



# Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

Nov. 15, 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 and advisory members of the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
 Administrative Team and advisors 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 (Nov. 9–12, 2023)

The Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) met at the Lutheran Center in Chicago, Ill., Nov. 9–12, 2023. The following is a summary of Church Council actions along with background information.

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**1. RE-ELECTION OF MS. LORI S. FEDYK AS TREASURER OF THE ELCA**

*Background*

Section 13.50 of the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA* describes the position, responsibilities, and process for election of the Treasurer of the ELCA. According to provision 13.52., “The treasurer shall be elected by the Church Council to a six-year term and serve until a successor takes office.” Churchwide bylaw 19.01.01., specifies “The treasurer shall be elected by a two-thirds vote of the Church Council.” The term of the treasurer elected at the November 2023 meeting of the Church Council will begin on Feb. 1, 2024.

In accordance with provision 13.51., “The treasurer shall serve under the presiding bishop of this church.” Presiding Bishop Eaton recommended re-election of Ms. Lori S. Fedyk to the Executive Committee, who forwarded this recommendation to the Church Council for consideration.

**Church Council action:**

**To re-elect Ms. Lori S. Fedyk to a six-year term as treasurer of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, beginning February 1, 2024.**

**2. APPOINTMENT OF THE REV. MICHAEL BURK AS PRESIDING BISHOP *PRO TEMPORE***

*Background*

The Executive Committee granted the request of Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton to take a four- to six-month leave of absence beginning November 17, 2023, and recommended that the Rev. Michael Burk be appointed to serve as presiding bishop *pro tempore*.

**Church Council action:**

**To appoint the Rev. Michael Burk to serve as presiding bishop *pro tempore* beginning Nov. 17, 2023, and expiring when the presiding bishop returns from her leave of absence.**

**3. ELECTION OF THE REV. BENJAMIN B. BERGREN TO THE CHURCH COUNCIL**

*Background*

The Executive Committee nominated the Rev. Benjamin B. Bergren, Henderson, Nev., to fill the vacancy left by the Rev. Karn Carroll, Grand Canyon Synod [2D], who resigned from the Church Council in June 2023. Pastor Bergren will fulfill the remainder of the term ending in 2025. The biographical information for Pastor Bergren was provided to Church Council members electronically prior to the meeting.

**Church Council action:**

**To elect the Rev. Benjamin B. Bergren, Henderson, Nev. [2D], to the Church Council for a term ending in August 2025.**

**4. 2024 FISCAL YEAR CURRENT FUND SPENDING AUTHORIZATION**

Background information on Budget and Finance Committee recommendations was distributed to Church Council members electronically prior to the meeting.

**Church Council action:**

**To approve a 2024 fiscal year current fund spending authorization of \$68,083,962.**

**5. 2024 ELCA WORLD HUNGER SPENDING AUTHORIZATION**

Background information on Budget and Finance Committee recommendations was distributed to Church Council members electronically prior to the meeting.

**Church Council action:**

To approve the 2024 ELCA World Hunger spending authorization of \$26,000,000, provided the January 31, 2024, fund balance is in excess of \$10.0 million.

**6. APPROVAL OF ALIGNMENT AND FOCUS OF FUNDRAISING PRIORITIES**

Background information on Budget and Finance Committee recommendations was distributed to Church Council members electronically prior to the meeting.

**Church Council action:**

To approve the alignment and focus of the fundraising priorities to these areas: **Where Needed Most, ELCA World Hunger, Lutheran Disaster Response, and Future Church: God's Love Made Real, and to empower the Development team to align their resources around these priorities accordingly.**

**7. CREATION OF A BUDGET AND PRIORITIES TASK FORCE**

As part of a Church Council discussion of churchwide organization priorities, the council decided to create a task force to consider churchwide organization budgets and priorities.

**Church Council action:**

To create a task force to address the need for the Council and Administrative Team (with advisors) to explore needed changes to budget work and priorities. This task force shall be composed of members of the Executive Committee (or designees of the committee chairs), the Administrative Team and its advisors, two members from the Church Council advisory members, and one liaison bishop. The task force shall report to the Church Council at its Spring 2024 meeting.

**8. AMENDMENT OF A CONTINUING RESOLUTION IN THE CONSTITUTIONS, BYLAWS, AND CONTINUING RESOLUTIONS OF THE ELCA**

The Legal and Constitutional Review Committee recommended an amendment to the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA* to provide a pre-assembly identification process for the election of the presiding bishop.

**Church Council action:**

To adopt the following amendment to the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*:

**19.01.A243.** *In a year when the **presiding bishop**, vice president, or secretary shall be elected, those who will serve as voting members of the upcoming Churchwide Assembly shall be invited to identify the names of up to three persons who might be considered for election as **presiding bishop**, vice president, or secretary. Names shall be submitted to the Office of the Secretary at least four months prior to the assembly. The Office of the Secretary shall contact those persons identified and request biographical information. At least 60 days prior to the Churchwide Assembly, the biographical information received from those persons open to consideration shall be distributed to the voting members.*

[This action was taken in response to 2022 Churchwide Assembly action CA22.01.051. See the Responses Memo, I.G. (p. 8).]

**9. CHURCH COUNCIL RACIAL JUSTICE EDUCATION**

**Church Council action:**

That the ELCA Church Council will intentionally participate in racial justice education when it gathers.

**10. INDEPENDENT LUTHERAN ORGANIZATION: ORDER OF LUTHERAN FRANCISCANS**

*Background:*

In accordance with Bylaw 14.21.15., acknowledgment of an independent Lutheran organization in relation to a unit of the churchwide organization of the ELCA requires conscientious deliberation and thorough evaluation before implementation.

Any acknowledgment of a relationship with independent, cooperative, and related Lutheran organizations that seek to relate with this church while maintaining their independence and autonomy shall follow the policy on relationships of churchwide units with independent Lutheran organizations.

The Order of Lutheran Franciscan seeks to deepen and expand its relationship with the ELCA as an independent Lutheran organization. The application material was provided to Church Council members electronically prior to the meeting.

***Church Council action:***

**To acknowledge the Order of Lutheran Franciscans as an Independent Lutheran Organization relating to the Christian Community and Leadership home area.**

## **11. AUDIT COMMITTEE REPORT APPROVAL**

***Church Council action:***

**To approve the report of the ELCA Audit Committee describing its review of the audited financial statements for the churchwide organization's fiscal year ended January 31, 2023.**

## **12. ENGAGEMENT OF CROWE LLP**

***Church Council action:***

**To assign responsibility for the engagement of Crowe LLP to perform the audit service plan for the churchwide organization's year ending January 31, 2024, to the Executive Committee.**

## **13. AUDIT COMMITTEE REAPPOINTMENTS**

***Church Council action:***

**To approve the reappointment of Mr. Kevin Anderson, Ms. Tracey Beasley, Ms. Kerry Fehrman, and Mr. Keoni Newman as members to the ELCA Audit Committee for a two-year term expiring in August 2025; and**

**To approve the reappointment of Ms. Ingrid Stafford as a member to the ELCA Audit Committee for a two-year, renewable term beginning November 2023.**

## **14. APPROVAL OF CHURCHWIDE ORGANIZATION PERSONNEL POLICIES**

***Background:***

The Administrative Team added Indigenous Peoples Day as a paid holiday for churchwide organization staff. The updated section in Personnel Policies was distributed to Church Council members electronically prior to the meeting.

Employees of the churchwide organization of the ELCA are expected to read, understand, and comply with the Personnel Policies of the Churchwide Organization, which are adopted by the Church Council in accordance with 14.21.06.

***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.**

## **15. ALLOCATION OF ADDITIONAL VOTING MEMBERS FOR THE 2025 CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY**

***Background:***

For each Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, provision for additional voting members has been made for certain synods. This has been done in keeping with this church's "Principles of Organization." Under those principles, the Church Council was assigned responsibility for ensuring that at least 60% of the members of assemblies shall be lay persons and that at least 10% of such voting members shall be people of color or people whose primary language is other than English (provision 5.01.f.).

Experience in the registration process for assemblies has demonstrated the need for allocation of additional voting members to help ensure fulfillment of the organizational principles and to provide for broader representation in synods that would be entitled by the formula to only two voting members, one of whom would be the synod bishop.

The 2011 Churchwide Assembly passed an amendment to bylaw 12.41.11., which describes the process for determining the number of voting members for a Churchwide Assembly and includes the possibility that the Church Council may allocate up to ten additional voting members.

***Church Council action:***

**To allocate for the 2025 Churchwide Assembly two additional voting members to the Alaska Synod (1A), Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod (4C), Slovak Zion Synod (7G), West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod (8H), and Caribbean Synod (9F), making a total of six voting members per synod.**

## **16. BYLAW AMENDMENTS FOR WARTBURG THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY**

### *Background:*

Bylaw 8.21.02. of the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA* stipulates: “Amendments to the governing documents of each separately incorporated seminary and each seminary cluster shall be submitted, upon recommendation of the appropriate unit of the churchwide organization, to the Church Council for approval.”

During the 2022 to 2023 academic year, the Wartburg Seminary Board of Directors (WTS Board) participated in a comprehensive governance curriculum offered by the InTrust Center’s Wise Stewards Initiative. The threefold purpose of this curriculum is: (1) to equip boards to reimagine governance as a force for change, (2) to support the president and board partnership as a means of institutional renewal, and (3) to clarify the roles and responsibilities of boards of theological schools. Through that work, the WTS Board committed itself to clarifying internal governing documents and bringing bylaws into alignment with best practices for boards of theological schools. The proposed amendments along with rationales were provided to Church Council members electronically prior to the meeting.

### *Church Council action:*

**To ratify the amendments to the Bylaws of Wartburg Theological Seminary.**

## **17. AMENDMENTS TO THE ELCA PARTICIPATING ANNUITY TRUST**

### *Background:*

At its November 2023 meeting, Portico Benefit Services Board of Trustees reviewed a resolution to authorize amendments to the ELCA Participating Annuity Trust. As there will no longer be any assets or liabilities in the ELCA Participating Annuity Bridge Fund (“Bridge Fund”) as of Dec. 31, 2023, the recommendation is to remove references to the Bridge Fund in the Annuity Trust and in the ELCA Retirement Plan.

### *Church Council action:*

**To approve the amendments to the ELCA Participating Annuity Trust and the ELCA Retirement Plan relating to references to the “Bridge Fund.”**

## **18. AMENDMENTS TO SYNOD CONSTITUTIONS**

### *Background:*

Provision 10.12. of the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA* stipulates: “Each synod shall have a constitution, which shall become effective upon ratification by the Church Council. Amendments thereto shall be subject to like ratification....”

Amendments to synod constitutions were distributed to Church Council members electronically prior to the meeting.

### **A. AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION OF THE NORTHWEST INTERMOUNTAIN SYNOD**

#### *Church Council action:*

**To ratify the amendments to the constitution of the Northwest Intermountain Synod (1D); and  
To request that the secretary of this church notify the synod of this action.**

### **B. AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION OF THE OREGON SYNOD**

#### *Church Council action:*

**To ratify the amendments to the constitution of the Oregon Synod (1E); and  
To request that the secretary of this church notify the synod of this action.**

### **C. AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN SYNOD**

#### *Church Council action:*

**To ratify the amendments to the constitution of the Rocky Mountain Synod (2E); and  
To request that the secretary of this church notify the synod of this action.**

### **D. AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION OF THE WESTERN NORTH DAKOTA SYNOD**

#### *Church Council action:*

**To ratify the amendment to the constitution of the Western North Dakota Synod (3A); and  
To request that the secretary of this church notify the synod of this action.**

**E. AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CENTRAL/SOUTHERN ILLINOIS SYNOD**

*Church Council action:*

To ratify the amendments to the constitution of the Central/Southern Illinois Synod (5C); and  
To request that the secretary of this church notify the synod of this action.

**F. AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION OF THE SOUTHEASTERN IOWA SYNOD**

*Church Council action:*

To ratify the amendments to the constitution of the Southeastern Iowa Synod (5D); and  
To request that the secretary of this church notify the synod of this action.

**G. AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION OF THE NORTHERN GREAT LAKES SYNOD**

*Church Council action:*

To ratify the amendment to the constitution of the Northern Great Lakes Synod (5G); and  
To request that the secretary of this church notify the synod of this action.

**H. AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION OF THE NORTHWEST SYNOD OF WISCONSIN**

*Church Council action:*

To ratify the amendments to the constitution of Northwest Synod of Wisconsin (5H), with the exception of S9.04.i); and  
To request that the secretary of this church notify the synod of this action.

**I. AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION OF THE EAST-CENTRAL SYNOD OF WISCONSIN**

*Church Council action:*

To ratify the amendments to the constitution of the East-Central Synod of Wisconsin (5I); and  
To request that the secretary of this church notify the synod of this action.

**J. AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION OF THE NORTHEASTERN OHIO SYNOD**

*Church Council action:*

To ratify the amendments to the constitution of the Northeastern Ohio Synod (6E); and  
To request that the secretary of this church notify the synod of this action.

**K. AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UPSTATE NEW YORK SYNOD**

*Church Council action:*

To ratify the amendments to the constitution of the Upstate New York Synod (7D); and  
To request that the secretary of this church notify the synod of this action.

**L. AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA SYNOD**

*Church Council action:*

To ratify the amendments to the constitution of the South Carolina Synod (9C); and  
To request that the secretary of this church notify the synod of this action.

**M. AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION OF THE SOUTHEASTERN SYNOD**

*Church Council action:*

To ratify the amendment to the constitution of the Southeastern Synod (9D); and  
To request that the secretary of this church notify the synod of this action.

**N. AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION OF THE FLORIDA-BAHAMAS SYNOD**

*Church Council action:*

To ratify the amendments to the constitution of the Florida-Bahamas Synod (9E); and  
To request that the secretary of this church notify the synod of this action.

## **19. RECONSIDERATION OF MESSAGE ON END-OF-LIFE DECISIONS**

*Background:*

A request to review the social message End-of-Life Decisions (1992) was submitted. This request is added to two other pending requests for social messages. It is the recommendation of the director for theological ethics to postpone action along with the two other pending requests for assessment until late winter of 2024.

*Church Council action:*

**To defer the question of reconsidering the selected paragraph in the “Message on End-of-Life Decisions” (1992) following the 2023-24 social message development cycle in order to allow for a careful and thorough assessment of that request along with continued assessment of the pending request for a social message on child abuse and protection and the request of a substantive revision of the “Message on Homelessness” (1990). This assessment will include input from relevant leadership circles as well as the availability of staff capacity, and finances; and**

**To request that the secretary of this church notify the synod of this action.**

## **20. CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY DOCUMENTS**

*Background:*

The Church Council is responsible for reviewing this church’s ongoing work in corporate social responsibility. The Service and Justice Committee reviewed three issue papers and two social criteria investment screens that were made available to Church Council members electronically prior to the meeting.

*Church Council action:*

**To approve the amendments to the following corporate social responsibility documents to serve as the basis for ongoing corporate social responsibility work in this church:**

- **Code of Conduct Issue Paper**
- **Domestic Access to Health Issue Paper**
- **Extractive Industries and Environmental Justice Issue Paper**
- **Community Economic Development Social Criteria Investment Screen**
- **Gambling Social Criteria Investment Screen; and**

**To request that the original issue papers be archived for historical and research purposes.**

## **21. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

*Background:*

The minutes of the Church Council meeting on April 20, 2023, were provided to Church Council members electronically prior to the meeting.

The minutes of the council’s Executive Committee meetings on April 20, 2023, May 25, 2023, June 20, 2023, July 25, 2023, Aug. 29, 2023, Sept. 25, 2023, and Oct. 17, 2023, were provided to members of the Church Council electronically prior to the meeting. Meetings held on April 11, 2023, April 14, 2023, and April 24, 2023, were held in executive session and minutes were added to the protocol file in the Office of the Secretary.

Council members were invited to provide notations or typographical errors in the distributed text of the minutes to the Office of the Secretary prior to the meeting.

*Church Council action:*

**To approve the minutes of the April 20, 2023, meeting of the Church Council; and**

**To ratify actions of the council’s Executive Committee as indicated in the minutes of the April 11, 2023, April 14, 2023, April 20, 2023, April 24, 2023, May 25, 2023, June 20, 2023, July 25, 2023, Aug. 29, 2023, Sept. 25, 2023, and Oct. 17, 2023, meetings.**

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

*Background:*

The Church Council has the responsibility for electing people to fill terms on boards of Separately Incorporated Ministries (SIMs), 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 ELCA*, the Church Council is also to elect nominees to a vacancy on a board or committee of the churchwide organization.

Biographical information for nominees was provided to Church Council members electronically prior to the meeting.

**A. ELECTION TO THE ADVISORY BOARD OF PACIFIC LUTHERAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY AT CALIFORNIA LUTHERAN UNIVERSITY**

*Church Council action:*

To elect to the advisory board of Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary at California Lutheran University to a term beginning in June 2023 and expiring in June 2026: Mr. Antoine Ricardo Cummins, Mr. Richard Alan Deschamps, Mr. Mark Dalton Fornwall, and The Rev. Herbert Shao.

**B. ELECTION TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF WARTBURG THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY**

*Church Council action:*

To elect to the board of directors of Wartburg Theological Seminary to a term beginning Nov. 12, 2023, and expiring Dec. 31, 2027 (term end date subject to approval of amended Bylaws of Wartburg Theological Seminary): The Rev. Rudy Trevino Flores and Deacon Ross Robert Murray.

**C. ELECTION TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF MOSAIC, INC.**

*Church Council action:*

To re-elect to the board of directors of Mosaic, Inc. to a three-year term expiring in 2027: The Rev. Keith Douglas Hohly and Ms. Monica Elizabeth Holle.

**D. ELECTION TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF NATIONAL LUTHERAN CAMPUS MINISTRY, INC.**

*Church Council action:*

To re-elect to the Board of Directors of National Lutheran Campus Ministry, Inc. for a four-year term beginning in March 2024 and concluding March 2028: The Rev. Carol L. Schneider.

**E. ELECTION TO THE ELCA FOUNDATION BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

*Church Council action:*

To elect to the ELCA Foundation Board of Trustees to a term expiring on December 31, 2025: Mr. Andrew George Steele.

**F. ELECTION TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPEALS**

*Church Council action:*

To elect to the Committee on Appeals to a term expiring in August 2025: The Rev. Andrew A. Taylor.