



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

November 18, 2015

TO: Bishops of synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
 Vice Presidents of synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
 Secretaries of synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
 Members of the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
 Administrative Team of the churchwide organization
 Chief executive officers of separately incorporated ministries
 Seminary presidents
 Regional coordinators

FROM: The Rev. Wm Chris Boerger, secretary

SUBJECT: Report of Actions of the Church Council (November 12-15, 2015)

The Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) met at the Lutheran Center, Chicago, Ill., Nov. 12-15, 2015. Here is a summary of particular actions along with background information.

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1. SOCIAL MESSAGE ON GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Background:

In November 2013, the Task Force on Women and Justice: One in Christ, which was developing a social statement on justice for women, asked the Church Council that a social message be developed to address violence correlated with gender. The council voted [CC13.11.63]:

To thank the ELCA Task Force on Women and Justice: One in Christ for directing the attention of this church to the levels of gender-based violence in U.S. society and globally; and

To authorize staff of the theological discernment team, in accordance with “Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns” (2011), to initiate an ELCA social message development process on gender-based violence with council action to be taken at the November 2014 Church Council meeting.

In 2014, the Church Council reaffirmed its commitment “to the completion of a social message on gender-based violence that speaks carefully and comprehensively to the issues” and extended the time for development of the message. Theological discernment staff of the Office of the Presiding Bishop provided the council and the Conference of Bishops with regular progress reports.

At its October 2015 meeting, the Conference of Bishops reviewed the proposed social message on gender-based violence and its accompanying foundational documentation, and it voted [CB15.10.13]:

To affirm the proposed social message on gender-based violence and its foundational documentation; and

To commit to share and use these materials.

Church Council action:

To adopt the document titled “Gender-based Violence” as a social message of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; and

To adopt the accompanying foundational document for in-depth study and analysis of the social message on “Gender-based Violence.”

2. WORD AND SERVICE TASK FORCE REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Background:

In November 2012, the Church Council voted [CC12.11.38]:

To receive with gratitude and thanks the interim report of the Word and Service Task Force, convened in response to Church Council action [CC10.11.64] taken in November 2010;

To offer profound appreciation and thanks to persons who serve as associates in ministry, deaconesses, and diaconal ministers on the lay rosters of this church;

To affirm the preliminary conclusion of the Word and Service Task Force that this church should move toward creation of a single, unified lay roster of Word and Service ministry, subject to further review and recommendation by the Conference of Bishops and the Church Council and approval by the Churchwide Assembly;

To authorize the Word and Service Task Force to continue its work in order to facilitate the creation of such a unified roster, to develop a process outlining how the existing lay rosters would be closed, and to provide a process for transition of existing associates in ministry, diaconal ministers, and deaconesses into such a new roster, and, in collaboration with the Office of the Secretary, to consider and propose possible amendments to the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* to accomplish its recommendations ...

During deliberations of the Word and Service Task Force, the question of whether those on the unified roster should be ordained arose. The task force determined that the question was beyond the scope of its responsibilities and, at the request of the task force, the Church Council appointed a working group to deal specifically with the matter of ordination and its implications and to bring recommendations to the Churchwide Assembly.

The Church Council and Conference of Bishops received periodic reports from the task force and working group. In April 2015, the council voted [CC15.04.05]:

To receive with gratitude the recommendation from the Conference of Bishops regarding the Word and Service roster;

To recommend continuing the work of developing a proposal to unify the three existing lay rosters into one Word and Service roster and to bring this proposal to the November 2015 meeting of the Church Council;

To affirm the recommendation to delay a proposal on the appropriate entrance rite and related issues until the November 2018 meeting of the Church Council;

To ask the Entrance Rite Discernment Working Group to continue its work and to develop for use beginning at the 2016 Churchwide Assembly a process to engage conversation around the appropriate entrance rite for the unified Word and Service roster and to address the related issues;

To work together as a church to define issues of leadership and refine recommendations about rosters and entrance rites through a process of intentional, open conversation seeking God’s guidance for the sake of the world; and

To continue to seek ways to facilitate broad-based discussion and discernment around leadership within this church;

To work together as a church to define issues of leadership and refine recommendations about rosters and entrance rites through a process of intentional, open conversation seeking God's guidance for the sake of the world; and

To continue to seek ways to facilitate broad-based discussion and discernment around leadership within this church.

The Word and Service Task Force prepared its final report and recommendations and presented it to the Church Council for consideration. The Office of the Secretary prepared constitutional amendments that would be necessary to unify the three existing lay rosters into one Word and Service roster.

Church Council action:

To recommend the following action to the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America:

To thank the Word and Service Task Force members and all who contributed to its work to develop a proposal to establish a single, unified roster of Word and Service;

To unify the three existing Official Rosters of Laypersons (Associates in Ministry, Deaconesses of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and Diaconal Ministers) into a roster of Ministry of Word and Service;

To ensure that individuals on the three existing rosters of Associates in Ministry, Deaconesses of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and Diaconal Ministers be automatically transferred to the roster of Ministry of Word and Service, unless a person on an existing roster declines, and that the existing rosters be eliminated with the establishment of the new roster on January 1, 2017;

To endorse the other recommendations of the task force regarding this new roster; and

To give thanks to God for the ministry of all who have served and are serving on the present lay rosters and to express confidence that God is leading this church into God's future.

3. PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTIONS OF THE ELCA

Background:

Related to the report and recommendations of the Word and Service Task Force, the Office of the Secretary prepared constitutional amendments necessary to unify the three existing lay rosters into one Word and Service roster. Secretary Wm Chris Boerger also prepared a memorandum offering rationale for the amendments. It was indicated that, should the 2016 Churchwide Assembly decide not to endorse the report and recommendations of the task force, the following recommendation would be removed from the assembly's agenda.

The Office of the Secretary presented several constitutional amendments not related to the Word and Service Task Force report and recommendations. The Church Council took action to recommend that the 2016 Churchwide Assembly adopt those amendments in addition to the following action.

Church Council action:

To recommend the following for adoption by the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America:

To authorize the secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to strike the words "ordained minister/s" and replace with the words "minister/s of Word and Sacrament" in the *Constitutions, Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*;

To authorize the secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to strike the word "clergy" and replace with the words "minister/s of Word and Sacrament" in the *Constitutions, Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*;

To authorize the secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to strike the words "pastor/s" and replace with the words "minister/s of Word and Sacrament" where appropriate in the *Constitutions, Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, for the purpose of clarity and consistency;

To authorize the secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to strike the words “associate in ministry, diaconal minister and deaconess” and replace with the words “minister/s of Word and Service” in the *Constitutions, Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*;

To authorize the secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to make editorial corrections that identify the rosters of this church and implement the creation of the ministers of Word and Service roster in the *Constitutions, Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*; and

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

4. PRE-ASSEMBLY PROCESS IDENTIFYING POTENTIAL NOMINEES FOR ELECTION AS VICE PRESIDENT

Background:

ELCA constitutional provision **22.31**, states:

Continuing resolutions not in conflict with the constitution or bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America may be adopted or amended by a majority vote of the Churchwide Assembly or by a two-thirds vote of the Church Council. Such continuing resolutions become effective immediately upon adoption. Matters related to the administrative functions of the churchwide organization shall be set forth in the continuing resolutions.

In a Sept. 1, 2015, memorandum regarding proposed amendments to the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, Secretary Wm Chris Boerger provided the rationale for proposing that the Church Council adopt a new continuing resolution **19.31.B15**, at its November 2015 meeting.

This continuing resolution will allow for pre-identification of potential nominees for vice president. It comes as a result of discussions that began at the 2013 Churchwide Assembly and reflects surveys of the Church Council and the Conference of Bishops. Voting members of the 2016 Churchwide Assembly will be contacted by the Office of the Secretary in January to identify up to three people who might be considered for the office of vice president. Those identified will be contacted by the Office of the Secretary and asked to complete a biographical information form. Those forms received by May 1, 2016, will be distributed to the voting members at least 60 days before the assembly meets. Completing the form does not prohibit an individual from withdrawing after the first ballot. Other persons may be identified on the first ballot; these people will be asked to fill out the same biographical form prior to the third ballot.

Church Council action:

To adopt the following continuing resolution to the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*:

19.31.B15. In a year when the vice president shall be elected, the voting members of the Churchwide Assembly shall be invited to identify the names of up to three persons who might be considered for election as vice president. Names shall be submitted to the Office of the Secretary at least four months prior to the assembly. The Office of the Secretary shall contact those persons identified and request biographical information. At least 60 days prior to the Churchwide Assembly, the biographical information received from those persons open to consideration shall be distributed to the voting members.

5. FUTURE DIRECTIONS AND PRIORITIES OF THE ELCA PROCESS DESIGN

Background:

In response to the mission funding think tank's final report, the Church Council took a series of actions at its April 2015 meeting, including [CC15.04.10]:

To affirm the intention of Presiding Bishop [Elizabeth A.] Eaton to convene a team to generate recommendations to sharpen the priorities of this church and bring greater clarity about what this church will do and will not do in order to serve God's mission more faithfully and effectively in the years to come; ...

At the Executive Committee's meetings in August and September 2015, Presiding Bishop Eaton noted that she had enlisted the help of Ms. Lyla Rogan to fashion that priority-setting process. The presiding bishop gave a synopsis of what the process will deliver.

- A directional statement on the identity of this church and high level priorities that provide a sharpened and common focus for leadership of this church, including a focus on my four emphases: We are Lutheran; We are church; We are church together; and, We are church for the sake of the world
- Ownership of the directions and priorities by church leaders, especially the Conference of Bishops and Church Council
- Motivation and renewed energy across this church to serve God's mission faithfully and more effectively and to work together to build a thriving, connected and sustainable church
- A common strategic framework for other levels of planning, including operational planning by the churchwide organization and by synods

"Future Directions and Priorities of the ELCA" proposed a range of processes and mechanisms to achieve engagement and generate conversations, and a "Future Directions Table" was recommended to have a role in generating and drawing together thinking as the processes move forward. The processes would dovetail with the observance of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation and provide opportunity for all church leaders to communicate a shared vision for the future of this church.

Church Council action:

To affirm Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton's Future Directions and Priorities of the ELCA process design;

To authorize the Executive Committee to appoint members identified by the presiding bishop to serve on the Future Directions Table; and

To request that the Future Directions Table bring periodic progress reports to the Conference of Bishops and Church Council beginning in spring 2016.

6. DECLARATION ON THE WAY: CHURCH, MINISTRY AND EUCHARIST

Background:

At its April 2015 meeting, the Church Council affirmed [CC15.04.22] the work of an ecumenical team drafting a document titled "Declaration on the Way: Church, Ministry and Eucharist." The document compiles 32 Statements of Agreement drawn from the international and regional dialogues of the past 50 years. The dialogues also identified 15 topics of varying degrees of doctrinal difference still remaining to be resolved.

This fall, the Conference of Bishops voted to affirm "Declaration on the Way," as did the Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. The document is to be shared with The Lutheran World Federation and the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity for their consideration and possible next steps, especially in observance of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017.

Church Council actions:

To receive with gratitude the "Declaration on the Way" as another sign of the ELCA's commitment to making visible the unity that is God's gift in Christ ("Ecumenism: The Vision of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America," 1991); and

To accept the thirty-two Statements of Agreement.

To recommend the following for adoption by the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America:

To express profound gratitude for the “Declaration on the Way” as another sign of the ELCA’s commitment to making visible the unity that is God’s gift in Christ (“Ecumenism: The Vision of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,” 1991);

To receive the thirty-two Statements of Agreement, acknowledging that “receiving these agreements recognizes that there are no longer church dividing issues with respect to these Statements...” (“Declaration on the Way”); and

To commend to the ELCA the “Declaration on the Way”; “From Conflict to Communion”; and the “Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification” as resources for the common life of the church as we approach 2017 and beyond.

7. MINISTRY TO AND WITH SAME-GENDER COUPLES AND THEIR FAMILIES

Background:

In response to memorials from 13 synods, the 2013 Churchwide Assembly voted [CA13.03.12]:

To affirm the commitment made in the social statement “Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust” for “pastoral responsibility to all children of God,” recognizing “familial relationship as central to nurturing and sustaining trust and security in human relationships and to advocate for public policies that support and protect families” (pp. 19, 24);

To invite and encourage conversations and resource sharing among this church’s congregations, rostered and lay leaders and the Conference of Bishops on changing family configurations and their impact on society and the ministry of this church; and

To request the Church Council, in keeping with the recommendations of the Addressing Social Concerns Review Task Force, to authorize a group to explore this concern and to bring a report and possible recommendations to the fall 2014 meetings of the Conference of Bishops and Church Council regarding appropriate next steps in carrying out these commitments to pastoral care for same-gender couples and their families.

At its November 2013 meeting, the Church Council voted [CC13.11.64]:

To affirm the 2013 Churchwide Assembly action to invite and encourage conversations and resource sharing among this church’s congregations, rostered and lay leaders, and the Conference of Bishops on changing family configurations and their impact on society and the ministry of this church;

To authorize a working group to explore this social concern and to bring recommendations regarding appropriate next steps in carrying out these commitments to pastoral care for same-gender couples and their families;

To request a sub-group of the Program and Services Committee of the Church Council, in consultation with the Conference of Bishops and Office of the Presiding Bishop, to identify and recommend individuals to serve on a working group, with voices representing the breadth of viewpoints identified in the social statement, “Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust,” and including, specifically, representation by members of the LGBTQ community;

To authorize the Executive Committee to appoint a working group; and

To request that the working group bring progress reports to the Conference of Bishops and Church Council beginning in fall 2014 and that a final report and possible recommendations be brought to the November 2015 Church Council meeting.

The Executive Committee appointed a working group of ELCA members representative of the views identified in social statement. The working group provided regular reports to the Conference of Bishops and Church Council. It achieved consensus on a final report with nine recommendations.

Church Council action:

To receive the report with gratitude and refer the recommendations of the Ministry to and with Same-Gender Couples and Their Families Working Group to the appropriate churchwide

organization units for implementation and to report back to the Church Council by the November 2016 meeting.

8. COMMITMENT TO ETHNIC AND RACIAL DIVERSITY

Background:

The Church Council recommended that the 2016 Churchwide Assembly amend the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* by deleting the continuing resolution:

5.01.A87. *It shall be a goal of this church that within 10 years of its establishment its membership shall include at least 10 percent people of color and/or primary language other than English.*

and by replacing it with:

5.01.A16. *This church commits itself to ethnic and racial diversity. Each expression of this church shall annually assess its ethnic and racial diversity when compared to the demographic data of its community or territory. The churchwide organization will work with synods as they assist congregations to reach out to persons of color or whose primary language is other than English.*

In the conversation surrounding this recommendation, Church Council members discussed this church's failure to achieve the goal it had set (**5.01.A87.**) for its first 10 years of existence and its commitment to more closely reflect the ethnic and racial character of the general population. Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton described several manners, especially in the aftermath of the June 17, 2015, murders of nine people at a historic African American church in Charleston, S.C., in which she has called on the ELCA to confront the many ways racism manifests itself within both church and society.

Church Council action:

To recognize and affirm the extensive efforts of the presiding bishop to call the entire church to confront racism and add our voice to that call; and

To invite the presiding bishop to include the current efforts in a broader, comprehensive strategy toward becoming a racially and ethnically diverse church committed to dismantling racism.

9. THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COUNCIL (TEAC)

Background:

The Mission Funding Task Force noted, in its November 2012 report to the Church Council, that "the issue of renewed, sustainable financial support for theological education in the ELCA . . . deserved consideration beyond the scope of the current task force."

At its April 2013 meeting, the Church Council voted [CC13.04.11]:

To authorize the creation of an advisory council which shall be known as the Theological Education Advisory Council, the members of which shall be appointed by the Executive Committee of the Church Council;

To authorize the Theological Education Advisory Council to implement the tasks outlined in the "Proposal for Churchwide Response to Current Challenges and Opportunities in Theological Education;"

To authorize the Theological Education Advisory Council to consult as appropriate with other leaders both within and beyond the ELCA in order 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;

To authorize the Theological Education Advisory Council to convene presidents of ELCA universities with embedded seminaries, seminary presidents, board chairs, a bishop from each seminary's board and others to share counsel on priorities and strategic plans, current collaboration initiatives, new

collaborative possibilities, and degree program design innovations, and to examine implications for our leadership identification and preparation systems;

To request that the Theological Education Advisory Council submit periodic progress reports on its deliberations along with updates on new developments in the theological education network to the Conference of Bishops and the Church Council, with a final comprehensive report and possible recommendations submitted at the fall 2015 meeting of the Church Council for consideration at the 2016 Churchwide Assembly; and

To authorize the Executive Committee of the Church Council to act as necessary to facilitate the work of the Theological Education Advisory Council, including the authority to authorize additional expenditures.

The Theological Education Advisory Council circulated a draft of its report with a theological framework and three recommendations — each recommendation with four proposed actions of the Church Council. The report included an assessment from Baker Tilly, “a full-service accounting and advisory firm that offers industry specialized services in audit, tax and management consulting.” On Aug. 28, 2015, Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton met with the chair and another member of the board of each ELCA seminary to discuss the report and recommendations.

In October 2015, the Conference of Bishops received an account of the consultation, reviewed the draft report of the Theological Education Advisory Council and addressed a letter to the Church Council, emphasizing the urgent need for theological education in the ELCA to reject the *status quo*. “The Conference of Bishops strongly advocates the necessary reform that best serves the current and future mission of Christ’s church for the sake of the world,” it wrote. “We pledge ourselves to this work with our partners at our seminaries.”

The Church Council also began receiving responses from ELCA seminary boards in which they conveyed their readiness to work with each other and all expressions of this church in “enacting all necessary reforms to preserve and advance a strong ecology of theological education and confessional formation for the sake of the Church.”

Church Council action:

To receive the Theological Education Advisory Council (TEAC) report and express our appreciation for the work of the Theological Education Advisory Council;

To recognize and embrace this Spirit-led convergence of new possibilities for theological education for this church;

To affirm the innovation and collaboration already underway by the seminaries which recognizes the changing climate of theological education;

To make available the TEAC report to synods, congregations, agencies, institutions and ecumenical partners;

To create a comment period inviting all the expressions of this church to provide feedback and engage in ongoing conversation about the future of the theological education enterprise in the life of this church;

To appoint a working group of Church Council members, TEAC members and appropriate churchwide staff to receive feedback from around this church, to craft possible specific implementing strategies that operationalize the recommendations in the TEAC report, and to make a report to the Church Council prior to the April 2016 meeting; and

To direct the Church’s Council Budget and Finance Committee to give preliminary thought to funding implications of the recommendations contained in the TEAC report.

10. THE REVISED CANDIDACY MANUAL

Background:

At its March 2012 meeting, the Conference of Bishops asked the Rev. Gregory J. Villalón, director for leadership for mission/candidacy, to review the ELCA’s candidacy process outlined in the Candidacy Manual. More than two years of consultations with bishops, candidacy committees and many others produced a revised manual and candidacy process. The Conference of Bishops reviewed the proposed process at its October 2015 meeting and voted [CB15.10.25] “to endorse the revised Candidacy Process Manual.”

Church Council action:

**To adopt the revised Candidacy Manual; and
To authorize the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit, in consultation with the Office of the Secretary, to make any necessary corrections for clarity and accuracy.**

11. CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY SUCCESSION PLAN

Background:

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has a long history of working for justice through corporate social responsibility. ELCA bylaw **14.21.14**, states:

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

Ms. Patricia Zerega carries out the ELCA's corporate social responsibilities through a half-time contract arrangement with the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit.

The council asked for succession planning and consideration of the future of corporate social responsibility work beyond Ms. Zerega's tenure. The Congregational and Synodical Mission unit report on staffing recommendations moves the half-time contract position to a half-time churchwide staff position over the next several years.

Church Council action:

To affirm the succession plan proposed by the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit for the Corporate Social Responsibility position.

12. TABLE AND FONT CONVERSATION

Background:

The 2013 Northern Illinois Synod Assembly memorialized the 2013 Churchwide Assembly "to institute a process necessary to review and possibly revise the ELCA's guiding documents concerning admission to the Sacrament of Holy Communion."

The 2013 Churchwide Assembly voted [CA13.03.10]:

To receive with gratitude the memorial of the Northern Illinois Synod requesting a process to review the ELCA's guiding documents on communion practices;

To invite members, congregations, synods and the churchwide organization into conversation and study regarding "The Use of the Means of Grace";

To request the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit, in consultation with the Office of the Presiding Bishop and the Conference of Bishops, to establish a process to review current documents concerning administration of the Sacrament of Holy Communion; and

To request the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit to bring a report and possible recommendations to the April 2014 meeting of the ELCA Church Council.

In response to a report from the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit in April 2014, the Church Council voted [CC14.04.13i]:

To take seriously the invitation to engage one another in conversation and study of "The Use of the Means of Grace";

To request the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit to provide resources that will help facilitate that conversation;

To encourage others to develop and share resources more locally, while guiding people to "The Use of the Means of Grace" with the invitation to read and share it;

To let the conversation regarding "The Use of the Means of Grace" serve as the initial step in a process of review, but to delay any further development or implementation of a process until research is done to assess the nature and extent of changing practices, and until a director for worship formation and liturgical resources at the ELCA churchwide organization is in place and prepared to oversee the design of such a process, both in scope and hoped-for outcomes; and

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

Responsibility for this work was transferred to the Office of the Presiding Bishop. The Rev. Kevin L. Strickland, assistant to the presiding bishop for worship, provided periodic reports to the Conference of Bishops and the Church Council regarding the development of resources and the results of a survey on communion practices. At this meeting, the council received the final “Table and Font Communion Practices Report.”

Church Council action:

To receive the report [Appendix] from the Office of the Presiding Bishop in response to the 2013 Churchwide Assembly action related to the matter of reviewing the ELCA’s guiding documents on communion practices;

To thank the members, congregations, synods and churchwide organization for their conversation and study regarding “The Use of the Means of Grace”; and

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

13. 2016 INCOME ESTIMATES AND SPENDING AUTHORIZATIONS

Background:

The Office of the Treasurer brought a budget proposal to the Church Council and its Budget and Finance Committee for fiscal 2016 that included a 4 percent reduction in spending and a \$1 million increase in the ELCA World Hunger budget. Mission support for the year was projected to be \$45 million. An income goal of \$21 million was set for ELCA World Hunger as an emphasis of *Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA*. Most other current fund income categories were expected to be similar to those in the 2016 budget adopted by the 2013 Churchwide Assembly. The proposal included direct reductions in unit or office spending, accompanying a 2 percent increase in personnel salaries for the year.

Church Council action:

To approve a revised 2016 fiscal year current fund spending authorization of \$66,514,340; and

To approve a revised 2016 fiscal year World Hunger spending authorization of \$21,000,000.

14. RESOLUTIONS REGARDING AUTHORITY TO ACT IN FINANCIAL MATTERS

The Church Council adopted a series of resolutions to update and consolidate all earlier actions of the council authorizing officers and certain of their assistants to conduct business with financial institutions, engage in commercial transactions and act as trustees on behalf of the ELCA.

15. APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES OF THE 2016 CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY

Background:

The *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* states:

12.51. The Churchwide Assembly shall have a Reference and Counsel Committee, a Memorials Committee, and a Nominating Committee. The description of these committees shall be in the bylaws. The Churchwide Assembly may authorize such other committees as it deems necessary.

12.51.10. Reference and Counsel Committee

12.51.11. A Reference and Counsel Committee, appointed by the Church Council, shall review all proposed changes or additions to the constitution and bylaws and other items submitted that are not germane to items contained in the stated agenda of the assembly.

12.51.20. Memorials Committee

12.51.21. A Memorials Committee, appointed by the Church Council, shall review memorials from synodical assemblies and make appropriate recommendations for assembly action.

Church Council actions:

To appoint the members of the Reference and Counsel Committee for the 2016 Churchwide Assembly:

1. Mr. Paul G. Archer (6A) – *co-chair*
2. Pr. Vicki T. Garber (6C) – *co-chair*
3. Ms. Maren Hulden (3G)
4. Mr. John W. Lohrmann (1D)
5. Bp. Suzanne D. Dillahunt (6F)
6. Bp. Jon V. Anderson (3F)
7. Pr. Alexis J. D. LaChapelle (5A)
8. Pr. Tracey L. Breashears Schultz (4F)
9. Pr. Raymond D. Ranker (8G)
10. Mr. Imran Siddiqui (9D)
11. Mr. Randall S. Foster (2B)
12. Ms. Pamela Killinger (5B)
13. Ms. Patsy A. Glista (7D)
14. Ms. Ella Peterson (7A)
15. Ms. Blythe Scott (9A); and

To authorize the Executive Committee of the Church Council to appoint additional members to the Reference and Counsel Committee for the 2016 Churchwide Assembly as needed.

To appoint the members of the Memorials Committee for the 2016 Churchwide Assembly:

1. Pr. Stephen R. Herr (8D) – *co-chair*
2. Ms. Marjorie B. Ellis (6F) – *co-chair*
3. Mr. Hans E. Becklin (5K)
4. Mr. Allan J. Bieber (3I)
5. Bp. Tracie L. Bartholomew (7A)
6. Bp. Ray Tiemann (4E)
7. Pr. Miguel F. Gomez-Acosta (2D)
8. Pr. Amanda J. K. Simons (3H)
9. Pr. Meggan H. Manlove (1D)
10. Ms. Patricia Cash (2A)
11. Ms. Anita T. Nuetzman (5F)
12. Ms. Anna Czarnik-Neimeyer (5I)
13. Ms. Diana G. Haywood (9B)
14. Mr. Rod Schofield (1B)
15. Mr. Bill Mintz (4F); and

To authorize the Executive Committee of the Church Council to appoint additional members to the Memorials Committee for the 2016 Churchwide Assembly as needed.

16. ELECTIONS TO CERTAIN COMMITTEES AND BOARDS

Background:

The *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* states:

- 20.64. The Committee on Appeals shall be comprised of six ordained ministers and six laypersons, elected by the Churchwide Assembly for a term of six years, without consecutive re-election.**

To transition from a biennial to triennial election of members to the Committee on Appeals, the 2013 Churchwide Assembly adopted the following continuing resolution.

20.64.A13. *In the event that the term of any member of the Committee on Appeals expires before that member's successor is elected, the Church Council may elect an individual in the same category—ordained minister or layperson—to serve on the Committee until the next Churchwide Assembly. A member elected by the Church Council who serves less than one-half of a term shall be eligible for election to a full term by the Churchwide Assembly.*

The Church Council also has responsibilities of governance relating to ELCA seminaries and social ministry organizations.

Church Council actions:

To elect the following individuals to the Committee on Appeals to serve until the 2016 Churchwide Assembly: the Rev. Cheryl Meinschein Hausman, the Rev. E. Roy Riley, Ms. Louise A. Hemstead, and Mr. Kevin D. Anderson.

To elect to the advisory council of Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary to a term from June 1, 2016, to May 31, 2019: the Rev. Richard J. Goeres, Ms. Miriam L. David, Ms. Carolyn S. Donges, and the Rev. Kathryn A. Tiede;

To elect to the board of directors of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg to a four-year term expiring December 19, 2019: Ms. Nancy Dering Mock;

To elect to the board of trustees of Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia to a three-year term expiring October 31, 2018: the Rev. John C. Richter; and

To elect to the board of directors of Luther Seminary to a four-year term expiring June 30, 2020: Mr. John A. Blanchard and Ms. Beth Lewis.

To approve the designation of the following members of the board of directors of The Evangelical Lutheran Good Samaritan Society as representatives to the ELCA: Mr. David J. Horazdovsky [president], the Rev. John F. Holt [term ending in June 2016], Dr. Gwen Wagstrom Halaas [term ending in June 2016], and Mr. H. Theodore Grindal [term ending in June 2018].



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.



Table and font: Who is welcome?

An invitation to join the conversation about Baptism and Communion.

Report to the ELCA Church Council November 2015

The Reverend Kevin L. Strickland,
Assistant to the Presiding Bishop/Executive for Worship

This report is in response to the 2012 Memorial and subsequent CWA action in 2013 and Church Council action in 2014.

A survey was fielded to a random sample of 1,000 ELCA congregations asking about the communion practices and welcome statements used in their Sunday worship folder(s). Forty-eight percent of the congregations responded. There was a good distribution by region and by congregational size. (See Figures 3 and 4 at the end of this document).

Each of the statements was coded into one of several categories which ranged from explicitly stating that Holy Communion is the meal of the baptized and to receive it, one must accept the real presence of Christ, to Holy Communion is God’s meal and all are welcome regardless if you are baptized or what you believe. The responses show there is considerable diversity in communion practices and welcome statements. (See Figure 1.)

Figure 1: Percent of Congregations by Type of Communion Practice Statements

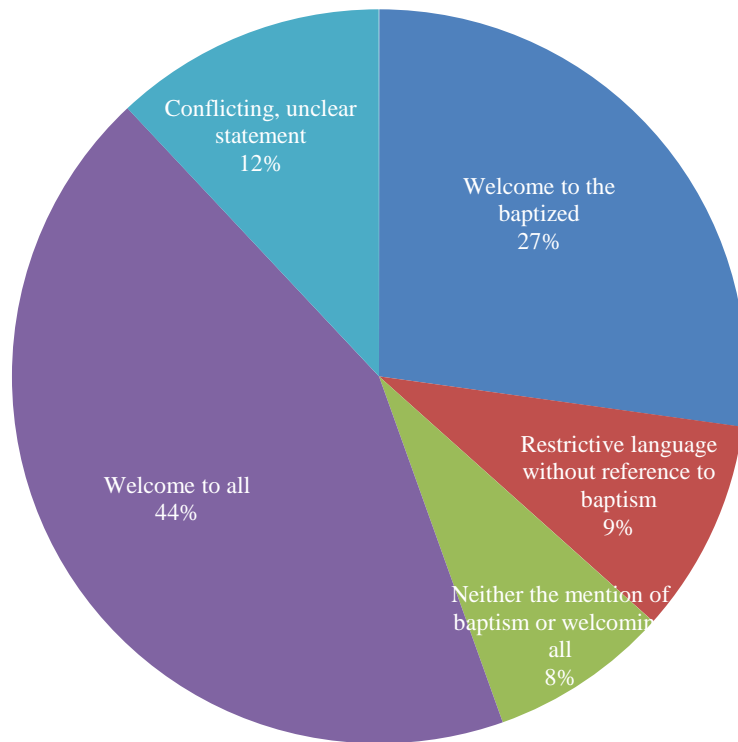
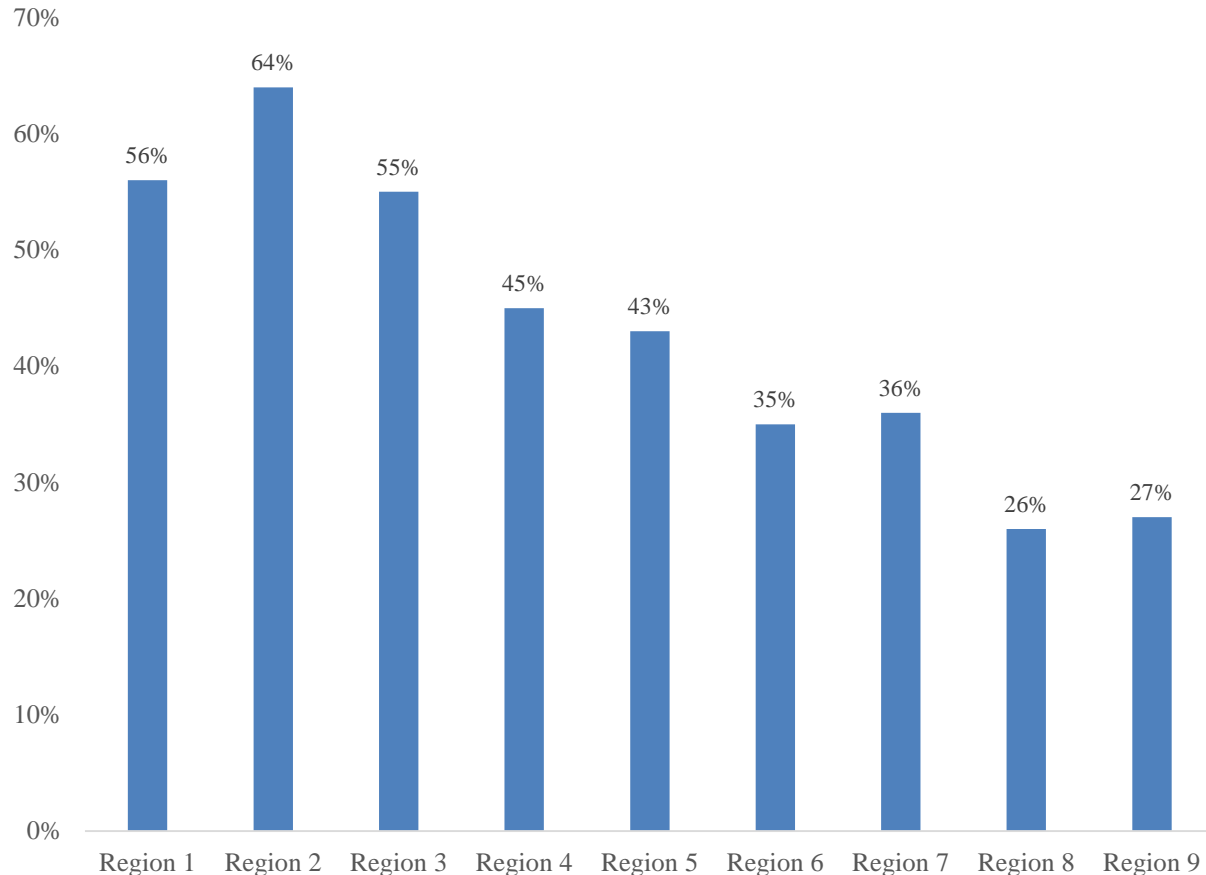


Figure 2 shows the differences by region. Congregations in the West (Regions 1 and 2) are most likely to welcome all. Regions in the East and South (Regions 8 and 9) are most likely to extend the welcome to baptized.

Figure 2: Percent of Congregations Using Welcome All in Their Communion Practice by Region



Following the survey, a study guide, “Table and Font: Who is welcome?” was created. Responses were received from 134 individuals and 138 congregations or groups (As of the deadline of June 30, 2015). We also received a letter from Lutheran Core and approximately 30 responses after the deadline. In addition to these formal responses, there have been multiple threads of conversation occurring on the ELCA Clergy Facebook page and other social media.

There is a diversity of practice from, “The consensus of our discussion was that our theology should shape our worship practices. Traditional Lutheran theology understands Holy Baptism as the entrance rite into the church. Holy Communion follows this entrance into the family of faith. Therefore, we feel that the current practice of the ELCA concerning Communion practices as outlined in The Use of the Means of Grace, should continue to be the practice of the ELCA going forward. The Use of the Means of Grace states that there occasionally may be times when a person who has not been baptized may receive communion, but this should be the exception and not the rule. Our hope is that the current practices of the ELCA Font and Table (in that order) will continue.”

To, “Thank you for involving local churches in this study. We see a more inclusive approach now than attitudes were in Martin Luther’s time, when many aspects of life and culture and worship practice were more legalistic. Today’s more global world view is more inclusive and accepting of everyone. Christ invites everyone to the banquet. The Use of the Means of Grace is almost twenty years old. It is encouraging that the ELCA continues to move forward as people of God, with dividing walls coming down and with more ecumenical flexibility and cross-pollination.”

To, *“We believe that it is our responsibility as faithful stewards of the Sacraments to emphasize to all communicants (baptized or un-baptized) the centrality to our shared Christian faith of both Sacraments, and to proactively engage any of God’s children who commune with us and are not already baptized (or who are unsure about their baptismal status) in a loving conversation about the importance of their sharing with us fully, through Baptism, in a life joined to Christ in mission. We also believe that Holy Communion should never be received flippantly, disrespectfully, or without some level of appreciation for the gift that God so graciously offers us in the marvelous body and blood of Christ, coupled with the living Holy Spirit.”*

In reflecting on all the responses, I made two observations: One, there seems to be a sense of anxiety that the discussion itself will cause divisions in the church and produce a divisive “vote” on the sacraments of the church.

Second, many (even those who faithfully did the study) have asked why are we having this conversation and what is the goal. On the other hand, about as many have said how thankful they were for the opportunity to have this conversation within their congregations and even synods.

The ELCA has been guided by “The Use of the Means of Grace,” since 1997. This document set out the sacramental practices of our church and addressed good stewardship for the care and fidelity of God’s gifts of grace. “The Use of the Means of Grace,” while describing preferred practices, noted this “statement grows out of the church’s concern for healthy pastoral action and strong congregational mission. It does not address our practice of Word and Sacrament out of antiquarian or legalistic interests but rather to ground the practice of our church in the Gospel and to encourage good order within our church.” (The Use of the Means of Grace, Background 4a)

We are a church that centers itself on the central things of our faith—Water, Word, and Meal; central things that point us to Christ who is our center. We remember that, “In every celebration of the means of grace, God acts to show forth both the need of the world and the truth of the Gospel. In every gathering of Christians around the proclaimed Word and the holy sacraments, God acts to empower the Church for mission. Jesus Christ, who is God’s living bread come from heaven, has given his flesh to be the life of the world. This very flesh, given for the life of all, is encountered in the Word and Sacraments.” (The Use of the Means of Grace, Principle 51)

The ELCA Worship staff sees no further need to research the practices of congregations with respect to “The Use of the Means of Grace” and sees this report as the conclusion of its work related to the 2012 Memorial and the subsequent actions by the 2013 CWA and the 2014 Church Council.

Figure 3: Percent of Responding Congregations by Region Compared to the ELCA as a Whole

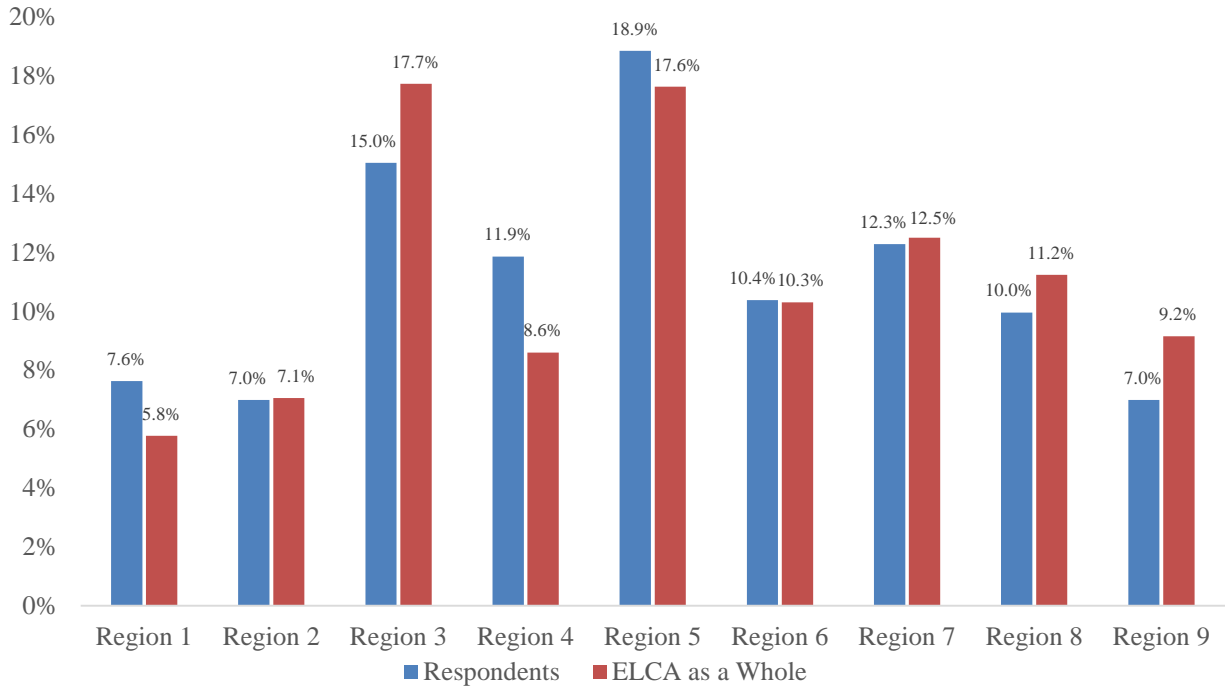


Figure 4: Percent of Responding Congregations by Worship Size Compared to the ELCA as a Whole

