



**Office of the Secretary**  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.

May 24, 2011

**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  
Regional Coordinators

**FROM:** Secretary David D. Swartling

**SUBJECT:** Report of Actions of the Church Council (May 23, 2011)

The Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) met via telephone conference call on May 23, 2011. A variety of matters received attention. Here is a summary of actions the council took concerning the report and recommendations of the task force on Living into the Future Together: Renewing the Ecology of the ELCA (LIFT).

**1. REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE LIFT TASK FORCE**

*Church Council Action:*

To approve the revisions to the recommendations in the report of the task force on Living into the Future Together: Renewing the Ecology of the ELCA (LIFT) for inclusion as information in the final report, which will be included in the 2011 Churchwide Assembly *Pre-Assembly Report*.

**2. LIFT IMPLEMENTING RESOLUTIONS**

*Church Council Action:*

To recommend the following action to the 2011 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America:

To commend with joy and gratitude the report of the task force on Living into the Future Together: Renewing the Ecology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (LIFT) for study and action;

To thank the task force and all who contributed to its work for a vision of where God is leading this church;

To endorse the recommendations of the task force, as amended by the Church Council;

To express confidence that God is leading this church into God's future; and

To invite members, congregations, synods, regions, the churchwide organization, colleges and universities, institutions and agencies, networks, and global, ecumenical, and other partners into deep conversation, prayer, and discernment, as, together, this church commits itself to the following actions to implement the report and recommendations:

1. To make support for the work of congregations one of the highest priorities of this church. To request congregations, in collaboration with synods, to begin, develop, review or redefine their unique mission plans by the end of 2012, so that each congregation strengthens its capabilities and resources for witness and mission;
2. To support and strengthen synods so that they become catalysts for mission planning;
3. To request the Conference of Bishops, in consultation with synod leaders and the churchwide organization, to prepare a report and recommendations for the November 2012 meeting of the Church Council for

consideration by the 2013 Churchwide Assembly that:

- describes patterns of synodical life in the ELCA that effectively support vital congregations, mission growth and outreach;
  - proposes a pattern or a set of patterns that will allow synods to receive and distribute financial resources to support the whole ministry of this church;
  - builds on the Blue Ribbon Committee report of 2007 and includes recommendations for renewed, sustainable financial support for the mission and ministries of this church, including funding for theological education;
  - includes strategies for increased mission vitality that may include consideration of redrawing synod boundaries; and
  - recommends revision of the constitutional responsibilities of bishops and synods to emphasize synods as catalysts for mission in the changing context and culture.
4. To urge regions to expand their roles as centers for exploring the possibilities of cooperative mission and ministry;
5. To affirm the role of the churchwide organization to:
- accompany congregations and synods;
  - build the capacity of this church for evangelical witness and service;
  - continue to build and strengthen mutual and interdependent relationships;
  - model and promote the vision of a multicultural, multi-ethnic church;
  - coordinate this church's global mission and its international development and relief work;
  - lead its theological reflection and deliberations on identity and mission;
  - lead, in collaboration with the Conference of Bishops, synod leaders, and the Church Council, in exploring opportunities to grow current support, including direct appeals, planned giving, and endowment management.

6. To encourage the development of leaders for this church through increased innovation and collaboration in leadership development, faith formation, and theological education;
7. To build and strengthen relationships with this church's global companions and ecumenical partners, focusing on accompaniment, mutual growth, capacity-building, and sustainability of relationships;
8. To support and utilize networking as an organizational principle and practice that embodies interdependence and enhances increased collaboration and connections across this church;
9. To nurture a culture of faithful discernment that contributes to mutual respect and healthy decision-making in all assemblies, councils, committees, small groups, and meetings in congregations, synods, the churchwide expression, institutions, and agencies;
10. To bring, with the exception of the social statement *Genetics, Faith and Responsibility*, no social statements to Churchwide Assemblies until a review of the process for addressing social concerns based on a spirit of communal discernment is completed;
11. To endorse the proposed amendments to the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions* concerning the Churchwide Assembly, Church Council, Conference of Bishops, program committees, and interrelationships and networks.

### **3. CONTINUATION OF THE WORK OF LIFT**

*Church Council Action:*

*To recommend the following for adoption by the 2011 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America:*

To provide a means to continue the work assigned to the task force on *Living into the Future Together: Renewing the Ecology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (LIFT)*, the 2011 Churchwide Assembly directs that the Office of the Presiding Bishop, in collaboration with the Church Council and the Conference of Bishops, do the following:

1. To facilitate review of the constitutional responsibilities of synods in order that synods continue and increase their roles as catalysts for missional planning;
2. To facilitate a broad-based process addressing legislative decision-making in this church;
3. To initiate a process to expand the consultative role of the Conference of Bishops that allows the Church Council to refer issues to it and the Conference of Bishops to make recommendations to the Church Council;
4. To explore the use of social media and technology in order to allow greater participation of ELCA members in meetings of the Church Council and the Churchwide Assembly;
5. To initiate collaborative work by congregations, synods, the churchwide organization, and others to create and support diverse non-legislative forums and events that bring together leaders of this church to address missional issues, participate in theological study and reflection, foster leadership development, and enhance the interdependence of this church;
6. To request units of the churchwide organization to propose to the Church Council ways of receiving grassroots input on and disseminating information about their work through the use of emerging forms of communication, taking care to include those engaged in multicultural, ethnic-specific, justice for women ministries, youth and young adult networks, and various ministry partners; and
7. To request that annual reports related to this work be presented to the Church Council through 2013.