

DRAFT - Proposed Action by the Church Council in April 2007

Submitted to the Conference of Bishops for comment and counsel, March 2007

CC ACTION

Recommended: To recommend adoption by the 2007 Churchwide Assembly of the following resolution:

- (1) To rejoice with the whole Church of Jesus Christ in the revelation of God's Word conveyed to the people of every generation, declaring God's gifts of mercy and grace, forgiveness and hope, and reconciliation and peace;
- (2) To give thanks for the Bible through which the Word of God has spoken to God's people throughout the ages;
- (3) To remember with enduring esteem the multitudes throughout the ages who embraced the tradition received by the community of the faithful and passed to succeeding generations the glad news of God's steadfast love;
- (4) To recall with gratitude the work of Martin Luther and that of the other Reformers of the sixteenth century in the Word-inspired reform that grew from their study of Scripture;
- (5) To acknowledge with joy the power of the Word of God in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, evident in many ways, including:
 - a) The affirmations of the constitutional Confession of Faith that
 - + "Jesus Christ is the Word of God,"
 - + "The proclamation of God's message to us as both Law and Gospel is the Word of God..."
 - + "The canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the written Word of God" (provision 2.02.a, b, and c), and
 - + "This church accepts the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired Word of God and the authoritative source and norm of its proclamation, faith and life" (provision 2.03.).
 - b) The empowered proclamation, study, teaching, worship, reflection, song, community, and service through which the people of this church daily hear, share, and live the witness of Scripture.
 - c) The members, congregations, synods, churchwide ministries, agencies, institutions, and networks of this church, and their planning and programs, including the ELCA Plan for Mission adopted in 2005, which are undergirded by the Bible and seek faithfully to express God's Word;
- (6) To recognize that one of the six constitutionally stated purposes for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America through its congregations, synods, churchwide ministries, and related institutions and agencies is to nurture members "in the Word of

God so as to grow in faith and hope and love, to see daily life as the primary setting for the exercise of their Christian calling, and to use the gifts of the Spirit for their life together and for their calling in the world” (provision 4.02.e.).

(7) To embrace the passion and commitment that is richly shared among people of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for the witness of Scripture in forming and guiding the members of this church in daily life;

(8) To confess that we often have failed to hear and heed the Word of God;

(9) To express the hope and desire that—in the time leading up to the ELCA's 25th anniversary in 2012 and to the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation in 2017—this church will be sustained and renewed by the Word of God, thereby fostering deeper and broader use and understanding of Scripture for the life of disciples;

(10) To recognize and give thanks that the Word of God speaks and is valued throughout Christ's Church and that, globally and ecumenically, there are other movements and occasions for renewed attention to the authority of the Bible that will inform and enhance our own understanding, including the recent proposal among the U.S. Reformed churches for a Lutheran-Reformed consultation on the authority and role of the Word of God in the life of the churches and the Roman Catholic Church's intention to celebrate in 2015 the 50th anniversary of the Vatican II statement *Dei Verbum*; and

(11) To acknowledge with gratitude the action of the 2005 North Carolina Synod Assembly in memorializing this church to undertake a renewed study of the authority of Scripture in the life of the Church.

CC ACTION

Recommended: To recommend adoption by the 2007 Churchwide Assembly of the following resolution:

(1) To call members, congregations, synods, churchwide ministries, and institutions and agencies of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to engage in a five-year collaborative initiative—identified as *Book of Faith: Lutherans Read the Bible*—with the goal of raising to a new level this church's individual and collective engagement with the Bible and its teaching, yielding greater biblical fluency and a more profound appreciation of Lutheran principles and approaches for the use of Scripture;

(2) To commit the churchwide organization to substantial engagement in this initiative in extensive collaboration with synods and congregations;

(3) To urge that this initiative be designed and carried out in ways that affirm the Bible's power through the work of the Holy Spirit to speak in all settings and to all ages,

with attention to individual and corporate use of the Bible by members and leaders in worship, devotion, study, proclamation, teaching, and evangelizing;

(4) To request that the presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America—who “as its pastor, shall be a teacher of the faith of this church and shall provide leadership for the life and witness of this church” (provision 13.21.)—lead this initiative personally and through collaborative programmatic work with the Vocation and Education unit in partnership with Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, as the publishing ministry of this church, and many others;

(5) To anticipate the wide availability and use of a rich array of existing and new resources as well as the creative use of new means of communication, mindful of the global and ecumenical context in exploration of the nature and authority of Scripture in the life of individuals and the whole Church;

(6) To affirm funding of the churchwide organization’s share of this *Book of Faith* partnership effort primarily through the regular operating budget in recognition not only that this initiative is of foundational and ongoing importance, but also in confidence that mission-support will grow from congregations through synods for churchwide ministries; and

(7) To invite and encourage all members, expressions, institutions, and partners of this church to commit themselves regularly and increasingly to hearing, reading, studying, sharing, and being engaged by God's Word.