



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

November 12, 2014

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 presidents
 Regional coordinators

FROM: The Rev. Wm Chris Boefger, secretary *WCB*

SUBJECT: Report of Church Council Responses to Synod Resolutions
 and Churchwide Assembly Actions (Nov. 7-10, 2014)

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I. RESPONSES TO SYNOD RESOLUTIONS

A. The Isolation of Individuals Living in Our Communities

Virginia Synod (9A) [2013]

RESOLVED, that members of the Virginia Synod Assembly encourage their congregations to pray for those living in isolation; and be it further

RESOLVED, that members of the Virginia Synod Assembly encourage their congregations to identify and reach out to those who are living in isolation; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Virginia Synod encourage congregations and individuals to partner with institutions and agencies who work with children, youth, adults, and senior citizens to identify and reach out to those who are living in isolation; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Virginia Synod of the ELCA forward this to the ELCA Church Council for further consideration.

Church Council action (CC13.07.35c)

- To receive the resolution of the Virginia Synod on The Isolation of Individuals Living in Our Communities;
- To refer the resolution to the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit;
- To request that a report be brought to the November 2013 meeting of the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; and
- To request that the secretary inform the synod of this action.

Response from the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit (April 2014)

At its November meeting, the Church Council adopted a social message on “The Body of Christ and Mental Illness.” The very first page of that message speaks about the loneliness and isolation that those with mental illness experience. However, under the heading of “The Call to Companionship”, the message reminds us that being integrated into a community is treated as definitive by Jesus. In fact, on page 12 the message clearly states that “to people who are experiencing mental illness, physical, prayerful companionship can be a sign of God’s presence in a time when God’s presence cannot be felt any other way.” And so, in italics on page 16, we read that “The ELCA commits as a church to accompanying you in your valley of the shadow...” We also read of a commitment to the families and caregivers of those with mental illness, “The ELCA as a church commits to accompanying you as families and caregivers with honest, hopeful yet realistic, and prayerful companionship.”

To assist congregations in beginning conversations about the particular loneliness and isolation that those with mental illness experience, a congregational study guide has been developed to accompany the mental health message. Conversations about the isolation involved with mental illness can help to broaden the discussion so that the isolation experienced in the world in general can also be addressed.

For those whose isolation has led to despair and thoughts of suicide, there is an Independent Lutheran Organization called Lutheran Suicide Prevention Ministry which can provide many resources for helping people to move through the valley of the shadow.

Church Council action (CC14.04.11)

- To refer this matter to the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit for further work.

Background from the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit (November 2014)

After the April 2014 Church Council meeting, the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit followed up with the Virginia Synod and the author of the resolution regarding their intention as directed. A discussion with Bishop James Mauney, Virginia Synod, led into communication with the author of the resolution. The author then wrote a response to Bishop Mauney expressing that the intention of the resolution was to address isolation experienced from people with mental illness. Her primary concern was “that what is lacking is not that congregation members don’t care, they just are not aware and lack a degree of understanding. Therefore, the goal would be to raise awareness and understanding.” The author of the resolution and Bishop Mauney both expressed appreciation for our follow-up.

The Congregational and Synodical Mission unit strongly affirms the current and available congregational resources and materials, as noted in the April 2014 response. These available materials would address the concern noted and would assist congregation members to develop awareness and understanding that could enable them to support those living in isolation due to mental illness. We commend all these congregational resources to our members for their study to help them support those living in isolation in their congregations and communities.

Church Council action:

- To thank the Virginia Synod for encouraging congregations and individuals to reach out to those living in isolation;**
- To receive the responses from the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit;**
- To encourage congregations and individuals to use the mental health message congregational study guide to engage in conversations about isolation;**

**To encourage congregations and individuals to utilize the resources provided through Lutheran Suicide Prevention Ministry; and
To request that the secretary of this church inform the synod of this action.**

B. The Future of ELCA Seminaries

Northern Great Lakes Synod (5G) [2014]

RESOLVED, that the Northern Great Lakes Synod of the ELCA:

1. Reaffirm the generous financial support given to ELCA seminaries and seminarians from the Northern Great Lakes Synod and many of its member congregations; and
2. Inform its congregations and members, by means of the spoken, printed, and electronic word, of the financial struggles that ELCA seminaries are experiencing, in particular the two seminaries relating to this synod which are the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago and Wartburg Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa; and
3. Through its rostered leaders and congregation members, identify and lift up potential leaders who may serve its congregations and encourage them to pursue theological education; and
4. Educate its congregations and members, by means of the spoken, printed, and electronic word, that the ELCA Foundation, seminary foundations, and the Northern Great Lakes Synod Endowment Committee can help people plan and develop charitable trusts, gift annuities, and other planned gifts that will help ELCA seminaries continue into the future; and
5. Urge the Church Council to continue to review and adapt the institutions and practices of ELCA theological education to meet the needs in varied congregational contexts for this time and beyond, and to communicate these efforts and results annually to the 65 synods; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northern Great Lakes Synod Assembly direct the Synod Council to forward this resolution to the Church Council for consideration and positive action.

Executive Committee action (EC14.08.18b)

To receive the resolution from the Northern Great Lakes Synod regarding the future of ELCA seminaries; and

To refer the resolution to the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit for a report or for a timeline on when this resolution will receive further attention to be presented to the November 2014 Church Council meeting.

Background from the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit (November 2014)

The first four resolves in the resolution from the Northern Great Lakes Synod on “The Future of ELCA Seminaries” are welcome reaffirmations of this synod’s commitment to the ELCA’s shared work in preparing leaders for mission through the ELCA’s seminaries.

Concerning the fifth resolve, the ELCA Church Council, at its November 2014 meeting, is receiving an interim report from the Theological Education Advisory Council. The advisory council’s purpose is to review the institutions and practices of ELCA theological education. This will include adaptations already underway, new possibilities for the organization and how theological education is delivered and supported. This interim report, along with any Church Council actions related to it, will be publicly available following the November 2014 meeting.

The Theological Education Advisory Council will continue its work during the next year, bringing its final report and recommendations to the November 2015 meeting of the Church Council.

Church Council action:

To thank the Northern Great Lakes Synod for its resolution on the future of ELCA seminaries;

To receive the response from the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit;

To acknowledge the ongoing work of the Theological Education Advisory Council in addressing the concerns expressed in the resolution; and

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

C. Statement on Aging

Virginia Synod (9A) [2014]

WHEREAS, a statement of the Lutheran Church in America regarding “Aging and the Older Adult” was adopted by the Ninth Biennial Convention, Chicago, Illinois, July 12–19, 1978; and

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) upon its founding accepted the statement as a historical document; and

WHEREAS, the document has never been rescinded; and

WHEREAS, the statement is not binding for the ELCA; and

WHEREAS, while this church is blessed by the vital growth of young people and families, it is also blessed by the increasing number of senior members, making the subject of aging of paramount importance to a significant number of ELCA congregations; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Virginia Synod form a committee to study the issue and draft a social statement on aging; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Virginia Synod Council request the Church Council to bring the 1978 statement, “Aging and the Older Adult,” out of retirement and revise it as appropriate to make it a living document.

Executive Committee action (EC14.08.18d)

To receive the resolution from the Virginia Synod regarding the statement on aging; and

To refer the resolution to the Office of the Presiding Bishop for a report or for a timeline on when this resolution will receive further attention to be presented to the November 2014 Church Council meeting.

Background from the Office of the Presiding Bishop (November 2014)

The 2014 Virginia Synod Assembly discussed matters about aging and the church, adopting two actions that call for the development of social documents on aging. The first directed action to the synod itself and the second requested action on the part of the Church Council. The Executive Committee of the Church Council considered the resolutions at its August 2014 meeting and referred them to the Office of the Presiding Bishop, directing that a report or a timeline be presented to the November 2014 Church Council meeting to indicate when the second resolve would receive further attention.

Discussion regarding appropriate action on this request within the Office of the Bishop involves several considerations.

The first follows from the application of the term “social statement” by the synod in regards to the action it authorized for itself. While the use of this term causes confusion when applied to a synod document, given the specific and widespread meaning of the term for a specific kind of churchwide document, the synod is not taking upon itself the intention to draft a social statement on behalf of the ELCA. Rather, the intent is to produce a synodical study document that probes matters of aging and might inform conversation on relevant issues from the standpoint of faith. That is, the resolution does not use the term “social statement” in the technical sense and with the accompanying protocol specified in “Policies and Procedures of the ELCA for Addressing Social Concerns.” It does seem useful to clarify this matter in the Church Council action to the synod for the sake of clarity.

The second set of considerations involves the comparative significance of this issue at this time in relation to: a) existing work on the development of social documents, b) previously existing requests for additional documents, and c) churchwide staff capacity. It is widely recognized that a dominant cohort of ELCA membership is living longer and with greater vigor in ways that strengthen the presence and contribution of older adults within the church. It also is widely recognized that life span expansion and the use of rapidly evolving medical technology sharpens the challenges and dilemmas as individuals live longer. As the resolution itself points out, the 35-year-old LCA document “Aging and the Older Adult” could provide significant basis for the development of a document, even though dated by themes, scope and cultural shifts since 1978.

Given these considerations, the need for a social message on aging seems clearly worth an assessment even while it remains uncertain whether a document should or would finally be authorized. The recommendation from the Office of the Presiding Bishop below calls for such an assessment. At the same time, any commitment for an assessment must be added to an already extensive work load for the Theological Discernment Team as a whole and for the director for theological ethics who would take primary responsibility.

Church Council action:

To thank the Virginia Synod for its resolution on aging;

To receive the response from the Office of the Presiding Bishop;

To ask that the term “social statement” be avoided in the work of the synodical committee drafting a synod document on aging for the sake of clarity regarding the technical meaning “social statement” as used in “Policies and Procedures of the ELCA for Addressing Social Concerns;”

To acknowledge both the continuing limited staff capacity as well as the continuing presence of important social questions around aging;

To invite an assessment and possible recommendation from the Theological Discernment Team staff in the Office of the Presiding Bishop regarding the feasibility of developing a social message on aging that includes attention to the 1978 LCA statement, “Aging and the Older Adult”; and

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

D. Constitutional Provision on Limited Voting Rights

Grand Canyon Synod Council (2D) [2014]

RESOLVED, that the Synod Council of Grand Canyon Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America hereby petitions the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to recognize the distinctive situation of certain ELCA congregations in Sunbelt areas that experience with joy a large influx of seasonal members who are active participants in the life of those congregations and who are crucial in congregations; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Grand Canyon Synod Council petitions the Church Council to affirm the experience of various congregations that are situated primarily in areas with a substantial population of retired persons in which the involvement of seasonal members is greatly facilitated by minimizing distinctions between voting and associate members, especially as related to the mission and ministry and the local affairs of such congregations; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Grand Canyon Synod Council, demonstrating clear recognition of these concerns, recommends that the following amendment be proposed by the Church Council of the Evangelical Church in America to the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to address the particular needs of certain congregation in some synods:

To adopt a new constitutional provision as 9.54. to read in the *Constitution, Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*:

- 9.54.** A congregation may grant limited voting rights to associate members with the approval of the synod responsible for the review of the congregation’s constitution, subject to the following limitations: Associate members in affected congregations (a) shall be deemed to be active participants who offer crucial support for the congregation’s overall mission and ministry; (b) shall not have the right to vote on any matter governed by provisions 7.46. and 9.62. in this constitution; (c) shall not have the right to serve as an officer or member of the Congregation Council; (d) shall not be eligible to serve as a voting member of the Synod Assembly or the Churchwide Assembly; and (e) shall be governed by any additional limitations as the Synod Council may require as a condition of the synod’s approval of voting and other privileges for associate members.

Executive Committee action (EC14.08.18a)

To receive the resolution from the Grand Canyon Synod concerning a constitutional provision on limited voting rights; and

To refer the resolution to the Office of the Secretary for a report or for a timeline on when this resolution will receive further attention to be presented to the November 2014 Church Council meeting.

Background from the Office of the Secretary (November 2014)

The Grand Canyon Synod has requested that a provision be added to the ELCA Constitution to allow associate members to have the privilege of voting in congregational meetings where they hold associate membership with certain

limitations. This proposal will be part of the review of the constitutions in anticipation of the 2016 Churchwide Assembly. Early conversation would not see this provision added as written to the ELCA Constitution. A provision could be considered in the Model Constitution for Congregations. The timeline would be to have a proposal ready for the Legal and Constitutional Review Committee to review at its April 2015 meeting. A proposal could be recommended to the Churchwide Assembly at the November 2015 meeting of the Church Council.

Church Council action:

To receive the response from the Office of the Secretary and to thank the Grand Canyon Synod for its resolution on Constitutional Provision on Limited Voting Rights;

To acknowledge such a provision could be considered for the Model Constitution for Congregations and will be incorporated into the overall constitutional review work of the Legal and Constitutional Review Committee;

To request the Office of the Secretary consider the constitutional provision as it reviews possible amendments to the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*; and

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

E. Transparent and Accountable Congregation Management

Metropolitan New York Synod (7C) [2014]

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan New York Synod Assembly instruct the Metropolitan New York Synod Council to request that the Church Council propose an amendment to the *Model Constitution for Congregations* by adding this clause to the end of C12.09:

“...including financial reports that fairly represent the financial status of the congregation.”; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan New York Synod Assembly direct the Metropolitan New York Synod Council to forward this resolution to the Church Council for consideration and possible action.

Executive Committee action (EC14.08.18c)

To receive the resolution from the Metropolitan New York Synod regarding transparent and accountable congregation management; and

To refer the resolution to the Office of the Secretary for a report or for a timeline on when this resolution will receive further attention to be presented to the November 2014 Church Council meeting.

Background from the Office of the Secretary (November 2014)

The Metropolitan New York Synod has asked that language requiring a report of the financial status of a congregation be part of the annual report to the annual meeting. This also will be reviewed as part of the overall review of the constitutions in preparation for the 2016 Churchwide Assembly. The timeline would call for review by the Legal and Constitutional Review Committee at its April 2015 meeting. Any proposal for amendment would be part of the proposed amendments acted on at the November 2015 Church Council meeting.

Church Council action:

To receive the response from the Office of the Secretary and to thank the Metropolitan New York Synod for its resolution on Transparent and Accountable Congregation Management;

To acknowledge such an amendment could be considered for the Model Constitution for Congregations and will be incorporated into the overall constitutional review work of the Legal and Constitutional Review Committee;

To request the Office of the Secretary consider the amendment as it reviews possible amendments to the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*; and

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

II. RESPONSES TO CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY ACTIONS

The Report of the Memorials Committee to the Churchwide Assembly includes the full text of the synodical memorials to that assembly under the categories given below.

A. Social Statement *Genetics, Faith and Responsibility*

Churchwide Assembly Action (CA11.04.17)

1. To call upon members of this church to pray, work, advocate and apply genetic knowledge and technology in ways that respect and promote the community of life justly and wisely;
2. To call upon congregations and other sites of ministry to give renewed attention to becoming places of koinonia in Christ that foster a deepened understanding of and commitment to baptismal vocation, everyday callings and moral formation and discernment;
3. To encourage leaders in conferences, synods or other appropriate bodies to compile lists of resources for their jurisdictions to which pastors, counselors and individuals can turn for help when seeking information or guidance in dealing with genetic issues;
4. To call upon this church's advocacy ministries to support and advocate for measures consistent with this social statement;
5. To affirm the study document "Genetics and Faith: Power, Choice and Responsibility" as a resource for ongoing deliberation and discernment, and to direct the Theological Discernment team of the Office of the Presiding Bishop to maintain its availability as long as demand continues;
6. To affirm the 2004 ELCA Social Policy Resolution "Genetically Modified Organisms in the Food Supply" and its continuing value for the mission and ministry of the ELCA;
7. To encourage the churchwide organization to maintain a database of ELCA members with expertise related to genetic science and technology that can serve as a primary resource for consultation;
8. To direct the Theological Discernment team of the Office of the Presiding Bishop to assess the feasibility of developing a social message on regenerative medicine, including, but not limited to, a range of stem cell technologies; and to bring to the ELCA Church Council in November 2013 a report and possible recommendations, in accordance with Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns (Chicago: ELCA, 1997, revised 2011); and
9. To call upon the Office of the Presiding Bishop to establish and oversee a process of implementation and accountability for Genetics, Faith and Responsibility and to report annually on implementation to the ELCA Church Council through November 2015, with progress reports made available through www.ELCA.org.

Background from the Office of the Presiding Bishop (November 2014)

Since 2003, one implementing resolution in each social statement has directed or called upon units of the churchwide organization to provide a process for accountability and reporting regarding the implementation of the resolutions attached to it. The 2011 statement, *Genetics, Faith and Responsibility*, specified an annual report in implementing resolution #9 (through 2015) and this report assesses activities during 2014. Activities for 2013 or earlier are reported in the November 8-10, 2013, Church Council materials, specifically Exhibit J, Part 6.

Resolutions #1 and 2 of *Genetics, Faith and Responsibility* call for prayer, ministry and daily work that "respect and promote the community of life justly and wisely." These activities are unquantifiable and difficult to assess, especially in terms of congregational activity and renewed attention "to becoming places of Koinonia in Christ." Barring a churchwide survey, it also remains difficult to report accurately what actions were generated by Resolution #3, which encourages church leaders "to compile lists of resources for their jurisdictions" that might help pastors and others seeking to deal with genetic issues. ELCA advocacy ministries (Resolution #4) have not given priority or visibility to issues around genetics this year. Yet, staff of the churchwide organization is familiar with the statement and report referring to it on occasion.

It is clear, however, that the ELCA's statement continues to create visibility and reflection for its concerns. For example, the statement was reviewed significantly in *Kristeligt Dagblad* (a Danish newspaper) in September 2013, was summarized on the Pew Research Center website last June, and cited in a *Washington Post* article that drew from the Pew site.

Ecumenically, this social statement has been widely recognized for its excellence — most clearly indicated in the activities within The Episcopal Church. That church's 2012 General Convention adopted Resolution A-013 that expressly

commends the leadership of the ELCA and called upon itself to “follow the example of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and other denominations in seeking to identify the moral, ethical and theological principles” raised by genetically modified organisms. The subsequent Episcopal working paper draws at length from both *Genetics, Faith & Responsibility* and the 2004 ELCA social policy resolution “Genetically Modified Organisms in the Food Supply.” (This social policy resolution was reaffirmed in Resolutions #5 and #6.) The working paper discusses themes and principles from these ELCA documents for more than ten pages and cites them as sources of guidance for the resolutions proposed to the 2014 General Convention.

Resolution #7 encourages the churchwide organization to maintain a database of ELCA members with relevant expertise and an initial, brief list compiled in late 2011 remains available. The churchwide organization’s integrated database (ECIS) would be the natural location for the creation of a complete database, however in light of other priorities staff capacity limitations remain. No further efforts have been made to create such a database.

Resolution #8 directs the Theological Discernment Team in the Office of the Presiding Bishop to assess “the feasibility of developing a social message on regenerative medicine” and to bring a report to the Church Council by November 2013. A delay for this activity was approved by Church Council action in November 2013 due to limited staff capacity and will be the subject of Church Council attention at the November 2014 meeting. It should be noted that moral questions surrounding regenerative medicine largely have been replaced in public conversation by other topics such as Ebola or the Affordable Health Care Act. However, it remains appropriate to conduct a thorough assessment.

Church Council action:

To receive the report from the Office of the Presiding Bishop in response to the 2011 Churchwide Assembly action related to the implementing resolutions for the social statement, Genetics, Faith and Responsibility.

B. Social Statement *The Church and Criminal Justice: Hearing the Cries*

Churchwide Assembly Action (CA13.05.16)

1. To call upon members of this church through steadfast prayer, discernment, Christian education, ministry efforts and public action to share the gospel of God’s love in Jesus Christ as they hear the cries, offer hospitality, accompany and advocate on behalf of those whose lives are caught up in or committed in service to the criminal justice system;
2. To call upon members, congregations, synods, social ministry organizations and churchwide ministries to advocate intentionally and creatively for system reform consistent with the principles and recommendations set forth in this social statement;
3. To encourage ELCA congregations to work with victims, victim advocates and victim support organizations, to grow in sensitivity and response to the harm caused by crime, and to grow in awareness of restorative justice practices;
4. To encourage ELCA congregations to become intentional sites of ministry and action for the incarcerated and their families, possibly in ecumenical collaboration, and with special attention to re-entry ministries and to preferential hiring for ex-offenders, as appropriate;
5. To hold in prayer the ministry of ELCA chaplains and pastors serving in all correctional facilities, or serving with law enforcement agencies around the country, and to encourage all expressions of the ELCA and its affiliated institutions to provide greater support to prison ministry;
6. To request the ELCA’s Congregational and Synodical Mission unit to enlist the aid of leaders in conferences, synods, seminaries, social ministry organizations or other appropriate groups in creating and maintaining a resource database, to which members, pastors, seminarians or other professionals can turn for information about activities, models and training modules that support ministry to people and action toward reform of the criminal justice system;
7. To call upon the ELCA’s Worship and Liturgical Resources Team to develop additional liturgical resources for those involved in the criminal justice system, such as services and prayers for victims and A Social Statement their families, for those incarcerated, for those employed in the system, or rites of blessing for those engaging in visitation ministries;
8. To direct the staff of the ELCA’s advocacy ministries to coordinate efforts to develop on behalf of this church a social investment screen on private prison operations, along with developing education materials to use within the ELCA for understanding these actions;

9. To direct the ELCA's Theological Discernment Team in the fall of 2015 to bring to the ELCA Church Council an assessment of the feasibility of developing a social message on U.S. national drug policy, in accordance with "Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns" (Chicago: ELCA, 1997, revised 2006, 2011);
10. To encourage the three expressions of this church to utilize the recommendations of the Addressing Social Concerns Review Task Force in the process of disseminating and implementing this social statement; and
11. To call upon appropriate staff in the ELCA's Congregational and Synodical Mission unit and the Office of the Presiding Bishop to establish and oversee a process of implementation and accountability for this social statement that provides a report on implementation to the ELCA Church Council in the fall of 2017.

Background from the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit (November 2014)

Education

Race & Criminal Justice was a plenary presentation during the 2014 joint North/West Lower Michigan Synod and Southeast Michigan Synod assemblies by the ELCA program director for racial justice.

Planning is underway in the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, in partnership with the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit, Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, the African Descent Lutheran Association Philadelphia Chapter and Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Pennsylvania, for a daylong gathering to equip congregations to accompany individuals and families impacted by incarceration. The event is scheduled for June 6, 2015. Michelle Alexander, author of *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, will deliver the keynote.

The theme of mass incarceration education will be included in the strategic plans of the ethnic associations.

Work is underway toward the development of a study guide to *The Church and Criminal Justice: Hearing the Cries*. A writer and design company have been contracted to craft the study guide as an interactive PDF that will include several varied-length curriculum sessions, multiple audience entry points, video clips and leader's guide. The resource will be available on the ELCA website, or for purchase as a flash drive or in print. The target for completion is April 2015.

Resources

Lutheran Men in Mission has provided free copies of New Testament translation Bibles in Spanish for outreach ministry to formerly incarcerated individuals.

A Bible study prepared for the African Descent Lutheran Association will focus on the issue of incarceration and its impact on communities of African descent. The Bible study will be featured in the fall 2014 newsletter of the association.

The ecumenical resource "Healing the Community" provides a framework for churches to be stations of hope. Funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, this resource has been implemented in more than 20 sites nationally. This model is currently used in Southeastern Pennsylvania, Lower Susquehanna and Southeastern synods.

New Start Congregations

A partnership of the ELCA and the Prison Congregations of America connects synodical bishops, Directors for Evangelical Mission and local leaders in starting ministries with incarcerated individuals and/or with formerly incarcerated people as they reintegrate into society. The Church of the Damascus Road prison ministry is the first Prison Congregations of America site in the state of Texas. The congregation is part of the Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana mission area.

Living Gospel Ministry, located in the northwest community of Philadelphia, provides life skills, employment search assistance and help with accessing government benefits to formerly incarcerated individuals and their families.

Accompaniment

The Intersection, a congregation located in Dorchester, Mass., provides educational preparation classes for adults preparing to take the Massachusetts State High School Equivalency Test (formerly known as the GED). This initiative is specifically intended to be a resource for returning citizens but will be available to any adult in need of obtaining a degree equivalent.

Advocacy

The ELCA Washington Office is part of an interfaith coalition for smarter sentencing reform. In June 2014, it issued an action alert for support of the ***Smarter Sentencing Act***. This bipartisan legislation would reduce racially disparate

mandatory minimum sentences for drug offenses and allow current prisoners serving outdated sentences for crack cocaine offenses to apply for a sentence reduction.

The ELCA State Public Policy Office in California is advocating for sentencing policy reform. California Proposition 47 is on the ballot for November 4, 2014. If approved by the state's voters, this law would reduce the classification of most "non-serious and nonviolent property and drug crimes" from a felony to a misdemeanor.

In 2013, the ELCA was able to formally sign on as an official supporter of the Campaign for the Fair Sentencing of Youth on the basis of the social statement *The Church and Criminal Justice: Hearing the Cries*.

Synod staff members report sharing copies of and text from *The Church and Criminal Justice: Hearing the Cries* in advocacy efforts with legislators in several states — states as diverse as New Jersey and Mississippi.

Corporate Social Responsibility

The action directed by Implementing Resolution #8 of *The Church and Criminal Justice: Hearing the Cries* to develop a social investment screen on private prison operations was undertaken by the corporate social responsibility consultant under the auspices of the churchwide organization's inter-unit review team. Following normal protocol for the development of a screen, the process involved review by Church Council, Conference of Bishops and staff at Portico Benefit Services. The adoption of this screen is expected at the November 2014 meeting of the Church Council after a final review by its Program and Services Committee.

Ecumenism

The ELCA is working within the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA on interreligious relations with a focus on peace and mass incarceration. The 2014 Christian Unity Gathering focused on mass incarceration and what we can do together ecumenically to help contribute to a solution to this crisis.

Breaking the Chains: Mass Incarceration & Systems of Exploitation will be the 2015 Ecumenical Advocacy Days theme. The event will take place April 17-20, 2015, in Washington, D.C. More than 1,000 participants will gather to build a movement to shake the foundations of systems of human exploitation (Acts 16:16-40), including a prison-industrial system that incarcerates millions of people in the United States and abroad.

Church Council action:

To receive the report from the Office of the Presiding Bishop in response to the 2013 Churchwide Assembly action related to the implementing resolutions for the social statement, *The Church and Criminal Justice: Hearing the Cries*.

C. Update on the Book of Faith Initiative

Churchwide Assembly action (CA13.02.04)

To affirm the Book of Faith initiative as a continuing emphasis and priority in this church, and 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" (ELCA constitutional provision 13.21.)—continue to lead this initiative personally and in collaboration with the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit, other appropriate churchwide units, and the Conference of Bishops;

To reaffirm the overall goal of the Book of Faith initiative to help individuals and congregations throughout the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to open Scripture and join the conversation;

To call on congregations, synods, the churchwide organization, and other ministries of this church to continue to promote deep biblical engagement that approaches the Bible as the written Word of God, using "multiple methods" to engage persons individually and in community with others;

To call upon Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, as the publishing ministry of this church, to consult with all expressions of this church and its related institutions and agencies as appropriate to undergird and support the Book of Faith initiative in order to enhance the biblical literacy of all members of this church as well as those seeking a better understanding of the Gospel of Jesus Christ;

To encourage engagement of the Book of Faith initiative by colleges, universities, and seminaries of this church, recognizing the continuing challenge of assisting pastoral and lay leaders in taking up their roles as teachers of the Bible in ways that engage and inspire the current and future members and seekers in this church;

To encourage the Book of Faith initiative leadership in conversation with its many partners to continue implementation of the initiative so as to respond to such challenges as: biblical illiteracy, Bible and mission outreach, addressing the great variety of cultures that make up this church and world, appealing to the growing number of persons in society claiming to be “spiritual but not religious,” creative use of social media, and the importance of family and home as centers of faith development; and

To give thanks to God for all of the individuals, congregations, synods, and churchwide ministries for their deep and abiding commitment to the centrality of God’s transforming Word in Christ, in proclamation, and in Scripture.

Background from Augsburg Fortress, Publishers (November 2014)

Augsburg Fortress has actively partnered with others in all expressions of this church and many of its related institutions and agencies since the inception of the Book of Faith initiative in 2007. In listening to the needs of leaders across this church, Augsburg Fortress has published 122 unique Book of Faith learning and teaching resources written by 70 different authors whose primary workplace includes a wide range of ELCA congregations, agencies and institutions. In addition, Augsburg Fortress assists the churchwide organization on marketing the Book of Faith initiative, including a website, brochures and use of social media.

Beyond the resources published under the Book of Faith initiative imprint, Augsburg Fortress and our ecumenical faith formation division, sparkhouse, continue to partner with people across this church to publish a wide range of print, digital and video resources for teaching and learning, worship planning and personal devotion, which are designed to enhance biblical fluency for children, youth and adults.

In addition, one of the major pillars of our Fortress Press publishing program is biblical studies, many of them created to enhance the knowledge and confidence of students as well as pastors who lead their congregations toward biblical literacy.

Background from the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit (November 2014)

The 2013 Churchwide Assembly voted to “affirm the Book of Faith initiative as a continuing emphasis and priority in this church.” The presiding bishop, in collaboration with the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit, continues to provide leadership for this initiative.

In response to the call to promote deep biblical engagement that approaches the Bible as the written Word of God, using “multiple methods” to engage persons individually and in community with others, we have launched a promotional campaign to deepen the understanding of multiple methods of engagement. We are calling on people throughout this church to engage our devotional, historical, literary and theological Book of Faith.

The 4 Lenses for reading scripture: [Learn more about the 4 Lenses by clicking here](#)

Our Devotional book of faith	Our Historical book of faith	Our Literary book of faith	Our Theological book of faith
Where are you today?	Meet yesterday's story today	The library that's always open	What are the God Questions?

In response to the call to encourage engagement of the Book of Faith initiative by colleges, universities and seminaries of this church, we are in the process of initiating, in collaboration with the seminaries, a newly imagined Book of Faith Hein Fry Challenge. The purpose of this challenge is to enliven the biblical engagement of the whole church by providing current examples of innovative and effective ways of teaching and learning the Scripture. This challenge will result in both conferences and videos. The Book of Faith Initiative was also highlighted in two seminary publications. The June 2014 issue of *Currents in Theology and Mission* is dedicated to the Book of Faith Initiative and downloadable for free at the Book of Faith website. The lead article in *Word and World's* Summer 2014 issue, *Igniting Biblical Imagination*, highlights the initiative.

We are responding in a number of ways to a variety of the challenges listed in the adopted resolutions.

In response to the challenge of Bible and mission outreach, we continue, in partnership with Faith Practices and Mission Development Leaders, to promote *Story Matters: Claiming our Biblical Identity for the Sake of the World*.

We continue to expand our online presence. We have 1,107 members of the Facebook Book of Faith group. We have 1,798 followers on Twitter and counting. We are in the ongoing process of improving our website, www.bookoffaith.org.

Several new projects are in the works: We are forming a team to participate in the 2015 Youth Gathering in Detroit. We are active in the formation of an evolving group, *Partners in Adult Learning*. We are working with the Covenant Cluster of seminaries in envisioning a partner initiative entitled *Life of Faith*. And we are working with ELCA Research and Evaluation to create a new survey that will gauge how ELCA members think about and read the Bible. This survey will be significant in that it will grow out of our Lutheran theological tradition and experience rather than most of the extant surveys that have a more fundamentalist viewpoint.

Other challenges continue to be present as we envision the future of the Book of Faith initiative, including “the importance of family and home as centers of faith development,” addressing the great variety of cultures that make up this church and world and appealing to the growing number of persons in society claiming to be “spiritual but not religious.” Such challenges as these will be met as the initiative transitions to a new director, following the February 2015 retirement of Diane Jacobson.

At the heart of the initiative is the continuing overall goal “to help individuals and congregations throughout the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to open Scripture and join the conversation.”

Church Council action:

To receive the report and thank Augsburg Fortress, Publishers and the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit for their ongoing work to help individuals and congregations throughout the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to open Scripture and join the conversation.

D1. Motion J: Native Americans and Alaska Natives

RESOLVED, that the ELCA Churchwide Organization be committed to inviting the tribal leader or a representative of the sovereign tribal or region wherein any and at every ELCA Churchwide Organization sponsored event held—e.g. Churchwide Assemblies, Global Mission Events, ELCA Youth Gatherings, smaller or regional events, etc.—with costs incurred to be supported by each event’s budget, to bring a word of welcome/greetings from their nations or peoples; and that consultation with the ELCA Director for American Indian and Alaska Native Ministries be done so as to ensure the invitation is extended appropriately; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA Churchwide Organization be committed to ensuring at least one educational component is developed and offered to participants at every Churchwide Organization sponsored event—e.g. Churchwide Assemblies, Global Mission Events, ELCA Youth Gatherings, smaller or regional events, etc.—regarding American Indian and Alaska Native tribal peoples of the nation or region wherein the Churchwide Organization sponsored event is being held, with costs incurred to be supported by each event’s budget; and that consultation with the ELCA’s Director for American Indian and Alaska Native Ministries be done so as to ensure such an educational experience is developed and presented appropriately.

Churchwide Assembly action (CA11.04.18)

To refer Motion J to the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit for consultation with the American Indian and Alaska Native Ministries to identify ways to address the intent of the motion.

Church Council action (CC13.04.27f)

To recommend the establishment of a working group of the ELCA American Indian and Alaska Native Ministries Program for the purpose of recommending guidelines for this church on ways to approach and offer invitations to the American Indian and Alaska Native community, guidelines for the American Indian and Alaska Native community on acceptable ways to provide greetings at ELCA events, suggestions for which events or opportunities might be most appropriate for greetings, a possible educational experience, and consideration of the costs and monies of funding such participation; and

To request that a report of the findings from the working group be brought to the Congregational and Synodical Mission (CSM) unit and a report from CSM be made to the ELCA Church Council at its November 2013 meeting.

Church Council action (CC13.11.69o)

To receive the response from the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit; and

To postpone the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit report with possible recommendations to the November 2014 meeting of the ELCA Church Council.

D2. Motion N: American Indian and Alaska Native Peoples

RESOLVED, that this assembly commits this church, the ELCA, to go beyond apologies and begin working on renewed, healthy and responsible relationships with American Indian and Alaska Native Peoples; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA commits to becoming the leader among churches in the area of advocacy and active support of justice, self-determination, sovereignty, and advancement of American Indian and Alaska Native Peoples and their nations and governments; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA endorses the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples adopted by the U.N. General Assembly on September 13, 2007, adopts the declaration as the standard for our own practices, and commits to implementing the values and principles of the declaration within the work and structure of this church; and be it further

RESOLVED, that this assembly asks the presiding bishop to write to the president of the United States of America, encouraging the president to continue building strong government-to-government relationships with all of the federally recognized tribes, as well as to work collaboratively with tribes and the National Congress of American Indians on discerning how to best fully and effectively implement the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples for the sake of justice in the lives and communities of American Indian and Alaska Native Peoples; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA actively supports the work and goals of the ELCA's director of American Indian and Alaska Native Ministries, the American Indian and Alaska Native Advisory Team, and the American Indian and Alaska Native Lutheran Association and, further, that this church will actively seek their counsel, in order to deepen our understanding of the oppression and colonized histories lived and remembered by American Indian and Alaska Native Peoples, as well as to gain insight on the present situations of injustices experienced by and opportunities that lie before American Indian and Alaska Native Peoples; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA encourage its membership, and especially its leadership, to educate themselves about American Indian and Alaska Native Peoples; starting with the tribes and Peoples whose reservations and/or nations are nearest us, then the tribes and Peoples who first inhabited the lands whereupon church buildings now sit; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA actively explore funding opportunities to better serve American Indian and Alaska Native Peoples and social services organizations that provide direct services such as the Oaks Indian Mission, Lakota Lutheran Center, Navajo Lutheran Mission and others, so that they may have sufficient resources to feed and house children and families in serious poverty; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA periodically encourage synods and congregations to go beyond mission trips to American Indian and Alaska Native communities and become active advocates for and supporters of them; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA commits to being a part of dreaming, praying and working together with American Indian and Alaska Native Peoples for a reconciled and hopeful future, recognizing that immediate action and long-term commitment are required for renewed, healthy and responsible relationships to be built.

Rationale of the Reference and Counsel Committee

The Reference and Counsel Committee receives the motion with gratitude. We acknowledge ongoing efforts of American Indian and Alaska Native Ministries in the ELCA. We also recognize that we have for too long as a church failed to act more intentionally on and to educate each other about issues of justice for American Indian and Alaska Native peoples. The Churchwide Assembly is unable to endorse the United Nations document that it has not yet read and studied. There is further work to be done if we are to seriously move forward with the goals of this motion.

Churchwide Assembly action (CA13.06.29)

To refer Motion N to the Congregational and Synodical Mission and Global Mission units.

Church Council action (CC13.11.69l)

To refer Motion N: American Indian and Alaska Native Peoples to the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit, in consultation with the Global Mission unit and the working group of the ELCA American Indian and Alaska Native Ministries Program; and

To request that a report and possible recommendations be presented to the November 2014 meeting of the Church Council.

Background from the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit (November 2014)

Following is a summary of the scope of the work that will need to be addressed by the American Indian and Alaska Natives (AIAN) Ministry Program in the coming months.

Motion J First Resolved Recommendations:

1. Create a working group by the American Indian and Alaska Natives (AIAN) Ministry Program:
 - a. Recommend guidelines for this church on ways to approach and offer invitation to Indian Nations to bring greetings to ELCA churchwide events;
 - b. Consider other questions, including:
 - i. Types and sizes of events that might be appropriate for greetings,
 - ii. Cost estimates for participation in such events,
 - iii. Consideration of how they will be funded; and
 - c. Recommend guidelines to the American Indian and Alaska Native communities on acceptable ways to provide greetings at ELCA events.

Motion J Second Resolved Recommendations:

1. A series of six 5-minute educational videos to be used at appropriate ELCA events, introducing:
 - a. The Lutheran historical commitment to accompany American Indian and Alaska Native peoples in North America, and
 - b. The lifting up of current concerns in Indian Country.
2. The AIAN Ministry Program and the AIAN Lutheran Association
 - a. serve as consultants in the production of the videos, and
 - b. commit to finding partners and advocates...to provide funds for the proposed recommendations.

Motion N First Resolved Recommendations:

1. To acknowledge the benefit of past apologies to bring attention to the communities and issues of AIAN tribes in North America;
2. To commend current and past efforts, by parts of the ELCA, to take action on the intent of this resolved. For example, the Montana Synod not only wrote an apology to the tribal nations of Montana, but also is in the process of going to each nation and hand-delivering the apology, seeking a more meaningful relationship with each nation;
3. To encourage the rest of the ELCA to follow suit and seek out face-to-face engagement with tribal nations closest to their locations; and
4. To encourage closer collaboration of ELCA staff and bishops with the National Congress of American Indians and find common cause with each other.

Motion N Second Resolved Recommendations:

1. To commend past and current relationships between ELCA staff and AIAN leaders, including ELCA advocacy staff collaborating on the Violence Against Women Act amendments and the Office of the Presiding Bishop staff's inviting comment on the Justice for Women statement by Wendy Helgemo (Ho-Chunk), a senior congressional staffer and member of the ELCA; and
2. To encourage closer collaboration of ELCA staff and bishops with the National Congress of American Indians in areas of advocacy which are of common cause, including the Conference of Bishops' ready benches.

Motion N Third Resolved Recommendations:

1. Ask the AIAN Working Group to work with the staff of the ELCA Global Mission unit and the Lutheran Office for World Community (LOWC) who have already been following the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of

Indigenous Peoples, in order to come up with recommendations on how to proceed with the intent of this resolved; and

2. Join with our ecumenical partners to address the church's complicity in making the Doctrine of Discovery a foundation of U.S. Federal Indian Law and take actions to repudiate this doctrine.

Motion N Fourth Resolved Recommendations:

1. Encourage Presiding Bishop Eaton to write the President of the United States of America to:
 - a. commend him for his commitment to Native Nations,
 - b. urge him to continue to strengthen government-to-government relationships between tribal nations and the U.S. federal government, and
 - c. urge him to work collaboratively with the National Congress of American Indians on implementation of the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Motion N Fifth Resolved Recommendations:

1. Commend the ELCA in its past and current support of American Indian and Alaska Native ministries in the ELCA and commend the staff of the ELCA, in all its expressions, for its support of these ministries throughout the church;
2. Commend the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit for establishing an interim strategy for accomplishing the work of the AIAN ministry program in, what has been a long-term vacancy in the program director's position;
3. Request that the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit implement the ELCA Church Council's desire for an AIAN working group, which has suffered the consequences of the current position vacancy;
4. Request that the interim program director begin work on revising the ELCA AIAN ministry strategy, which is quite out-dated; and
5. Request that the AIAN Ministry Program begin work on an AIAN leadership initiative:
 - a. For the leadership needs of ELCA AIAN ministries, and
 - b. In collaboration with the Council of Native American Ministries, to address leadership needs in common in the ecumenical AIAN arena.

Motion N Sixth Resolved Recommendations:

1. Following the recommendations to Motion J, ask the AIAN working group to create a series of five-minute educational videos, by curating current products or adapting them to the format and intent of this resolved, such as: previous Commission for Multicultural Ministries videos, resources from Select Learning/Seraphim Communications, the Native Nations collaborative, videos produced by our full-communion partners; and
2. Encourage all expressions of the ELCA to find ways in which to have face-to-face engagement with the American Indian and/or Alaska Native communities around them.

Motion N Seventh Resolved Recommendations:

1. Request that the ELCA AIAN Ministries program director work with appropriate staff of the Mission Advancement unit (MA) in creating a communications and marketing strategy for the Native American Ministries Endowment Fund, so that it may be further strengthened, in order to support the intention of this resolved;
2. Utilize the existing Multicultural Resources Fund to create interpretive products for the purpose of this resolved; and
3. Work with ELCA Program Director for Community Development and the Poverty and Justice Ministries Team-Congregational and Synodical Mission, to create a consultation plan for ELCA AIAN ministries to take advantage of the capacity-building workshops and related processes to increase and stabilize their financial capacity.

Motion N Eighth Resolved Recommendations:

1. Request that the AIAN ministry program work with appropriate MA staff to develop a communications vehicle to inform all the expressions of the ELCA of the state of its AIAN ministries, the issues of concern in these communities and opportunities for learning and service in these communities; and

2. Request that a new Indigenous Institute be planned to coincide with the 2015 National Congress of American Indians annual meeting, held in San Diego, CA in November 2015 and to make strategic invitations to Directors for Evangelical Mission and other synod leaders to participate in this Institute, so that they become stronger allies with American Indian and Alaska Native communities.

Motion N Ninth Resolved Recommendations:

1. To commit to the intent of these resolutions and these recommended actions to fulfill them, providing prayer support and resources to this end, as the Creator allows and we are able; and
2. To commend the current work of the ELCA American Indian and Alaska Native ministry program, the American Indian and Alaska Native Lutheran Association, and the Native Ministry Team, who have already engaged many of these resolutions and commend all those in the ELCA who have supported this work and have shown a commitment to them.

Concluding commentary on these resolutions and the work of the ELCA in American Indian and Alaska Native communities

Two unfortunate vacancies in the position of program director for American Indian and Alaska Native ministries of the ELCA, and the programmatic void that occurred as a result of them, have delayed the implementation of the Church Council's actions. However, by devoting staff time during the interim and a resurgence of efforts among the ELCA and many of its full-communication partners, there is a reason for confidence that this will no longer be the case. Many of us greatly appreciate the patience of the Church Council, and we anticipate good things to come in the near future. In reality, this work has not stopped just because of a programmatic vacancy. Our ELCA ministries in AIAN communities continue to struggle and grow. There are challenges and there are new opportunities that present themselves. We thank you for your partnership in this work.

Church Council action:

To thank the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit for its response;

To acknowledge the challenges of accomplishing the broad scope of the work due to diminished staff capacity;

To encourage the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit to continue its ongoing efforts in implementing the recommendations outlined in its response, including establishment of an AIAN working group; and

To encourage all expressions of the ELCA to work on renewed, healthy and responsible relationships with American Indian and Alaska Native Peoples.

E. Fossil Fuels

Churchwide Assembly Action (CA13.03.07f)

To receive with gratitude the memorials of the Oregon, Northwest Washington and New England synods regarding climate change and fossil fuels;

To reaffirm the commitment of this church to:

1. confess that both our witness to God's goodness in creation and our acceptance of caregiving responsibility have often been weak and uncertain;
2. support and encourage synods, congregations, members, the churchwide organization, and agencies and institutions of this church that are working to reduce their use of fossil fuels and improve their stewardship of energy resources;
3. support and encourage synods, congregations, members, the churchwide organization, and agencies and institutions of this church to adopt and advocate for policies that reduce energy use, and with it our dependence on fossil fuels, as an expression of this church's commitment to address climate change and to care for God's creation;
4. support and encourage synods, congregations, members, the churchwide organization, and agencies and institutions of this church to re-examine lifestyles and environmental footprints as they relate to the climate crisis and to improve their stewardship of energy resources and promote care for God's creation;

To refer the matter of evaluating the feasibility and advisability of developing revised or additional investment screens and related recommendations to the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit with the request that it ask the Corporate Social Responsibility Team to provide a report with possible recommendations to the November 2014 meeting of the ELCA Church Council; and

To forward any possible revisions of these policies to the separately incorporated ministries, agencies and institutions of this church for implementation as appropriate.

Background from the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit (November 2014)

In an effort to fulfill the actions set out by the Churchwide Assembly related to fossil fuels, the ELCA engaged in a campaign during the summer of 2014 to support the Environmental Protection Agency's proposed rules to reduce carbon emissions, which would diminish the use of fossil fuels in the United States. The following is an overview of the Clean Air Campaign/ Climate Change actions:

- ELCA Lutheran leaders throughout the country attended and gave testimony at all public hearings on the Environmental Protection Agency's proposed rules for carbon emissions at power plants. Speakers included:
 - Rev. Leah Schade (Pa.), Rev. Paul Lubold (Pa.), Rev. Bill Rosenow (D.C.), Ms. Mary Minette (D.C.), Rev. Edward Wolff (Tenn.), Dr. James White (director for the Institute for Arctic Alpine Research and member of Trinity Lutheran Church, Colo.), Rev. Robert Moss (Colo.)
- In our campaign in support of the Environmental Protection Agency's proposed rules on carbon emissions at power plants throughout the United States, we encouraged Lutherans to send comments to the EPA.
 - We have received 1,182 paper and electronic comments to send to the EPA so far. We will be presenting these comments to Gina McCarthy, administrator for the EPA, this month.
- We encouraged Lutherans to sign an interfaith climate petition to global leaders, letting them know that Lutherans support action to combat climate change.
 - As of Oct. 1 we have collected 1,219 signatures in support of the Climate Petition.
- Hundreds of Lutherans (an estimated 350) traveled to New York City for the People's Climate March as part of the Interfaith Contingent. Those representing the Lutheran faith were one of the largest groups present at a march of more than 400,000 people.
- This year we have doubled the number of Lutherans in our network who are active on Environmental issues.

The corporate social responsibility team did evaluate the feasibility of developing revised or additional investment screens. It was determined that no additional investment screens are needed at this time. However, there is a recommended revision to the Environment Social Criteria Investment Screen. The social criteria investment screen, "Environment," is available in the Program and Services materials and will be reviewed by the committee during its meeting in November 2014.

Church Council action:

To receive the response from the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit; and

To affirm the continued efforts in supporting and encouraging all expressions of this church to reduce their use of fossil fuels and improve their stewardship of energy resources.

F. Hydraulic Fracturing

Background from the 2013 Churchwide Assembly Memorials Committee: Category B1

The issues surrounding hydraulic fracturing are complex and diverge significantly from place to place. Rural landowners, including some ELCA congregations and ministries, have benefitted financially from leasing to drilling companies, but other parts of these communities may be suffering from environmental or social impacts related to drilling. The moratorium on hydraulic fracturing suggested by the New England synod in its memorial is a solution that some communities might embrace, while others would not. For that reason, it would be difficult for the ELCA, as a national church, to endorse a single approach to this complex issue.

Given the complexity of these issues, including a number of environmental and economic factors, and the variety of important and valid perspectives held by ELCA members and communities on this issue, a dialog, as suggested by the Upper Susquehanna Synod's memorial, could be constructive and helpful for this church body. Convening such conversations could both underscore the challenges in finding a single policy solution for such a complex issue and lead

to new understanding and new approaches as we live out our shared commitments to addressing hunger and poverty, supporting rural communities, and caring for God's creation.

Churchwide Assembly action (CA13.03.07e)

To receive with gratitude the memorials of the Upper Susquehanna and New England synods regarding hydraulic fracturing;

To thank the Upper Susquehanna and New England synods for raising an important issue and for their continued partnership as advocates for a cleaner energy future for our communities and for God's creation;

To recognize the complexity of issues surrounding hydraulic fracturing and the divergent views of this practice that exist within the ELCA;

To support and lift up the ongoing and evolving work of ELCA advocacy ministries of the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit to monitor and engage issues related to hydraulic fracturing; and

To encourage all ELCA synods, congregations and members to inform and educate themselves through the lens of the social statements Caring for Creation (1993), Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All (1999), and Genetics, Faith, and Responsibility (2011) about the issues pertaining to hydraulic fracturing by engaging in 1) grassroots conversation, 2) the sharing of pertinent stories, and 3) workshops and study groups to discern the theological, moral and ethical facets of this practice.

Background from the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit (November 2014)

The corporate social responsibility team addressed the issues outlined in the churchwide action on Hydraulic Fracturing in the "Extractive Industries Issue Paper" document found in the Program and Services materials. By addressing all extractive practices, with a particular emphasis on populations and locations most severely impacted by extractive practices such as hydraulic fracturing, the corporate social responsibility team has provided a framework within which further educational efforts can be made.

Another first step was the inclusion of hydraulic fracturing as part of the advocacy presentations given at both the Western North Dakota Synod and Western Iowa Synod assemblies.

Consideration related to further educational efforts is a part of the corporate social responsibility team's standing agenda.

Church Council action:

To receive the response from the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit; and

To encourage the educational efforts in addressing the issues surrounding hydraulic fracturing.

G. Immigration Reform

Churchwide Assembly action (CA13.03.08)

To receive with gratitude the memorials of the Northeastern Pennsylvania, Lower Susquehanna, New Jersey, Southwestern Pennsylvania and Metropolitan Washington, D.C., synods regarding comprehensive immigration reform;

To advocate for the adoption of comprehensive immigration reform legislation, consistent with guidance articulated in the ELCA message on "Immigration" and as set forth by Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services:

- Provide an earned pathway to lawful permanent residency and eventual citizenship for undocumented immigrants and their families
- Ensure the humane and just enforcement of U.S. immigration laws, specifically by reducing the use of immigration detention and expanding the use of community support programs for immigrants who do not need to be detained
- Protect families from separation and ensure an adequate supply of visas for families seeking to reunite
- Provide adequate resources and protections to ensure the successful integration of refugees, asylees, survivors of torture and trafficking, unaccompanied minors, and other vulnerable migrants
- Ensure the protection of U.S. citizen and migrant workers;

This legislation should provide a reasonable path to citizenship for undocumented individuals currently living and working in the United States, and set fair immigration quotas that are not discriminatory;

To call on rostered leaders, in their preaching and teaching, to promote an understanding of immigration issues that addresses welcome, promotes concern for the vulnerable, and calls believers to foster the highest possible level of moral discourse in church and society;

To call on congregations to engage in prayerful, reasoned discussion and education on issues related to immigration, availing themselves of resources prepared by the ELCA and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service;

To call on rostered leaders and congregations of the ELCA to communicate with the President of the United States, Senators, and Members of Congress, to develop and pass such comprehensive immigration reform legislation in the current session; and

To call on the presiding bishop of this church to continue to communicate to members of Congress the ELCA's position on immigration reform.

Church Council action (CC13.11.69h)

To request the Congregational and Synodical Mission Unit, in consultation with the Office of the Presiding Bishop and the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, to bring a report on the ELCA advocacy activities related to comprehensive immigration reform by the November 2014 meeting of the Church Council.

Background from the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit (November 2014)

Although the U.S. Senate led in April 2013 with its passage of a long-awaited and long-fought-for humane Comprehensive Immigration Reform package, House leadership has yet to follow the Senate's lead and will unlikely vote on any positive immigration reform measures in the lame duck session ahead. Sadly, the legislation that passed the Senate expires at the close of 2014 with the end of this congressional session. Therefore, the probability of the passage any sort of comprehensive immigration reform legislation, particularly any that reflect Lutheran principles and values, is slight at best until the advent of a new administration in 2017 and renewed political will in Congress.

As Congress fails to deliver overdue solutions to our outdated and inadequate immigration laws, President Obama is expected to take some steps to provide relief to a segment of the current undocumented population. Administrative steps hold the most promise for short-term fixes to the immigration system.

Regardless of how truculent the current political environment may be in regard to the possibility of a good immigration reform package, Lutherans continue to keep up the fight toward justice and family unity. Quite contrary to Congress's culture of impasse, Lutherans continue to engage on a whole array of immigration-related issues with eyes kept on comprehensive legislative solutions and federal agency practices and procedures:

- In the wake of the dramatic increase of children and families crossing the southern border of the United States, Lutherans, through the leadership of Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) and affiliates like Lutheran Social Services of Texas, along with Lutheran Disaster Response and the ELCA Advocacy Office, reached out to the administration and to Congress to request that proper funding be made available to meet the children's basic needs without detracting from important work to resettle traditional refugees. Because the federal agency that cares for children who arrive alone also resettles refugees, the increase in arrivals of unaccompanied children resulted in a cut in programming for refugee services. LIRS sought supplemental funding to ensure that both vulnerable populations received the support they need, and continues to fight for adequate funding through the appropriations process.
- Lutherans also advocated for ensured access to legal counsel and continue to work to ensure that children are kept safe and held in child-appropriate settings while awaiting the adjudication of their legal status. LIRS worked with the administration to ensure that children were placed in the least restrictive and as small a setting as possible, with a strong emphasis on foster care. LIRS has also led the way in working to ensure safe release of minors to relatives already living in the United States. This has meant advocacy with the administration to work toward the guarantee of adequate post-release follow-up services as a means of helping to safeguard children from possible abuse, trafficking, or neglect as well as a means of helping families navigate the Byzantine immigration system that currently exists.
- While the number of children and families crossing the border has diminished to some extent since the peak of arrivals this past summer, the numbers of children arriving alone and with parents has truly been astounding. In response, the administration has re-instituted the obsolete and inhumane practice of family detention and is increasingly holding newly arrived mothers and their babies, toddlers and teens in immigration detention facilities. In response to this, LIRS is advocating strongly with the administration to release families into communities, with proper case management support, such as under the care of a Welcoming Congregation. The

ELCA Advocacy Office is working in conjunction with LIRS on this issue and is considering, if capacity allows, a possible advocacy campaign on this issue in the year to come. LIRS has begun to directly speak with Lutheran churches and pastors as a way to educate and mobilize Lutherans around this issue and to help Lutherans understand how a comprehensive immigration reform package could help end family detention in the United States.

- Another Lutheran effort toward showing compassion and welcome for migrants and refugees is one led by Lutheran pastor, the Rev. Alexia Salvatierra, called Guardian Angels. The Guardian Angels is a response to the crisis of unaccompanied migrant children crossing the U.S./Mexican border. Recent studies have shown that roughly 60 percent of the children appear to have credible asylum cases (many connected to the potential for murder or trafficking by organized crime in their home countries.) While the House passed a bill on Aug. 1, 2014, only allowing children (without any guarantee of legal representation) seven days to prove their asylum case, the Senate did not concur. However, federal immigration courts have implemented faster initial hearings for unaccompanied children and families released from detention. These faster hearings, known as the “rocket docket,” negatively impact the ability to find legal representation necessary to mount a challenge to deportation. All children who arrive to the United States without valid visas are placed into deportation proceedings and have no right to government-appointed counsel. This is a confusing and anguishing time for their caregivers, many of whom don’t know what to do or how to help. The National Lawyers’ Guild is currently engaged in a suit to gain the provision of legal counsel for these children. They need court observers who are trained to watch for violations of the trafficking laws and report them to the guild. The Guardian Angels program is designed to engage immigrant and non-immigrant congregational members in accompanying these children and families to court, both for pastoral support and to document violations. Guardian Angels may also be in a position to advocate in other ways (e.g. write letters to authorities on behalf of particular children and families). The Welcoming Congregations Network of the Southwest California Synod is in partnership with the National Lawyers’ Guild to train volunteers and link them with families. Volunteers attend court at a time and date when the unaccompanied migrant children are going through the court process, wearing t-shirts that identify them and being available to pastorally support families. The National Lawyers’ Guild offices are across from the court so the most efficient way to structure the program is for the assigned volunteers to meet at their offices to be briefed on the cases for the day before going across the street. The National Lawyers’ Guild will also inform the court about the Guardian Angels project. Volunteer training sessions are currently being scheduled by the National Lawyers’ Guild (legal counsel) and LIRS (a webinar on effective ministry to children and families).
- While Congress keeps immigration reform in limbo, millions of immigrants must suffer the consequences of this inaction. Approximately 300 churches across the country, through the leadership of the Interfaith Immigration Coalition*, are responding to the immediate needs of immigrants by providing sanctuary. One such congregation is Augustana Lutheran Church in Portland, Ore., which has committed to hosting at least one undocumented man. His case marks the first time in recent years that an immigrant has been granted sanctuary inside an Oregon church. During the past decade, as reform has stalled, it is perceived by some that churches around the country have offered refuge to immigrants who lack legal status because immigration officials generally do not arrest people inside churches and other places of worship.
- Because comprehensive immigration reform is currently stalled in Congress, the push now is for some fixes on the administrative front that could ease some of the burden immigrants face while awaiting Congress’ eventual passage of an immigration reform package. The following are what Lutheran pastors and congregations, such as Reformation Lutheran in Washington, D.C., are asking of the administration:
 - Renew and Expand Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals;
 - Expand Use of Prosecutorial Discretion and Amend Civil Enforcement Priorities;
 - End Secure Communities and 287(g) Agreements;
 - Reform Deportation Policies and Practices;
 - Reform Detention Policies and End the Detention Bed Mandate;
 - Expand Implementation of the Rule on Provisional Unlawful Presence Waivers;
 - Respect Department of Labor Actions and Parental Rights;
 - Increase Opposition to Anti-Immigrant State Policies; and
 - Prioritize Funding to Promote Immigrant Integration and Protect Vulnerable Populations.

* The ELCA is a member of Interfaith Immigration Coalition.

Church Council action:

To receive the report from the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit on current ELCA advocacy activities related to comprehensive immigration reform; and

To affirm the ongoing work of this church and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services on this issue.

H. Gender Identity Discrimination

Churchwide Assembly action (CA13.03.07a) Category A1

To receive with gratitude the memorials of the Eastern North Dakota, Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana, Eastern Washington-Idaho, South-Central Synod of Wisconsin, Southwestern Texas, Saint Paul Area, Sierra Pacific, Northwest Washington, Greater Milwaukee, Southwest California, Minneapolis Area, Metropolitan New York, Northwestern Minnesota, Upstate New York, Northeastern Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Southwestern Minnesota, Southwestern Pennsylvania, Metropolitan Washington, D.C., and Indiana/Kentucky* synods regarding their concern for the important issue of employment non-discrimination and their common cause in memorializing the 2013 Churchwide Assembly;

To acknowledge the continued lack of state and federal anti-discrimination workplace laws addressing the categories of sexual identity and gender identity and the recent and recurring proposals concerning the employment non-discrimination legislation, including a proposal to provide a religious exemption;

To recommit this church to principles of non-discrimination in employment and to call for other employers to engage in similar practices;

To affirm the work by the ELCA advocacy ministries and Corporate Social Responsibility Team in supporting employment non-discrimination legislation and request that they continue to support legislation that opposes workplace discrimination;

To request that the presiding bishop of this church communicate to members of Congress the support of the ELCA for legislation that prohibits employment discrimination on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity while providing for religious exemptions; and

To encourage all ELCA synods, congregations, and members to add their voices in support of legislation that prohibits employment discrimination on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity.

Church Council action (CC13.11.69f)

To request the Congregational and Synodical Mission Unit, in consultation with the Office of the Presiding Bishop, to bring a report on the ELCA advocacy activities related to Gender Identity Discrimination by the November 2014 meeting of the Church Council.

Background from the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit (November 2014)

With inter-religious coalition members, the ELCA helped in a federal legislative effort late last year to push the Employment Non-Discrimination Act through to final passage.

On November 7, 2013, with concerted advocacy from faith-based leadership in partnership with other sectors, the Senate passed Employment Non-Discrimination Act. However, as with many pieces of legislation, House leadership referred the bill to its Workforce Protections Subcommittee.

During the winter and spring of 2014, a coalition of partners including the ELCA, worked to garner House support to move the bill through committee. Meetings to encourage House representatives, requests to the business community for support and work to further concretize interfaith support made up the bulk of the work over the first months of the year.

However, advocacy work to support Employment Non-Discrimination Act in the House diminished and has practically stopped as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender coalition partner groups began to pull out of the Employment Non-Discrimination Act fight due to the Supreme Court's Hobby Lobby decision.

While there are no other pieces of legislation that address gender identity discrimination solely moving in either the House or Senate, the ELCA continues to assess and address other advocacy work through a gender lens. Examples of how this is realized in the ELCA's advocacy portfolio include recommending that issues around gender identity discrimination as it relates to mass incarceration, asylum issues, as well as the International Violence Against Women's Act are addressed in legislative language. The ELCA also continues to raise the issue of Gender Identity Discrimination

as it works with the administration. In a meeting with Labor Secretary Thomas Perez, ELCA advocacy staff noted the churchwide commitment to end gender discrimination in the workplace and encouraged Secretary Perez to do what can be done through executive order on this issue. In the area of housing, the ELCA has done the same encouragement through appropriate channels with Housing Urban Development.

Church Council action:

**To receive the response from the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit; and
To request the ELCA Advocacy Office continue its efforts in supporting legislation and policies to protect civil rights and to prohibit discrimination in housing, employment and public services.**

I. State and Commonwealth

Churchwide Assembly Motion B: Constitution

To amend †S3.01. by striking “state” in the last line and substituting the word “Commonwealth,” and to amend 10.01.11. by striking the word “state” in the fifth line and substituting the word “commonwealth,” striking the final comma in the same line and substitute the word “and,” and striking the word “state” in the last line and substituting the word “commonwealth.”

Churchwide Assembly action (CA13.05.16)

To refer this matter to the Office of the Secretary with a requested report to the Church Council by the fall of 2014.

Background from the Office of the Secretary

Currently all references are to “the state of . . .,” and four of the states refer to themselves as “commonwealths.” This resolution was presented by a pastor from Pennsylvania. It is the opinion of the secretary that this change does not need to be made at this time. The constitution of the United States refers only to states and not to states and commonwealths. The website for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (pa.gov) self-identifies as the “Keystone State.” While it is appropriate to refer to the Commonwealths of Virginia, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and Kentucky, it is not standard practice to do so when referring to them along with states that are not commonwealths. All commonwealths are states.

Church Council action:

**To receive the response from the Office of the Secretary; and
To decline to amend this church’s constitutions by striking the word ‘state’ and substituting the word ‘commonwealth.’**

J. Term Limits for Officers

Churchwide Assembly: Motion I

To amend the Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America by inserting the following provisions:

- 13.23. No person shall be eligible to be elected to a third consecutive six-year executive term to the office of presiding bishop.
- 13.33. No person shall be eligible to be elected to a third consecutive six-year term to the position of vice president.
- 13.43. No person shall be eligible to be elected to a third consecutive six-year term to the office of secretary.

Rationale of the Reference and Counsel Committee

The Reference and Counsel Committee receives the motion with gratitude. We are not advocating for or against term limits.

The proposed resolution requested consideration of term limits for all officers selected by the Churchwide Assembly. In the coming days, we will have many conversations about this assembly’s decisions. The conversations about leadership

needs and our future elections are already taking place. The proposed motion engages one of many points of conversation.

Recommendation of the Reference and Counsel Committee

To refer this resolution to the ELCA Church Council and Conference of Bishops for broad-based conversation beginning in spring 2014 (for example – inviting the input of our vice presidents) with a possible report by the November 2015 meeting of the Church Council with sufficient time for potentially bringing action to the 2016 Churchwide Assembly.

The items for attention include:

- Identification of the needs of the Churchwide Organization for each office (that are deeper than the constitutional descriptions);
- Identifying leaders to potentially serve; and
- Conversation about possible limitation of duration in terms.

Churchwide Assembly action (CA13.06.28)

To refer Motion I to the Church Council and Conference of Bishops for broad-based conversation (e.g. inviting the input of synodical vice presidents) beginning in spring 2014 with a possible report to the Church Council at its November 2015 meeting and recommendations to the 2016 Churchwide Assembly.

The items for attention include identifying the needs of the churchwide organization for each office that are deeper than the constitutional descriptions, identifying leaders to potentially serve, and discussing the possible limitation of duration in terms.

Church Council action (CC13.11.69k)

To refer Motion I: Term Limits to the Office of the Secretary, in consultation with the Conference of Bishops and the Office of the Presiding Bishop; and

To request that a report with possible recommendations be brought to the November 2015 meeting of the Church Council.

Background from the Office of the Secretary (November 2014)

In surveying synod bishops, vice presidents and secretaries, Secretary Chris Boerger learned that 18 synods have term limits for bishops, 37 have term limits for vice presidents, 30 have term limits for secretary, and 27 have term limits for treasurer.

In response to the question, “Do you believe your synod would favor or oppose a two-term limit for churchwide officers?” 33 percent were in favor, 22 percent were opposed, and 45 percent were not sure. The comments section noted the strength of having new ideas and new perspectives as a reason for term limits. Loss of experience and corporate memory were the most common negatives noted. Several comments were made about an election as a form of term limits.

While there was some enthusiasm expressed for this concept, there was also some strong opposition. This issue has also been the subject of synod memorials three times in the life of this church. On all three occasions, the request to establish term limits was declined by the Churchwide Assembly.

Therefore, Secretary Boerger does not recommend that this church amend the constitution to establish two-term limits for churchwide officers. He will be working with a group from the Executive Committee to look at officer election processes. He does not anticipate that term limits will be part of that discussion.

Church Council action:

To receive the response from the Office of the Secretary; and

To decline to amend the ELCA Constitution to establish term limits for churchwide officers.