



# Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

April 21, 2023

**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 of Actions of the Church Council (April 20, 2023)

The Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) met electronically on April 20, 2023. The following is a summary of Church Council actions along with background information.

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## 1. PROPOSAL FOR EXCHANGEABILITY OF THE DIACONATE: THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH AND THE ELCA

At its March 2023 meeting, the ELCA Conference of Bishops voted to commend to the ELCA Church Council a “Proposal for Exchangeability of the Diaconate” between the ELCA and The Episcopal Church (TEC) as an interpretation of the full communion agreement, “Called to Common Mission.”

Long-awaited, the exchangeability of deacons between the two churches became possible following the action of the 2019 ELCA Churchwide Assembly confirming ordination as the entrance rite for rostered ministers of Word and Service. The proposal mutually recognizes each church’s order of deacons as authentic and provides for the possibility of interchangeability for occasional ministry or extended service. The proposal affirms the possibility for exchange. Exchangeability itself is subject to the approval of the respective bishops and guided by the “Orderly Exchange.”

As an ecumenical text, this proposal can only be acted upon, and not altered. TEC is undertaking a similar process to implement this proposal as the ELCA.

The proposal was developed over 18 months by an implementation team of the Lutheran-Episcopal Coordinating Committee (LECC), which is the body entrusted to oversee both churches’ “reception” (living out) of the full communion agreement, “Called to Common Mission.” LECC endorsed the proposal on January 11, 2023.

In February, a consultation was convened by the ecumenical staff and implementation team chair with the ELCA Deaconess Community and ELCA churchwide candidacy staff. The importance of the proposal was affirmed. A parallel consultation is underway in the TEC.

In March 2023, the ELCA Conference of Bishops voted to commend the proposal to the ELCA Church Council for reception. Again, TEC will undertake a similar process.

In the meantime, work on the “Orderly Exchange” document, which provides guidelines for the exchangeability of ministers of Word and Sacrament, will be expanded to include guidelines for the exchangeability of deacons. Specific realities, such as the asymmetry in the compensation of ELCA and TEC deacons, will be carefully and clearly addressed. This work on the “Orderly Exchange” will also provide opportunities for mutual growth and accompaniment, including best practices in formation, compensation, and the role and responsibilities of deacons.

The Rev. Donald M. Kreiss, bishop of the Southeast Michigan Synod, chair of the Conference of Bishops Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations Committee, and co-chair of the LECC, and Ms. Kathryn M. Lohre, executive for ecumenical and inter-religious relations and theological discernment, presented the proposal.

The proposal was shared electronically with Church Council members prior to the meeting.

**Church Council action:**

To receive a proposal for exchangeability of the diaconate between The Episcopal Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

## 2. REVISIONS TO THE 2023 FISCAL YEAR SPENDING AUTHORIZATIONS

**Church Council action:**

To increase the FY23 spending authorization in ELCA World Hunger by \$1,520,000, from \$25,250,000 to \$26,770,000.

## 3. SUPPORT FOR THE COMMISSION FOR A RENEWED LUTHERAN CHURCH

**Church Council action:**

To approve the establishment of a Church Council designated fund, entitled Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church, in the amount of \$300,000, to be used to cover the costs of meetings and other resources.

## 4. BUDGETED OPERATIONS SUPPORT DESIGNATED FUNDS ADJUSTMENT

**Church Council action:**

To add \$1.7 million to the Budgeted Operations Support designated fund to provide support for future budgetary needs.

## 5. REDESIGNATION OF ENDOWMENT FUNDS

From time to time, the intended purpose of the distributions of an endowed gift are no longer possible as the ministry is no longer operational, the ELCA may no longer be in partnership with the intended organization, etc. If a change is necessary and the ELCA Church Council is not listed as the decision maker on originating documentation, staff's priority is to reach out to the donor and next of kin to see if they would agree to a proposed recommended successor beneficiary. Should staff not be able to connect with the donor or next of kin, the endowment agreement names either the ELCA Foundation Board of Trustees or the ELCA Church Council as the governing body with authority to make changes where the law allows. ELCA churchwide staff will provide a recommendation that best aligns with the original donor intent and secondarily, churchwide organizational priorities.

**Church Council action:**

To approve the naming of successor beneficiaries of the distributions from the following endowment funds to the new areas as described below:

***E270660 - Instituto Superior Evangélico de Estudios Teológicos Chicago, Ill.***

**Recommendation:** To name Iglesia Evangélica Luterana Unida en Argentina y Uruguay (IELU) as the successor beneficiary of the Instituto Superior Evangélico de Estudios Teológicos Endowment Fund.

**Rationale:** This fund was established to support theological education at the Instituto Superior de Educación Teológica (ISEDET) in Argentina. After the closing of ISEDET, the Iglesia Evangélica Luterana Unida en Argentina y Uruguay (IELU) developed a training program under the leadership of Dr. Mercedes García Bachmann (OT Professor at ISEDET). These funds will continue to assist IELU in the formation of its leaders in collaboration with the Universidad Pedagógica, the recipient of ISEDET Theological Library, which IELU continues to access for the formation of its leaders. Leadership of the Service and Justice home area of the churchwide organization recommend that this endowment begin distributing to IELU given the fact that ISEDET is no longer in existence.

***E270634 – The Vincent L. and Annette L. Myers Memorial Endowment Fund***

**Recommendation:** The endowment names Stand With Africa as a beneficiary. The Stand With Africa initiative concluded in 2009. Staff kept the account open to receive additional gifts for a number of years (which is consistent with the churchwide organization existing practices because this church is still doing the work of seeking to eradicate hunger, address HIV/AIDS, and seek conflict resolution in Africa via ELCA World Hunger programming). It is time to close this initiative completely. At its March 17, 2023, meeting the ELCA Foundation Board of Trustees approved the recommended action to name ELCA World Hunger as the successor beneficiary of this endowment to support the ELCA's work in Africa. Staff propose the ELCA Church Council concur with this decision.

## **6. AUTHORIZATION TO AMEND REPURPOSE OF ENDOWMENT FUNDS**

The churchwide organization is currently performing a review of all endowments benefiting the churchwide organization to ensure donor intent is still being met along with alignment to churchwide organizational priorities. To ensure alignment with donor intent and organizational spending, staff believe that the Budget and Finance Committee, which also includes resource staff from development, is best suited to review these requests for changes in named beneficiaries on an ongoing basis.

### ***Church Council action:***

**To authorize the Budget and Finance Committee on behalf of the Church Council to approve recommendations from churchwide staff of successor beneficiaries for various endowments benefitting the churchwide organization, based on recommendations from the Resource Development Committee.**

## **7. CHURCHWIDE ORGANIZATION PERSONNEL POLICIES**

Additional paid holidays were added to Section 6.5. of the ELCA *Churchwide Organization Personnel Policies* handbook. The proposed revisions were distributed to Church Council members electronically prior to the meeting.

### ***Church Council action:***

**To approve the amended Churchwide Organization Personnel Policies; and  
To authorize the Office of the Secretary to make any necessary editorial corrections for accuracy.**

## **8. MISSION INVESTMENT FUND SUPPLEMENTAL RETIREMENT PLAN**

The Mission Investment Fund of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (MIF), a separately incorporated ministry of the ELCA, presented the MIF Supplemental Executive Retirement Plan (MIF SERP) for adoption by the ELCA Church Council at its November 2020 meeting. The MIF SERP provides tailored retirement distributions to key executives in addition to those provided by the standard retirement savings plan. Revisions are now needed to the plan. These revisions were prepared by outside counsel and reviewed by both the MIF corporate and compliance counsel and ELCA general counsel.

The proposed revisions to the MIF SERP were distributed to Church Council members electronically prior to the meeting.

### ***Church Council action:***

**To approve the revised Mission Investment Fund Supplemental Executive Retirement Plan.**

## **9. APPROVAL OF CHURCH COUNCIL MINUTES AND RATIFICATION OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ACTIONS**

The minutes of the Church Council meeting on Nov. 10–13, 2022, were provided to council members electronically prior to the meeting.

The minutes of the council's Executive Committee meetings on Nov. 10–13, 2022, Dec. 13, 2022, Jan. 17, 2023, Feb. 14, 2023, and March 23, 2023, were provided to council members electronically prior to the meeting. Minutes for the Feb. 21, 2023, and March 14, 2023, meetings held in executive session were added to the protocol file in the Office of the Secretary.

### ***Church Council action:***

**To approve the minutes of the Nov. 10–13, 2022, meeting of the Church Council; and  
To ratify actions of the council's Executive Committee as indicated in the minutes of the Nov. 10-13, 2022, Dec. 13, 2022, Jan. 17, 2023, Feb. 14, 2023, Feb. 21, 2023, March 14, 2023, and March 23, 2023, meetings.**

## **10. CHURCH COUNCIL NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS**

The Church Council has the responsibility for electing people to fill terms on boards of Separately Incorporated Ministries (SIM), social ministry organizations, and seminaries. Bylaws 8.21.03. and 8.21.04. outline basic parameters for the election of members to the boards of ELCA seminaries. Pursuant to 14.22. of the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, the Church Council also elects nominees to vacancies on boards or committees of the churchwide organization.

Biographical information on nominees was provided electronically to council members prior to the meeting.

### ***Church Council action:***

**To elect to the advisory board of directors of Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary at Lenoir-Rhyne University to a term beginning June 1, 2023, and expiring May 31, 2027: The Rev. Philip A. Bouknight, Ms. Sandra R. Cline, the Rev. Rachel L. Connelly, Deacon Adrainne J. Gray, Mr. LaMont J. Johnson, and the Rev. Franklin Eric Wester.**

### ***Church Council action:***

**To elect to the board of directors of Luther Seminary to a term beginning July 1, 2023, and expiring June 30, 2027: Ms. Charlotte Haberaecker and Mr. Paul Siegele.**

***Church Council action:***

To elect to the board of directors of Wartburg Theological Seminary to a term beginning April 20, 2023, and expiring Dec. 31, 2029: The Rev. Emily Harkins Norris.

***Church Council action:***

To elect to the advisory board of Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary at California Lutheran University to a term beginning June 1, 2023, and expiring June 1, 2026: The Rev. Erik Utto-Galarneau.