Church Council

MINUTES

Sept. 27, 2021

Prepared by the
Office of the Secretary
The 108th meeting of the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) was convened electronically as a special meeting at 7:00 p.m. Central Daylight Time (CDT).

**Organization of the Meeting**

The following people were present for all or part of the meeting:

**Voting Members**

- Officers:
  - The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton, presiding bishop
  - Mr. Carlos E. Peña, interim vice president
  - Deacon Sue E. Rothmeyer, secretary
  - Ms. Lori S. Fedyk, treasurer

- Chair of the Conference of Bishops:
  - The Rev. Tracie L. Bartholomew, bishop of the New Jersey Synod *(excused)*

- Church Council:
  - Mr. Kevin Anderson
  - Ms. Tracey A. Beasley *(excused)*
  - The Rev. Marcus A. Bigott
  - The Rev. Nicholas M. Billardello III *(excused)*
  - Ms. Susan Boxberger
  - Ms. Lisa Burk
  - The Rev. William H. Callister
  - The Rev. Karn S. Carroll *(excused)*
  - Ms. Cheryl T. Chatman
  - Ms. Alyssa J. Cobb
  - Mr. Ismael E. Danforth *(excused)*
  - Ms. Divine
  - The Rev. Joanne E. Engquist
  - Ms. Kerry A. Fehrman
  - The Rev. Dena M. Gable
  - The Rev. Daniel W. Gerriettts
  - The Rev. Emily C. Hartner *(excused)*

- Representatives of the Conference of Bishops:
  - Bp. Sue J. Briner, Region 4
  - Bp. H. Jeffrey A. Clements, Region 5
  - Bp. Barbara J. Collins, Region 8 *(excused)*
  - Bp. Donald M. Kreiss, Region 6 *(excused)*
  - Bp. Patricia J. Lull, Region 3
  - Bp. Pedro M. Suárez, Region 9 *(excused)*
  - Bp. Andrew A. Taylor, Region 2
  - Bp. Shelley R. Wickstrom, Region 1

**Churchwide Staff Resource People:**

- Mr. Thomas A. Cunniff, general counsel
- Ms. Aja M. Favors, associate counsel
- The Rev. N. Keith Fry, executive for Office of the Secretary administration
- The Rev. Philip C. Hirsch, executive director for Christian Community and Leadership
- The Rev. Louise N. Johnson, executive for administration
- Ms. Marit E. Johnson, official documentation manager
- The Rev. Rafael Malpica-Padilla, executive director for Service and Justice
- Ms. Mikka McCracken, executive director for Innovation
- Ms. Jodi L. Slattery, executive for governance
- Mr. Joseph W. Schmidt, administrative services coordinator
Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery Task Force:
Mr. Vance Blackfox, co-chair of the task force and desk director for American Indian and Alaska Native Tribal Nations
The Rev. Jessica R. Crist, co-chair of the ELCA Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery Table
Ms. Jennifer G. DeLeon, director for racial justice
Ms. Kathryn M. Lohre, executive for ecumenical and inter-religious engagement and theological discernment
The Rev. Richard A. Magnus, co-chair of the task force
Ms. Christine K. Mangale, program director for the Lutheran Office for World Community (excused)
The Rev. Carmelo Santos, director for theological diversity and ecumenical and inter-religious engagement

Separately Incorporated Ministries:
The Rev. Jeffrey D. Thiemann, president, Portico Benefit Services

Ethnic Specific Ministry Association:
The Rev. Khader El-Yateem, representative, Association of Lutherans of Arab and Middle Eastern Heritage
Ms. Sherie Seifert, president, European Descent Lutheran Association for Racial Justice
CALL TO ORDER AND ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA
(Agenda I.A.)
Agenda items were distributed electronically in advance of the meeting.
Mr. Carlos E. Peña, interim vice president of the ELCA and chair of the Church Council, called the special meeting of the Church Council to order at 7:00 p.m. (CDT) and asked the Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton, presiding bishop of the ELCA, to open the meeting with prayer.
A motion was made to adopt the agenda.
There being no discussion, the chair called for the vote.

VOTED:
CC21.09.13 To adopt the agenda and to permit the chair to call for consideration of agenda items in the order the chair deems most appropriate.

ELECTION: CHURCH COUNCIL NOMINEE
(Agenda I.B.1.)
Ms. Patricia Kluetz, East-Central Synod of Wisconsin [5I], resigned from the Church Council Sept. 7, 2021. Secretary Rothmeyer declared a vacancy and invited the East-Central Synod of Wisconsin Synod Council to nominate a lay woman. The synod council nominated Ms. Kerry A. Fehrman. If elected, she would fulfill the remainder of Ms. Kluetz’s term ending in 2025.
There being no discussion, the chair called for the vote.

CC21.09.14 To elect Ms. Kerry A. Fehrman, Wausau, Wisconsin [5I], to the Church Council for a term ending 2025.

“A DECLARATION OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA TO AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE PEOPLE”
(Agenda I.B.1.)
Background:
The 2016 Churchwide Assembly repudiated the Doctrine of Discovery “to offer a statement of repentance and reconciliation to native nations in this country for damage done in the name of Christianity.” [CA16.02.04]

Church Council action:
Vice President Peña invited the Rev. Richard A. Magnus and Mr. Vance Blackfox, co-chairs of the Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery Task Force, to present the proposed document, “A Declaration of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to American Indian and Alaska Native People.”
Pastor Magnus expressed gratitude to churchwide staff and task force members for their collaboration on the document. He reviewed the development process and read relevant sections.
The Rev. Jessica R. Crist, co-chair of the ELCA Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery Table and task force member, noted that the declaration document was a next step in a larger process. Other projects are in development to continue the repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery.
Mr. Blackfox highlighted the importance of this document which will aid work taking place in American Indian and Alaska Native communities.
Following discussion, the chair called for the vote.

CC21.09.15 To adopt “A Declaration of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to American Indian and Alaska Native People” as a statement of repentance and reconciliation to native nations in this country for this church’s damage done in the name of Christianity;
To thank the Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery Task Force for their diligence in preparing the statement; and
To encourage congregations, synods and the churchwide organization to find ways to share this statement broadly.
Vice President Peña declared “A Declaration of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to American Indian and Alaska Native People” adopted.

Presiding Bishop Eaton reviewed resources and initiatives related to the declaration that are in development, including worship resources, American Indian and Alaska Native Reflections on Luther’s Small Catechism, and a worship service with tribal leaders. The ELCA joins The Episcopal Church, The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, and the Anglican Church of Canada in a group called Churches Beyond Borders to work ecumenically on the repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery.

Mr. Blackfox thanked Church Council members for passing the declaration and shared reflections of how this commitment will give hope and encouragement to American Indian and Alaska Native communities.

Vice President Peña announced that the declaration will be shared widely on Indigenous People’s Day, October 11, 2021.

ADJOURNMENT

The special meeting of the Church Council adjourned at 7:30 p.m. on Monday, Sept. 27, 2021.