



Apr. 19, 2021

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 leaders
FROM: Deacon Sue E. Rothmeyer, secretary
SUBJECT: Report Church Council Responses to Synod Council Resolutions, Synod Constitution Amendments, and Churchwide Assembly Actions (Apr. 15–17, 2021)

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I. RESPONSES TO SYNOD COUNCILS

A. ELCA DISABILITY OFFSET FOR DEPENDENTS

East Central Synod of Wisconsin (5I) [2020]

Response from Portico Benefit Services on ELCA Disability Offset Policy for Dependents

At the fall 2020 Church Council meeting, the Church Council received the response from Portico Benefit Services [Portico] on the ELCA Disability Offset Policy for Dependents and acted to refer the resolution back to Portico. [CC20.11.30]

To thank the East-Central Synod of Wisconsin for its resolution regarding “ELCA Disability Offset for Dependents;”

To receive the report and recommendation from Portico Benefit Services on this resolution;

To refer the resolution to Portico Benefit Services for a recommendation, pursuant to 17.20.02.c. of the Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA, on a proposed change to the “ELCA Disability Offset Policy for Dependents” which excludes Social Security Disability Insurance paid to dependent children of disabled members from the offsets to the disability benefits paid to the disabled member; and

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

At its March 16 meeting, the Executive Committee discussed the response and recommendation from Portico.

Church Council action:

To receive the report and recommendation from Portico Benefit Services regarding a proposed change to the “ELCA Disability Offset for Dependents” to exclude Social Security Disability Insurance paid to dependent children of disabled members from the offsets to the disability benefits paid to the disabled member;

To affirm Portico’s recommendation not to change the ELCA Disability Offset for Dependents;

To encourage Portico to fund health coverage, retirement contributions, and survivor benefits, consistent with the ELCA Philosophy of Benefits and this church’s social teachings; and

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

B. ELCA ADVOCACY SUPPORT FOR THE ENERGY INNOVATION AND CARBON DIVIDEND ACT

Northeastern Iowa Synod (5F) [2021]

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

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has adopted social policy statements, *Caring for Creation* (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* social statement, 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, carbon pricing is one policy tool to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuel combustion, which complements other tools like regulations on polluting industries and tax incentives encouraging investment in energy efficiency and renewable forms of energy production; and

WHEREAS, in January 2019, over 3,500 of our nation’s leading economists across the political spectrum, including 28 Nobel Laureates and four former chairs of the Federal Reserve, issued a joint “Economists’ Statement on Carbon Dividends” that argued “A carbon tax offers the most cost-effective lever to reduce carbon emissions at the scale and speed that is necessary” but also recommended “the revenue should be returned directly to U.S. citizens through equal lump-sum rebates,” and concluded “The majority of American families, including the most vulnerable, will benefit financially by receiving more in ‘carbon dividends’ than they pay in increased energy prices;” and

WHEREAS, in 2019 the Churchwide Assembly received with gratitude a memorial from the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin regarding a Carbon Fee and Dividend, and the Church Council directed the Domestic Mission unit to develop “a plan that promotes educational resources on Carbon Fee and Dividend to assist in forming the basis for any potential advocacy strategy;” and

WHEREAS, in October 2019 ELCA Advocacy published a primer on “Carbon Pricing Basics” that provides an overview to the topic and identifies several principles rooted in ELCA social statements that should be used to assess carbon pricing proposals; and

WHEREAS, the “Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act of 2019” has received bipartisan support in the last two sessions in Congress and is consistent with the principles outlined in ELCA Advocacy’s “Carbon Pricing Basics;” and

WHEREAS, ELCA Advocacy does advocate for particular pieces of legislation after careful review and moral grounding in the ELCA’s social statements; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Upper Iowa River Conference of the Northeast Iowa Synod urges ELCA Advocacy to advocate for the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act, or similar legislation during the 117th United States Congress and, if necessary, future Congresses; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Upper Iowa River Conference directs the Synod Council to consider this resolution at their next meeting and to forward it to the ELCA Church Council or its Executive Committee for further consideration and action by directing ELCA Advocacy to advocate for the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act or similar legislation.

Church Council action:

To refer the “ELCA Advocacy Support for the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act” resolution from the Northeastern Iowa Synod Council to the Service and Justice unit for a report or for a timeline on when this will receive further attention; and

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

C. GUIDANCE ON RETIRED OR RETIRING MINISTERS FROM THE ROSTER OF THE ELCA

Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod (8B) [2021]

Bishop Kurt Kusserow submitted a letter to the Church Council on behalf of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod Council seeking guidance with retired or retiring ministers from the roster of the Church whose status is in question or uncertain. Specifically, the synod council is asking about the required triennial review of the ministers on this church’s retired roster and to propose that the guidance be added to the *Manual of Policies and Procedures for the Management of the Rosters of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* for the benefit of the whole church.

Church Council action:

To receive the request from the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod Council requesting guidance regarding the review of retired ministers on the roster of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America;

To refer the matter to the Office of the Secretary for further research and to request that a response be provided at the Fall 2021 Church Council meeting; and

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

II. RATIFICATIONS OF SYNOD CONSTITUTIONS

A. SOUTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD

Church Council action:

To ratify the following amendments to the constitution of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod:

†S8.51.c. The treasurer of this synod shall be ~~elected~~ appointed to a four-year term and may be re-elected or reappointed. The treasurer shall serve until his or her successor takes office.

S8.55. Should the vice president or secretary ~~or treasurer~~ die, resign, or be unable to serve, the bishop, with the approval of the Executive Committee of the Synod Council, shall arrange for the appropriate care of the responsibilities of the officer until an election of a new officer can be held, or, in the case of temporary disability, until the officer is able to serve again. The term of the successor officer, elected by the Synod Assembly, shall be four years.

~~S9.07. The Synod Council shall nominate at least two persons for treasurer; additional nominations may be made from the floor.~~

B. SOUTHWESTERN TEXAS SYNOD

Church Council action:

To ratify the amendments to the constitution of the Southwestern Texas Synod as outlined in the “4E SWTX CBCR Ratification” document.

~~S9.03. There shall be a Nominating Committee composed of nine persons appointed by the Synod Council. One of the appointees shall be a youth or young adult who shall be appointed for a two-year term. Other members shall be appointed for six-year terms. The appointees shall reflect the male/female and lay/clergy representation guidelines for the Synod. Additional nominations may be made from the floor for all elections for which nominations are made by the Nominating Committee.~~

S9.03 Nominating Committee: There shall be a Nominating committee consisting of 5 members who shall be appointed by the Synod Council to serve for each regular meeting of the Synod Assembly. Additional nominations may be made from the floor for all elections for which nominations are made by the Nominating Committee.

†S10.01. The Synod Council, consisting of the four officers of the synod, 10 to 24 other members, and at least one youth and at least one young adult shall be elected by the Synod Assembly.

a. Each person elected to the Synod Council shall be a voting member of a congregation of this synod, with the exception of ministers on a roster of this synod who reside outside the territory of this synod. The process for election and the term of office when not otherwise provided shall be specified in the bylaws. A member of the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, unless otherwise elected as a voting member of the Synod Council, may serve as an advisory member of the Synod Council with voice but not vote.

b. The term of office of members of the Synod Council, with the exception of the officers and the youth member, shall be ~~four~~ three years.

S10.08. Robert’s Rules of Order, latest edition, shall govern parliamentary procedure of all meetings of the Synod Council.

III. RESPONSES TO CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY ACTIONS

A. SOCIAL PURPOSE FUNDS (PORTICO)

Churchwide Assembly action [CA19.02.06s]

To receive with gratitude the memorial from the Greater Milwaukee Synod concerning Portico Benefit Services Social Purpose Funds; and

To urge Portico Benefit Services to conduct an educational campaign for plan members designed to increase awareness of the Social Purpose Investment Funds and provide an update to the November 2020 Church Council meeting.

Response from Portico Benefit Services (April 2021; originally received in November 2020)

Portico welcomed this request to conduct an educational campaign to increase awareness of social purpose funds, and the memorial influenced much of its work in 2020.

- In January 2020, Portico surveyed a randomly selected group of members to gauge social purpose (SP) fund awareness.
- February through April, staff conducted a multi-touch campaign designed to educate all 27,000 sponsored, retired, and non-sponsored members about its SP funds, and stepped-up SP fund information in quarterly financial communication and on social media.
- In the spring, survey results helped to inform the new investment lineup for Fall 2020—we chose to create both SP and unscreened target date funds and to default new members into a SP target date fund.
- In July, a second multi-touch campaign was launched, educating members about the new investment fund lineup, target date funds, and the continuing importance of SP funds.

Portico sent an online survey to 6,000 randomly selected sponsored, retired, and non-sponsored members, and received a very good 15.8% response rate. Findings demonstrated that a significant majority are aware of the SP fund options and support their place in the ELCA Retirement Plan's fund lineup.

- 92% correctly stated that not all of Portico's funds are SP funds.
- 82% were aware, prior to taking this survey, that they have the choice to invest in SP funds.
- 79% felt it very or somewhat important for Portico to offer SP funds.
- 76% strongly agreed or agreed that they would be comfortable investing in SP funds with different risk and return projections than unscreened funds.
- 74% were confident or somewhat confident that they know what steps to take to change their fund selection.
- 68% were aware that Portico's default fund was not a SP fund.

The late February campaign targeted 27,000 sponsored, retired, and non-sponsored members via mail, email, and web with a simple two-step call to action—"Read about SP funds, then look at your Retirement Account Summary on myPortico and ask: 'Am I in the fund(s) I want to be in?' If not or you're not sure, call a Portico Financial Planner for help." Staff measured strong engagement on several fronts.

- Staff tracked a net total increase in investments into the SP funds of \$2.2 million during the first week of March 2020, a significant step up from the pre-campaign \$130,000 increase tracked a month earlier during the first week of February 2020.
- Pageviews of the personalized Retirement Account Summary on myPortico nearly doubled: 2,643 during the first week of March 2020, compared to 1,442 during the same week in 2019.
- Calls to Portico Financial Planners regarding asset allocation and risk assessment spiked significantly: 242 in March 2020, compared to 31 in March 2019.

The July campaign built on the earlier campaign, targeted the same 27,000 members via mail, email, and web to inform them of the upcoming fall change to the ELCA Retirement Plan's investment fund lineup and the addition of target date funds—both SP and unscreened. Already oriented to their investment choices and SP funds, members were more prepared in July to understand and appreciate their new investment fund choices.

Church Council action:

To receive the update from Portico Benefit Services on an educational campaign for plan members designed to increase awareness of the Social Purpose Investment Funds; and

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

B. UNALTERED AUGSBURG CONFESSION

Churchwide Assembly action [CA19.02.09q]

To receive with gratitude the memorials from Allegheny and Southeastern synods concerning renewed awareness and use of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession; and

To refer the proposed actions to the Office of the Presiding Bishop, in consultation with 1517 Media, Mission Advancement unit and other units, for additional analysis and planning in the churchwide organization for a report and possible recommendations to the Church Council.

Executive Committee action [EC19.09.28.a11]

To request that the Office of the Presiding Bishop, in consultation with 1517 Media and other appropriate churchwide organization units, provide a report or a timeline on when the Unaltered Augsburg Confession will receive further attention; and

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

Church Council action [CC19.11.47u]

*To receive the response on “Unaltered Augsburg Confession” from the Office of the Presiding Bishop;
To request that a report with possible recommendations be provided to the Church Council’s Spring 2021 meeting; and
To request that the secretary of this church inform the synods of this action.*

Response from the Office of the Presiding Bishop (April 2021)

Over the past 18 months, the focus of the work of the Office of the Presiding Bishop related to the 500th anniversary of the Reformation has been the 2020 initiatives on Luther’s “The Freedom of a Christian.” 1517 Media generously made a PDF of the treatise freely available to accompany a study guide and compendium of case studies developed and published at elca500.org. A number of public events drew upon these resources and themes.

Consideration is currently being given to marking the 500th anniversary of the Diet of Worms this year.

Given these projects, an extension is requested for the work detailed in the November 2019 report. As this church journeys toward the anniversary of the Augsburg Confession in 2030, the Rev. Marcus Kunz (executive, discernment of contextual and theological issues) will serve as the facilitator for processes and consultations that will:

- clarify or define the purpose of any organized action by the churchwide organization in the years leading to the 500th anniversary of the Augsburg Confession;
- assess what resources already are or will be available and what activities will likely be planned and undertaken by other organizations (for example, resources already available or planned by the ELCA publishing house; activities that may be undertaken by theological faculties and/or ecumenical groups, the work of the Lutheran World Federation and the 13th assembly in 2023);
- consider which, if any, of the actions requested in the memorials are appropriate for the churchwide organization to undertake itself or to coordinate with or among others, and considering what other actions related to the Augsburg Confession may be beneficial;
- give full attention to the letter and spirit of the ELCA’s representational principles in any and all related processes and consultations; and
- make a progress report with possible recommendations for next steps to the Fall 2022 Church Council meeting.

Church Council action:

**To receive the response on “Unaltered Augsburg Confession” from the Office of the Presiding Bishop;
To request that a progress report with possible recommendations be provided to the Fall 2022 Church Council meeting; and
To request that the secretary of this church inform the synods of this action.**

C. 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ORDINATION OF WOMEN

Churchwide Assembly action [CA19.05.30]

...To direct the Office of the Presiding Bishop, in consultation with other churchwide units, to conduct a gap analysis of rostered women, with a particular focus on the challenges faced by rostered women of color;...

Church Council action [CC19.11.47p]

*To receive the response on “50th Anniversary of Women Ordination” from the Office of the Presiding Bishop;
To request that a report on the gap analysis results with possible recommendations be provided to the Church Council’s Spring 2021 meeting; and
To request that the secretary of this church inform the synods of this action.*

Response from the Office of the Presiding Bishop (April 2021)

The 2019 Churchwide Assembly and Church Council requested a “gap analysis results with possible recommendations.”

This request flowed from the memorials from many synods in 2019, calling upon this church to address the systemic causes of gender-based problems, including disparities among ELCA rostered ministers. The 2019 Churchwide Assembly called upon this church through Implementing Resolution #7 of *Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Call to Action*, “To urge congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization to address inequities (in pay, senior leadership, availability of second and third calls, etc.), as well as the systemic causes of such inequities, for rostered and lay women of various backgrounds, identities, and personal experiences, and to advocate for adequate and equitable leave for all parents and families” (*Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Call to Action*, pp. 81–82).

Based on a comparative analysis of compensation data collected from Portico Benefit Services [Portico] in 2015 and a survey of a representative sample of rostered ministers in late 2019 and early 2020, the requested data show many clear differences by race, ethnicity, and gender. However, it should be noted that the self-reported data shown for 2020 will be less accurate than what was provided by Portico for 2015, and that could affect the comparison being made.

Based on that data, there were significant differences by gender for compensation in 2019/2020.¹ (See Table 1.) The churchwide staff working on the analysis selected only respondents with full-time congregational calls for these analyses due to the large variation among part-time and non-congregational calls. Men had higher levels of compensation compared to women, with a difference of about \$6,600.

Table 1: Compensation Differences by Gender

	Full-Time Women (N=249)	Full-Time Men (N=206)	Differences
Mean	\$68,245	\$74,880	\$6,635
Median	\$65,365	\$72,000	\$6,635

The differences by race were also significant, with white rostered ministers reporting higher compensation levels, with a difference of about \$8,000. (See Table 2.)

Table 2: Compensation Differences by Race and Ethnicity

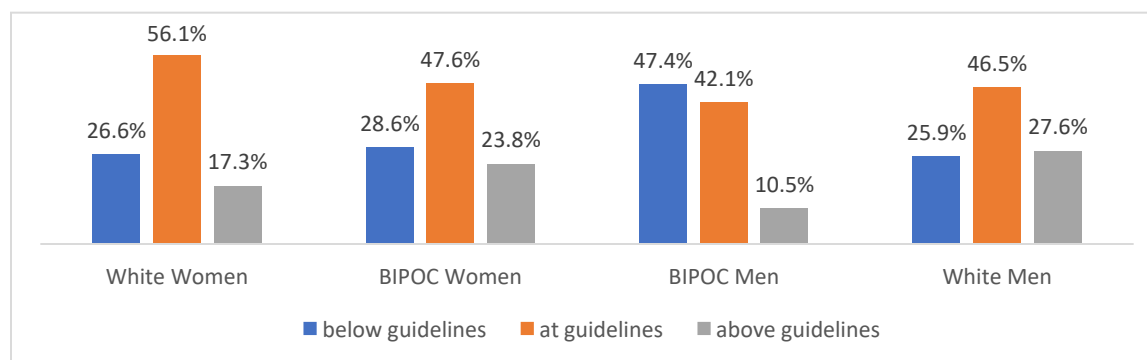
	Full-Time BIPOC (N=27)	Full-Time White (N=428)	Difference
Mean	\$64,320	\$71,686	\$7,366
Median	\$60,000	\$68,579	\$8,579

Based on the respondents' reports in 2019/2020, there were also significant differences by race/ethnicity for synod guidelines. (See Figure 1.) Note that small sample sizes for BIPOC (Black, Indigenous or People of Color) ministers can also affect accuracy of data. Despite staff efforts to survey 100% of BIPOC rostered ministers, response rates were low.

Based on that data, more white men (28%) reported being above the synod guidelines than any other group. More white women (56%) reported being at the synod guidelines while more BIPOC men (47%) reported being below the guidelines.

These results are very similar to the 2015 study with one exception. In 2015, BIPOC women were more likely to be below synod guidelines, while in 2019/2020 BIPOC men were most likely to be below the guidelines. In 2019/2020, the BIPOC women's results followed the pattern of results for white men, rather than the results for BIPOC men.

Figure 1: Differences among Word and Sacrament Ministers with Respect to Synod Compensation Guidelines



Although a full report of efforts to serve all the implementing resolutions related to the social statement from the 2019 Churchwide Assembly will be shared with the Church Council at the Fall 2021 meeting, here are some of the ways people through this church are working to address compensation disparities specifically.

1. The Quality of Call initiative team provides reports and other tools to cultivate reflection and action in collaboration with synod bishops, synod staff members, and pastors. For example, in March 2021 the bishops received a report on family leave policies for families adding a child. (See *Parental Leave Policies Across the ELCA* report).

¹ All reported differences are significant at the .05 level.

2. The Quality of Call initiative team is working collaboratively with synod bishops, synod staff members, and pastors to support conversations, practices, and protocols to foster equitable compensation for rostered ministers.
3. The bishops and synod offices of Region 9 work within an eight-point relational agreement, which includes using a regional worksheet to guide conversations with congregations on compensation.
4. The Justice for Women director is collaborating with others to have an online study guide for *Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Call to Action* for congregational and other use available Fall 2021. Root causes of inequities is a central feature of the learning focus. Learning activities focus on applying ELCA social teaching and policy on patriarchy and sexism from an intersectional perspective to personal, congregational, ecclesial, and social life, which encompasses compensation.

Church Council action:

To receive the gap analysis of rostered women, with a particular focus on challenges faced by rostered women of color, from the Office of the Presiding Bishop;

To commend the ongoing efforts of congregations, synods, and churchwide organization to address compensation disparities; and

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

D. SEMINARY TUITION

Churchwide Assembly action [CA19.02.06t]

...To direct the Domestic Mission unit, in consultation with other churchwide units, to conduct a comprehensive analysis of current and potential seminary tuition funding sources, with a report and recommendations regarding funding for seminary tuition to be provided to the Church Council by its spring 2021 meeting.

Response from the Christian Community and Leadership unit (April 2021)

On Feb. 1, the seminary portfolio in the Domestic Mission unit moved to Christian Community and Leadership.

The Montana Synod presented a full tuition memorial to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly. The assembly directed the Domestic Mission unit (now the Christian Community and Leadership unit), in consultation with other units, to conduct an analysis and provide this report and recommendations to the Church Council by its 2021 Spring meeting.

Since this memorial was adopted, all ELCA seminaries moved to offer free or greatly reduced tuition (90% discount) to full time Master of Divinity ELCA student candidates for Word and Service or Word and Sacrament ministry. In addition, the ELCA Fund for Leaders program is now providing full tuition equivalent scholarships for almost 300 current seminarians.

However, tuition alone only accounts for half the actual cost of attendance to seminary which averages \$45,000 (tuition averages \$19,000). To address these concerns (perhaps outside the scope but not the intent of the memorial), a more comprehensive approach is needed. See recommendations at the end of this report.

Seminarian's Debt

In the 1990s, average tuition for students in Master of Divinity programs (not specific to the ELCA) increased 74%. Inflation was only 30% for the same decade. Over that period, student aid levels remained relatively constant, meaning that most students at most schools paid considerably more than students ten years before, even after controlling for inflation. In addition to tuition increases, living expenses also increased. At the same time, support from churches (both denominationally and congregationally) was declining. These factors, in large part, accounted for a significant increase in educational debt (200%) during this period.

Educational debt, which includes previous college debt and seminary debt (private, government, and seminary loans applied for books, housing, living expenses, etc.), continued to rise throughout the 2000's. These increases produced a host of concerns for theological schools and denominations, including the difficulty of repayment that graduates might face, the potential stress that carrying a large amount of educational debt may produce, and the possibility that a high level of debt might directly impact a graduate's persistence or longevity in ministry. The Auburn Center posited that a higher number of theological school graduates were reporting their level of debt was affecting their career choices, holding them back from purchasing homes, preventing them from saving for their children's education, limiting their retirement savings, causing them to delay health care needs, and creating stress in their personal and professional lives.

In the same way that the COVID-19 pandemic affected the finances of society at large, the finances of the ELCA churchwide organization, seminaries, synods, congregations, seminarians, and their families were likely impacted. All churchwide expressions, along with seminaries, adjusted rapidly to this new panorama. The ability of seminaries to provide their academic programs online not only helped seminarians and seminaries to address this

emergency, but also created a much-needed infrastructure and academic alternative that can help address debt in the future. Online programs can contribute to a reduction in living expenses for seminarians and their families.

ELCA Initiatives to Address Educational Debt

Response to educational debt, which addresses the tuition concern, includes: 1) the Stewards of Abundance Program (2009–2013); 2) the Resourceful Servants Program; 3) the Fund for Leaders scholarships provided to seminarians; and 4) by the seminaries movement toward offering full tuition.

Stewards of Abundance

The emphasis of the Stewards of Abundance project was on the extent, the causes, and the consequences of educational debt among seminarians in the ELCA. Research conducted as part of Stewards of Abundance indicated that more than 75% of graduates from ELCA Master of Divinity programs between the years of 2006 and 2013 borrowed educational loans to finance their seminary education. Over that time, the average theological education debt at graduation of those who borrowed increased from approximately \$34,000 to \$41,500. Over the same time period, the proportion of graduates who carried undergraduate debt increased from 34% to 47%, and among these borrowers, average undergraduate indebtedness rose from \$14,000 to \$18,000. In 2013, overall, 84% of graduates carried educational debt (either undergraduate, theological, or both) at graduation. The average amount among borrowers was just over \$49,000. Data from 2015 onward has been difficult to gather and research.

Resourceful Servants

Several years after the completion of Stewards of Abundance, and as a follow up grant from the Lilly Endowment, the Resourceful Servants project was developed. The project is part of the Lilly Endowment national initiative called Economic Challenges Facing Pastoral Leaders (ECFPL). The research conducted with ELCA rostered ministers identified three main financial pressure points: 1) educational debt; 2) a lack of emergency savings; and 3) a lack of retirement savings.

Both the Stewards of Abundance and the Resourceful Servants have taken a more comprehensive approach to identify and research seminarians' financial situations, provided valuable information about financial wellness among current and future ELCA rostered ministers and fostered meaningful networks with leadership in synods and seminaries.

ELCA Fund for Leaders

The ELCA Fund for Leaders scholarship program supports students attending ELCA seminaries. These scholarships make seminary more affordable, and the fund enables more future ministers to go to seminary and helps them graduate with less debt. In 2019–2020, the fund supported 283 students and awarded \$3,008,142. In 2020–2021, Fund for Leaders will grant 45 new scholarships, support 297 students, and distribute almost \$3,000,000 in scholarships.

Seminary tuition initiatives

Seminaries have transitioned from being mainly funded by the denomination to being funded mainly by donors, third party institutional grants, and development strategies.

In the last three to five years, seminaries have been able to move toward offering full tuition. Three seminaries provide full tuition. The other four seminaries provide generous and renewable financial aid for most students that generally account for at least 90% of full tuition. Overall, the total FTE (full time equivalent) in the system is 1056. Of these, 63% receive full tuition. The remaining 37% receive 90% or more of full tuition. When paired with Fund for Leaders scholarships, students receive stipends for living expenses, helping them manage their finances and lessen their debt. We also have 102 Theological Education for Emerging Ministries (TEEM) students systemwide. Generally, TEEM students do not participate in the full tuition programs available.

The movement toward covering tuition fully is encouraging and exciting; however, there are additional costs to attending seminary. On average, the annual cost of tuition at an ELCA seminary is \$19,000. The average cost of attendance for a full-time residential learner at an ELCA seminary is about \$45,000. Therefore, a more comprehensive way to analyze and address the cost of seminary attendance would consider these additional expenses. This wider approach would serve to address issues of justice and the situations of ethnic-specific seminarians, seminarians living in rural areas, single mothers, and other marginalized communities.

The combination of Fund for Leaders scholarships and the seminaries' movement to offer full tuition have addressed, although timidly and not strategically, seminary tuition costs in this church's theological education system. While seminary tuition costs are a part of seminarians' debt, other substantial issues are previous

educational debt, living expenses, and family matters (including emergencies). Additionally, on the other side of seminary, rostered ministers' vocational opportunities may not provide sufficient financial resources to easily manage accrued educational debt.

Recommendations

- To continue supporting the Resourceful Servants program and its recommendations;
- To continue supporting Fund for Leaders as an intentional strategy to provide for seminarians and address educational debt in this church's theological education system;
- To broaden the call for comprehensive reporting on full tuition to request reports on seminarian's educational debt and cost of attendance;
- To explore alternatives to address educational debt and cost of attendance of seminarians;
- To call seminaries and churchwide to include TEEM students in full tuition programs, scholarships and this church's educational debt and cost of attendance efforts; and
- To explore financial alternatives in our three expressions of the Church addressing educational debt of first call pastors.

Church Council action:

To receive the response and recommendations for "Seminary Tuition" from the Christian Community and Leadership unit;

To continue supporting the Resourceful Servants program;

To continue supporting ELCA Fund for Leaders as an intentional strategy to provide for seminarians and address educational debt in this church's theological education system;

To request the churchwide organization to broaden the call for comprehensive reporting on full tuition and request reports from ELCA seminaries on seminarian's educational debt and cost of attendance;

To direct the churchwide organization to explore alternatives to address educational debt and cost of attendance of seminarians;

To ask the seminaries of this church and the churchwide organization to include Theological Education for Emerging Ministries (TEEM) students in full tuition programs, scholarships, and this church's educational debt and cost of attendance efforts; and

To encourage this church's congregations, synods, and churchwide organization to explore financial alternatives to address educational debt of first call pastors.

E. SANCTUARY CHURCH BODY DEFINITION AND GUIDELINES

Churchwide Assembly action [CA19.03.07]

...To request that appropriate staff on the AMMPARO team, LIRS, and the Domestic Mission, Global Mission, and Mission Advancement units review the existing strategies and practices by the five current sanctuary synods and develop a plan for additional tools that provide for education and discernment around sanctuary;

...To request the ELCA Church Council, in consultation with the appropriate churchwide units and offices, provide guidance for the three expressions of this church about what it means to be a sanctuary church body and provide a report to the 2022 Churchwide Assembly.

Church Council action:

To recognize that the ELCA's ministry as a sanctuary church body is a public witness that calls ELCA members to value the dignity of each human being made in God's image;

To thank the churchwide staff for the development of additional resources that provided education and discernment around sanctuary;

To encourage an understanding of the word 'sanctuary' that is rooted in the principles of walking alongside, or accompanying, immigrants and refugees while acknowledging that the word 'sanctuary' has no legal or universally accepted definition; and

To affirm the guidance provided in the "ELCA Sanctuary Church Guidelines" for ways congregations, synods and churchwide organization can accompany and support the ministry of sanctuary.