesus Christ became incarnate in human form to show God's love and mercy to all humanity, in all its variety, and to every race and people on every continent of the earth; and

WHEREAS, we acknowledge with pain and regret the damage done to the indigenous inhabitants of the Americas by the European conquest and migration to what Europeans called a "new world," but which was in reality already the homeland of many peoples; and

WHEREAS, we recognize that Christian churches were and remain complicit in that conquest, migration, and dispossession, and that Christian churches helped develop conceptions of Native peoples that blamed them for their own ills and that continue to perpetuate prejudice and injustice against them and their descendants; and

WHEREAS, we deplore and reject the so-called "doctrine of discovery": the legal principle, originating with Pope Alexander VI in 1493 and further entrenched in U.S. federal law in *Johnson v. McIntosh* (1823), that Native inhabitants have no property or any other rights which colonizing European nations and their sovereigns are bound to respect. This principle promotes the myth that the Americas were a largely empty land that European conquerors and migrants had a right to claim, occupy, and possess simply by virtue of their Christianity and their European civilization; and

WHEREAS, a number of churches with whom the ELCA is in full communion — the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, The Episcopal Church, the United Church of Christ, The United Methodist Church and the Moravian Church — have already repudiated this doctrine and repented of it; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Minneapolis Area Synod Assembly explicitly and clearly repudiates the European Christian-derived "doctrine of discovery" and its continuing impact upon tribal governments and individual tribal members to this day, acknowledges the unearned benefits this church has received from the evils of colonialism in the Americas, repents of this church's complicity in this doctrine, and memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to join with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, The Episcopal Church, the United Church of Christ, The United Methodist Church and the Moravian Church in doing the same; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Minneapolis Area Synod Assembly memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to join it in offering herewith a statement of repentance and reconciliation to Native nations in this country for damage done in the name of Christianity and "civilization," requesting the Office of the Presiding Bishop to plan an appropriate ELCA national ceremony of repentance and reconciliation with tribal leaders, and provide resources for similar synodical and congregational observances with local tribal leaders, at all such times and places as are appropriate; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Minneapolis Area Synod Assembly memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to request that the ELCA, with the help of Native communities, commit itself to the development of resources in the next triennium, to help its congregations and people understand and reduce the negative impact of the "doctrine of discovery" and its consequences for Native people in North America; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Minneapolis Area Synod Assembly memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to request that the ELCA Domestic Mission unit bring forward to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly a renewed strategy for ministry with Native people in the ELCA and accompaniment with North American Native communities generally, with a particular commitment to long-term, stable funding of ELCA American Indian and Alaska Native ministries, increasing partnerships with congregations and synods in the ELCA, and promoting efforts with the Native communities within which our congregations and synods reside.

9. Saint Paul Area Synod (3H) [2016]

WHEREAS, we confess with our Native sisters and brothers that the whole of Creation is God's work, that God declares it all as good, and that God's Spirit dwells within it; and

WHEREAS, we confess that Jesus Christ became incarnate in human form to show God's love and mercy to all humanity, in all its variety, and to every race and people on every continent of the earth; and

WHEREAS, we acknowledge with pain and regret the damage done to the indigenous inhabitants of the Americas by the European conquest and migration to what Europeans called a "new world," but which was in reality already the homeland of many peoples; and

WHEREAS, we recognize that Christian churches were and remain complicit in that conquest, migration, and dispossession, and that Christian churches helped develop conceptions of Native peoples that blamed them for their own ills and that continue to perpetuate prejudice and injustice against them and their descendants; and

WHEREAS, we deplore and reject the so-called "doctrine of discovery": the legal principle, originating with Pope Alexander VI in 1493 and further entrenched in U.S. federal law in *Johnson v. McIntosh* (1823), that Native inhabitants have no property or any

other rights which colonizing European nations and their sovereigns are bound to respect. This principle promotes the myth that the Americas were a largely empty land that European conquerors and migrants had a right to claim, occupy, and possess simply by virtue of their Christianity and their European civilization; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Saint Paul Area Synod, in assembly, joins the ELCA American Indian Alaskan Native Lutheran Association, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, The Episcopal Church, the United Church of Christ, The United Methodist Church and the Moravian Church to explicitly and clearly repudiate the European Christian-derived “doctrine of discovery” and its continuing impact upon tribal governments and individual tribal members to this day; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Saint Paul Area Synod, in assembly, joins the ELCA American Indian Alaskan Native Lutheran Association to memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) to explicitly repudiate the “doctrine of discovery;” and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Saint Paul Area Synod, in assembly, expresses its contrition, repentance and desire to reconcile with Native nations in this country for damage done in the name of Christianity and “civilization,” and memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to do the same, and request the Office of the Presiding Bishop to plan an appropriate ELCA national ceremony of repentance and reconciliation with tribal leaders and provide resources for similar synodical and congregational observances with local tribal leaders, at such time and places as are appropriate; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Saint Paul Area Synod, in assembly, memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly, with the help of Native communities, to commit itself to the development of resources in the next triennium to help its congregations and people understand and reduce the negative impact of the “doctrine of discovery” and its consequences for Native people in the Americas; and therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Saint Paul Area Synod, in assembly, request the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to request and direct the ELCA Domestic Mission unit bring forward to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly a renewed strategy for ministry with Native people in the ELCA and accompaniment with North American Native communities generally, with a particular commitment to long-term, stable funding of ELCA American Indian and Alaska Native ministries, increasing partnerships with congregations and synods in the ELCA, and promoting efforts with the Native communities within which our congregations and synods reside.

10. Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod (4C) [2016]

WHEREAS, we confess with our Native sisters and brothers that the whole of Creation is God’s work, that God declares it all as good, and that God’s Spirit dwells within it; and

WHEREAS, we confess that Jesus Christ became incarnate in human form to show God’s love and mercy to all humanity, in all its variety, and to every race and people on every continent of the earth; and

WHEREAS, we acknowledge with pain and regret the damage done to the indigenous inhabitants of the Americas by the European conquest and migration to what Europeans called a “new world,” but which was in reality already the homeland of many peoples; and

WHEREAS, we recognize that Christian churches were and remain complicit in that conquest, migration, and dispossession, and that Christian churches helped develop conceptions of Native peoples that blamed them for their own ills and that continue to perpetuate prejudice and injustice against them and their descendants; and

WHEREAS, we deplore and reject the so-called “doctrine of discovery”: the legal principle, originating with Pope Alexander VI in 1493 and further entrenched in U.S. federal law in *Johnson v. McIntosh* (1823), that Native inhabitants have no property or any other rights which colonizing European nations and their sovereigns are bound to respect. This principle promotes the myth that the Americas were a largely empty land that European conquerors and migrants had a right to claim, occupy, and possess simply by virtue of their Christianity and their European civilization; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod Assembly offers herewith a statement of repentance and reconciliation to Native nations in this country for damage done in the name of Christianity and “civilization”; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod Assembly memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), offering herewith a statement of repentance and reconciliation to Native nations in this country for damage done in the name of Christianity and “civilization,” and requests the Office of the Presiding Bishop to plan an appropriate ELCA national ceremony of repentance and reconciliation with tribal leaders, and provide resources for similar synodical and congregational observances with local tribal leaders, at all such times and places as are appropriate; and be it further

RESOLVED, joining with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, The Episcopal Church, the United Church of Christ, The United Methodist Church and the Moravian Church, that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

explicitly and clearly repudiates the European Christian-derived “doctrine of discovery” and its continuing impact upon tribal governments and individual tribal members to this day, and acknowledges and repents of its complicity in the evils of colonialism in the Americas; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA, with the help of Native communities, commit itself to the development of resources, in the next triennium, to help its congregations and people understand and reduce the negative impact of the “doctrine of discovery” and its consequences for Native people in North America; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA Domestic Mission unit bring forward to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly a renewed strategy for ministry with Native people in the ELCA and accompaniment with North American Native communities generally, with a particular commitment to long-term, stable funding of ELCA American Indian and Alaska Native ministries, increasing partnerships with congregations and synods in the ELCA, and promoting efforts with the Native communities within which our congregations and synods reside.

11. Northwest Synod of Wisconsin (5H) [2016]

WHEREAS, we confess, with our Native sisters and brothers, that the whole of Creation is God’s work, that God declares it all as good and that God’s Spirit dwells within it; and

WHEREAS, we confess that Jesus Christ became incarnate in human form to show God’s love and mercy to all humanity, in all its variety, and to every race and people on every continent of the earth; and

WHEREAS, we acknowledge with pain and regret the damage done to the indigenous inhabitants of the Americas by the European conquest and migration to what Europeans called a “new world” but which was in reality already the homeland of many peoples; and

WHEREAS, we recognize that Christian churches were and remain complicit in that conquest, migration and dispossession, and that Christian churches helped develop conceptions of Native peoples that blamed them for their own ills and that continue to perpetuate prejudice and injustice against them and their descendants; and

WHEREAS, we deplore and reject the so-called “doctrine of discovery,” the legal principle, originating with Pope Alexander VI in 1493 and further entrenched in U.S. federal law in *Johnson v. McIntosh* (1823), that Native inhabitants have no property or any other rights which colonizing European nations and their sovereigns are bound to respect. This principle promotes the myth that the Americas were a largely empty land that European conquerors and migrants had a right to claim, occupy and possess simply by virtue of their Christianity and their European civilization; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Northwest Synod of Wisconsin Assembly explicitly and clearly repudiates the European Christian-derived “doctrine of discovery” with its continuing impact upon tribal governments and individual tribal members to this day, acknowledges and repents of its complicity in the evils of colonialism in the Americas, and memorializes the 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to join with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, The Episcopal Church, the United Church of Christ, The United Methodist Church and the Moravian Church in doing the same; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Northwest Synod of Wisconsin Assembly memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to join it in offering herewith a statement of repentance and reconciliation to Native nations in this country for damage done in the name of Christianity and “civilization,” requesting the Office of the Presiding Bishop to plan an appropriate ELCA national ceremony of repentance and reconciliation with tribal leaders, and provide resources for similar synodical and congregational observances with local tribal leaders, at all such times and places as are appropriate; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Northwest Synod of Wisconsin Assembly memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to request that the ELCA, with the help of Native communities, commit itself to the development of resources in the next triennium to help its congregations and people understand and reduce the negative impact of the “doctrine of discovery” and its consequences for Native people in North America; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Northwest Synod of Wisconsin Assembly memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to request that the ELCA Domestic Mission unit bring forward to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly a renewed strategy for ministry with Native people in the ELCA and accompaniment with North American Native communities generally, with a particular commitment to long-term, stable funding of ELCA American Indian and Alaska Native ministries, increasing partnerships with congregations and synods in the ELCA, and promoting efforts with the Native communities within which our congregations and synods reside.

12. East-Central Synod of Wisconsin (5I) [2016]

WHEREAS, we confess, with our Native sisters and brothers, that the whole of Creation is God’s work, that God declares it all as good and that God’s Spirit dwells within it; and

WHEREAS, we confess that Jesus Christ became incarnate in human form to show God’s love and mercy to all humanity, in all its variety, and to every race and people on every continent of the earth; and

WHEREAS, we acknowledge with pain and regret the damage done to the indigenous inhabitants of the Americas by the European conquest and migration to what Europeans called a “new world” but which was in reality already the homeland of many peoples; and

WHEREAS, we recognize that Christian churches were and remain complicit in that conquest, migration and dispossession, and that Christian churches helped develop conceptions of Native peoples that blamed them for their own ills and that continue to perpetuate prejudice and injustice against them and their descendants; and

WHEREAS, we deplore and reject the so-called “doctrine of discovery,” the legal principle, originating with Pope Alexander VI in 1493 and further entrenched in U.S. federal law in *Johnson v. McIntosh* (1823), that Native inhabitants have no property or any other rights which colonizing European nations and their sovereigns are bound to respect. This principle promotes the myth that the Americas were a largely empty land that European conquerors and migrants had a right to claim, occupy and possess simply by virtue of their Christianity and their European civilization; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the 2016 East-Central Synod of Wisconsin Assembly explicitly and clearly repudiates the European Christian-derived “doctrine of discovery” with its continuing impact upon tribal governments and individual tribal members to this day, acknowledges and repents of its complicity in the evils of colonialism in the Americas, and memorializes the 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to join with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, The Episcopal Church, the United Church of Christ, The United Methodist Church and the Moravian Church in doing the same; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2016 East-Central Synod of Wisconsin Assembly memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to join it in offering herewith a statement of repentance and reconciliation to Native nations in this country for damage done in the name of Christianity and “civilization,” requesting the Office of the Presiding Bishop to plan an appropriate ELCA national ceremony of repentance and reconciliation with tribal leaders, and provide resources for similar synodical and congregational observances with local tribal leaders, at all such times and places as are appropriate; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2016 East-Central Synod of Wisconsin Assembly memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to request that the ELCA, with the help of Native communities, commit itself to the development of resources in the next triennium to help its congregations and people understand and reduce the negative impact of the “doctrine of discovery” and its consequences for Native people in North America; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2016 East-Central Synod of Wisconsin Assembly memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to request that the ELCA Domestic Mission unit bring forward to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly a renewed strategy for ministry with Native people in the ELCA and accompaniment with North American Native communities generally, with a particular commitment to long-term, stable funding of ELCA American Indian and Alaska Native ministries, increasing partnerships with congregations and synods in the ELCA, and promoting efforts with the Native communities within which our congregations and synods reside.

13. Indiana-Kentucky Synod (6C) [2016]

WHEREAS, the Indiana-Kentucky Synod in assembly has voted to deplore and reject the concept of Manifest Destiny and the so-called “doctrine of discovery;” therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Indiana-Kentucky Synod in assembly memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to:

1. offer a statement of repentance and reconciliation to Native nations in this country for damage done in the name of Christianity and “civilization,” to plan an appropriate ELCA national ceremony of repentance and reconciliation with tribal leaders, and to provide resources for similar synodical and congregational observances with local tribal leaders, at all such times and places as are appropriate;
2. join with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, The Episcopal Church, the United Church of Christ, The United Methodist Church and the Moravian Church in explicitly and clearly repudiating the historic American vision of Manifest Destiny and the European Christian-derived “doctrine of discovery” and their continuing impact upon tribal governments and individual tribal members to this day, acknowledging and repenting of its complicity in the evils of colonialism in the Americas;
3. commit itself, with the help of Native communities, to the development of resources in the next triennium, to help its congregations and people understand and reduce the negative impact of the “doctrine of discovery” and its consequences for Native people in North America; and
4. direct the ELCA Domestic Mission unit to bring forward to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly a renewed strategy for ministry with Native people in the ELCA and accompaniment with North American Native communities generally, with a particular commitment to long-term, stable funding of ELCA American Indian and Alaska

Native ministries, increasing partnerships with congregations and synods in the ELCA, and promoting efforts with the Native communities within which our congregations and synods reside.

14. Upstate New York Synod (7D) [2016]

WHEREAS, we confess, with our Native sisters and brothers, that the whole of Creation is God's work, that God declares it all as good and that God's Spirit dwells within it; and

WHEREAS, we confess that Jesus Christ became incarnate in human form to show God's love and mercy to all humanity, in all its variety, and to every race and people on every continent of the earth; and

WHEREAS, we acknowledge with pain and regret the damage done to the indigenous inhabitants of the Americas by the European conquest and migration to what Europeans called a "new world" but which was in reality already the homeland of many peoples; and

WHEREAS, we recognize that Christian churches were and remain complicit in that conquest, migration and dispossession, and that Christian churches helped develop conceptions of Native peoples that blamed them for their own ills and that continue to perpetuate prejudice and injustice against them and their descendants; and

WHEREAS, we deplore and reject the so-called "doctrine of discovery," the legal principle, originating with Pope Alexander VI in 1493 and further entrenched in U.S. federal law in *Johnson v. McIntosh* (1823), that Native inhabitants have no property or any other rights which colonizing European nations and their sovereigns are bound to respect. This principle promotes the myth that the Americas were a largely empty land that European conquerors and migrants had a right to claim, occupy and possess simply by virtue of their Christianity and their European civilization; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Upstate New York Synod Assembly explicitly and clearly repudiates the European Christian-derived "doctrine of discovery" with its continuing impact upon tribal governments and individual tribal members to this day, acknowledges and repents of its complicity in the evils of colonialism in the Americas, and memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to join with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, The Episcopal Church, the United Church of Christ, The United Methodist Church and the Moravian Church in doing the same; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Upstate New York Synod Assembly memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to join it in offering herewith a statement of repentance and reconciliation to Native nations in this country for damage done in the name of Christianity and "civilization," requesting the Office of the Presiding Bishop to plan an appropriate ELCA national ceremony of repentance and reconciliation with tribal leaders, and provide resources for similar synodical and congregational observances with local tribal leaders, at all such times and places as are appropriate; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA, with the guidance and advice of Native communities, commit itself to the development of resources, in the next triennium, to educate its congregations and people to understand and reduce the negative impact of the "doctrine of discovery" and its consequences for Native people in North America; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Upstate New York Synod Assembly memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to request that the ELCA, with the help of Native communities, commit itself to the development of resources in the next triennium to help its congregations and people understand and reduce the negative impact of the "doctrine of discovery" and its consequences for Native people in North America; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Upstate New York Synod Assembly memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to request that the ELCA Domestic Mission unit bring forward to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly a renewed strategy for ministry with Native people in the ELCA and accompaniment with North American Native communities generally, with a particular commitment to long-term, stable funding of ELCA American Indian and Alaska Native ministries, including increased partnerships with congregations and synods in the ELCA, and promoting efforts with the Native communities within which ELCA congregations and synods reside.

15. Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod (8A) [2016]

WHEREAS, we confess, with our Native sisters and brothers, that the whole of creation is God's work, that God declares it all as good and that God's Spirit dwells within it; and

WHEREAS, we confess that Jesus Christ became incarnate to show God's love and mercy to all humanity, in all its variety, and to every race and people on every continent of the earth; and

WHEREAS, we acknowledge with pain and regret the damage done to the indigenous inhabitants of the Americas by the European conquest and migration to what Europeans called a "new world" but which was in reality already the homeland of many peoples; and

WHEREAS, we recognize that Christian churches were and remain complicit in that conquest, migration and dispossession, and that Christian churches helped develop conceptions of Native peoples that blamed them for their own ills and that continue to perpetuate prejudice and injustice against them and their descendants; and

WHEREAS, we deplore and reject the so-called “doctrine of discovery,” the legal principle, originating with Pope Alexander VI in 1493 and further entrenched in U.S. federal law in *Johnson v. McIntosh* (1823), that Native inhabitants have no property or any other rights which colonizing European nations and their sovereigns are bound to respect. This principle promotes the myth that the Americas were a largely empty land that European conquerors and migrants had a right to claim, occupy and possess simply by virtue of their Christianity and their European civilization; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly explicitly and clearly repudiates the European Christian-derived “doctrine of discovery” with its continuing impact upon tribal governments and individual tribal members to this day, acknowledges and repents of its complicity in the evils of colonialism in the Americas, and memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to join with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, The Episcopal Church, the United Church of Christ, The United Methodist Church and the Moravian Church in doing the same; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to join it in offering herewith a statement of repentance and reconciliation to Native nations in this country for damage done in the name of Christianity and “civilization,” requesting that the Office of the Presiding Bishop to plan an appropriate ELCA national ceremony of repentance and reconciliation with tribal leaders, and provide resources for similar synodical and congregational observances with local tribal leaders, at all such times and places as are appropriate; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to request that the ELCA, with the help of Native communities, commit itself to the development of resources in the next triennium, to help its congregations and people understand and reduce the negative impact of the “doctrine of discovery” and its consequences for Native people in North America, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Northwestern Pennsylvania Assembly memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to request that the ELCA Domestic Mission unit bring forward to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly a renewed strategy for ministry with Native people in the ELCA and accompaniment with North American Native communities generally, with a particular commitment to long-term, stable funding of ELCA American Indian and Alaska Native ministries, increasing partnerships with congregations and synods in the ELCA, and promoting efforts with the Native communities within which our congregations and synods reside.

16. Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod (8G) [2016]

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) confesses, with our Native sisters and brothers, that the whole of creation is God’s work, that God declares it all as good and that God’s Spirit dwells within it; and

WHEREAS, we confess that Jesus Christ became incarnate to show God’s love and mercy to all humanity, in all its variety, and to every race and people on every continent of the earth; and

WHEREAS, we acknowledge with pain and regret the damage done to the indigenous inhabitants of the Americas by the European conquest and migration to what Europeans called a “new world” but which was in reality already the homeland of many peoples; and

WHEREAS, we recognize that Christian churches were and remain complicit in that conquest, migration and dispossession, and that Christian churches helped develop conceptions of Native peoples that blamed them for their own ills and that continue to perpetuate prejudice and injustice against them and their descendants; and

WHEREAS, we deplore and reject the so-called “doctrine of discovery,” originated with Pope Alexander VI in 1493 and entrenched in U.S. federal law in *Johnson v. McIntosh* (1823), that Native inhabitants have no property or any other rights which colonizing European nations and their sovereigns are bound to respect. This principle promotes the myth that the Americas were a largely empty land that European conquerors and migrants had a right to claim, occupy and possess simply by virtue of their Christianity and their European civilization; and

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) and the ELCA’s full-communion partners — The Episcopal Church, the United Church of Christ, The United Methodist Church and the Moravian Church — have publicly repudiated the “doctrine of discovery”; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod Assembly offers herewith a statement of repentance and reconciliation to Native nations in this country for damage done in the name of Christianity and “civilization,” and memorialize the 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to repudiate the “doctrine of discovery,” repent of the damage done in the name of the European Christian-derived “doctrine of discovery” and of complicity in the evils of colonialism in the Americas, seeking reconciliation with Native nations in this country by:

- directing the ELCA Office of the Presiding Bishop to plan an appropriate ELCA national ceremony of repentance and reconciliation with tribal leaders and provide resources for similar synodical and congregational observances with local tribal leaders, at all such times and places as are appropriate; and

- directing the ELCA Church Council, with the help of Native communities, to commit the ELCA to the development of resources, in the next triennium, to help its congregations and people understand and reduce the negative impact of the “doctrine of discovery” and its consequences for Native people in North America; and
- directing the ELCA Domestic Mission unit to bring forward to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly a renewed strategy for ministry with Native people in the ELCA and accompaniment with North American Native communities in general, with a particular commitment to long-term, stable funding of ELCA American Indian and Alaskan Native ministries, increasing partnerships with congregations and synods in the ELCA, and promoting efforts with the Native communities within which our congregations and synods reside.

17. North Carolina Synod (9B) [2016]

WHEREAS, we confess, with our Native sisters and brothers, that the whole of creation is God’s work, that God declares it all as good and that God’s Spirit dwells within it; and

WHEREAS, we confess that Jesus Christ became incarnate to show God’s love and mercy to all humanity, in all its variety, and to every race and people on every continent of the earth; and

WHEREAS, we acknowledge with pain and regret the damage done to the indigenous inhabitants of the Americas by the European conquest and migration to what Europeans called a “new world” but which was in reality already the homeland of many peoples; and

WHEREAS, we recognize that Christian churches were and remain complicit in that conquest, migration and dispossession, and that Christian churches helped develop conceptions of Native peoples that blamed them for their own ills and that continue to perpetuate prejudice and injustice against them and their descendants; and

WHEREAS, we deplore and reject the so-called “doctrine of discovery,” the legal principle, originating with Pope Alexander VI in 1493 and further entrenched in U.S. federal law in *Johnson v. McIntosh* (1823), that Native inhabitants have no property or any other rights which colonizing European nations and their sovereigns are bound to respect. This principle promotes the myth that the Americas were a largely empty land that European conquerors and migrants had a right to claim, occupy and possess simply by virtue of their Christianity and their European civilization; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the 2016 North Carolina Synod Assembly explicitly and clearly repudiate the European Christian-derived “doctrine of discovery” with its continuing impact upon tribal governments and individual tribal members to this day, acknowledges and repents of its complicity in the evils of colonialism in the Americas, and memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to join with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, The Episcopal Church, the United Church of Christ, The United Methodist Church and the Moravian Church in doing the same; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2016 North Carolina Synod Assembly memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to join it in offering a statement of repentance and reconciliation to Native nations in this country for damage done in the name of Christianity and “civilization,” requesting that the Office of the Presiding Bishop plan an appropriate ELCA national ceremony of repentance and reconciliation with tribal leaders, and provide resources for similar synodical and congregational observances with local tribal leaders, at all such times and places as are appropriate; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2016 North Carolina Synod Assembly memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to request that the ELCA, with the help of Native communities, commit itself to the development of resources in the next triennium, to help its congregations and people understand and reduce the negative impact of the “doctrine of discovery” and its consequences for Native people in North America, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2016 North Carolina Synod Assembly memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to request that the ELCA Domestic Mission unit bring forward to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly a renewed strategy for ministry with Native people in the ELCA and accompaniment with North American Native communities generally, with a particular commitment to long-term, stable funding of ELCA American Indian and Alaska Native ministries, increasing partnerships with congregations and synods in the ELCA, and promoting efforts with the Native communities within which our congregations and synods reside.

18. Southeastern Synod (9D) [2016]

WHEREAS, we confess, with our Native sisters and brothers, that the whole of creation is God’s work, that God declares it all as good and that God’s Spirit dwells within it; and

WHEREAS, we confess that Jesus Christ became incarnate to show God’s love and mercy to all humanity, in all its variety, and to every race and people on every continent of the earth; and

WHEREAS, we acknowledge with pain and regret the damage done to the indigenous inhabitants of the Americas by the European conquest and migration to what Europeans called a “new world” but which was in reality already the homeland of many peoples; and

WHEREAS, we recognize that Christian churches were and remain complicit in that conquest, migration and dispossession, and that Christian churches helped develop conceptions of Native peoples that blamed them for their own ills and that continue to perpetuate prejudice and injustice against them and their descendants; and

WHEREAS, we deplore and reject the so-called “doctrine of discovery,” the legal principle, originating with Pope Alexander VI in 1493 and further entrenched in U.S. federal law in *Johnson v. McIntosh* (1823), that Native inhabitants have no property or any other rights which colonizing European nations and their sovereigns are bound to respect, a principle which promotes the myth that the Americas were a largely empty land that European conquerors and migrants had a right to claim, occupy and possess simply by virtue of their Christianity and their European civilization; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Southeastern Synod Assembly explicitly and clearly repudiate the European Christian-derived “doctrine of discovery” with its continuing impact upon tribal governments and individual tribal members to this day; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod acknowledge and repent of its complicity in the evils of colonialism in the Americas; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Southeastern Synod Assembly memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to join with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, The Episcopal Church, the United Church of Christ, The United Methodist Church and the Moravian Church in doing the same; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Southeastern Synod Assembly memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to join it in offering a statement of repentance and reconciliation to Native nations in this country for damage done in the name of Christianity and “civilization,” requesting that the Office of the Presiding Bishop plan an appropriate ELCA national ceremony of repentance and reconciliation with tribal leaders, and provide resources for similar synodical and congregational observances with local tribal leaders, at all such times and places as are appropriate; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Southeastern Synod Assembly memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to request that the ELCA, with the help of Native communities, commit itself to the development of resources in the next triennium, to help its congregations and people understand and reduce the negative impact of the “doctrine of discovery” and its consequences for Native people in North America, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Southeastern Synod Assembly memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to request that the ELCA Domestic Mission unit bring forward to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly a renewed strategy for ministry with Native people in the ELCA and accompaniment with North American Native communities generally, with a particular commitment to long-term, stable funding of ELCA American Indian and Alaska Native ministries, increasing partnerships with congregations and synods in the ELCA, and promoting efforts with the Native communities within which our congregations and synods reside.

Background

The “doctrine of discovery” is a theological justification of colonization that later became nationalistic justification. Initiated when European monarchies invasively arrived in the Western Hemisphere in the 15th, 16th and later centuries, during the so-called “Age of Discovery,” they claimed the lands, territories and resources of the indigenous peoples, asserting that the monarchies had a right to appropriate on behalf of Christendom. The monarchies’ claims of a Christian dominion (dominance) over indigenous peoples and their lands served them pragmatically to fend off competing monarchies and to de-legitimize the long-established autonomous indigenous peoples’ governments.

The doctrine of discovery is a key premise for non-indigenous government claims to legitimacy on and sovereignty over Indigenous lands and territories. It is used in particular by former British colonies, specifically Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the United States of America.

What is found in the doctrine of discovery?

1. *Criteria for claiming land.*
 - a. European monarchies treated indigenous land as “unoccupied,” as long as Christians were not present. Status of a “human” was based on religion.
 - b. Land deemed “unoccupied” was, therefore, “discovered” as if it had been previously unknown to humankind, and the land thus claimed by the “discovering” Christian European “sovereign.”
2. *Transfer of the land.* A Christian government’s claim to sovereignty over the territory of an indigenous nation or people could be transferred by a treaty with another Christian government, such as treaty between the British Crown and the United States.
3. *Government by agent or proxy.* Sovereign monarchs gave royal charters of “discovery” to companies or individuals to delegate the work of claiming indigenous lands.

4. *Coercion and subjugation of whole peoples.* Christian governments sought to subdue, enslave and convert peoples.
5. *Incorporation of a diminished and impermanent status into secular laws.* In the 1823 ruling *Johnson v. McIntosh*, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that Indian nations had no legal title to their lands and were entitled only to the right of “occupancy.” This decision stripped Native nations of any and all sovereignty agreed to in treaties with the United States. This decision has never been overturned and is still referred to in legal decisions (as recently as 2010 in federal courts).
6. *Double standard among international conventions.* The doctrine of discovery is used to diminish validity and significance of international treaties between indigenous Nations and the United States, Canada, New Zealand and Australia.
7. *Foundational to U.S. policies on immigration and migration.* Preventing indigenous peoples from crossing the U.S.-Mexico border to inhabit lands that are historically theirs.

For more than 500 years, the interpretive framework of the doctrine has been institutionalized and rationalized heinous behaviors against Indigenous peoples through the centuries. Forced removals such as the Trail of Tears, the seizure of natural “resources,” the destruction of traditional languages and cultures, the sterilization of Indian women and the disruption of indigenous communities are examples of implementation of the concepts of “discovery” and “dominance.” The Vatican papal bulls of the 15th and 16th centuries actively encouraged the subjugation of indigenous nations, and the secularization of the doctrine in the United States and elsewhere perpetuated subjugation and its consequences.

What effect does the doctrine of discovery have?

1. The doctrine of discovery’s assumption about who is sovereign allows policies to develop without the full knowledge and prior informed consent of indigenous peoples.
2. Diminished protection of human rights is evident. (For example, there is no indigenous jurisdiction over crimes committed on reservations by non-natives.)
3. The diminished and impermanent status of indigenous peoples under the doctrine of discovery is contrary to the right of Indigenous peoples to sustain themselves in perpetuity as distinct peoples, a right affirmed in the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
4. The doctrine’s concept of occupancy (“Indian title”) is inconsistent with the constitutional status of treaties. Treaties are the highest law of the land, equal to the constitution. Treaties are made between sovereign states.
5. Self-determination of indigenous peoples brings them into conflict with governments and corporations that rely on the legal lineage of the doctrine to assert claims to natural resources, such as coal, oil, uranium, natural gas and water.

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People

Overwhelmingly passed in 2007 after two decades of work, the U.N. repudiated the doctrine of discovery and called upon the nations of the world to respect land claims of their indigenous people and treaties made with indigenous peoples. This was a positive and comprehensive international human rights instrument addressing economic, social, cultural, spiritual and environmental rights of indigenous people. The United States is one of four countries in the world that voted against the declaration. Since 2007, the countries endorsed the declaration but have made no action to implement the declaration.

ELCA Conversations and the Memorials

The American Indian Alaska Native Ministries program director along with the American Indian Alaska Native Lutheran Association has gathered in conversation for several years when our denominational and ecumenical partners started to repudiate the doctrine of discovery in 2009. The ecumenical partners who have already repudiated the doctrine of discovery are the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, The Episcopal Church, the United Church of Christ, The United Methodist Church and the Moravian Church.

In October 2015, information was shared with the Conference of Bishops, which resulted in several Bishops and leaders drafting a model resolution. This resolution was taken by the American Indian Alaska Native Lutheran Association, distributed amongst the synods and congregational partners.

Many recognize that to this day the doctrine of discovery and its legal ramifications still have profound effects on the issues of migration, racial and economic justice for indigenous people. It is important to acknowledge there is a profound brokenness of our relationship with indigenous people that is deeply embedded in our identity as the

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America that calls us to a path of healing and reconciliation. Of particular note is the memorial from the Alaska Synod Assembly. It provides an invaluable teaching moment for our congregations to understand systemic and continuous impact of racism on the daily lives of indigenous peoples in the United States. Action regarding this memorial could provide a means of educating people about the doctrine of Christian discovery and its continuing effects on indigenous nations and peoples.

The final resolve is intended to eliminate the doctrine of discovery within the church's contemporary politics, programs, outreach, structures and engagement with Native communities. It resolves to no longer missionize indigenous communities and instead to take the opportunity to grow and journey with indigenous communities, through partnerships with congregations and synods within the ELCA, and to promote efforts of indigenous communities within our congregations and synods. One way to assist in true accompaniment with current and developing American Indian and Alaska Native ministries within the ELCA is to grow the existing Native American Ministry Fund endowment.

Recommendation for Assembly Action

To receive with gratitude memorials from the Alaska, Northwest Washington, Montana, Southwest California, Rocky Mountain, Eastern North Dakota, South Dakota, Minneapolis Area, Saint Paul Area, Arkansas-Oklahoma, Northwest Wisconsin, East-Central Wisconsin, Indiana-Kentucky, Upstate New York, Northwestern Pennsylvania, Metropolitan Washington, D.C., North Carolina and Southeastern synods regarding the Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery;

To recommend the ELCA explicitly and clearly repudiate the European-derived doctrine of discovery with its continuing impact upon tribal governments and individual tribal members, acknowledging and repenting of this church's complicity in the evils of colonialism in the Americas;

To offer a statement of repentance and reconciliation to Native nations in this country for damage done in the name of Christianity;

To encourage the Office of the Presiding Bishop to plan an appropriate national ceremony of repentance and reconciliation with tribal leaders, providing appropriate worship resources for similar synodical and congregational observances with local tribal leaders, at such times and places as are appropriate;

To direct the Domestic Mission unit, together with the American Indian and Alaska Native community and ecumenical partners, to develop resources to educate members of the ELCA and the wider community about the doctrine of discovery and its consequences for Native peoples;

To direct the Domestic Mission unit to develop a strategy with the American Indian and Alaska Native community during the next triennium to be referred to the Church Council for action, including a mechanism to grow the Native American Ministry Fund of the ELCA; and

To affirm that this church will eliminate the doctrine of discovery from its contemporary rhetoric and programs, electing to practice accompaniment with Native peoples instead of a missionary endeavor to them, allowing these partnerships to mutually enrich indigenous communities and the ministries of the ELCA.

Category B8: Supporting Mission Phebe Hospital through Photovoltaics

1. Northeastern Minnesota Synod (3E) [2016]

WHEREAS, solar energy is acknowledged as an excellent source of energy; and

WHEREAS, we are called to be good stewards of God's creation, as we read in Numbers 35:34, "You shall not defile the land in which you live, in which I also dwell; for I the Lord dwell among the Israelites"; and

WHEREAS, the current diesel system used at Phebe Hospital in Liberia is polluting the air and the soil; and

WHEREAS, the Northeastern Minnesota Synodical Women's Organization in convention in 2013 resolved "that the Northeastern Minnesota Women of the ELCA support the efforts of Rural Renewable Energy Alliance (RREAL) in developing a proposal for providing solar power to the Phebe Hospital in Liberia and the possible establishment of an avenue of funding through the Women of the ELCA"; and

WHEREAS, the churchwide Women of the ELCA convention in 2014 resolved "that the Northeastern Minnesota Synodical Women's Organization continue to inform the churchwide women's organization about the progress of this project over the next triennium and encourage women throughout the organization to pray for and support this extraordinary initiative"; and

WHEREAS, the Northeastern Minnesota Synod in assembly in 2015 adopted resolution number 15-3, endorsing the Phebe Hospital solar energy project, Photovoltaics (PV) for Phebe, encouraging the efforts of our congregations to be involved in raising awareness and funds and directing the Synod Council to forward the resolution and information to the other synods in Minnesota for consideration; and

WHEREAS, at least four additional synods have now joined in the effort for Phebe; and

WHEREAS, contributions for the PV for Phebe project have now come from at least 23 of the 65 synods of the ELCA; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Minnesota Synod recommit to the Photovoltaics (PV) for Phebe project and continue to encourage its congregations to be involved in raising both awareness and funds; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA at its 2016 Churchwide Assembly in New Orleans be memorialized to embrace the Phebe Hospital solar energy project, Photovoltaics (PV) for Phebe, as a churchwide initiative; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA at its 2016 Churchwide Assembly in New Orleans be further memorialized to embrace future projects like PV for Phebe in areas such as Nigeria, Tanzania and Iraq in this ongoing mission using the Phebe project as a model.

Background

In a trip sponsored by the Women of the ELCA, 17 women visited the Lutheran Church in Liberia in 2012. As part of this trip, the women visited Phebe Hospital and School of Nursing and saw the realities of the lack of an electrical grid in Liberia.

Phebe Hospital in Bong County, Liberia, was founded as a joint effort by Lutheran, Methodist and Episcopal missionaries in the early 1920s. The hospital is now primarily a ministry of the Lutheran Church in Liberia. Annually, the hospital serves some 50,000 patients as a regional referral hospital for the surrounding communities that has a population of about 450,000. Along with the hospital facilities in 1965, Phebe became a teaching hospital and has a government-accredited nursing school. Phebe Hospital and School of Nursing has a long history of serving the people in Bong County through crisis, through civil war and most recently through the Ebola virus disease crisis.

Despite its history of serving the people, there are factors that keep Phebe from being the best it could be. One of these factors is electricity. In a letter dated December 14, 2014, Dr. Jefferson Sibley, the medical director of Phebe Hospital, wrote, “The Liberian [electricity] grid infrastructure was totally destroyed during the civil war and during the war and ever since all of our electricity has been supplied by diesel generators.” Currently, Phebe Hospital is powered by five diesel generators. The cost of the diesel can be up to \$4.50 a gallon. At this cost for fuel and the consumption of over 80,000 gallons, the hospital spends over \$300,000 a year. This makes it necessary for the administrators of the hospital to decide what will be funded and what will not, and in a multi-faceted emergency, which part of the hospital complex will have electricity for necessary work and which will not.

In support of the need for solar power, the Rev. D. Jensen Seyenkulo, bishop of the Lutheran Church in Liberia, wrote in a letter dated December 1, 2014, “Not only has it been challenging for us to afford the high costs of diesel fuel; during the rainy season it is difficult to even deliver supplies up to Phebe as the dirt road becomes virtually impassable. Yet, even during the rainy season God gives us sunlight almost every day.”

Besides the financial cost of fuel, the cost to the environment is enormous. This diesel fuel used to provide electricity produces the carbon equivalent of 800 tons of waste. In the [“Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope and Justice”](#) social statement, we are called to justice through sustainability and to continue our attempt at “providing an acceptable quality of life for present generations without compromising that of future generations.... The principle of sustainability summons our church, in its global work with poor people, to pursue sustainable development strategies.” Solar energy may be one such strategy.

Impassioned by what the women, from the trip by Women of the ELCA to Phebe Hospital, saw as a problem, they approached the Rural Renewable Energy Alliance (RREAL) for help. RREAL is a nonprofit company based in Minnesota that has made a commitment to helping communities of all economic levels access solar energy. In 2014, Women of the ELCA championed a resolution in support of the installation of solar power at Phebe Hospital. To begin the development process of this project, Women of the ELCA pledged to raise \$200,000.

In April 2015, the RREAL personnel made a visit to Phebe to assess the possibility and feasibility of this project. Based on that visit, a memorandum was sent to the ELCA that said, “The project aims to install a photovoltaic (PV) array capable of delivering the full daytime energy needs of the hospital within the first year of the project.”

The ELCA through its Global Mission unit’s long-standing relationship of accompaniment with the Lutheran Church in Liberia contributes \$50,000 of ELCA World Hunger funds to different initiatives at Phebe. Those initiatives are related to hospital and community health. Health promotion and health care including work on HIV and AIDS, prenatal care and malaria are also supported. In total, ELCA World Hunger contributes \$200,000 in grants to health care in Liberia.

A grant of \$25,000 of ELCA World Hunger funds has been committed to the “PV for Phebe” project. The purpose is to support “PV for Phebe” and through those other funded projects listed above to help shore up the infrastructure of the hospital so that it is able to withstand any health crisis that would arise.

Another actor in the support for “PV for Phebe” is Global Health Ministries (GHM), an organization that has shipped containers of medical supplies and other equipment to Phebe Hospital. This independent Lutheran organization is serving as the logistics partner for this project. GHM relates to the ELCA through the Global Mission unit. The organization has pledged to ship system components that are not normally available in Liberia. Ms. Kim Dickey, GHM director for mission development, wrote in a January 28, 2015, letter, “GHM is proficient in international logistics and has years of experience in sending equipment to Liberia.”

Part of this “PV for Phebe” project will help build the capacity of local technicians and hospital employees to be able to maintain this photovoltaic system.

Recommendation for Assembly Action

To receive with gratitude the memorial of the Northeastern Minnesota Synod related to the “PV for Phebe” project; and

To reaffirm the commitment of this church to:

- 1. Continue to advocate for “justice through sustainability” as stated in the “Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope and Justice” social statement;**
- 2. Continue to seek ways to provide support for the mission of Phebe Hospital;**
- 3. Encourage the companion synods for the Lutheran Church in Liberia to be involved in this “PV for Phebe” effort; and**
- 4. Encourage the Global Mission unit, through its relationships of accompaniment, to continue to lift up the use of solar energy in conversation with companion churches around the globe as a means to be good stewards of the environment.**

Category B9: Examining the Implications of Becoming a Sanctuary Denomination

1. Oregon Synod (1E) [2016]

WHEREAS, Jesus said that we would see him in the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick and the prisoner; and

WHEREAS, we are living in dangerous times in this nation as immigrants from the Central and South Americas and those fleeing warfare in the Middle East are being persecuted; and

WHEREAS, the Lutheran church over the last 75 years has been a leader in refugee resettlement through Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services, Lutheran Community (Family) Service and thousands of congregations; and

WHEREAS, after World War II one in six Lutherans in the world were refugees or displaced persons, Lutherans and the Lutheran church in this country with the participation of 6,000 congregations resettled 57,000 refugees in the United States, and after the fall of Saigon in 1975 Lutheran congregations sponsored more than 50,000 refugees from Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos; and

WHEREAS, today 12 million sisters and brothers from Central and South America are living in the shadows, while contributing many gifts and talents to the wonderful diversity of this nation; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA social message on Immigration (1997) proclaims, “We draw on the best of our nation’s traditions as a refuge and haven for the persecuted and destitute when we affirm that we support a generous policy of welcome for refugees and immigrants, and that we will advocate for just immigration policies including fairness in visa regulations and in admitting and protecting refugees”; and

WHEREAS, Romans 15:7 admonishes, “Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God”; and Hebrews 13:2 exclaims, “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for my doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it”; and

WHEREAS, Mary, Joseph and Jesus were refugees fleeing to Egypt to avoid Herod’s violence; and

WHEREAS, the declaration of Sanctuary is an ancient custom of the church which calls for the church to be a safe place for those escaping persecution; and

WHEREAS, the Interfaith Movement for Immigrant Justice (Oregon) and the National Sanctuary Movement of Church World Service have been birthed over the last several years; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Oregon Synod endorse and fully support the existing Sanctuary congregations of the Oregon Synod; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Oregon Synod declare itself one of the first Sanctuary Synods in the ELCA while encouraging all of its congregations to become Sanctuary churches ready to protect refugees and undocumented sisters and brothers from arrest and deportation by Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers, as well as offer assistance in navigating the legal process; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Oregon Synod memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to declare itself the first denomination in the country to call itself a Sanctuary denomination, encouraging its nearly 10,000 Lutheran congregations to become Sanctuary churches; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Oregon Synod, with help from Augustana Lutheran Church in Portland, provide resources to help congregations explore why and how to publicly identify themselves as, and effectively serve as, sanctuary congregations.

Background

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has a strong history of welcoming the stranger. The commitment of this church to welcome migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and their families has been strengthened by its relationships with companion churches and its partnership with Lutheran and faith-based organizations, particularly Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) in the United States.

Lutherans have a deep rooted history in refugee and immigrant issues. After World War II, one of every six Lutherans in the world was a refugee or displaced person. The strong immigrant roots and vibrant immigrant members led to Lutheran church bodies establishing LIRS in 1939 as the national organization to serve uprooted people. LIRS and the ELCA have long advocated for the protection of vulnerable populations and family unification in immigration policies. LIRS has taken a leadership role in creating forums in which the members and leaders of the ELCA learn about the policy positions of the ELCA and discuss the necessity of immigration reform, the importance of family unity, and the humane enforcement of U.S. immigration laws.

Family unity and the acknowledgment that there is God-given dignity in all people has been a cornerstone of advocacy by the ELCA and LIRS. Despite our efforts, the number of migrants detained by immigration officials skyrocketed in the last two decades due to policies that criminalize all migrants. U.S. President Barack Obama has deported almost 2.5 million people, many of whom are parents of U.S. citizen children. These enforcement policies and practices can leave any non-citizen, including green card holders, asylum seekers, trafficking victims and torture survivors, at risk of detention and deportation.

The lack of protection under the law for approximately 11 million undocumented immigrants, leaves millions of members in our communities, including U.S. citizen children, incredibly vulnerable. According to estimations by the Migration Policy Institute, approximately 4.1 million U.S. born children have undocumented parents. Children with parents that have been deported suffer economic and psychological consequences, including “psychological trauma, material hardship, residential instability, family dissolution, increased use of public benefits and, among boys, aggression.”

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has announced that it will continue to target Central American children and families for deportation. The ELCA continues to honor its immigrant roots by our support of migrant ministries and advocating for laws that focus on love, family and welcoming the stranger.

A number of congregations all over the country have answered the call to protect and care for our neighbor by providing physical sanctuary to immigrants and their families facing deportation. This has meant providing shelter and all other necessities to immigrants who have been given the order to return to their countries of origin by the DHS. Today, there are 50 congregations from different denominations across the United States offering sanctuary and 300 congregations that support it. This movement to provide physical protection from deportation is called the new sanctuary movement.

The ancient concept of churches being sanctuaries from “the long arm of the law” was never as absolute as portrayed in novels and movies and never made it into legal precedents in this country. Indeed, it was basically abolished everywhere in the 16th century. There are many books on the subject, including “Sanctuary and Crime in the Middle Ages, 400-1500” by Karl Shoemaker.

The sanctuary movement of the 1980s was more about churches choosing to assist and care for undocumented immigrants. Lutheran congregations played a key role in the beginning of the sanctuary movement in the 1980s to protect Central Americans fleeing civil wars. (One of those churches was an American Lutheran Church [ALC] congregation in Arizona mentioned below.) There were and still are isolated cases in the news where law enforcement authorities have tolerated someone staying in a church to avoid deportation, but those situations have nothing to do with law enforcement personnel being legally barred by a claim of “sanctuary.” They can, and sometimes do, result in the person being arrested and taken from the church premises.

There is a historically interesting legal case involving the ALC congregation in Arizona mentioned above. The ALC was also a party to the case, which was decided shortly after the ELCA merger: *The Presbyterian Church (USA) v. US, 870 F. 2d 518 - Court of Appeals, 9th Circuit 1989.*

The plaintiffs in that action are Arizona Evangelical Lutheran Church, Camelback United Presbyterian Church, Southside United Presbyterian Church, Sunrise United Presbyterian Church and their two national parent denominations, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the ALC. The churches brought this action against the United States, the

Department of Justice, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and several individual INS officers, claiming that the churches' First and Fourth Amendment rights were violated when INS agents entered the churches wearing "body bugs" and surreptitiously recorded church services. The district court granted the defendants' motion to dismiss on a variety of grounds. The 9th Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed the dismissal in part, and reversed in part, remanding to the district court with instructions to consider whether the churches retain standing to pursue their claims and whether their claims are moot. Although the churches lost, this is an example of a predecessor denomination taking a national stand in support of the original "Sanctuary Movement."

In 1989, the ELCA adopted a [social policy resolution](#) to extend hospitality and support to Central American refugees and continue working with LIRS to provide them asylum. Since 2014, after thousands of children and families were displaced from their communities, the ELCA has developed a comprehensive, whole church strategy to protect and welcome Central American children: Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities (AMMPARO). This strategy was affirmed by the Church Council in April 2016 and will be considered at the 2016 Churchwide Assembly.

ELCA resolutions support uniting families as a basic principle of our immigration laws and actions by the church. The ELCA social message on "[Immigration](#)" highlights the importance of family unity in immigration and highlights that "the existence of a permanent sub-group of people who live without recourse to effective legal protection opens the door for their massive abuse and exploitation and harms the common good" ("Immigration," p. 8).

This message cites two Bible passages that guide the ELCA's view of migration: "The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God" (Leviticus 19:34) and "I was a stranger and you welcomed me" (Matthew 25:35).

In the 2009 social policy resolution, "[Toward Compassionate, Just, and Wise Immigration Reform](#)," the ELCA speaks out against inhumane detention and deportation practices. In addition, the 2013 social policy resolution "[Immigration Detention](#)" encourages congregations to be part of the detention visitation ministries coordinated by LIRS while also informing others about issues around detention and deportation.

The ELCA also addressed opposing unjust and inhumane laws in the 2011 social policy resolution "[Immigrant Welcome](#)," which states:

RESOLVED, that the 2011 Churchwide Assembly declare its support of and encouragement for all efforts to prevent the enactment of punitive and unjust federal and state laws that target immigrants...

RESOLVED, that all members of this church, including its leaders, be encouraged to protest laws and proposed laws that ignore the Bible's witness to care for the stranger among us and to serve all people and strive for justice and peace in all the earth, by communicating with legislators, governors, and the media; participating in public gatherings opposing unjust immigration policies; and taking all actions that demonstrate welcome and live out accompaniment of immigrants...

Today, many of the ELCA's nearly 10,000 congregations provide critical services to migrant populations, spread the word of welcome, and advocate for fair and humane immigration policies that honor the gift of family. Thanks to LIRS leadership staff, a number of bishops have visited immigration detention centers and testified before Congress on the concerns related to the treatment of immigrants in detention and in the process of being deported.

In the ELCA, Augustana Lutheran Church in Portland, Ore., gave sanctuary in 2014 to Francisco Aguirre, a migrant from El Salvador facing deportation. In June 2016, the U.S. Department of Justice announced it dropped the reentry prosecution against Aguirre. He is now able to obtain his visa. In addition to Augustana Lutheran, Angelica Lutheran Church in Los Angeles and Lutheran Church of the Good Shepard in Brooklyn, among others have joined the new sanctuary movement. A comprehensive list of Lutheran churches involved in the movement does not exist.

Prior to recommending that the ELCA become a sanctuary denomination, more information would be needed on the opportunities and implications of such a designation.

Recommendation for Assembly Action

To receive with gratitude the memorial of the Oregon Synod regarding the sanctuary movement;

To reaffirm the ELCA's partnership with Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service in calling for fair and compassionate immigration policies and practices that keep families together;

To encourage ELCA synods, congregations and members to advocate for legislation that welcomes the stranger to this country and to their communities;

To refer the request to the Domestic Mission unit to examine the opportunities and implications of endorsing the practice of congregations offering sanctuary and of the ELCA declaring itself a sanctuary denomination and request a report and recommendations be provided to the Church Council.

Category B10: Supporting Military Personnel, Veterans and their Families

1. Eastern Washington-Idaho Synod (1D) [2016]

WHEREAS, 1.2 million Americans are currently serving in the various branches of the U.S. Armed Forces, and about 21.2 million American men and woman are veterans of military service; and

WHEREAS, hundreds of thousands of military personnel have been injured over the years and returned home with wounded bodies, minds and hearts; and

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is highly committed to ministry among those in military uniform and those who have faithfully and often sacrificially served this nation; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Eastern Washington-Idaho Synod memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to encourage congregations of the ELCA to offer their gratitude and support for all military personnel, veterans and their family and friends with tangible expressions of care and encouragement in one or more of the following ways:

- 1) Express our gratitude often and remain especially attentive to those serving in the Armed Forces, as well as veterans, including the military and federal chaplains.
- 2) Present copies of the Prayer Book for the Armed Services (Augsburg Fortress), a companion to Evangelical Lutheran Worship designed for those serving in uniform, veterans and their families, to military personnel and their families and donate additional copies of the prayer book to military chaplains.
- 3) Regularly lift up in prayer those who are serving and those who have served, and pray especially with and for members of the military and the families of those who have been wounded or killed in the line of duty.
- 4) Give ongoing support and hold in constant prayer the military chaplains who bring the means of grace in the name of Christ Jesus on our behalf to the 1.2 million women and men in the Armed Forces, as well as to those in Veterans Affairs Hospitals and wherever else they are called to serve.
- 5) Explore and facilitate congregational, conference and/or synodical events that equip individuals and congregations to offer needed care and support for returning veterans such as the ELCA "Care for Returning Veterans," the Wounded Warrior Project, Point Man International Ministries, Partners in Care and other efforts to receive those returning home with open hearts and arms.
- 6) Lift up the vocational call of those who serve in the Armed Forces and raise up the need in our congregations for those who may hear the call of the Spirit of God and the church to serve as ordained military and federal chaplains of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- 7) Designate one Sunday each year to especially remember those in military uniform, the veterans who have served, the wounded and their families in their recovery and in their coping, and the families of those who have lost their lives in service who live with pain and loss.
- 8) Remembering that injuries of the mind, spirit and relationships do not show as clearly as physical injuries, offer rituals of healing and reconciliation for active duty members, reservists and members of the National Guard upon their return from deployment or special duty and periodically thereafter."
- 9) Realizing that not all honorably discharged veteran's transition well and some find themselves incarcerated, congregations which already have prison ministries are encouraged to make a special effort to seek out incarcerated veterans and thank them for their service and help them access their veterans benefits that they might have a more successful transition upon their release.

2. Pacifica Synod (2C) [2015]

WHEREAS, 1.2 million Americans are currently serving in the various branches of the U.S. Armed Forces and about 21.2 million American men and woman are veterans of military service; and

WHEREAS, hundreds of thousands of military personnel have been injured over the years and returned home with wounded bodies, minds and hearts; and

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is highly committed to ministry among those in military uniform and those who have faithfully and often sacrificially served this nation; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Pacifica Synod memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to encourage congregations of the ELCA to offer their gratitude and support for all military

personnel, veterans and their family and friends with tangible expressions of care and encouragement in one or more of the following ways:

- Express this church's gratitude often and remain especially attentive to those serving in the Armed Forces, as well as veterans, including the military and federal chaplains.
- Present copies of the "Prayer Book for the Armed Services" (Augsburg Fortress, Publishers), a companion to Evangelical Lutheran Worship designed for those serving in uniform, veterans and their families, to military personnel and their families and donate additional copies of the prayer book to military chaplains.
- Regularly lift up in prayer those who are serving and those who have served, and pray especially with and for members of the military and the families of those who have been wounded or killed in the line of duty.
- Give ongoing support and hold in constant prayer the military chaplains who bring the Means of Grace in the name of Christ Jesus on our behalf, to the 1.2 million women and men in the Armed Forces, as well as to those in Veterans Affairs Hospitals and wherever else they are called to serve.
- Explore and facilitate congregational, conference and/or synodical events that equip individuals and congregations to offer needed care and support for returning veterans such as the ELCA "Care for Returning Veterans," the Wounded Warrior Project, Point Man International Ministries, [National Guard] Partners in Care and other efforts to receive those returning home with open hearts and arms.
- Lift up the vocational call of those who serve in the Armed Forces and raise up the need in ELCA congregations for those who may hear the call of the Spirit of God and this church to serve as ordained military and federal chaplains of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- Designate one Sunday each year to especially remember those in military uniform, the veterans who have served, the wounded and their families in their recovery and in their coping, and the families of those who have lost their lives in service who live with pain and loss.
- Remembering that injuries of the mind, spirit and relationships do not show as clearly as physical injuries, offer rituals of healing and reconciliation for active duty members, reservists and members of the National Guard upon their return from deployment or special duty and periodically thereafter."
- Realizing that not all honorably discharged veterans transition well and some find themselves incarcerated, congregations which already have prison ministries are encouraged to make a special effort to seek out incarcerated veterans and thank them for their service and help them access their veterans benefits that they might have a more successful transition upon their release.

3. South Dakota Synod (3C) [2016]

WHEREAS, 1.2 million Americans are currently serving in the various branches of the U.S. Armed Forces and about 21.2 million American men and women are veterans of military service; and

WHEREAS, hundreds of thousands of military personnel have been injured over the years and returned home with wounded bodies, minds and hearts; and

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is highly committed to ministry among those in military uniform and those who have faithfully and often sacrificially served this nation; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the South Dakota Synod Assembly memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) to encourage congregations of the ELCA to offer their gratitude and support for all military personnel, veterans, and their families and friends with tangible expressions of care and encouragement in one or more of the following ways:

- Express our gratitude often and remain especially attentive to those serving in the Armed Forces and veterans, including the military and federal chaplains. Present copies of the Prayer Book for the Armed Services (Augsburg Fortress) — a companion to Evangelical Lutheran Worship designed for those serving in uniform, veterans, and their families — to military personnel and their families and donate additional copies of the prayer book to military chaplains.
- Regularly lift up in prayer those who are serving and those who have served, and pray especially with and for soldiers and the families of those who have been wounded or killed in the line of duty.
- Give ongoing support and hold in constant prayer the military chaplains who bring the means of grace in the name of Christ Jesus on our behalf, to the 1.2 million women and men in the Armed Forces, as well as to those in Veterans Affairs Hospitals and wherever else they are called to serve.
- Explore and facilitate congregational, conference and/or synodical events that equip individuals and congregations to offer needed care and support for returning veterans such as the ELCA "Care for Returning

Veterans,” the Wounded Warrior Project, Point Man International Ministries, Partners in Care and other efforts to receive those returning home with open hearts and arms.

- Lift up the vocational call of those who serve in the Armed Forces and raise up the need in our congregations for those who may hear the call of the Spirit of God and the church to serve as ordained military and federal chaplains of the ELCA.
- Designate one Sunday each year to especially remember those in military uniform, the veterans who have served, the wounded and their families in their recovery and in coping, and the families of those who have lost their lives in service who live with pain and loss.
- Remembering that injuries of the mind, spirit and relationships do not show as clearly as physical injuries, offer rituals of healing and reconciliation for active duty members, reservists and members of the National Guard upon their return from deployment or special duty, and periodically thereafter.

4. Southeastern Minnesota Synod (3I) [2016]

WHEREAS, 1.2 million Americans currently serve in the U.S. Armed Forces; and

WHEREAS, the United States has about 21.2 million military veterans; and

WHEREAS, 2.2 million Americans are wounded veterans; and

WHEREAS, this church is highly committed to ministry with military personnel and veterans; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Minnesota Synod, in assembly, encourage its congregations to support military personnel and veterans by:

- a. expressing the congregation’s gratitude to military personnel and veterans;
- b. remaining attentive to military personnel and veterans;
- c. presenting military personnel and veterans copies of the Prayer Book for the Armed Services (Augsburg Fortress), a companion to Evangelical Lutheran Worship;
- d. donating copies of the Prayer Book for the Armed Services for use by military chaplains;
- e. regularly praying for military chaplains, military personnel, veterans and their families, those who are hospitalized and those families with a member or member who have been wounded or killed in military service;
- f. participating in programs like the ELCA “Care for Returning Veterans,” the Wounded Warrior Project, Point Man International Ministries, and Partners in Care;
- g. lifting up the vocational call of military service and chaplaincy;
- h. keeping members aware of the need for chaplains and contributing to the ELCA Federal Chaplaincy Fund for Leaders Endowment; and
- i. designating one Sunday each year as a day of thanksgiving and remembrance for individuals and the families of individuals who are serving in the military, are veterans, have been wounded in military service, or have died in military service; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Minnesota Synod memorialize the 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to express this church’s gratitude and support for all individuals — and the families of such individuals — who serve in the military or are veterans of military service and to encourage all ELCA congregations to involve themselves in the activities listed above.

5. Southwestern Texas Synod (4E) [2016]

WHEREAS, 1.2 million Americans are currently serving in the various branches of the U.S. Armed Forces, and about 21.2 million American men and woman are veterans of military service; and

WHEREAS, 1.6 million veterans live in Texas, and South Texas was ranked second out of all regions in the country where military retirees reside; and

WHEREAS, South Texas is home to two major Air Force installations, one major Army post, one large Naval base and numerous National Guard and Reserve units; and

WHEREAS, hundreds of thousands of military personnel have been injured over the years and returned home with wounded bodies, minds and hearts; and

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is highly committed to ministry among those in military uniform and those who have faithfully and often sacrificially served this nation; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Texas Synod in its 2016 annual Synod Assembly offer our gratitude and support for all military personnel, veterans, and their family and friends and encourage the people and congregations of the synod to support them with tangible expressions of care and encouragement in one or more of the following ways:

- 1) Express our gratitude often and remain especially attentive to those serving in the Armed Forces, as well as veterans, including the military and federal chaplains.

- 2) Present copies of the Prayer Book for the Armed Services (Augsburg Fortress, Publishers), a companion to Evangelical Lutheran Worship designed for those serving in uniform, veterans and their families, to military personnel and their families and donate additional copies of the prayer book to military chaplains.
- 3) Regularly lift up in prayer those who are serving and those who have served, and pray especially with and for members of the military and the families of those who have been wounded or killed in the line of duty.
- 4) Utilize the elcachaps.com website as a resource in providing ministry to our military personnel, veterans and families.
- 5) Lift up the vocational call of those who serve in the Armed Forces and raise up the need in our congregations for those who may hear the call of the Spirit of God and the church to serve as ordained military and federal chaplains of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and contribute to the ELCA Federal Chaplaincy Fund for Leaders Endowment.
- 6) Encourage our congregations with pastors serving part-time in the Reserves or National Guard to grant time-off for monthly drill and two-week annual training not counted as pastor's vacation time.
- 7) Designate one Sunday each year to especially remember those in military uniform, the veterans who have served, the wounded and their families in their recovery and in their coping, and the families of those who have lost their lives in service who live with pain and loss; and be it further

RESOLVED, the 2016 Southwestern Texas Synod Assembly memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly for the support and actions of the entire ELCA in these efforts of care, encouragement and hospitality for those whose lives have been at risk, those returning home from military service, and those persons and/or their families who have been wounded or who have lost their lives in service to this country.

6. East-Central Synod of Wisconsin (5I) [2016]

WHEREAS, 1.2 million Americans are currently serving in the various branches of the U.S. Armed Forces, and about 21.2 million American men and woman are veterans of military service; and

WHEREAS, hundreds of thousands of military personnel have been injured over the years and returned home with wounded bodies, minds and hearts; and

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is highly committed to ministry among those in military uniform and those who have faithfully and often sacrificially served this nation; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the East-Central Synod of Wisconsin memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to encourage congregations of the ELCA to offer their gratitude and support for all military personnel, veterans and their family and friends with tangible expressions of care and encouragement in one or more of the following ways:

- Express our gratitude often and remain especially attentive to those serving in the Armed Forces, as well as veterans, including the military and federal chaplains.
- Present copies of the Prayer Book for the Armed Services (Augsburg Fortress), a companion to Evangelical Lutheran Worship designed for those serving in uniform, veterans and their families, to military personnel and their families and donate additional copies of the prayer book to military chaplains.
- Regularly lift up in prayer those who are serving and those who have served, and pray especially with and for members of the military and the families of those who have been wounded or killed in the line of duty.
- Give ongoing support and hold in constant prayer the military chaplains who bring the means of grace in the name of Christ Jesus on our behalf to the 1.2 million women and men in the Armed Forces, as well as to those in Veterans Affairs Hospitals and wherever else they are called to serve.

7. Southern Ohio Synod (6F) [2016]

WHEREAS, 1.2 million Americans are currently serving in the various branches of the U.S. Armed Forces, and about 21.2 million American men and women are veterans of military service; and

WHEREAS, hundreds of thousands of military personnel have been injured over the years and returned home with wounded bodies, minds and hearts; and

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is highly committed to ministry among those in military uniform and those who have faithfully and often sacrificially served this nation; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Southern Ohio Synod memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) to encourage congregations of the ELCA to offer their gratitude and support for all military personnel, veterans and their family and friends with tangible expressions of care and encouragement in one or more of the following ways:

- Express our gratitude often and remain especially attentive to those serving in the Armed Forces, as well as veterans, including the military and federal chaplains.
- Present copies of the “Prayer Book for the Armed Services” (Augsburg Fortress), a companion to “Evangelical Lutheran Worship” designed for those serving in uniform, veterans and their families, to military personnel and their families and donate additional copies of the prayer book to military chaplains.
- Regularly lift up in prayer those who are serving and those who have served, and pray especially with and for members of the military and the families of those who have been wounded or killed in the line of duty.
- Give ongoing support and hold in constant prayer the military chaplains who bring the means of grace in the name of Christ Jesus on our behalf to the 1.2 million women and men in the Armed Forces, as well as to those in Veterans Affairs Hospitals and wherever else they are called to serve.
- Explore and facilitate congregational, conference and/or synodical events that equip individuals and congregations to offer needed care and support for returning veterans such as the ELCA “Care for Returning Veterans,” wounded warrior programs, Rural Clergy Training Program, Point Man International Ministries, Partners in Care and other efforts to receive those returning home with open hearts and arms.
- Lift up the vocational call of those who serve in the Armed Forces and raise up the need in our congregations for those who may hear the call of the Spirit of God and the church to serve as ordained military and federal chaplains of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- Designate one Sunday each year to especially remember those in military uniform, the veterans who have served, the wounded and their families in their recovery and in their coping, and the families of those who have lost their lives in service who live with pain and loss.
- Remembering that injuries of the mind, spirit and relationships do not show as clearly as physical injuries, offer rituals of healing and reconciliation for active duty members, reservists and members of the National Guard upon their return from deployment or special duty and periodically thereafter.”
- Realizing that not all honorably discharged veteran’s transition well and some find themselves incarcerated, congregations which already have prison ministries are encouraged to make a special effort to seek out incarcerated veterans and thank them for their service and help them access their veterans benefits that they might have a more successful transition upon their release.

8. Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod (8A) [2016]

WHEREAS, 1.2 million Americans are currently serving in the various branches of the U.S. Armed Forces, and about 21.2 million American men and woman are veterans of military service; and

WHEREAS, hundreds of thousands of military personnel have been injured over the years and returned home with wounded bodies, minds and hearts; and

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is highly committed to ministry among those in military uniform and those who have faithfully and often sacrificially served this nation; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) to encourage congregations of the ELCA to offer their gratitude and support for all military personnel, veterans and their family and friends with tangible expressions of care and encouragement in one or more of the following ways:

- Express our gratitude often and remain especially attentive to those serving in the Armed Forces, as well as veterans, including the military and federal chaplains.
- Present copies of the “Prayer Book for the Armed Services” (Augsburg Fortress), a companion to “Evangelical Lutheran Worship” designed for those serving and their families, and donate additional copies of the prayer book to military chaplains.
- Regularly lift up in prayer those who are serving and those who have served, and pray especially with and for members of the military and the families of those who have been wounded or killed in service.
- Give ongoing support and hold in prayer military chaplains who bring the means of grace in the name of Christ Jesus on our behalf to the 1.2 million women and men in the Armed Forces, as well as to those in Veterans Affairs Hospitals and wherever else they are called to serve.
- Explore and facilitate congregational, conference and/or synodical events that equip individuals and congregations to offer needed care and support for returning veterans such as the ELCA “Care for Returning Veterans,” the Wounded Warrior Project, Point Man International Ministries, Partners in Care and other efforts to receive those returning home with open hearts and arms.

- Designate one Sunday each year to especially remember those in military uniform, the veterans who have served, the wounded and their families in their recovery and in their coping, and the families of those who have lost their lives in service who live with pain and loss.
- Remembering the injuries of the mind, spirit and relationships do not show as clearly as physical injuries, offer rites of healing and reconciliation for active duty members, reservists and members of the National Guard upon their return from deployment or special duty and periodically thereafter.
- Lift up the vocational call of those who serve in the Armed Forces and raise up the need in our congregations for those who may hear the call of the Spirit of God and the church to serve as ordained military and federal chaplains of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

9. Allegheny Synod (8C) [2016]

WHEREAS, 1.2 million Americans are currently serving in the various branches of the U.S. Armed Forces, and about 21.2 million American men and woman are veterans of military service; and

WHEREAS, hundreds of thousands of military personnel have been injured over the years and returned home with wounded bodies, minds and hearts; and

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is highly committed to ministry among those in military uniform and those who have faithfully and often sacrificially served this nation; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Allegheny Synod Assembly memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) to encourage congregations of the ELCA to offer their gratitude and support for all military personnel, veterans and their family and friends with tangible expressions of care and encouragement in one or more of the following ways:

- Express our gratitude often and remain especially attentive to those serving in the Armed Forces, as well as veterans, including the military and federal chaplains.
- Present copies of the “Prayer Book for the Armed Services” (Augsburg Fortress), a companion to “Evangelical Lutheran Worship” designed for those serving in uniform, veterans and their families, to military personnel and their families and donate additional copies of the prayer book to military chaplains.
- Regularly lift up in prayer those who are serving and those who have served, and pray especially with and for members of the military and the families of those who have been wounded or killed in the line of duty.
- Give ongoing support and hold in constant prayer the military chaplains who bring the means of grace in the name of Christ Jesus on our behalf to the 1.2 million women and men in the Armed Forces, as well as to those in Veterans Affairs Hospitals and wherever else they are called to serve.
- Explore and facilitate congregational, conference and/or synodical events that equip individuals and congregations to offer needed care and support for returning veterans such as the ELCA “Care for Returning Veterans,” the Wounded Warrior Project, Point Man International Ministries, Partners in Care and other efforts to receive those returning home with open hearts and arms.
- Lift up the vocational call of those who serve in the Armed Forces and raise up the need in our congregations for those who may hear the call of the Spirit of God and the church to serve as ordained military and federal chaplains of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- Designate one Sunday each year to especially remember those in military uniform, the veterans who have served, the wounded and their families in their recovery and in their coping, and the families of those who have lost their lives in service who live with pain and loss.

10. Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod (8G) [2016]

WHEREAS, 1.2 million Americans are currently serving in the various branches of the U.S. Armed Forces, and about 21.2 million American men and woman are veterans of military service; and

WHEREAS, hundreds of thousands of military personnel have been injured over the years and returned home with wounded bodies, minds and hearts; and

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is highly committed to ministry among those in military uniform and those who have faithfully, and often sacrificially, served this nation, as exemplified by the service of the Rev. Karis Graham, the Rev. Charles Hodges, the Rev. Jeffrey Jacobson, the Rev. John Kallerson, the Rev. Alexis King and the Rev. Terri King, military chaplains rostered in this synod; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod Assembly memorialize the 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly in New Orleans to encourage churchwide ministries, synods and congregations to offer their gratitude and support for all military personnel, veterans, and their families and friends with tangible expressions of care and encouragement in one or more of the following ways:

- a. Express gratitude often and remain especially attentive to those serving in our Armed Forces and veterans, including military and federal chaplains;
- b. Congregations provide to their members who serve in the military copies of the Prayer Book for the Armed Services, (Augsburg Fortress, Publishers) — a companion to Evangelical Lutheran Worship designed for those serving in uniform, veterans and their families — to military personnel and their families, and collaborate with their synod and the ELCA Bureau of Federal Chaplaincy Ministries to donate additional copies of the prayer book to military chaplains for them to distribute to those in their care;
- c. Regularly lift up in prayer those who are serving and those who have served, and pray especially with and for members of the military who have been wounded or killed in the line of duty, as well as for their families;
- d. Regularly remember in intercessory prayer all of our federal chaplains, to include military chaplains, Veterans Affairs hospital chaplains and Federal Bureau of Prison chaplains, who bring the means of grace in the name of Christ Jesus on our behalf wherever they are called to serve;
- e. Lift up the vocation of those who serve in our Armed Forces, and encourage gifted women and men in our congregations to be open to the call of the Holy Spirit and the church for them to serve as ordained military and federal chaplains of the ELCA;
- f. The presiding bishop invite synods and congregations one Sunday each year (on the Sunday closest to Veterans Day) to especially remember in prayer those in military uniform, the veterans who have served, the wounded and their families in their recovery and in their coping, and the families of those who have lost their lives in military service who now live with pain and loss;
- g. Remembering that injuries of the mind, spirit, and relationships do not show as clearly as physical injuries, offer rituals of healing and reconciliation for active duty members and members of the National Guard and Reserve upon their return from deployment or special duty, and periodically thereafter;
- h. Conduct and/or participate in events in our congregations, conferences, and/or our synod that equip individuals and congregations to offer needed care and support for returning veterans. Such activities include the ELCA “Centurion Connection” and “Care for Returning Veterans” programs, support to wounded warriors, Partners in Care (a state National Guard initiative), and other efforts to receive those returning home with open hearts and arms;
- i. Realizing that not all honorably discharged veterans transition well, and some find themselves incarcerated, congregations which already have a prison ministry are encouraged to make a special effort to seek out incarcerated veterans to thank them for their service and to help them access their veterans’ benefits so that they might have a more successful transition upon their release.

11. West Virginia-Western Maryland (8H) [2016]

WHEREAS, 1.2 million Americans are currently serving in the various branches of the U.S. Armed Forces, and about 21.2 million American men and woman are veterans of military service; and

WHEREAS, since Sept. 11, 2001, the United States has deployed more than 2.5 million service members. About one in five of those returning veterans experience severe PTSD (posttraumatic stress disorder) or depression symptoms six months *after* they return home. Of particular relevance to the church, many veterans from all eras are experiencing what is now being called “moral injury.” This involves guilt, shame or betrayal over things service members did, witnessed or failed to do in the line of duty. In addition to these “invisible wounds of war,” veterans also struggle with a number of other difficult issues as they seek to reconnect with their family, their community and themselves. Unemployment, change in family, divorce, homelessness, substance abuse and physical injuries can add tremendous stress to families and contribute to a veteran suicide rate of 22 per day, according to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (2012), and

WHEREAS, the church has a unique role to play in the healing of veterans and their families. Because of mental health stigma in the military, lack of trust and the military’s emphasis on self-reliance, many veterans are not getting the help they need. Many veterans are looking for help more informally in places like their family or church. Our congregations are often “first responders” to the needs of veterans and their families. The church plays a key role in restoring our warriors to their community, their families and their relationships with themselves and with God. Reconciliation is what our veterans need most in all aspects of their lives. We know that the church has been given “the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:18). The church cannot simply wait for veterans to come to us asking for help. Isolation and avoidance are symptoms of PTSD and characterize many of our nation’s veterans. The church must not only minister to those veterans inside our churches, we must reach beyond our walls, build partnerships with the communities we live in, and offer veterans and their families the healing, support and resources they need. It has been said, “If we send ‘em, we must mend ‘em”; and

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is highly committed to ministry among those in military uniform and those who have faithfully and often sacrificially served this nation; therefore, be it

RESOLVED that the West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to encourage congregations of the ELCA to offer their gratitude and support for all military personnel, veterans, and their family and friends with tangible expressions of care and encouragement in one or more of the following ways:

- Express our gratitude often and remain especially attentive to those serving in the Armed Forces and veterans, including the military and federal chaplains.
- Present copies of the Prayer Book for the Armed Services (Augsburg Fortress) — a companion to Evangelical Lutheran Worship designed for those serving in uniform, veterans and their families — to military personnel and their families and donate additional copies of the prayer book to military chaplains.
- Regularly lift up in prayer those who are serving and those who have served, and pray especially with and for soldiers and the families of those who have been wounded or killed in the line of duty.
- Give ongoing support and hold in constant prayer the military chaplains who, on our behalf, bring the means of grace in the name of Christ Jesus on our behalf to the 1.2 million women and men in the Armed Forces, as well as to those in Veterans Affairs Hospitals and wherever else they are called to serve.
- Explore and facilitate congregational, cluster, conference and/or synodical events that equip individuals and congregations to offer needed care and support for returning veterans such as the ELCA “Care for Returning Veterans,” Congregational Centurions and other efforts to receive those returning home with open hearts and arms.
- Explore and facilitate congregational, conference and/or synodical events that equip individuals and congregations to offer needed care and support for returning veterans such as the ELCA “Care for Returning Veterans,” the multi-denominational partnership with the West Virginia National Guard called “Partners in Care,” and the Veterans Health Administration’s National Chaplains Center directed, Office of Rural Health supported, Rural Clergy Training Program, along with other efforts which are working to receive returning veterans home with open hearts and arms.
- Lift up the vocational call of those who serve in the Armed Forces and raise up the need in our congregations for those who may hear the call of the Spirit of God and the church to serve as ordained military and federal chaplains of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- Designate one Sunday each year to remember those in military uniform, veterans who have served, the wounded and their families in their recovery and in their coping, and the families of those who have lost their lives in service and who continue to live with pain and loss.
- Remembering that injuries of the mind, spirit and relationships do not show as clearly as physical injuries, offer rituals of healing and reconciliation for active duty members, reservists and members of the National Guard upon their return from deployment or special duty and periodically thereafter.
- Realizing that not all honorably discharged veterans transition well and some find themselves incarcerated, congregations which already have prison ministry are encouraged to make a special effort to seek out incarcerated veterans and thank them for their service and help them access their veterans’ benefits that they might have a more successful transition upon their release.
- Form or join a local private or government partnership with community, county, state and federal organizations or agencies to advocate and provide support for veterans in need (e.g., community action organizations, health departments, homeless organizations, food banks, job organizations, higher education organizations, state veteran organizations, Department of Veterans Affairs organizations and mental health provider organizations).

12. Southeastern Synod (9D) [2016]

WHEREAS, 1.2 million Americans are currently serving in the various branches of the U.S. Armed Forces, and about 21.2 million American men and woman are veterans of military service; and

WHEREAS, hundreds of thousands of military personnel have been injured over the years and returned home with wounded bodies, minds and hearts; and

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is highly committed to ministry among those in military uniform and those who have faithfully and often sacrificially served this nation; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod Assembly memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to encourage congregations of the ELCA to offer their gratitude and support for all military personnel, veterans and their family and friends with tangible expressions of care and encouragement in one or more of the following ways:

- Express our gratitude often and remain especially attentive to those serving in the Armed Forces and veterans, including the military and federal chaplains.
- Present copies of the Prayer Book for the Armed Services (Augsburg Fortress) — a companion to Evangelical Lutheran Worship designed for those serving in uniform, veterans and their families — to military personnel and their families and donate additional copies of the prayer book to military chaplains.
- Regularly lift up in prayer those who are serving and those who have served, and pray especially with and for soldiers and the families of those who have been wounded or killed in the line of duty.
- Give ongoing support and hold in constant prayer the military chaplains who, on our behalf, bring the means of grace in the name of Christ Jesus on our behalf to the 1.2 million women and men in the Armed Forces, as well as to those in Veterans Affairs Hospitals and wherever else they are called to serve.
- Explore and facilitate congregational, cluster, conference and/or synodical events that equip individuals and congregations to offer needed care and support for returning veterans such as the ELCA “Care for Returning Veterans,” Congregational Centurions and other efforts to receive those returning home with open hearts and arms.
- Lift up the vocational call of those who serve in the Armed Forces and raise up the need in our congregations for those who may hear the call of the Spirit of God and the church to serve as ordained military and federal chaplains of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- Designate one Sunday each year to remember those in military uniform, veterans who have served, the wounded and their families in their recovery and in their coping, and the families of those who have lost their lives in service and who continue to live with pain and loss.
- Remembering that injuries of the mind, spirit and relationships do not show as clearly as physical injuries, offer rituals of healing and reconciliation for active duty members, reservists and members of the National Guard upon their return from deployment or special duty and periodically thereafter.

Background

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) social statement “[For Peace in God’s World](#)” (1995) states: We of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America share with the Church of Jesus Christ in all times and places the calling to be peacemakers. In the liturgy of Holy Communion, we pray “for the peace of the whole world,” asking, “Lord, have mercy.” Our petition unites faith in the Triune God with our world’s sufferings and hopes. (p. 1)

In taking this approach to war, this church supports the vocation of men and women in the military who in conscience directly face the ambiguities of relative evils, and who may suffer and die to defend their neighbor. (p. 12)

The ELCA has been on record as supporting both those who decline military service as well as those who in conscience enter the armed forces of the United States of America. Since 1995, the ELCA has relied on “For Peace in God’s World” to provide biblical witness, theological reflection and pastoral guidance for matters at the intersection of military life and the church. This social statement incorporates the reflections of predecessor church bodies on military service, war and peace.

Historically, the Lutheran church has been part of the “just war” tradition for Christian examination of the role of military service in the life of believers. In the United States, Lutherans (particularly the ELCA and predecessor church bodies) provided ample and exemplary clergy to serve as federal chaplains in the military, veterans hospitals and federal correctional institutions. These chaplains have ensured direct religious support to Lutherans and family members through their public, institutional ministries and upheld the free exercise rights of all those in their care.

Military missions and combat deployments since the attacks of September 11, 2001, have endured longer than any military conflict in the nation’s history. Also, not since World War II has the U.S. military relied so heavily on the community-based forces of the Reserve and National Guard. ELCA congregations across the United States have experienced sustained numbers of men and women entering and returning from military service. Further, Lutheran families and their neighbors are affected by military deployments. Our capacity and intention to love our neighbor involves caring for people and families in our congregations affected by military service as well as those in local communities.

ELCA congregations and synods engage in creative ministries among military members, veterans and their families. In 2015, a pilot initiative called “Centurion Connection” (Mark 15:39, Matthew 8:8, Acts 10:1-8) started with nine synods naming a “Centurion Contact” as a resource within their synod. Now, 19 synods offer a “Centurion Connection,” and that work is supported by a volunteer-run website for sharing ideas and resources (<http://elcachaps.com>). Further,

congregations have generously purchased, packed and provided thousands of copies of the new Prayer Book for the Armed Services (Augsburg Fortress, 2013) for troops deployed, afloat, in the care of military medicine and in recruit training or officer preparation. In a cooperative initiative with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), four synods (Eastern Washington-Idaho, West Virginia-Western Maryland, Southern Ohio and South Carolina) and ELCA pastors with support from congregations, synods and their bishops convened a formal “Rural Clergy Training Program.” All of these exemplify the commitment and capabilities of the ELCA.

Numerous examples in all expressions of this church demonstrate the capability of this church to address human and spiritual needs of military members, veterans and their families:

- We give thanks for the success of publishing and providing copies of the Prayer Book for the Armed Services by Augsburg Fortress, Publishers. This prayer book expresses this church’s focus on the spiritual well-being of Lutherans, all military personnel and their families.
- We give thanks for the numerous ways this church recognizes service to our nation and provides assistance in transition. We express gratitude for the pastoral care of individuals and families along with counseling, retreats and prayerful support which help military members, veterans and their families coping with combat trauma and war-time service. We celebrate initiatives like the ELCA “Centurion Connection” and “Care for Returning Veterans” programs, support to wounded warriors, Partners in Care (a state National Guard initiative) and other efforts to receive those returning home with open hearts and arms.
- We give thanks for those who recognize not all veterans transition readily and smoothly after war-time military service and are incarcerated. We affirm all ministries in federal correctional institutions, prisons and jails, including efforts to honor the service of incarcerated veterans.
- We thank God for Lutheran Suicide Prevention Ministries, congregations and individuals who actively seek to save lives through suicide prevention. We are thankful for initiatives at ELCA seminaries to ensure every graduate has the competence and confidence to provide assistance in preventing suicide and assisting neighbors in need.
- We give thanks for congregations, synods, the churchwide organization, agencies and institutions advancing intentional ministries of moral discernment, practical care and encouragement for those considering military service, those currently serving, veterans and their families.
- We pray and act as individuals, congregations, synods and a denomination as agencies and institutions which can aid those in the military, veterans, the wounded and their families in life after wartime experiences. The church can uphold in prayer families of the wounded and families of those who lost their lives in military service now living with pain and loss.

Regarding the need for chaplains, conversations with top leaders in the ranks of U.S. military chaplaincies indicate an aching need for chaplains from mainline, liturgical churches. Those leaders indicate ELCA Lutheran chaplains bring well-rounded theological education, clinical pastoral education, and parish experience to chaplaincy that are highly-valued. Lutheran chaplains provide access to sacraments and pastoral presence for Lutherans, people of other Christian denominations and faith communities, as well as persons of no stated religious beliefs. Numerically, Lutheran chaplains are significantly under-represented in military, VA hospital and Bureau of Prisons ministries. This means Lutheran military members, veterans and their families do not receive religious support from Lutheran pastors. More chaplains are desperately needed.

Recommendation for Assembly Action

To receive with gratitude, the memorials of Eastern Washington-Idaho, Pacifica, Southeastern Minnesota, Southwestern Texas, East-Central Wisconsin, Southern Ohio, Northwestern Pennsylvania, Allegheny, Metropolitan Washington, D.C., West Virginia-Western Maryland and Southeastern synods regarding their interest and vision for ministry affirming those called to military service, veterans, their families and this church’s support for chaplaincy ministries;

To recognize with gratitude ELCA members, congregations, agencies and institutions which have initiated creative ministry and mission engaging members of the military, veterans, ELCA chaplains and their families;

To encourage congregations, agencies, families and individuals to assist those considering military service and those continuing in service through moral discernment and vocational guidance concerning the life-changing decisions they must make involving justice, service and the ethical application of force;

To direct the Office of the Presiding Bishop to establish a Sunday of prayer and action near Veterans Day each year to unite this church in prayer and encourage assistance for military members, veterans, ELCA chaplains and families;

To encourage ELCA members, congregations and synods to offer care and support for returning veterans;
To encourage congregations to seek out incarcerated veterans to thank them for their service and to help them access veterans' benefits so that they might have a more successful transition upon release;
To affirm the publication of the Prayer Book for the Armed Services and to encourage congregations to present gift copies to veterans, military personnel and chaplains;
To encourage synod bishops, candidacy committees, congregations and seminaries to make known the need for ordained pastors to serve as chaplains in the military, Veterans Affairs hospitals, federal corrections and other chaplaincies;
To urge ELCA members and congregations to contribute to the ELCA Federal Chaplaincy Ministries Fund for Leaders Scholarship to attract the next generation of chaplains; and
To encourage ELCA seminaries, colleges and universities to integrate practicing chaplains to teach about specialized ministries, preach in chapel, and foster awareness and consideration of a call to chaplaincy ministry.

Category B11: Time of Prayer and Worship Resources on Human Trafficking

1. Northwest Synod of Wisconsin (5H) [2016]

WHEREAS, human trafficking in all its forms continues to be a problem that victimizes thousands of people around the world and in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Cherish All Children, an ELCA ministry that equips congregations to prevent child sexual exploitation, exists as a helpful resource (www.CherishAllChildren.org); and

WHEREAS, January 11 is considered Human Trafficking Awareness Day, and Super Bowl weekend traditionally has one of the highest incidences of human trafficking in the United States; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that January 11 through February 5, 2017, be established as a time of prayer in the congregations of the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin to end human trafficking; and be it further

RESOLVED, that we request that Bishop Richard N. Hoyme encourage members of the Wisconsin Council of Churches to join in establishing January 11 through February 5, 2017, as a time of prayer to end human trafficking in their congregations and national organizations; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) to encourage member congregations to establish January 11 through February 5, 2017, as a time of prayer to end human trafficking; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA to create and distribute materials (such as, but not limited to, petitions for prayers of the church, daily prayer suggestions, and informational newsletter articles and bulletin inserts) to help congregations participate in this time of prayer; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA to request that appropriate leaders connect with their counterparts in other religious organizations to encourage them to establish the same time of prayer to end human trafficking.

2. East-Central Synod of Wisconsin (5I) [2016]

WHEREAS, human trafficking in all its forms continues to be a problem that victimizes thousands of people around the world and in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Cherish All Children, an ELCA ministry that equips congregations to prevent child sexual exploitation, exists as a helpful resource (www.CherishAllChildren.org); and

WHEREAS, January 11 is considered Human Trafficking Awareness Day, and Super Bowl weekend traditionally has one of the highest incidences of human trafficking in the United States; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that January 11 through February 5, 2017, be established as a time of prayer in the congregations of the East-Central Synod of Wisconsin to end human trafficking; and be it further

RESOLVED, that we request that the bishop of the East-Central Synod of Wisconsin encourage members of the Wisconsin Council of Churches to join in establishing January 11 through February 5, 2017, as a time of prayer to end human trafficking in their congregations and national organizations; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the East-Central Synod of Wisconsin memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) to encourage member congregations to establish January 11 through February 5, 2017, as a time of prayer to end human trafficking; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the East-Central Synod of Wisconsin memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA to create and distribute materials (such as, but not limited to, petitions for prayers of the church, daily prayer suggestions,

and informational newsletter articles and bulletin inserts) to help congregations participate in this time of prayer; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the East-Central Synod of Wisconsin memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA to request that appropriate leaders connect with their counterparts in other religious organizations to encourage them to establish the same time of prayer to end human trafficking.

3. La Crosse Area Synod (5L) [2016]

WHEREAS, human trafficking in all its forms continues to be a problem that victimizes thousands of people around the world and in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Cherish All Children, an ELCA ministry that equips congregations to prevent child sexual exploitation, exists as a helpful resource (www.CherishAllChildren.org); and

WHEREAS, January 11 is considered Human Trafficking Awareness Day, and Super Bowl weekend traditionally has one of the highest incidences of human trafficking in the United States; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that January 11 through Super Bowl Weekend be established as a time of prayer in the congregations of the La Crosse Area Synod to end human trafficking; and be it further

RESOLVED, that we request that Bishop James A. Arends encourage members of the Wisconsin Council of Churches to join in establishing January 11 through Super Bowl weekend as a time of prayer in their congregations and national organizations to end human trafficking; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the La Crosse Area Synod memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) to encourage member congregations to establish January 11 through Super Bowl weekend as a time of prayer to end human trafficking; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the La Crosse Area Synod memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA to create and distribute materials (such as, but not limited to, petitions for prayers of the church, daily prayer suggestions, and informational newsletter articles and bulletin inserts) to help congregations participate in this time of prayer; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the La Crosse Area Synod memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA to request that appropriate leaders connect with their counterparts in other religious organizations and within the community to encourage them to establish the same time of prayer to end human trafficking and to work with law enforcement to end human trafficking.

Background

Human trafficking, the second largest and fastest-growing illegal trade in the world, is modern-day slavery wherein people are in bondage through fraud, force or coercion. According to the U.S. Department of State, between 12.3 million and 27 million people are trafficked worldwide at any time. That's approximately the total population (27 million) of Texas and Louisiana. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes estimates the total value of human trafficking to be \$32 billion. That's roughly the gross domestic product of Guatemala. Human trafficking is currently just behind drug trafficking among illegal forms of trade, which puts it ahead of illegal drug and weapons sales. Within this vast trade in human lives, women and girls account for 70 to 80 percent of all humans trafficked worldwide.

The [Evangelical Lutheran Church in America](#) (ELCA) has a history of upholding human rights and taking human trafficking and exploitation seriously. Many individuals and entities within the ELCA, including the churchwide organization, work to educate members on this issue through varying resources and partners. In collaboration with our ELCA Advocacy office in Washington, D.C., the Lutheran Office for World Community, as well as through several state public policy offices, this church has continued to support the International Violence Against Women Act, which includes provisions to confront and respond to trafficking. In addition, the ELCA Advocacy office and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service continue to defend appropriate trafficking screens for all unaccompanied children arriving at the U.S. border despite numerous attempts to strip them of coverage under from the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act.

In 2001, the ELCA adopted the social message on "[Commercial Sexual Exploitation](#)," and thereby affirmed its commitment to address and respond to all forms of commercial sexual exploitation, including human trafficking. Sexual exploitation is especially egregious when children are the targets of it.

With this message, the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America hopes to raise awareness of the industry that sexually exploits vulnerable persons, principally women and girls, but also men and boys. It calls upon members to examine how this industry might affect their lives. The council urges members, congregations, synods, churchwide units, and affiliated agencies and

institutions to renew their care and concern for children and youth, recognizing that there are those who prey upon young persons in their dependency and vulnerability. (p. 1)

Cherish All Children remains an important organization within the ELCA in carrying out the directive of the social message by raising awareness of child exploitation, providing prayer and worship resources, equipping congregations and advocates in ways in which they can pray for an end to these horrendous acts, and providing support to congregational activities and programs.

In 2015, the ELCA adopted a social message and foundational documentation on “[Gender-based Violence](#).” This social message seeks to raise awareness about the growing level of gender-based violence in U.S. society. “Gender-based Violence” includes but is not limited to rape, sexual abuse, physical and sexual assault, domestic and dating violence, and sexual harassment.

Out of the Office of the Presiding Bishop, the plan for resources and communication related to the ELCA social message on “Gender-based Violence” includes attention to human trafficking as expressed in this memorial.

However, a number of readily available resources on human trafficking already exist. The ELCA Justice for Women program offers resources on human trafficking for congregations, schools and organizations of the ELCA. These include learning modules and bulletin inserts downloadable for free at <http://www.ELCA.org/resources/justice-for-women>.

Likewise, Women of the ELCA justice initiatives include combating commercial sexual exploitation and human trafficking. Women of the ELCA provides Bible studies and informational fact sheets, which are downloadable for free at <http://www.womenoftheelca.org/resources>.

All of these resources identified are faith-based.

Since the inception of the ELCA in 1988, this church has been actively involved in corporate social responsibility and working to ensure the partners and institutions with which the church works have measures in place to ensure that they uphold human dignity. This commitment of the [Corporate Social Responsibility](#) program includes measures to end human trafficking. “We as a church will support legislation, ordinances and resolutions that guarantee equality to all individuals. We also ask financial institutions to ensure that new ways of providing low-income people with assistance and services do not sacrifice the most vulnerable for the sake of economic efficiency and profit.” Some examples of these measures include personal safety and well-being, economic equity and fair business practices.

Human trafficking continues to be a global problem and an issue that cannot be addressed by one country alone. Through the Global Mission unit, the ELCA engages in dialogue with companion churches, most of which are member churches of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), to discuss how this issue affects each and every one of us as children of God, and seeks to find ways to raise awareness within member church constituencies. The LWF has raised this as an issue for its 2017 Twelfth Assembly with the sub-theme “[Human Beings — Not for Sale](#).”

ELCA World Hunger works to address human trafficking with companion churches by supporting projects and programs through grants that seek to address root causes of poverty. By working to address root causes of poverty, the financial pressure that would leave one susceptible to being trafficked is diminished.

Recommendation for Assembly Action

To receive with gratitude the memorials of the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin, East-Central Synod of Wisconsin and La Crosse Area Synod calling for a dedicated time of prayer to end human trafficking and to create resources to support congregations in this endeavor;

To encourage congregations to incorporate attention to the issue of human trafficking in their communication and resource development plan, and to foster ecumenical and inter-religious cooperation, including dedicated times of prayer each year, such as January 11, Human Trafficking Awareness Day; and

To refer to the worship team within the Office of the Presiding Bishop for its deliberation and discretion the creation of worship resources surrounding the issue of human trafficking and the creation of prayers and litanies for the dedication time of prayer.

Category B12: Gun Violence Prevention

1. Saint Paul Area Synod (3H) [2016]

WHEREAS, the ELCA Presiding Bishop’s Pastoral Letter of March 4, 2013, begins: “A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more”; and

WHEREAS, mass shootings (4 or more shot or killed) occur in the United States’ homes, communities, businesses, schools and places of work at the rate of more than one per day; and

WHEREAS, police officials and studies emphasize the effectiveness of criminal background checks for all gun sales in significantly lowering gun violence frequency; and

WHEREAS, background checks are not currently required for private gun sales; and

WHEREAS, nearly 800,000 people are on the American Terrorist Watch List and more than 2,000 have been allowed to purchase weapons; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has, since 1989, urged synods and congregations to address gun violence; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Saint Paul Area Synod, in assembly, memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to address the need for criminal background checks on all gun sales, to urge the adoption of laws to ensure that the Terrorist Watch List is fairly administered and to prevent persons on that list from purchasing guns, to renew or replace the Federal Assault Weapons Ban from 1994 that expired in 2004 with the definition of assault weapons given in the renewal attempt of the Assault Weapons Ban bill of 2013 — Senate Bill S.150, to urge congregations to meditate, educate and advocate for gun violence prevention, and to direct this church's leadership to communicate these gun safety actions to appropriate elected officials; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Saint Paul Area Synod, in assembly, memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to establish a task force to organize actions to address gun violence prevention.

2. Upper Susquehanna Synod (8E) [2016]

WHEREAS, acts of gun violence have destroyed far too many of God's children, God's resolve for peace in the human community is unshakeable. Deliberate acts to harm or kill innocent people violate God's intention for the human community. God's commandment is: "You shall not murder" (Exodus 20:13). In proclaiming God's law, we declare that all people are accountable before God and the community to honor and respect the life God has given; and

WHEREAS, in 1994 the ELCA Church Council adopted "Message on Community Violence," which "calls on members of this church to consider how they might become more involved in countering the reality and fear of violence in their communities"; and

WHEREAS, the Supreme Court has held that the Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution guarantees an individual right to "keep and bear arms" and has also made it clear that this right is "not unlimited"; and

WHEREAS, military-style assault rifles are created to kill enemy combatants with maximum efficiency and ease and have been used in mass shootings to slaughter innocent people and terrorize entire communities and a nation; and

WHEREAS, the cost to society of gun violence cannot be measured in dollars alone; in dollars and cents, preventable gun violence drains our country of \$100 billion every year in medical, criminal justice and security costs; and

WHEREAS, nearly 80 percent of ex-offenders who commit a crime with a gun have obtained their guns through private transfers; and

WHEREAS, at least 40 percent of gun sales in the United States occurs without a Brady criminal background check; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Upper Susquehanna Synod Assembly memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to direct this church's advocacy efforts for passage of legislation to close gaps in the background check systems, and to mandate background checks at gun show sales and private transfers; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Upper Susquehanna Synod Assembly memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to direct this church's advocacy efforts for passage of legislation prohibiting the sale of military-style assault weapons and large capacity ammunition magazines; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Upper Susquehanna Synod Assembly memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to direct this church's advocacy efforts for passage of legislation by implementing a common sense, comprehensive approach to help law enforcement prevent gun trafficking, strengthen record keeping of gun transfers and requiring the reporting of lost or stolen guns to law enforcement to ensure better accountability of all guns; and be it further

RESOLVED, that local efforts to prevent and reduce gun violence should be supported and promoted by ELCA congregations including efforts to reduce violence in their communities by addressing violence's root causes.

Background

The 2013 Churchwide Assembly received six memorials related to community and gun violence. At that time, a number of resources were shared with the assembly on how the ELCA has addressed the issue of violence in society throughout the years, including:

- the 1993 Churchwide Assembly adoption of a social policy resolution [[CA93.06.10](#)] on community violence-gun control that calls upon all "congregations, synods, and appropriate agencies to work for the passage and strict enforcement of local, state and national legislation as appropriate, that rigidly controls the manufacture, importation, exportation, sale, purchase, transfer, receipt, possession or transportation of handguns, assault weapons, and assault-like weapons and their parts, excluding rifles and shotguns used for hunting and sporting purpose, for use other than law enforcement and military purposes;"

- the adoption of “[Community Violence](#)” as a social message by the Church Council in April 1994, calling on this church to confront a culture steeped in violence as a community of worship, a community of education and service, a community of advocacy, and a community of ongoing deliberation;
- the action by the [1999 Churchwide Assembly](#) for the ELCA to participate in a decade of work with other denominations and organizations as part of the U.N.’s Decade of Non-Violence 2001-2010.
- a video shared by Presiding Bishop Emeritus Mark S. Hanson in January 2013 that addressed the societal problem of gun violence; and
- a [Pastoral Letter on Violence](#) written by the Conference of Bishops during its March 2013 meeting.

More recently, Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton has addressed gun violence with public [statements on the Charleston Shooting](#), the [statement on the Overland Park Shooting](#), and the [statement on the Orlando Shooting](#).

The memorial from the Saint Paul Area Synod calls on the Churchwide Assembly to act to “renew or replace the Federal Assault Weapons Ban from 1994 that expired in 2004 with the definition of assault weapons given in the renewal attempt of the Assault Weapons Ban bill of 2013 — Senate Bill S.150.”

This legislation bans the sale, transfer, manufacture and importation of 157 specifically-named semiautomatic firearms while excluding any weapon that is lawfully possessed at the date of the bill’s enactment. It strengthens the 1994 Assault Weapons Ban and state bans in a number of ways, including eliminating the 10-year sunset that allowed the original federal ban to expire.

The legislation addresses the millions of assault weapons and large-capacity magazines currently in existence by requiring a background check on all sales or transfers of a grandfathered assault weapon and requires that all of these weapons manufactured after the date of the bill’s enactment be engraved with the serial number and date of manufacture of the weapon.

In addition, the memorial calls for the establishment of a task force dedicated to organizing actions that address gun violence prevention on behalf of the ELCA. Such a request for a task force dedicated to a specific set of actions is highly unusual and carries both policy and financial implications that properly belong to the discretion of the ELCA Church Council in consultation with Churchwide staff.

Rationale from the Memorials Committee

The memorial from the Saint Paul Area Synod also calls on the Churchwide Assembly to “urge the adoption of laws to ensure that the Terrorist Watch List is fairly administered and to prevent persons on that list from purchasing guns.” As the American Civil Liberties Union notes, such lists inherently limit due process and do not retain a presumption of innocence. Regarding the means for determining the make-up of these lists, they are secret and arbitrary. Furthermore, there is no established procedure for one to be removed from such lists.

The 13th Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America adopted a social statement on “[The Church and Criminal Justice: Hearing the Cries](#),” which states that “the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) affirms the fundamental principles of the U.S. criminal justice system such as due process of law and the presumption of legal innocence.” As this church cannot contradict its established social teaching, all such watch lists cannot be endorsed by this church, even as the basis for stricter control of deadly weapons.

Recommendation for Assembly Action

To receive with gratitude the memorials of the Saint Paul Area and the Upper Susquehanna synods concerning legislation on background checks and gun violence;

To reaffirm this church’s commitment to addressing the broad issues of violence in society through worship, education, service, advocacy and ongoing moral deliberation as called for in the 1994 social message on “Community Violence” and the 2013 Conference of Bishops’ Pastoral Letter on Violence;

To reaffirm that ELCA social policy does not reject gun ownership or the recreational activities associated with guns as morally wrong;

To encourage bishops, pastors and Lutheran leaders to communicate with members of Congress and state legislators this church’s long-standing support for managing gun purchases, such as background checks for all gun sales including private sales;

To urge bishops, pastors and Lutheran leaders to communicate to members of Congress and state legislators this church’s sense of urgency for the renewal or replacement of the Federal Assault Weapons Ban (expired in 2004), including a definition of assault weapons comparable to that in the renewal attempt of the Assault Weapons Ban bill of 2013; and

To refer to the Church Council, in consultation with staff of the churchwide organization, consideration of the request for establishing an ELCA task force to organize actions consistent with ELCA policy that addresses gun violence prevention.

Category B13: AMMPARO Strategy

1. Greater Milwaukee Synod (5J) [2016]

WHEREAS, there are more than 90 verses in the Bible that call on people of faith to welcome the stranger and foreigner; and

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has issued many statements since its inception on Central America and refugees, calling on this church to be a welcoming place for those seeking refuge and asylum; and

WHEREAS, children and families from Central America have been coming to the United States seeking refuge from violence, poverty and lack of opportunities, for many years with a spike in the number coming in federal fiscal years 2012-2014, along with an increase in number this fiscal year; and

WHEREAS, companion churches, ecumenical partners, social ministry organizations and other partners are in ministry with the children and families in Central America and in the United States of America; and

WHEREAS, it is the commitment of the ELCA as a church in the world, to accompany vulnerable children and families from Central America today and in the future using the AMMPARO (Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities) strategy as a guide; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Greater Milwaukee Synod in assembly affirm the AMMPARO (Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities) strategy recently presented to the ELCA Church Council and memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to adopt it; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Greater Milwaukee Synod Assembly affirm the ministry that is being done in this synod with children and families from Central America; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Greater Milwaukee Synod Assembly consider ways that it can accompany, foster awareness building and advocate for the children and families in Central America in their country, in the countries in transit and in the United States of America; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Greater Milwaukee Synod use the AMMPARO strategy as a guide for accompanying children and families from Central America through the Welcoming Congregations and/or Guardian Angel programs, and for advocating policies that are more just and humane and that uphold and defend the human rights of migrant children and their families.

Background

Aside from a series of actions being requested by the Greater Milwaukee Synod Assembly, the only action being requested of the churchwide organization in its resolution on Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities (AMMPARO) is that the Churchwide Assembly adopt the AMMPARO strategy, an action recommended by the Church Council. In its April 2016 meeting, the council voted [CC16.04.03]:

To recommend to the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America:

To express gratitude to this church's members, congregations, synods and churchwide organization as well as our faithful partnership with this church's companion churches and partners for the work to accompany migrant children and families fleeing the humanitarian crisis in Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala;

To approve the Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities (AMMPARO) strategy as a whole church response to the migration of children and their families around protection, advocacy, representation and opportunities; and

To encourage this church's members, congregations, synods and churchwide organization to continue their work in advocating for migrant children and their families.

In terms of the genesis for this strategy, it is outlined in the introduction of [the strategy document](#). In addition to what is listed there, previous to the recommendation by the Church Council, drafts of the strategy were shared on two occasions with both the Conference of Bishops and the Church Council. Input on the draft was given by ELCA companions both internationally and domestically as well as by strategic allies such as Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service.

Recommendation for Assembly Action

To receive, with gratitude, the memorial of the Greater Milwaukee Synod related to Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities (AMMPARO) Strategy;

To commend the ministry that is being done with children and families from Central America by members, congregations, synods and other entities related to the ELCA; and

To acknowledge the action of the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America on the recommendation of the Church Council regarding the AMMPARO Strategy as the response of the Churchwide Assembly to the memorial from this synod.

Category B14: ELCA World Hunger and Child Nutrition

1. Southwest California Synod (2B) [2016]

WHEREAS, “Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty’” (John 6:35); and

WHEREAS, 2016 is the year within *Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA* that is focused on ELCA World Hunger; and

WHEREAS, we live in a world where more than 800 million people — one in eight people in our world today — are hungry; and

WHEREAS, in the United States, more than 50 million people do not know where their next meal will come from and 15.8 million children live in households that struggle with hunger; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Southwest California Synod of the ELCA, meeting in assembly, encourage all congregations in this synod to raise up ELCA World Hunger in their work, domestic and internationally, to respond to the needs of those who are hungry, especially children, to speak up on behalf of all who experience hunger and work to find sustainable solutions to break the cycle of hunger; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the members of this synod’s congregations seek to support ELCA World Hunger through prayer and financial support; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwest California Synod memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA to urge the Congress of the United States to renew and strengthen our nation’s child nutrition programs by passing the Child Nutrition Reauthorization (CNR) bill in 2016 and bring the “Improving Child Nutrition Integrity and Access of 2016” to the Senate floor for a vote.

Background

Through partnerships with ELCA World Hunger, ELCA Advocacy has had Child Nutrition Reauthorization (CNR) as a domestic policy priority since the beginning of the 114th Congress in January 2015. ([See ELCA Advocacy on CNR.](#))

In a nation of great wealth and resources, no child should ever go hungry. However, 15.8 million children in the United States live in households that struggle with hunger. For too many children, a meal served at school is the only food that can be counted on each day. Lack of access to nutritious food sets children apart at an early age, resulting in issues like lower test scores, decreased attention in the classroom, or illness. Childhood hunger also has lifelong negative impacts on a child’s development and growth stretching all the way into adulthood. Access to consistent and nutritious meals gives children the fundamental and necessary elements needed to grow, learn, love and play.

This year, Congress has the opportunity to improve access to quality, nutritious meals for millions of children — many of whom live in rural or marginalized communities. A series of national nutrition programs helps combat childhood hunger by supporting healthy meals and snacks for children of all ages, both in and out of school.

Successful and cost-effective federal programs play a critical role in helping children in nearly every school program and community across the United States. These programs include the [Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children](#), popularly known as WIC, which provides nutritious foods, counseling on healthy eating, breastfeeding support, and health care referrals to more than 8 million low-income women, infants and children at nutritional risk.

The National School Lunch Program and the Summer Food Service Program both guarantee that millions of low-income children have access to healthy food throughout the year.

In addition to the ELCA social statement on economic life, “[Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All](#),” there are a number of other helpful resources including [ELCA World Hunger](#), [Food Resource Action Council: Child Nutrition Primer](#) and [Combating Childhood Hunger](#). The ELCA Advocacy office supports the intention of this memorial to renew and strengthen child nutrition programs in the United States.

Recommendation for Assembly Action

To receive with gratitude the memorial of the Southwest California Synod regarding child nutrition programs; and

To encourage ELCA synods, congregations, members and the churchwide organization to advocate that the U.S. Congress provide robust financial support for child nutrition programs.

Category B15: Affirming Global Human Rights and Non-discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation

1. Florida-Bahamas Synod (9E) [2016]

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has committed to “speak out on timely, urgent issues on which the voice of the church should be heard” and to “defend human dignity” (“The Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective,” 1991); and

WHEREAS, we as a church are committed to “teach about human rights, protest their violation, advocate their international codification, and support effective ways to monitor and ensure compliance with them” and especially to “defend the human rights of groups most susceptible to violations” (“For Peace in God’s World,” 2009); and

WHEREAS, the ELCA acknowledges that “hate crimes and violence against those who are regarded as sexually different sometimes have been perpetrated publicly in the name of Christ” and that this church denounces behavior leading to violence against those regarded as sexually different (“Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust,” 2009); and

WHEREAS, 32 nations in Africa now criminalize homosexuality, thereby sanctioning and encouraging homophobia and persecution of those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex — or suspected of being so — with punishments including beatings, lashings, castrations, prison sentences up to life and executions, and further penalizing those involved with or supporting organizations, including faith-based organizations, advocating for LGBTI human rights; and

WHEREAS, certain self-identified Christian spokespersons from the United States in recent years have misrepresented the gospel in Africa in urging anti-homosexual persecution and punishment in God’s name; and

WHEREAS, as people of faith, this church is bound in conscience and conviction to advocate for human rights globally by confronting injustice with truth rooted in the gospel; therefore, be it

RESOLVED that the Florida-Bahamas Synod Assembly memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to speak out publicly against human rights violations globally that criminalize homosexuality and against the teachings of any who encourage such persecution in the name of Christ, and that it do so citing the gospel-based commitments to human rights and justice set forth in the social statements referenced here.

Background

The ELCA has spoken on several occasions about upholding the principle of non-discrimination based on sexual orientation. Beyond the social statements referenced in the memorial, the 1997 Churchwide Assembly by resolution affirmed “the advocacy of synods and the Division for Church in Society in support of laws barring discrimination against individuals on the basis of their sexual orientation.” [In 1993, the Church Council expressed:](#)

1. Strong opposition to all forms of verbal or physical harassment or assault of persons because of their sexual orientation; and
2. Support for legislation, referendums, and policies to protect the civil rights of all persons, regardless of their sexual orientation, and to prohibit discrimination in housing, employment, and public services and accommodations...

With respect to pending legislation in Uganda in 2010 that “would, in certain cases, impose the death penalty for persons convicted of ‘aggravated homosexuality,’” At that time, Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson wrote to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, “Enactment of this kind of legislation would be an abhorrent injustice and outside the norms and standards of internationally-recognized human rights.” He commended her speech at Georgetown University in late 2009 “in which you stated that our government saw the proposed legislation as ‘a very serious potential violation of human rights’ and that our government had ‘expressed our concerns directly, indirectly, and we will continue to do so’ about this matter.” While the Uganda Parliament later adopted the legislation, that nation’s constitutional court struck down the law “on the grounds that it was passed illegally without a quorum of parliament.”

It is worth recalling also that the ELCA’s first social statement (“[The Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective](#)“ [1991]) committed itself to “join with others to remove the obstacles of discrimination and indifference.”

Recommendation for Assembly Action

To receive with gratitude the memorial from the Florida-Bahamas Synod related to global human rights and non-discrimination based on sexual orientation; and

To call upon the churchwide organization to continue to speak out publicly against human rights violations globally that criminalize homosexuality and against any teachings which encourage persecution in the name of Christ, and, in doing so, draw attention to this church's stated commitments to social justice and the promotion and protection of internationally recognized human rights.

Category B16: My Muslim Neighbor

1. Northern Illinois Synod (5B) [2106]

WHEREAS, our Lord Jesus calls us to love our neighbor (Matthew 22:39); and

WHEREAS, in the United States our neighbors include a growing number of Muslims; and

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has, from its beginning, committed itself to ecumenical and interfaith dialogue; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA is a founding member of the Shoulder-to-Shoulder Campaign, “an interfaith campaign [which] works at the national level and offers strategies and support to local and regional efforts to address Islamophobia”; and

WHEREAS, in an open letter to the Muslim American community, Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton wrote, “we renew our commitment to find even more effective ways to protect and defend you from words and actions that assault your safety and well-being. We believe God calls us to resist what is divisive, discriminatory, xenophobic, racist or violent, and we want you to look to us as allies and friends”; and

WHEREAS, Islamophobia, defined as “hatred, hostility, and fear of Islam and Muslims, and the discriminatory practices that result” is real and dangerous; and

WHEREAS, we do not need to believe that Islam is right to understand that Islamophobia is wrong; and

WHEREAS, the headline-grabbing actions of violent extremists are not representative of mainstream Islam; and

WHEREAS, anti-Islamic rhetoric has become the stock-in-trade of some politicians, religious figures, and prominent atheists; and

WHEREAS, the latest FBI statistics indicate an increase in incidents of hate crimes against Muslims; and

WHEREAS, prejudice flourishes in the presence of ignorance; and

WHEREAS, Christians and Muslims share a common Abrahamic tradition; and

WHEREAS, excellent resources for understanding Islam are available, many free-of-charge; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Northern Illinois Synod “repudiate the hostility and hatred aimed at Muslims” and commit itself to opposing, preventing and eliminating Islamophobia; and be it further

RESOLVED, that members of the Northern Illinois Synod be encouraged to educate themselves about the beliefs and practices of our Muslim neighbors; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northern Illinois Synod make available a list of some useful resources for understanding the Islamic faith; and be it further

RESOLVED, that congregations of the Northern Illinois Synod in communities with an Islamic presence be encouraged to reach out to engage our Muslim neighbors in friendship, in conversation and in cooperative effort; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northern Illinois Synod Assembly memorialize the Churchwide Assembly to request that the aforementioned occur throughout the denomination.

Background

The ELCA and its predecessor bodies have nurtured a variety of relationships through dialogue and cooperation with Muslims in the United States and globally.

In response to 9/11, the ELCA, like many other churches in the United States, committed to giving greater focus to Muslim relations, through dialogue (including the national Muslim-Christian dialogue) and inter-religious coalitions for the common good.

In 2007, the ELCA participated in responding to the global initiative, “A Common Word Between Us and You” — an open letter from 138 Muslim leaders addressed to Christian leaders that underscored both religions’ emphases on love of God and neighbor and called for unity and peace on that basis.

The following year, a group of ELCA scholars and leaders was convened to explore how the church could enhance its Muslim relations. Out of this emerged the Consultative Panel on Lutheran-Muslim Relations, a body that serves in an advisory role to the presiding bishop and which assists the whole church in deepening Lutheran-Muslim relations. Drawing upon the model established by the Consultative Panel on Lutheran-Jewish Relations formed in the early 1990s, this new panel set out to develop several resources to educate ELCA members and ecumenical partners on Islam, and

to nurture local dialogue and engagement. The following resources are available for free download at <http://ELCA.org/en/Faith/Ecumenical-and-Inter-Religious-Relations/Inter-Religious-Relations/Muslim-Relations>:

- “Talking Points: Topics in Christian-Muslim Relations”
- 7-Part Study Guide to accompany the Discover Islam DVD series
- “Guidelines for Christian-Muslim Relations”
- Windows for Understanding, book and DVD

One additional resource for free download from Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota, “My Neighbor is Muslim,” is available at <http://www.lssmn.org/refugeeservices/study/>.

Recently, Lutheran University Press published a joint project of the Consultative Panels on Lutheran-Jewish and Lutheran-Muslim Relations, lifting up several real-life case studies of inter-religious engagement in a variety of ELCA ministry contexts. “Engaging Others, Knowing Ourselves: A Lutheran Calling in a Multi-Religious World,” which includes many examples of Lutheran-Muslim relations, and ideas for dialogue and cooperation, is available as a resource. More information, including tools for teaching and discussion, are available at <http://ELCA.org/Faith/Ecumenical-and-Inter-Religious-Relations/Inter-Religious-Relations/Case-Studies>.

In the fall of 2010, when Islamophobia had reached a fever pitch in light of the so-called “Ground Zero Mosque” controversy, the ELCA, together with over 20 interfaith partners, became a founding member of the interfaith campaign “[Shoulder to Shoulder](#): Standing with American Muslims; Upholding American Values.” Shoulder to Shoulder sponsors an Emerging Religious Leaders Seminar in conjunction with the Annual Convention of the Islamic Society of North America, with the active participation of Lutheran seminarians. ELCA synod bishops and synod members of the Lutheran Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Representatives Network have become more actively involved in the local and regional work of the campaign in recent years.

In 2011, on the 10th anniversary of 9/11, Dr. Sayyid Syeed of the [Islamic Society for North America](#) (ISNA) was the first Muslim speaker to address an ELCA Churchwide Assembly. He described how “during the last millennium mountains of hate [and] discrimination have been built. Our job,” he said, “is to see those mountains of hate removed.” In August 2014, Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton was invited, in turn, by Dr. Syeed to bring greetings to the ISNA Convention in Detroit. The concerns raised by some ELCA members provided an opportunity to share information about the long-standing nature of our partnership with ISNA and the ELCA’s ongoing commitment to Muslim relations.

With ISNA, and other Muslim organizations and partners, we also participate in and promote advocacy and civic engagement on issues of common concern, including religious freedom, poverty, gun violence, and Middle East peace. In the latter connection, Presiding Bishop Eaton participates with Dr. Syeed and other Muslim, Jewish and Christian leaders in the National Interreligious Leadership Initiative for Peace in the Middle East, a group that promotes a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The ELCA Advocacy office in Washington, D.C., works with Islamic Relief USA across a wide array of international humanitarian and development issues. In recent past, Islamic Relief partnered in briefing ELCA synod bishops for advocacy on Capitol Hill.

We are also partners in global relief and refugee resettlement efforts. The Lutheran World Federation has a “Memorandum of Understanding with Islamic Relief Worldwide.” Together they have several joint relief projects, including providing humanitarian assistance in Jordan for Syrian refugees at the Za’atari refugee camp, where most of the refugees are Muslim.

In December 2015, Presiding Bishop Eaton issued an open letter to the American Muslim community, as an expression of concern and solidarity in the aftermath of the deadly shooting in San Bernadino, Calif. The shooting, which was defined as an act of terrorism, prompted a spike in Islamophobia. The letter stated that “Together...we are committed to building a stronger society based on the dignity of each human being, the value of diversity, the holiness of creation, and the common good. We pledge our partnership, and invite our local communities into continued dialogue and engagement to this end.”

Recommendation for Assembly Action

To receive with gratitude the memorial of the Northern Illinois Synod on “My Muslim Neighbor”;

To commend the ELCA educational resources on Christian-Muslim relations for use across this church;

To encourage ELCA members to commit themselves to opposing, preventing and eliminating Islamophobia;

and

To encourage ELCA leaders to engage in dialogue, friendship and cooperative efforts with Muslim neighbors.

Section C

Israel and Palestine

Category C1: Peace with Justice in the Holy Land

1. Northwest Washington Synod (1B) [2015]

RESOLVED, that the Northwest Washington Synod, meeting in assembly, memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to ask for congressional action requiring that future U.S. aid to Israel be contingent on Israel's halt to all settlement-building in the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and that the United States, in coordination with the U.N. Security Council, launch a more determined effort for a negotiated agreement that ends the occupation, achieves an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel and provides security and peace for both Israelis and Palestinians.

2. Sierra Pacific Synod (2A) [2016]

RESOLVED, that the Sierra Pacific Synod in assembly memorialize the 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to call for congressional action making future U.S. aid to the State of Israel contingent on Israel's halt to all settlement building in the West Bank and East Jerusalem; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Sierra Pacific Synod in assembly memorialize the 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to request that Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton to contact appropriate U.S. governmental officials to urge this condition be applied to U.S. aid to Israel; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Sierra Pacific Synod in assembly memorialize the 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to encourage ELCA members and congregations to study this issue and to contact their U.S. Representatives and Senators.

3. Southwest California Synod (2B) [2015]

WHEREAS, the State of Israel, in its occupation of Palestinian territories, is not granting the Palestinian people their rights under international law established by the Fourth Geneva Convention: full access to water, food, shelter, medical and educational services; and

WHEREAS, Israel, in violation of the 1993 Oslo Accord's call for a two-state solution to the conflict, continues on Palestinian land to build illegal settlements, erect a separation wall, deny free movement of Palestinians, and maintain a blockade of the Gaza Strip; and

WHEREAS, the Congress of the United States is not following the intention of the Foreign Assistance Act, which requires that a country receiving U.S. financial aid not engage in consistent violation of human rights of people under its governance; and

WHEREAS, Congress is not following the intention of the Arms Export Control Act, which requires that a country receiving U.S. military arms not use weapons for oppression of another people; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Southwest California Synod of the ELCA, meeting in assembly, request the Congress of the United States to authorize that, for Israel to continue receiving U.S. financial and military aid, it must stop settlement building in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, and actively seek a peace agreement that ends its occupation of Palestinian territory and enables an independent Palestinian state; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the members of our synod's congregations who seek a just peace between Israel and Palestine ask for congressional action applying this condition to future U.S. aid to Israel by advocating such action to their U.S. Representatives and both U.S. Senators; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwest California Synod memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA to convey to the Congress of the United States to authorize that, for Israel to continue receiving U.S. financial and military aid, it must stop settlement building in East Jerusalem and the West Bank and actively seek a peace agreement that ends its occupation of Palestinian territory and enables an independent Palestinian state; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwest California Synod, meeting in assembly, memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA to encourage all members of the ELCA to ask for congressional action applying this condition to future U.S. aid to Israel by advocating such action to their U.S. Representatives and their U.S. Senators.

4. Rocky Mountain Synod (2E) [2016]

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) in assembly in 2005 adopted "Churchwide Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine," to build "a movement that will strengthen the resolve of political leaders to find a peaceful and just solution in the Holy Land" (I.A.), by way of a "cessation of all settlement activities" (II.B.1.b.); and

WHEREAS, the United Nations has determined that Israeli settlements are illegal under international law because they violate Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which prohibits the transfer of the occupying power's civilian population into occupied territory; and

WHEREAS, peace groups in Israel and the United States — such as the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, B'Tselem Israeli Information Center for Human Rights, Jewish Voice for Peace and Peace Now — assert that settlement construction is an obstacle to peace; and

WHEREAS, Israel continues to build more settlements on Palestinian land; and

WHEREAS, the Rocky Mountain Synod in assembly in 2015 passed the resolution “Making U.S. Aid to the State of Israel Contingent on Halt to Settlement Construction,” urging the Congress of the United States to make future U.S. aid to Israel contingent on Israel’s halt to all settlement-building in the West Bank (including East Jerusalem), and encouraging congregations and members to contact their Congressional Representatives and Senators asking them to apply this condition to future U.S. aid to Israel; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Rocky Mountain Synod Assembly memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly, requesting that the assembly call for congressional action to make future U.S. aid to Israel contingent on Israel’s halt to all settlement-building in the West Bank (including East Jerusalem), by:

- asking Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton to contact the appropriate U.S. governmental officials to urge this condition be applied to U.S. aid to Israel; and
- encouraging ELCA members and congregations to study this issue and to contact their U.S. Representatives and Senators.

5. Minneapolis Area Synod (3G) [2015]

WHEREAS, the State of Israel, in its occupation of Palestinian territories, is not granting the Palestinian people their rights under international law established by the Fourth Geneva Convention: full access to water, food, shelter, medical and educational services; and

WHEREAS, Israel, contrary to the 1993 Oslo Accord’s proposal for a two-state solution to the conflict, continues on Palestinian land to build illegal settlements, erect a separation wall, deny free movement to Palestinians, and maintain a blockade of the Gaza Strip; and

WHEREAS, the Congress of the United States is not following the intention of the Foreign Assistance Act, which requires that a country receiving U.S. financial aid not engage in consistent violation of human rights of people under its governance; and

WHEREAS, Congress is not following the intention of the Arms Export Control Act, which requires that a country receiving U.S. military arms not use weapons for oppression of another people; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the ELCA Minneapolis Area Synod, meeting in assembly, memorialize the Churchwide Assembly to ask for congressional action requiring that, to continue receiving U.S. financial and military aid, Israel must stop settlement building in East Jerusalem and the West Bank and actively seek a peace agreement which ends its occupation of Palestinian territory and enables an independent Palestinian state.

6. Southwestern Texas Synod (4E) [2016]

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is led by the promise of Jesus Christ, who said, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God” (Matthew 5:9); and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has committed itself to nonviolent responses to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including the Peace Not Walls campaign’s efforts toward strengthening accompaniment, awareness-building and advocacy; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA affirms its role as an agent of justice, peace and reconciliation, and recognizes that fulfilling this role in areas of international conflict will require both political action and locally driven grassroots efforts; and

WHEREAS, the goal of restorative justice is to transform conflict into a pact of mutual cooperation. Restorative justice focuses on addressing and finding ways to meet the needs of those who have been harmed by conflict, while encouraging those who have caused the harm to take responsibility. Through a process of facilitated dialogue, victims and aggressors/offenders name what happened, identify its impact and try to come to some common understanding of the root causes and the effects of the conflict, how the harm caused will be repaired and how the aggressors/offenders will be held accountable. Restorative justice dialogue may be especially effective in a situation like the Israeli/Palestinian conflict where both parties see themselves as the victim (who has been harmed) and the other as the aggressor/offender (who has caused the harm); therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Texas Synod memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) to reaffirm the commitment of this church to continue its awareness-building, accompaniment and advocacy on behalf of a peaceful resolution of the conflict between Israel and Palestine and to continue to support and pray for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Texas Synod memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to embrace the principles of restorative justice as part of the ELCA’s advocacy and engagement for the just resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and actively seek ways to support Palestinians and Israelis engaging in restorative justice dialogue and other projects involving mutual cooperation, and to consider continued commitment to making positive economic investments in those Palestinian projects and businesses which peacefully strengthen the economic and social fabric of Palestinian society; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Texas Synod memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to recognize that Palestinians and Israelis are all born free and equal in dignity and rights, and to support efforts for protecting the human rights of both Palestinians and Israelis and condemning and opposing all violence and actions of either party which discriminate or deny any people their basic freedom, dignity or economic, social, legal, educational or cultural rights; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Texas Synod memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to support a just resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through a negotiated settlement, even in the midst of the current violence and deteriorating political relations between the parties, but rather than relying on past failed methods of simple calls to return to the negotiating table:

- (a) challenge the United States government to offer a new, comprehensive, and time-bound agreement (based on dialogue with both parties) to the governments of Israel and the Palestinian Authority for the resolution of all final-status issues including borders, the status of Jerusalem, refugees, settlements and security arrangements; and
- (b) urge the United States government to offer strong, built-in incentives — including economic, commercial, diplomatic and travel-related incentives — to encourage both parties to adopt this as the framework for a final status agreement.

7. Southeastern Iowa Synod (5D) [2016]

WHEREAS, the 2005 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) Churchwide Assembly adopted “Churchwide Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine,” to build “a movement that will strengthen the resolve of political leaders to find a peaceful and just solution in the Holy Land” (I.A.), by way of a “cessation of all settlement activities” (II.B.1.b.); and

WHEREAS, the United Nations has determined that Israeli settlements are illegal under international law because they violate Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which prohibits the transfer of the occupying power’s civilian population into occupied territory; and

WHEREAS, peace groups in Israel and the United States — such as the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, B’Tselem Israeli Information Center for Human Rights, Jewish Voice for Peace, and Peace Now — assert that settlement construction is an obstacle to peace; and

WHEREAS, in October 2012, ELCA Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson, along with other United States religious leaders wrote a letter to the United States Congress calling for our aid to Israel to be contingent on the end to human rights abuses in the Occupied Territory; and

WHEREAS, Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton, in 2014, wrote a letter to President Barack Obama calling continued settlement construction “counterproductive to achieving a comprehensive and sustainable peace”; and

WHEREAS, Israel continues to build more settlements on Palestinian land, with Israeli Housing Minister Uri Ariel estimating more than 700,000 settlers in the West Bank in March 2015 (Jerusalem Post, March 3, 2015), living in more than 125 Israeli-approved settlements and additional 100 “settlement outposts”; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Southeastern Iowa Synod Assembly of the ELCA, encourage its bishop and members to urge U.S. Representatives and Senators to require Israel to comply with international human rights laws in the occupied territory and to halt all settlement construction in the West Bank and East Jerusalem in order to receive military aid; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Iowa Synod Assembly memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA to ask its members and Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton to contact members of the United States Congress, asking for congressional action requiring that, to continue receiving United States financial and military aid, Israel must stop settlement building in East Jerusalem and the West Bank; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Iowa Synod Assembly of the ELCA memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA to ask Presiding Bishop Eaton to correspond with the United States President and United States Department of State, urging that United States aid to Israel be made contingent on the Israeli government ending human rights abuses against Palestinians, and actively seeking a peace agreement which ends its occupation of Palestinian territory and allows the recognition of an independent Palestinian state.

8. South-Central Synod of Wisconsin (5K) [2016]

RESOLVED, that the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin ELCA Assembly memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to ask the United States Congress to follow the directives of the Foreign Assistance Act and the Arms Export Control Act, which require that a country receiving U.S. financial aid and military arms not engage in human-rights violations of another people and to urge congressional action requiring

that, to continue receiving U.S. financial and military aid, Israel must stop settlement building and the expansion of existing settlements in East Jerusalem and the West Bank.

9. Southeast Michigan Synod (6A) [2016]

RESOLVED, that the Southeast Michigan Synod Assembly memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) to request that the Church Council of the ELCA to ask the Administration and the Congress of the United States to:

1. Recognize Palestine as a “state” and vote to include it in the United Nations,
2. Ensure that the State of Israel complies with the Foreign Assistance Act and the Arms Export Control Act, which require that a country receiving U.S. financial aid and military arms, respectively, not engage in human rights violations of another people, and
3. Make future U.S. financial and military aid to the State of Israel contingent on the cessation of settlement building in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, and ensure that not-for-profit organizations found to be funding these settlements are in compliance with current IRS regulations regarding not-for-profit organizations; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southeast Michigan Synod Assembly memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA to request the presiding bishop of the ELCA to convey this memorial to the Administration and the Congress of the United States, and to the public at large; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southeast Michigan Synod Assembly memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to ask the presiding bishop to convey this memorial to the three expressions (churchwide, synods and congregations) of the ELCA requesting that these expressions, including members of congregations, convey this memorial to respective members of Congress.

10. Indiana-Kentucky Synod (6C) [2016]

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is led by the promise of Jesus Christ who said, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God”; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has committed itself to non-violent responses to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including the Peace Not Walls campaign’s efforts toward strengthening accompaniment, awareness-building and advocacy; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA affirms its role as an agent of justice, peace and reconciliation, and recognizes that fulfilling this role in areas of international conflict will require both political action and locally driven grassroots efforts; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Indiana-Kentucky Synod Assembly memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) to reaffirm the commitment of this church to:

1. Continue its awareness-building, accompaniment and advocacy on behalf of a peaceful resolution of the conflict between Israel and Palestine;
2. Embrace the principles of restorative justice as part of the ELCA’s advocacy and engagement for the just resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and actively seek ways to support Palestinians and Israelis engaging in restorative justice dialogue and other projects involving mutual cooperation;
3. Consider continued commitment to making positive economic investments in those Palestinian projects and businesses which peacefully strengthen the economic and social fabric of Palestinian society;
4. Recognize that Palestinians and Israelis are all born free and equal in dignity and rights;
5. Support efforts for protecting the human rights of both Palestinians and Israelis and condemning and opposing all violence and actions of either party which discriminate or deny any people their basic freedom, dignity, or economic, social, legal, educational or cultural rights;
6. Continue to support and pray for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land; and
7. Support a just resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through a negotiated settlement, even in the midst of the current violence and deteriorating political relations between the parties, but rather than relying on past failed methods of simple calls to return to the negotiating table:
 - (a) challenge the United States government to offer a new, comprehensive and time-bound agreement (based on dialogue with both parties) to the governments of Israel and the Palestinian Authority for the resolution of all final-status issues including borders, the status of Jerusalem, refugees, settlements and security arrangements; and

- (b) urge the United States government to offer strong, built-in incentives — including economic, commercial, diplomatic and travel-related incentives — to encourage both parties to adopt this as the framework for a final-status agreement.

11. Metropolitan New York Synod (7C) [2015]

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan New York Synod Assembly memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) to recommit to a robust effort in accomplishing the goals set out [CA05.06.23] in the Churchwide Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine (2005) that include but are not limited to:

In the Holy Land:

1. Peaceful coexistence of Palestinians and Israelis in their own recognized states
2. Economic empowerment of Palestinians
3. Negotiated final status agreement on two states with a shared Jerusalem
4. Protecting the endangered Christian witness
5. Ending illegal settlement building in the occupied territories

In the United States:

1. Education among ELCA members about the situation in the Holy Land
2. Advocacy by ELCA members with their members of Congress that reflects the urgency of the situation
3. To be the voice of the voiceless on behalf of the Evangelical Lutheran Church In Jordan and the Holy Land in U.S. policy-making decisions.

12. Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod (7E) [2016]

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is led by the promise of Jesus Christ who said, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God”; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has committed itself to non-violent responses to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including the Peace Not Walls campaign’s efforts toward strengthening accompaniment, awareness-building and advocacy; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA affirms its role as an agent of justice, peace and reconciliation, and recognizes that fulfilling this role in areas of international conflict will require both political action and locally driven grassroots efforts; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) to reaffirm the commitment of this church to:

1. Continue its awareness-building, accompaniment and advocacy on behalf of a peaceful resolution of the conflict between Israel and Palestine;
2. Embrace the principles of restorative justice as part of the ELCA’s advocacy and engagement for the just resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and actively seek ways to support Palestinians and Israelis engaging in restorative justice dialogue and other projects involving mutual cooperation;
3. Consider continued commitment to making positive economic investments in those Palestinian projects and businesses which peacefully strengthen the economic and social fabric of Palestinian society;
4. Recognize that Palestinians and Israelis are all born free and equal in dignity and rights;
5. Support efforts for protecting the human rights of both Palestinians and Israelis and condemning and opposing all violence and actions of either party which discriminate or deny any people their basic freedom, dignity, or economic, social, legal, educational or cultural rights;
6. Continue to support and pray for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land; and
7. Support a just resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through a negotiated settlement, even in the midst of the current violence and deteriorating political relations between the parties, but rather than relying on past failed methods of simple calls to return to the negotiating table:
 - (a) challenge the United States government to offer a new, comprehensive and time-bound agreement (based on dialogue with both parties) to the governments of Israel and the Palestinian Authority for the resolution of all final-status issues including borders, the status of Jerusalem, refugees, settlements and security arrangements; and
 - (b) urge the United States government to offer strong, built-in incentives — including economic, commercial, diplomatic and travel-related incentives — to encourage both parties to adopt this as the framework for a final-status agreement.

13. Upper Susquehanna Synod (8E) [2016]

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is led by the promise of Jesus Christ who said, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God”; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has committed itself to non-violent responses to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including the Peace Not Walls campaign’s efforts toward strengthening accompaniment, awareness-building and advocacy; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA affirms its role as an agent of justice, peace and reconciliation, and recognizes that fulfilling this role in areas of international conflict will require both political action and locally driven grassroots efforts; therefore, be it

RESOLVED that the Upper Susquehanna Synod Assembly memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) to reaffirm the commitment of this church to:

1. Continue its awareness-building, accompaniment and advocacy on behalf of a peaceful resolution of the conflict between Israel and Palestine;
2. Embrace the principles of restorative justice as part of the ELCA’s advocacy and engagement for the just resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and actively seek ways to support Palestinians and Israelis engaging in restorative justice dialogue and other projects involving mutual cooperation;
3. Consider continued commitment to making positive economic investments in those Palestinian projects and businesses which peacefully strengthen the economic and social fabric of Palestinian society;
4. Recognize that Palestinians and Israelis are all born free and equal in dignity and rights;
5. Support efforts for protecting the human rights of both Palestinians and Israelis and condemning and opposing all violence and actions of either party which discriminate or deny any people their basic freedom, dignity, or economic, social, legal, educational or cultural rights;
6. Continue to support and pray for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land; and
7. Support a just resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through a negotiated settlement, even in the midst of the current violence and deteriorating political relations between the parties, but rather than relying on past failed methods of simple calls to return to the negotiating table:
 - (a) challenge the United States government to offer a new, comprehensive and time-bound agreement (based on dialogue with both parties) to the governments of Israel and the Palestinian Authority for the resolution of all final-status issues including borders, the status of Jerusalem, refugees, settlements and security arrangements; and
 - (b) urge the United States government to offer strong, built-in incentives — including economic, commercial, diplomatic and travel-related incentives — to encourage both parties to adopt this as the framework for a final-status agreement.

14. West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod (8H) [2016]

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is led by the promise of Jesus Christ who said, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God”; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has committed itself to non-violent responses to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including the Peace Not Walls campaign’s efforts toward strengthening accompaniment, awareness-building and advocacy; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA affirms its role as an agent of justice, peace and reconciliation, and recognizes that fulfilling this role in areas of international conflict will require both political action and locally driven grassroots efforts; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod Assembly memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) to reaffirm the commitment of this church to:

1. Continue its awareness-building, accompaniment and advocacy on behalf of a peaceful resolution of the conflict between Israel and Palestine;
2. Embrace the principles of restorative justice as part of the ELCA’s advocacy and engagement for the just resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and actively seek ways to support Palestinians and Israelis engaging in restorative justice dialogue and other projects involving mutual cooperation;
3. Consider continued commitment to making positive economic investments in those Palestinian projects and businesses which peacefully strengthen the economic and social fabric of Palestinian society;
4. Recognize that Palestinians and Israelis are all born free and equal in dignity and rights;
5. Support efforts for protecting the human rights of both Palestinians and Israelis and condemning and opposing all violence and actions of either party which discriminate or deny any people their basic freedom, dignity, or economic, social, legal, educational or cultural rights;
6. Continue to support and pray for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land; and

7. Support a just resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through a negotiated settlement, even in the midst of the current violence and deteriorating political relations between the parties, but rather than relying on past failed methods of simple calls to return to the negotiating table:
 - (a) challenge the United States government to offer a new, comprehensive and time-bound agreement (based on dialogue with both parties) to the governments of Israel and the Palestinian Authority for the resolution of all final-status issues including borders, the status of Jerusalem, refugees, settlements and security arrangements; and
 - (b) urge the United States government to offer strong, built-in incentives — including economic, commercial, diplomatic and travel-related incentives — to encourage both parties to adopt this as the framework for a final-status agreement.

Background

Since the adoption of the “Churchwide Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine” by the Church Council and its affirmation at the 2005 Churchwide Assembly, the “Peace not Walls: Stand for Justice in the Holy Land” campaign has been implementing the strategy’s three key emphases: accompaniment, awareness-raising and advocacy. The strategy states that the ELCA “is committed to building a movement that will strengthen the resolve of political leaders to find a peaceful and just solution in the Holy Land.” Furthermore, the strategy “is built on the conviction that the ELCA is called to intensify and sharpen its efforts, giving greater visibility to its commitments both among its members and in the public sphere.”

Central to the work of accompaniment is the goal for continuation of the witness of indigenous Christian churches in Jerusalem and the Holy Land (i.e., continued vitality of the ministries of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land [ELCJHL] and The Lutheran World Federation [LWF]–Jerusalem and Jordan programs, including Augusta Victoria Hospital, recognition of the ELCJHL as a church by the Government of Israel, reduction in the emigration of Palestinian Christians that is a result of economic, social and political impact of the Israeli occupation, and removal of the separation barrier/wall which threatens the viability of the ELCJHL schools in the Bethlehem area and the LWF ministries that serve Palestinians). Specifically, since 1989 the ELCA has been sharing resources and personnel with the ELCJHL including financial resources in support of the church and its schools, and the provision of an English-speaking pastor at Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, Jerusalem, a communication coordinator working with the ELCJHL, a Holy Land Trips Liaison, and Young Adults in Global Mission country coordinators and program participants in Jerusalem and the West Bank.

In the area of awareness-raising, Peace Not Walls (PNW) continues to keep ELCA members informed about the situation through updates to the ELCA web pages, providing printed resources, responding to requests for information, blog postings, providing support to a network of PNW leaders, etc. Of particular focus in recent years have been efforts with synods to increase the number of ELCA church leaders visiting the ELCJHL, the LWF and related organizations — to have a firsthand experience of visiting the “living stones” in Palestine, and a project to train ELCA young adults to lead Holy Land trips for other young adults focused on accompaniment, awareness-raising and advocacy and in a second round of the project to equip ELCA young adults of color to lead Holy Land trips that specifically focus on the intersection of race, culture and class in the United States, Israel and Palestine. Also, a number of members of the Association for Lutherans of Arab and Middle East Heritage (ALAMEH) participate in the work of the campaign.

Advocacy continues to center on the intersection between U.S. foreign assistance and the political and humanitarian outcomes outlined in the strategy such as an ultimate goal of “Israelis and Palestinians co-existing in justice and peace, as citizens of viable and secure Israeli and Palestinian states.” In the meantime, monthly action alerts, blog postings and advocacy visits with elected officials in Washington, D.C., have focused on the identified outcomes (i.e., an end to Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories, an end to terrorism and violence against Palestinians and Israelis by individuals, groups and states, an end to further expansion of the separation wall on Palestinian territory and the related appropriation of natural resources [e.g., water, farmland], a cessation of all settlement activities and withdrawal from settlements on Palestinian territory to the 1967 boundaries, and a negotiated, final-status agreement, which includes a “shared Jerusalem” that can serve as a capital to both Palestine and Israel, with access by and full rights in the city for Jews, Christians, and Muslims).

With respect to eliminating military aid as a part of U.S. foreign assistance, in recent years the ELCA has joined with other ecumenical partners in calling for holding recipient countries of military aid, including Israel, accountable to U.S. laws that require it be used in conformity with international human rights standards. This is consonant with the ELCA’s commitment to Israel’s right to exist within secure borders, the establishment of a viable Palestinian state and an end to the Israeli occupation (UNSCR 242 and 338). This is also consistent with a 1991 Churchwide Assembly action

(CA91.6.33) that encouraged ELCA members to write to their political leaders asking them “to relate U.S. foreign assistance to the willingness of those nations to negotiate with one another in good faith and to adhere to international law and human rights conventions.”

In a related action, the ELCA has been supporting efforts to have Palestinian children released from military detention.

There are two provisions in existing U.S. law, also known as the Leahy law because the principal sponsor was U.S. Senator Patrick Leahy of Vermont, that specify internationally recognized human rights standards. These provisions state: “No assistance shall be furnished under this Act or the Arms Export Control Act to any unit of the security forces of a foreign country if the Secretary of State has credible information that such unit has committed a gross violation of human rights” (Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 as amended, 22 U.S. Code § 2378d), and “Of the amounts made available to the Department of Defense, none may be used for any training, equipment, or other assistance for a unit of a foreign security force if the Secretary of Defense has credible information that the unit has committed a gross violation of human rights” (Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 10 U.S. Code § 2249e).

Recommendation for Assembly Action

To receive with gratitude the memorials of the Northwest Washington, Sierra Pacific, Southwest California, Rocky Mountain, Minneapolis Area, Southwestern Texas, Southeastern Iowa, South-Central Wisconsin, Southeast Michigan, Indiana-Kentucky, Metropolitan New York, Northeastern Pennsylvania, Upper Susquehanna and West Virginia-Western Maryland synods related to Israel and Palestine;

To reaffirm the commitment of this church to:

- 1. Continue its awareness-building, accompaniment, and advocacy on behalf of a peaceful resolution of the conflict between Israel and Palestine;**
- 2. Take steps to assist the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) and other Christians in sustaining their endangered presence in the Holy Land;**
- 3. Promote the economic empowerment of Palestinians, including investment in Palestinian projects and businesses;**
- 4. Promote the protection of the human rights of Palestinians and Israelis and oppose all violence and actions which discriminate against or deny any people their basic freedom, dignity or human rights;**
- 5. Embrace the principles of restorative justice as part of the ELCA’s advocacy and engagement for the just resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and actively seek ways to support Palestinians and Israelis engaging in restorative justice dialogue and other projects; and**
- 6. Continue to pray for the ELCJHL and the work of The Lutheran World Federation Jerusalem program;**

To encourage this church’s members, congregations, synods, and agencies as well as the presiding bishop to call on the U.S. President, in coordination with the United Nations Security Council, to offer a new, comprehensive and time-bound agreement to the governments of Israel and Palestine, resulting in a negotiated final status agreement between Israel and Palestine leading to two viable and secure states with a shared Jerusalem;

To urge this church’s members, congregations, synods, agencies and presiding bishop to call on their U.S. Representatives, Senators and the Administration to take action requiring that, to continue receiving U.S. financial and military aid, Israel must comply with internationally recognized human rights standards as specified in existing U.S. law, stop settlement building and the expansion of existing settlements in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, end its occupation of Palestinian territory, and enable an independent Palestinian state; and

To encourage this church’s members, congregations, synods, and agencies to call on the U.S. President to recognize the State of Palestine and not prevent the application of the State of Palestine for full membership in the United Nations.

Category C2: Justice for the Holy Land through Responsible Investment

1. Sierra Pacific Synod (2A) [2016]

RESOLVED, that the Sierra Pacific Synod meeting in assembly memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA to direct the Church Council (with the assistance of the Corporate Social Responsibility Review Team and taking into account its already approved Social Criteria Investment Screens policy) to develop an investment screen

addressing companies whose products and services have significantly exacerbated the conflict between Israel and Palestine and the violation of human rights of Palestinians, further preventing a just and lasting peace in the region.

2. Southwest California Synod (2B) [2016]

WHEREAS, in 2005, the ELCA approved “Peace Not Walls” as a strategy for this church’s engagement in the efforts to bring a just and lasting peace to the conflict between Israel and Palestine; and

WHEREAS, in spite of this church’s call to “awareness, accompaniment and advocacy,” the nation of Israel and the Palestinian Authority remain deeply divided and unable to negotiate an agreement that will provide security, justice and peace for both states; and

WHEREAS, the continued occupation of the Palestinian Territories, including East Jerusalem, by the State of Israel hampers efforts to create a just and lasting peace, and violates the rights of Palestinians as defined by the “International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights” (ICCPR) which was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on December 16, 1966, and to which both Israel and the United States are parties; and

WHEREAS, several multinational corporations have provided materials and resources that instead of encouraging solutions that will bring a just and lasting peace in fact have exacerbated the conflict, perpetuated injustice, and violated the human rights of Palestinians, including:

Caterpillar Corporation, which provides bulldozers that Israel has used for the demolition of homes of Palestinians accused or suspected of activity that challenges or combats Israel’s continued occupation of the Palestinian territories seized during the 1967 War, thus violating Article 17 of the ICCPR, which states, “No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence”;

Hewlett-Packard Company, which developed, integrates and maintains finger print and facial recognition data collected on every Palestinian over the age of 16 that enables Israel to track and control their movements, which violates Article 17 of the ICCPR, which states, “Everyone has the right to the liberty of movement and freedom to choose his residence”;

Motorola Solutions, which supplies Israel with weapon components, military communications systems and surveillance systems that sustain the occupation of the Palestinian Territories and delay the formation of Palestine as a nation, which violates Article 24 of the ICCPR, which states, “Every child has the right to acquire a nationality”;

Group 4 Securicor (G4S), which provides equipment and services to Israeli prisons where political prisoners and children are detained without trial and subjected to torture, which violates Article 7 of the ICCPR, which states, “No one shall be subjected to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment”;

WHEREAS, three of the ELCA’s full communion partners — the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the United Church of Christ and The United Methodist Church — have each voted within the past two years to similarly divest funds from these and other companies that prolong Israel’s occupation or inhibit the formation of a viable Palestinian state; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Southwest California Synod meeting in assembly recommend that the Synod Council take those steps necessary to divest any and all stocks the Southwest California Synod may have invested in Caterpillar Corporation, Hewlett-Packard Company, Motorola Solutions and G4S; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwest California Synod meeting in assembly recommend to its member congregations, rostered leaders, agencies and institutions that they consider divesting any and all funds they may have in Caterpillar Corporation, Hewlett-Packard Company, Motorola Solutions and G4S; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwest California Synod meeting in assembly recommend that the ELCA Church Council take whatever steps to divest any and all funds the ELCA has invested in Caterpillar Corporation, Hewlett-Packard Company, Motorola Solutions and G4S; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwest California Synod meeting in assembly recommend that the ELCA Churchwide Assembly consider referring a motion to divest pension funds from Caterpillar Corporation, Hewlett-Packard Company, Motorola Solutions and G4S to the ELCA Board of Pensions for recommendation and action.

3. Metropolitan New York Synod (7C) [2016]

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan New York Synod meeting in assembly direct the Metropolitan New York Synod Council to recommend that the ELCA Church Council take steps necessary to divest any and all funds the ELCA has invested in Caterpillar Corporation, Hewlett-Packard Company and Motorola Solutions; and, with the assistance of the Corporate Social Responsibility Review Team of the churchwide organization and taking into account the ELCA’s Church Council-approved Social Criteria Investment Screens policy, develop an investment screen addressing companies whose products and services have significantly exacerbated the conflict between Israel and Palestine and the violation of human rights of Palestinians, further preventing a just and lasting peace in the region; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan New York Synod meeting in assembly memorialize the ELCA Churchwide Assembly to consider referring a motion to divest pension funds from Caterpillar Corporation, Hewlett-Packard Company and Motorola Solutions to the ELCA Board of Pensions for recommendation and action.

4. Delaware-Maryland Synod (8F) [2016]

WHEREAS, the continued occupation of the Palestinian Territories by the State of Israel, the ongoing building of Israeli settlements in the Palestinian Territories and other activities associated with this occupation and settlement — including but not limited to expulsion of Palestinians from their legally held lands; demolition of their homes; prolonged detention with torture and without due process; arrest, mistreatment and detention of children; separate and unequal systems of law for Israeli settlers and Palestinians; severe restrictions on movement and travel through arbitrary permit systems, checkpoints and the separation wall; and segregated roads and buses — deny the fundamental human rights of Palestinians, hamper efforts to create a just and lasting peace, jeopardize a two-state solution and violate international law as set forth in the United Nations Charter, the Fourth Geneva Convention and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; and

WHEREAS, the 2005 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America adopted “Peace Not Walls: Stand for Justice in the Holy Land” as this church’s strategy of engagement in the Holy Land, a strategy that advocates for equal human dignity and rights for all people in the Holy Land, an end to Israeli settlement building and the occupation of Palestinian land, and a two-state solution, with two viable, secure states living side-by-side; and

WHEREAS, Palestinian Christians, in the 2009 statement “Kairos Palestine,” written and supported by leaders and heads of thirteen churches in the Holy Land, including Catholic, Orthodox and Lutheran (Bishop Munib Younan and Pastor Mitri Raheb of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land both contributed to the statement), called on churches of the world to “stand alongside the oppressed” and work to end “the sin of occupation imposed upon us”; and

WHEREAS, multiple sources, including the American Friends Service Committee’s investment screening database, confirm that certain multinational corporations, including Caterpillar, HP Inc., Hewlett Packard Enterprise, Motorola Solutions and G4S, have been complicit in the occupation and its associated human rights abuses: Caterpillar provides specialized bulldozers, including unmanned bulldozers, to demolish Palestinian civilian homes and property; HP Inc. and Hewlett Packard Enterprise provide IT services and systems so that the State of Israel can collect fingerprint and facial recognition data on every Palestinian over the age of 16 to track and control their movements; Motorola Solutions provides invisible radar fences, surveillance and communication equipment used in the occupied territories; and G4S provides security systems for Israel’s prisons and detention centers, West Bank settlements and military checkpoints; and

WHEREAS, three of the ELCA’s full communion partners — the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the United Church of Christ and The United Methodist Church — have each voted within the past two years to divest funds from these and other companies and banks that profit from or are complicit in human rights violations arising from the occupation; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Delaware-Maryland Synod Assembly direct the Synod Council to divest of direct or substantive indirect holdings in companies profiting from, or complicit in, human rights violations arising from the occupation, such as Caterpillar, HP Inc., Hewlett Packard Enterprise, Motorola Solutions and G4S, until such time as those companies no longer profit from the occupation or cease operations in the illegal settlements; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Delaware-Maryland Synod Assembly encourage its members and congregations, to divest of direct or substantive indirect holdings in companies profiting from, or complicit in, human rights violations arising from the occupation, such as Caterpillar, HP Inc., Hewlett Packard Enterprise, Motorola Solutions and G4S, until such time as those companies no longer profit from the occupation or cease operations in the illegal settlements; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Delaware-Maryland Synod Assembly memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) to direct the Church Council to divest of direct or substantive indirect holdings in companies profiting from, or complicit in, human rights violations arising from the occupation, such as Caterpillar, HP Inc., Hewlett Packard Enterprise, Motorola Solutions, and G4S, until such time as those companies no longer profit from the occupation and cease operations in the illegal settlements; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Delaware-Maryland Synod Assembly memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA to encourage synods, congregations, and agencies and institutions of this church to divest of direct or substantive indirect holdings in companies profiting from, or complicit in, human rights violations arising from the occupation, such as Caterpillar, HP Inc., Hewlett Packard Enterprise, Motorola Solutions and G4S, until such time as those companies no longer profit from the occupation and cease operations in the illegal settlements.

Background

For more than a decade, attention has been drawn to the impact of the presence of foreign companies and corporations in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. There has been ongoing debate about whether their presence has been chiefly positive (i.e., of great benefit to the local Palestinian people and economy, or largely negative ... having a detrimental effect or, even worse, contributing to Israeli violations of internationally-recognized human rights related to the Occupation). The ELCA social message on “[The Israeli/Palestinian Conflict](#)” (1989) demonstrates this church’s long-standing and insistent call “for the cessation of human rights abuses against the Palestinians, because of the Israeli occupation” (p.1).

The 2005 Churchwide Assembly affirmed the “Churchwide Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine,” more popularly known as the “Peace Not Walls: Stand for Justice in the Holy Land” campaign. Part of that strategy included advocacy related to ‘Stewarding Economic Resources’. It committed the ELCA to explore economic initiatives, such as:

- b. Promoting positive economic development in the region to help those most in need (e.g., support for Palestinian businesses, including the establishment of micro-loans) ...
- d. Making consumer decisions that favor support to those in greatest need (e.g., Palestinian providers as distinct from Israel settlers on Palestinian territory) [and]
- e. Managing collective or personal investments with concern for their impact on the lives of all Holy Land peoples who suffer from the ongoing conflict.

The 2007 Churchwide Assembly called

... upon the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to underscore the call for economic initiatives by this church and its members in the “Peace, Not Walls” campaign. Such initiatives, in consultation with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, could include:

- purchasing of products from Palestinian providers and
- exploration of the feasibility of refusing to buy products produced in Israeli settlements. Also to be explored is the entire investment activity by this church. Examination of investments would exclude the option of divestiture.

The 2011 Churchwide Assembly voted

To encourage members, congregations, synods, and agencies of this church to:

1. seek ways to achieve a deeper understanding of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including the perspectives of other faith communities, and receive, read, and discuss the Kairos Palestine document as an “authentic word from our brothers and sisters in the Palestinian Christian community” that “warrants our respect and attentiveness”;
2. affirm this church’s commitment to non-violent responses to the Israeli- Palestinian conflict, including the Peace Not Walls campaign’s efforts toward strengthening accompaniment, awareness-building, and advocacy; and
3. consider making positive economic investments in those Palestinian projects and businesses that peacefully strengthen the economic and social fabric of Palestinian society;

To commend the policy “ELCA Economic Social Criteria Investment Screens” to the members, congregations, synods, and agencies of this church; and

To decline to undertake a review of the investment of funds managed within the ELCA but to commend these recommendations to the Office of the Treasurer, the Office of the Secretary, the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit, the Mission Advancement unit, and the ELCA Board of Pensions for consideration.

The 2013 Churchwide Assembly voted, among other things,

To reaffirm the 2011 Churchwide Assembly action [CA 11.04.27] “to commend the policy, ‘ELCA Economic Social Criteria Investment Screens,’ to the members, congregations, synods, and agencies of this church; and to decline to undertake a review of the investment of funds managed within the ELCA but to commend these recommendations to the Office of the Treasurer, the Office of the Secretary, the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit, the Mission Advancement unit, and the ELCA Board of Pensions for consideration”; [and]

To refer to the Global Mission unit, the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit, the Mission Advancement unit, the Office of the Secretary, the Office of the Treasurer, and Portico Benefit Services the matter of evaluating possibilities for investing in specific Palestinian economic endeavors and other projects that would promote peace and cooperation between Israelis and Palestinians; and to provide a report with recommendations to the April 2014 meeting of the Church Council.

As a result of the 2013 action, an *ad hoc* staff group was convened and prepared a report that was received by the Church Council at its November 2015 meeting. The report noted that consultations took place with Bishop Munib Younan of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL), Palestinian entrepreneurs and financial institutions, such as the Bank of Palestine, the named units as well as the Mission Investment Fund, and a review was made of the work of other denominations, specifically the Presbyterian Foundation and The Episcopal Church.

Determining possible parameters of “investment” was critical to the process and a continuum of investment options available to the ELCA were examined. The group looked at traditional (financial) investment practices as well as the

possibilities for other forms of economic investment (such as microfinance and online commerce). It also examined social investment or philanthropy; that is investing in the lives of people and communities without expectation for a financial return. The entities which manage ELCA financial resources (including Portico Benefit Services) explained that they implement ELCA guidelines for social criteria investment screens along a continuum, while maintaining their fiduciary responsibility to be effective stewards of the funds entrusted to them.

The ELCA's social criteria investment screens provide a guide for this church with regard to corporate social responsibility (CSR). They delineate areas in which the ELCA would like to invest or refrain from (future) investing and provide criteria to evaluate the scope of CSR work. The objective of social criteria investment screens is to identify the dimensions of a given problem area and, within those dimensions, to focus on egregious problems that are most critical to address. All social criteria investment screens have the overall objective of addressing the ELCA's concern for the social, environmental, as well as economic sustainability of corporations.

Social criteria investment screens do not constitute binding mandates or provide, for example, specific lists of corporations. It is the responsibility of the ELCA and each ELCA-related organization and individual Lutherans to develop and manage a prudent and responsible investment portfolio. The ELCA social criteria investment screens offer a context for decision-making about socially responsible investments.

Divestment is the act of selling an asset for the purpose of implementing either financial, legal, or social goals. Historically, some investors have used this tool to protest a particular corporate policy such as Apartheid in Southern Africa. The ELCA policy related to divestment is limited to the 2007 action cited above. The intention of several of the synod memorials is to change that policy with respect to U.S. businesses operating in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. It should also be noted that all separately incorporated entities of the ELCA including Portico, may choose to implement ELCA policy recommendations within their own guidelines and fiduciary duties.

In the context of the staff report to the November 2015 Church Council meeting, Portico reported that it was initiating Social Impact First investing in order to strive for greater social impact. Portico noted that it had been collaborating with ecumenical partners to learn more about potential investments in Palestine. However, it is uniquely challenging to uphold fiduciary responsibility while investing in Palestine. Given the volatility of the Middle East, the economic constraints inherent in the Occupation of Palestine, and the very low volume of options available, the financial return of investment in the region is well below market rate and considered high risk. Therefore, because of the fiduciary duty of the aforementioned entities, opportunities for financial investment in Palestine are rather limited. Similarly, economic investment, as understood in a free market, is significantly restrained under the Israeli occupation where freedom of movement of people and goods is restricted; where access to education, healthcare and employment opportunities are restricted; and where access to and development of land is restricted.

Staff of the churchwide organization also researched options in microfinance and online commerce, however, none of the microfinance options offered designated investing in Palestine; and the projects seeking funding in online commerce suit individual investors, not large scale investing.

The ELCA is dedicated to long-term social investment with long-standing financial commitments to our companion church, the ELCJHL, and related partners in Palestine. Therefore, the ELCA's social investment return can be found in the ELCA's engagement with the ELCJHL, The Lutheran World Federation (LWF)—Jerusalem, and other entities. From Fiscal Year 2012 to Fiscal Year 2014, the ELCA gave over \$2.2 million in grants to the ELCJHL, the LWF-operated Augusta Victoria Hospital, and to smaller initiatives like the Peace Center for the Blind. The Mission Investment Fund, reaching beyond its primarily domestic mission, loaned \$1.2 million to Dar Al-Kalima College (also a beneficiary of the Presbyterian Foundation) and \$1.5 million to the ELCJHL for the construction of the Baptismal Pilgrimage Site and Retreat Center at the Jordan River in Jordan.

In receiving the November 2015 report, the Church Council commended the ELCA's current social investment commitments to the ELCJHL, the LWF and other companions in the region.

In addition to ongoing research to identify positive investment opportunities to promote peace in the Holy Land, there are other aspects of Portico's social purpose investing approach to keep in mind. For example, Portico does not have a practice of divestment, nor does it recommend divestment, but rather implements a screening process consistent with ELCA social criteria screens. If an ELCA investment screen addressing companies connected with preventing peace in the Holy Land were to be developed, Portico would participate and consider the screen for implementation in the social purpose portfolios taking into account its fiduciary responsibility to its plan members. From Portico's perspective, the advantage of a screening approach is it offers flexibility and context for on-going decision making without being tied to a specific list of companies up front which can become outdated. Portico believes screening, as opposed to specific company divestment lists, provides more flexibility and a framework to address the changing situations in the world of business where some of the named companies have recently announced restructuring directly related to the issues raised

in memorials. For example, HP announced it was spinning off from HP Enterprise, the segment of HP that created and supported the finger print and facial recognition system named in the memorial. HP Enterprise will now become part of Computer Sciences Corp., which is not named in the memorial.

Turning to the matter of Lutheran-Jewish relations, the ELCA inherited significant work in Jewish relations from its predecessor bodies and the Lutheran World Federation. In 1994, acting under the mandate of the Churchwide Assembly, the Church Council adopted the “Declaration of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to the Jewish Community,” rejecting Luther’s later anti-Judaic writings, acknowledging their tragic effects throughout history and reaching out in reconciliation and relationship to the Jewish Community. Anti-Semitism is denounced as “a contradiction and an affront to the gospel, a violation of our hope and calling.” Over the past two decades, the ELCA has lived out the commitments contained in this declaration through various forms of dialogue and cooperation, and through a variety of educational initiatives.

One role the ELCA has played is to serve as a place where the concerns of Palestinian Lutherans and the concerns of American Jews have been in conversation. For example, some Jewish leaders have interceded with the U.S. government, some directly with the government of Israel, and some with both on issues of concern for the ELCA and the ELCJHL, including the recognition of the ELCJHL and the critical funding for the ministries of Augusta Victoria Hospital.

Some ELCA ecumenical partners have considered or adopted policies of divestment in recent years, resulting in tensions or breaks in Jewish-Christian relations at various levels. For some within the American Jewish community, divestment is interpreted as anti-Jewish. Therefore, divestment must be considered alongside the continuation of dialogue and partnership with the American Jewish community at all levels with respect to a lasting peace in Israel and Palestine.

While the above actions have been undertaken within this church, the memorials addressed to the 2016 Churchwide Assembly assess the situation of human rights abuse as dire enough to justify the dramatic response of divestment from U.S. based corporations, in particular those identified in the memorials. The memorials argue that a stronger institutional response by the ELCA is needed because these particular corporations profit from and contribute to human rights abuses in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Rationale from the Memorials Committee

While the memorials submitted by a number of synod assemblies requested divestment, the Memorials Committee is recommending the development of a social criteria investment screen. Using a social criteria investment screen guides this church in evaluating the types of investments it wishes to hold. It is an application of the church’s existing social teachings. Since we have an established Corporate Social Responsibility mechanism, the Memorials Committee recommends a screen as the best way to address human rights abuses in Israel and Palestine as well as throughout the world. A social criteria investment screen on human rights will provide Portico with ongoing guidance and an important framework to make decisions that provides for fiduciary responsibility. In addition, screens allow investors to still participate with a corporation in addressing the problems whereas a divestment approach does not allow for such engagement.

Recommendation for Assembly Action

To receive with gratitude the memorials from the Sierra Pacific, Southwest California, Metropolitan New York and the Delaware-Maryland synods regarding Justice for the Holy Land through Responsible Investment;

To reaffirm the actions of the 2005, 2007, 2011 and 2013 Churchwide Assemblies regarding responsible investment in Israel-Palestine;

To direct the ELCA’s Corporate Social Responsibility review team to develop a human rights social criteria investment screen based on the social teachings of this church and the concerns raised in the ELCA Middle East Strategy;

To encourage ELCA members, congregations, synods, agencies and institutions to increase positive investment in Palestine and other under-resourced areas where human rights abuses materially impact the well-being of all people; and

To encourage ELCA members, congregations, synods, agencies and institutions to engage in shareholder advocacy in support of human rights, exercising the right of a shareholder to submit resolutions at a corporation’s annual meeting.

Section D Ministry, Structure and Function of the Churchwide Organization

Category D1: Gender Identity

1. Sierra Pacific Synod (2A) [2015]

RESOLVED, that the Sierra Pacific Synod memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to task the ELCA Church Council with a review of existing ELCA policy regarding gender identity, in anticipation that the ELCA Church Council will recommend policy revisions which acknowledge and allow for the full inclusion of individuals of a broad variety of gender identities into the mission and ministry of the ELCA.

Background

The constituting assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America adopted what has become known as the “representational principle” in **5.01.f.** of the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*. This provision says:

... at least 60 percent of the members of its assemblies, councils, committees, boards, and other organizational units shall be laypersons; that as nearly as possible, 50 percent of the lay members of these assemblies, councils, committees, boards, or other organizational units shall be female and 50 percent shall be male, and that, where possible, the representation of ordained ministers shall be both female and male. At least 10 percent of the members of these assemblies, councils, committees, boards, or other organizational units shall be persons of color and/or persons whose primary language is other than English.

In 2014, three conferences of the Sierra Pacific Synod met to nominate persons for election to the Synod Council at the coming Synod Assembly. The question arose as to whether transgender lay members could be nominated and how they should they be identified. The discussion noted that the current policy does create issues for transgender persons wanting to be elected to be voting members of assemblies as well as other councils, boards, etc.

The synod formed a task force to address these issues. The fact that the representational principle is part of the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* limits the synod’s ability to respond to this concern.

The author of the memorial requests that the Churchwide Assembly “(1) task the Church Council with an intentional study of gender identity inclusivity within this church, (2) for this study to yield actionable recommendations to adjust existing ELCA policies, and (3) for individuals throughout the ELCA to begin a larger conversation in their own contexts about how we can welcome transgender individuals into the life and work of this church.”

The intent of the memorial is not to undermine the original intent of the “representational principle.” It is rather to ensure that all persons have the opportunity to serve this church in its assemblies, councils, committees, etc.

Recommendation for Assembly Action

To receive with gratitude the memorial of the Sierra Pacific Synod regarding gender identity;

To refer this memorial to the Church Council for study of gender identity;

To ask the Church Council, the Office of the Presiding Bishop and the Office of the Secretary to review existing definitions and policies in light of the council’s study; and

To report to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA actions and proposals for additional actions as may be required.

Category D2: Voting Ratio

1. Rocky Mountain Synod (2E) [2015]

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) maintains rosters of ordained ministers, and three lay rosters: commissioned associates in ministry, consecrated diaconal ministers and consecrated deaconesses; and

WHEREAS, at least 60 percent of the voting members of churchwide assemblies shall be composed of laypersons, with the remaining voting members being ordained ministers; and

WHEREAS, persons on one of the three lay rosters who serve as voting members at churchwide assemblies are counted in the ratio of lay voting members of said assemblies; and

WHEREAS, the number of non-rostered lay voting members is reduced when members of the lay rosters fill those voting seats, reducing representation from the majority voice of this church (non-rostered members); and

WHEREAS, the perspective of the lay rostered leader, whose combination of theological education and call to “diakonia,” serving on the boundaries between church and world, is a unique voice in conversations regarding this church; and

WHEREAS, both ordained and lay rostered voting members at assemblies are serving congregations, agencies and organizations related to the ELCA and bring that perspective; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Rocky Mountain Synod memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to amend ELCA governing documents to designate voting members at synod and churchwide assemblies be made up of at least 60 percent non-rostered lay voting members, with the remaining voting members be rostered leaders drawn from all four ministry rosters of the ELCA, reflective of the current ratio of ordained, consecrated, and commissioned leaders of that synod.

2. Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod (8G) [2015]

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) maintains rosters of ordained ministers and three lay rosters — commissioned associates in ministry, consecrated diaconal ministers and consecrated deaconesses; and

WHEREAS, at least 60 percent of the voting members of synod and churchwide assemblies shall be composed of laity, with the remaining portion of voting members coming from the roster of ordained ministers (ELCA constitutional provision 5.01.f.-g.); and

WHEREAS, people from the three lay rosters who serve as voting members at churchwide assemblies are included among the number of lay voting members of churchwide assemblies; and

WHEREAS, the number of non-rostered lay voting members is thereby reduced when rostered laity fill those seats, thereby reducing representation of the non-rostered membership, the majority voice of our church; and

WHEREAS, the unique perspective of the lay rostered leader, whose combination of theological education and call to diakonia, serving on the boundaries between church and world, is a critical voice in conversations regarding this church; and

WHEREAS, both ordained and lay rostered voting members at assemblies serve congregations, agencies and organizations related to the ELCA and bring that unique perspective to the assembly; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod Assembly memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to amend the ELCA governing documents to require that at least 60 percent of the total number of voting members at synod and churchwide assemblies consist of non-rostered lay voting members, with the remaining voting members to be drawn from leaders on the four ministry rosters of the ELCA.

Background

Chapter 5 of the ELCA constitution establishes what have come to be known as the “representational principles” in **5.01.f.** and **5.01.g.** The 1993 Churchwide Assembly decided that the rosters of associates in ministry, diaconal ministers and deaconesses would be lay rosters. That assembly adopted required constitutional provisions to the Constitution for Synods that gave the right of voice and vote to those on these rosters at synod assemblies. The 1993 Churchwide Assembly adopted a recommendation that associates in ministry shall be given voice and vote in addition to the 60 percent of lay voting members. This language was never added to the constitution.

The Study of Ministry recommended that diaconal ministers be counted as non-lay members of assemblies. The Church Council recommendation to the assembly did not include this specific proposal. In establishing the roster of diaconal ministers, the assembly identified it as a lay roster.

At its March 2015 meeting, the Conference of Bishops heard reports about possible entrance rites for the proposed roster of Ministers of Word and Service. It also heard a proposal to move this roster from the category of lay persons. The conference asked the Church Council to delay decisions about the entrance rite and other matters until the 2019 Churchwide Assembly. The Church Council agreed to this request and assigned this work to the already established Entrance Rite Discernment Working Group (CC15.04.05). That working group is to lead a discussion of issues related to the entrance rite to be used for this roster and related issues like the one identified in these memorials.

Recommendation for Assembly Action

To receive with gratitude the memorials of the Rocky Mountain and the Metropolitan Washington, D.C., synods regarding the application of the representational principles of this church related to those who are on the rosters of this church;

To acknowledge that this issue is related to other issues that have been identified related to the formation of a roster of Ministers of Word and Service; and

To refer these memorials to the Entrance Rite Discernment Working Group with a request that this concern be addressed in the working group’s report to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly.

Category D3: Cultivating and Sustaining Accompaniment in Global Mission

1. South Carolina Synod (9C) [2016]

WHEREAS, the *Great Commission* of our Lord, “Go, therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...” (Matthew 28:19) has no time limit attached to it; and

WHEREAS, throughout history the church has pursued varying strategies for accomplishing this mission; and

WHEREAS, in the modern missionary movement, the global church has often gathered to examine where we are in the task of global evangelism and to discuss methodologies and strategies; and

WHEREAS, since the formation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America there have been numerous consultations among the bishops, companion synod representatives and Global Mission staff, but there has been no churchwide examination of our global mission strategy involving all the stakeholders in this endeavor; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the South Carolina Synod Assembly memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) to set in motion a task force charged with the consideration of a global mission conference of all our historical mission partners around the world; and be it further

RESOLVED, that any organizing task force and any conference which follows shall be composed of a broad cross section of the ELCA to include all stake holders in this work: rostered leaders, former missionaries, both long-term and short-term, Global Mission staff, seminary professors of mission and evangelism, companion synod committee members, the Conference of Bishops and the presiding bishop of the ELCA; and be it further

RESOLVED, that any mission conference, which shall be the result of the work of the task force, shall also include representatives of those churches with whom the ELCA and its predecessor bodies have historically cooperated.

Background

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is committed to the missiology and the methodology of accompaniment in its global engagement. The Global Mission unit is responsible for carrying forth accompaniment for the ELCA’s mission outside the United States and as the channel through which companion churches engage in mission to this church (ELCA continuing resolution 16.12.B13.). Accompaniment is defined as “a mutual relationship between companion churches who walk together in service in God’s mission. Each church has primary responsibility for mission in its own area” ([ELCA Global Mission Companion Synod Handbook](#), p. 8). Accompaniment is comprised of five tenants: mutuality, inclusivity, vulnerability, empowerment and sustainability.

The ELCA Global Mission engagement is both comprehensive and integral — in the form of proclamation and service (or *kerygma* and *diakonia*) — because the scope of the church’s salvific work must be “as coherent, broad, and deep as the needs and exigencies of human existence” (David Bosch in *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*). This understanding is informed by The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), a global communion of 145 member churches. Over the years, the ELCA has participated in LWF mission consultations that have guided the ELCA’s global engagement missiology and methodology of accompaniment. In 1998, the LWF convened the Consultation on Churches in Mission in Nairobi, Kenya, which lead to the 2004 publication of “Mission in Context: Transformation, Reconciliation, Empowerment; An LWF Contribution to the Understanding and Practice of Mission.” From this seminal publication, we uphold that “mission encompasses proclamation, service, and advocacy for justice” and the “reaffirmation of mission in their respective context.” In 2008, LWF convened another global consultation to reach a common understanding of *diakonia*, explore its theological foundation and discern the distinct qualities of church-based action and development work.

Global Mission accompanies 94 global companion churches through our programs and personnel and regular presence through which relationships are deepened and enduring trust is built. In conversation and consultation with the companion churches, Global Mission Area Desks develop country plans and strategies for the regions they are responsible for and recommend alignment of resources to the priorities identified in these strategies. These strategies are then to be reflected in the Churchwide Organization’s Operational Plan and become the basis for reporting to the Church Council.

Global Mission also serves as the channel for the global companion churches to engage with and among ELCA synods and companion churches. Global Mission works contextually and with nuanced specificity with companion churches and synods on starting, renewing and deepening relationships through ongoing conversation, meetings and consultations. “Global connections help us see the world’s challenges in a new way and examine our own problems and joys through new eyes” ([ELCA Global Mission Companion Synod Handbook](#), p. 7). Each Area Desk region holds meetings of companion churches and synods on a periodic basis. The meetings vary in topic, size and scale — from regional consultations with synods to gathering all synods with the same companion church, to large scale consultations

covering a geographic region. These meetings also inform our country plans and strategies for global mission engagement.

Recommendation for Assembly Action

To receive with gratitude the memorial of the South Carolina Synod related to a Global Mission Conference; and

To reaffirm the commitment of this church to:

1. Commend synods, the Global Mission unit, companion churches and The Lutheran World Federation for ongoing commitment to the missiology and methodology of accompaniment, a holistic and contextual praxis,
2. Deepen the accompaniment of the 94 global companion churches, as companion relationships enlarge our perspective and understanding of the world,
3. Encourage this church's members, congregations, synods, agencies and institutions to commit to best practices for successful companion synod relationships — relationships held in mutuality, inclusivity, vulnerability, empowerment and sustainability, and
4. Pray for its companions and the relationships they share.

Category D4: Youth Mission Trips

1. La Crosse Area Synod (5L) [2016]

WHEREAS, mission work has a way of making faith active in love; and

WHEREAS, “good works” help strengthen and enhance faith; and

WHEREAS, Lutheran Disaster Response, Lutheran Men in Mission and Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) have shown that people are eager to do good; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA's Young Adults in Global Mission program has proven to be very meaningful; and

WHEREAS, the Service Project component of the ELCA Youth Gatherings has been shown to be very meaningful to the participants; and

WHEREAS, ELCA congregations wanting to take their youth on mission trips have to organize these trips on their own or go through non-denominational groups that organize mission trips; and

WHEREAS, many of our ELCA congregations take their youth on mission trips; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the La Crosse Area Synod memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA to explore the merits of creating an ELCA organization dedicated to organizing mission trips for high school youth.

Background

Beginning in 1988 and continuing for almost 20 years, the congregational mission unit of the churchwide organization published *Journeys for Youth and Young Adults*, an annual catalog of short-term mission trip opportunities for youth and young adults. Primarily, this resource pointed congregational leaders to ELCA-related agencies and organizations who offered mission trip opportunities during the summer and as alternative spring break experiences. The responsibility for organizing these trips and working out the trip details was always the responsibility of the congregation in partnership with the host agency. The churchwide organization provided a minimal level of vetting to ensure that sponsoring agencies were meeting certain basic standards for health, safety and program.

However, as mission support declined and budgets tightened and as staff reductions began to impact the churchwide organization more deeply, it was determined that this was a program resource that the churchwide organization could no longer offer. The churchwide organization simply did not have the staff capacity to sustain even the minimal level of vetting required to keep the *Journeys* publication updated. This reality continues today. The Domestic Mission unit does not envision having the capacity to assist congregations in organizing mission trips at any time in the near future. The Domestic Mission unit also does not believe that is the responsibility of the churchwide organization to “create” new ELCA organizations.

As the memorial acknowledges, there are several non-denominational groups who provide this kind of a service. In addition, the ELCA-related **Lutheran Outdoor Ministries** organization does publish an online version of a *Journeys for Youth* resource found on the website: <http://www.lomnetwork.org/resources/journeys.html>.

The ELCA Youth Ministry Network also offers the opportunity for frequent dialog on this topic at the website: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/elcaymnet/>.

Recommendation for Assembly Action

To receive with gratitude the memorial from the La Crosse Area Synod regarding the creation of an ELCA organization dedicated to organizing mission trips for high school youth; and

To encourage ELCA members, congregations and synods to engage Lutheran Outdoor Ministries and the ELCA Youth Ministry Network for available mission trip resources.