




Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

November 15, 2017

TO: Bishops of synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
 Vice presidents of synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
 Secretaries of synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
 Members of the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
 Administrative Team of the churchwide organization
 Chief executive officers of separately incorporated ministries
 Seminary leaders

FROM: 
 The Rev. Wm Chris Boerger, secretary

SUBJECT: Report of Church Council Responses to Synod Resolutions
 and Churchwide Assembly Actions (November 9-12, 2017)

I. RESPONSES TO SYNOD RESOLUTIONS

A. Dakota Access Pipeline protest	Page 1
B. The Role of the Church in Combating Antimicrobial Resistance	Page 2
C. Mission Support and Benevolence	Page 3
D. Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service	Page 4
E. Ministry Support and Protection for Immigrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers	Page 5
F. "Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust" (2009)	Page 6

II. RESPONSES TO CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY ACTIONS

A. Increase Suicide Prevention Research Funding	Page 7
B. Time of Prayer and Worship Resources on Human Trafficking	Page 8
C. Examining the implications of becoming a sanctuary denomination	Page 9
D. Report on Criminal Justice Social Statement	Page 10
E. Peace with Justice in the Holy Land	Page 13
F. Gender Identity	Page 14
G. Compensation for the Council Vice President	Page 15
H. Resolution on call process (Motion F)	Page 16
I. African Descent Lutherans	Page 17
J. Strategy Toward Authentic Diversity within the ELCA (Motion B)	Page 19
K. Amendment of the Environment Social Criteria Investment Screen	Page 22

I. RESPONSE TO SYNOD RESOLUTION

A. Dakota Access Pipeline protest

Western North Dakota Synod (3A) [2017]

RESOLVED, that the Western North Dakota Synod Assembly acknowledge, with tears in our hearts, the suffering endured by all who were involved, and pray for the earth and all those who suffered during this time of distress, anger and fear; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Western North Dakota Synod Assembly praises God and those who served, including the leaders of the State of North Dakota, local agency leaders, the Standing Rock Sioux and all who engaged in the act of upholding the law and protecting all people; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Western North Dakota Synod Assembly highly approves of the wisdom of its bishop and also commends the actions of the Standing Rock Council who kept the peace; and be it further

RESOLVED, that any and all statements made in support for one side or another on behalf of the ELCA, publicly, would be done only after thorough and prayerful discussion of the issues with tribal, local, state, national and religious

leaders, including those affected, while making diligent efforts to become fully informed, to learn and reflect, before a national proclamation is made; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Western North Dakota Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America now take the opportunity to better understand the historical, environmental and other issues; and be it further

RESOLVED, that we now strive to learn more about the issues from the leaders — including tribal, local, state, national and religious — so that we can begin to heal the wounds resulting from the events and to work together for a better relationship among the citizens of North Dakota; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Western North Dakota Synod Assembly direct the Synod Council to forward this resolution to the Church Council's Executive Committee for referral and disposition to the appropriate unit or office of the churchwide organization in accordance with the bylaws and continuing resolutions of this church.

Executive Committee action [EC17.08.19c]

To receive the resolution from the Western North Dakota Synod on the Dakota Access Pipeline protests;

To refer the resolution to the Domestic Mission unit for a report or for a timeline on when this resolution will receive further action; and

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

Response from the Domestic Mission unit (November 2017)

In a face-to-face conversation, Western North Dakota Synod Bishop Mark E. Narum shared the intention of the “Dakota Access Pipeline protest” resolution with Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton and the Rev. Stephen P. Bouman, executive director of the Domestic Mission unit. He said the intention of the resolution was to seek a wider conversation with others, including those affected, before a statement from the churchwide organization is released, and together they discussed what might be helpful as this church moves forward. It was noted that both the Western North Dakota Synod and the churchwide organization are both still processing the events of the Dakota Access Pipeline protest. In the midst of this work, there continue to be issues to wrestle with as we learn about people's experiences. The churchwide organization's intention is to continue talking with the American Indian and Alaska Native community about lessons learned from the various responses to the Dakota Access Pipeline protests. In addition, the churchwide organization will consider sending the ELCA Advocacy staff to listen and hear from ranchers, farmers, American Indians and energy conservationists as this church strives to become fully informed and to learn and reflect on issues, such as the upcoming work for the 2018 Farm Bill.

Church Council action:

To thank the Western North Dakota Synod for its resolution regarding “Dakota Access Pipeline Protest”;

To receive the report from the Domestic Mission unit and to encourage the staff's continued efforts to better understand the historical, environmental and other issues; and

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

B. The Role of the Church in Combating Antimicrobial Resistance

Southeastern Synod (9D) [2017]

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod Council request that the ELCA Church Council work to engage with its ecumenical partners, particularly the Roman Catholic Church, to identify areas of mutual interest and future collaboration on this issue [combating antimicrobial resistance]; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod Council request that the ELCA Church Council include information regarding the fight against antimicrobial resistance in existing churchwide efforts to eliminate health disparities (e.g., clean water initiatives, malaria prevention, etc.); and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod Council request that the synod's Health Ministry Task Force work through the bishop's office to engage its partner synods, domestically and internationally, to promote awareness and share ideas concerning best practices to combat antimicrobial resistance.

Executive Committee action [EC17.08.19e]

- To receive the resolution from the Southeastern Synod on Combating Antimicrobial Resistance;
- 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 action; and
- To request the secretary of this church inform the synod of this action.

Response from the Office of the Presiding Bishop (November 2017)

The staff in the Office of the Presiding Bishop consulted with colleagues in the Global Mission unit as that unit's staff has more expertise on antimicrobial resistance. The churchwide organization does not have specific programs addressing antimicrobial resistance. The program director for diakonia and the program director for health and sustainable development in Global Mission will look at other support that the churchwide organization provides more broadly for testing and capacity-building. Global Mission will take the lead on this response. Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations in the Office of the Presiding Bishop will offer consultation as needed with respect to engaging ecumenical partners on the issue. A further response to the Southeastern Synod resolution will be submitted by the April 2018 Church Council meeting.

Church Council action:

- To thank the Southeastern Synod for its resolution regarding “The Role of the Church in Combating Antimicrobial Resistance”;**
- To receive the report from the Office of the Presiding Bishop and to request a further response from the Global Mission unit by the April 2018 Church Council meeting; and**
- To request that the secretary of this church inform the synod of this action.**

C. Mission Support and Benevolence

Southeastern Minnesota Synod (3I) [2017]

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Minnesota Synod, in assembly, encourage the use of “mission support” instead of “benevolence” in all congregational, synodical and churchwide communications; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Minnesota Synod, in assembly, request the ELCA Church Council to change the wording of the Model Constitution for Congregations in C12.05.e. to read: “The Congregational Council shall ascertain that the financial affairs of this congregation are being conducted efficiently, giving particular attention to the prompt payment of all obligations and to the regular forwarding of **benevolence-mission support** monies to the synodical treasurer.”

Executive Committee action [EC17.06.16]

- To receive the resolution from the Southeastern Minnesota Synod encouraging the use of “mission support” instead of “benevolence”;
- 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; and
- To request that the secretary of this church inform the synod of this action.

Response from the Office of the Secretary (November 2017)

Secretary Wm Chris Boerger, at the June 2017 Executive Committee meeting, informed the committee that replacing “benevolence” with “mission support” will be among the constitutional amendments recommended for the 2019 Churchwide Assembly.

Church Council action:

- To thank the Southeastern Minnesota Synod for its resolution regarding “Mission Support and Benevolence”;**
- To anticipate proposed constitutional amendments replacing “benevolence” with “mission support” that may be recommended to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly; and**
- To request that the secretary of this church inform the synod of this action.**

D. Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service

Indiana-Kentucky Synod (6C) [2017]

RESOLVED, that the Indiana-Kentucky Synod will encourage all congregations of the synod to support and engage in the ongoing work of welcoming refugees through Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service and various partner organizations and ministries of this synod; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Indiana-Kentucky Synod recommits to being an advocate and justice seeker for refugees, requests that the synod bishop communicates its concerns to its members of Congress and other federal, state and local elected officials, and encourages all congregations and their members to express their concern for refugees to their elected officials; and be it further

RESOLVED, that all congregations of the Indiana-Kentucky Synod be encouraged to pray for the displaced and refugees around the world, for aid and resettlement organizations, for just and humane government policies that reflect this nation's core values of welcome and inclusivity, and for a world where no one need flee their home for fear of violence, oppression or economic hardship; and be it further

RESOLVED, that each congregation and synod leaders be encouraged to celebrate and give thanks for the rich and diverse gifts that refugees bring to our communities, our states and our nation by annually hosting a Refugee Sunday (www.lirs.org/refugeesunday); and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Indiana-Kentucky Synod Council request the Church Council to direct the presiding bishop to communicate this church's resolute commitment to the resettlement of refugees in the United States and encourage steadfast support for this program to the President and members of Congress.

Executive Committee action [EC17.08.19d]

To receive the resolution from the Indiana-Kentucky Synod on the ongoing work of the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee services and their commitment to aiding refugee;

To refer the resolution to the Domestic Mission unit for a report or for a timeline on when this resolution will receive further action; and

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

Response from the Domestic Mission unit (November 2017)

The Domestic Mission unit is invested in supporting and protecting immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers. This year 56 percent of new start ministries are among immigrant communities and this church is creating a stronger network to connect its work with immigrants through the [Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities](#) (AMMPARO) strategy, which is in its first implementation year. In addition, Domestic Mission and Global Mission continue to strategize and work together with Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) to communicate this church's resolute commitment to the resettlement of refugees and protection of migrants. In fact, the ELCA is the largest core supporter of LIRS.

In January, LIRS initiated and facilitated communication between Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton and U.S. President Donald J. Trump's administration to express and detail this church's support for resettling refugees. Presiding Bishop Eaton made this communication [public in a letter issued on January 30, 2017](#), asking congregations also to engage publicly in support of refugees. In March 2017, Presiding Bishop Eaton, ELCA synod bishops and other Lutheran leaders, in cooperation with LIRS, participated in joint advocacy efforts in Washington, D.C., visiting members of Congress to express support for the U.S. refugee program and efforts to welcome refugees. In June, Presiding Bishop Eaton co-authored a letter with Ms. Linda Hartke, president and chief executive officer of LIRS, [to celebrate World Refugee Day](#) and encourage ELCA congregations to welcome refugees and observe Refugee Sunday. In July, Presiding Bishop Eaton, the Rev. Mark M. Beckwith, bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Newark, and Ms. Hartke, along with staff from both churches, visited the Elizabeth Detention Center for immigrants at the invitation of the Rev. Ramon A. Collazo, an ELCA pastor and chaplain at the center. Throughout the year, ELCA Advocacy has engaged its public communications and advocacy to send messages from LIRS in support of refugee resettlement. Presiding Bishop Eaton sent private communications to the Trump Administration as the President was considering the ceiling he would set on refugee admissions for 2018. Presiding Bishop Eaton has also released statements on immigration issues, [including one when the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals \(DACA\) program was rescinded](#) earlier this year. Her disappointment for the end of the program as well as a call for Congress to pass a bill that permanently protects young Americans without legal status was shared on social media and sent to all congressional offices. The ELCA continues to promote resources for congregational engagement available at www.LIRS.org, and expects to lend support to the Circle of Welcome initiative that provides an opportunity for congregations to engage directly in welcoming refugees.

It is expected that the ELCA and Presiding Bishop Eaton, in cooperation with LIRS, will choose the most strategic opportunity to formally communicate the church's support of refugee resettlement to the President and all members of Congress.

LIRS, Global Mission and Domestic Mission continue to intentionally plan together to protect Central American refugees through the AMMPARO strategy.

Church Council action:

To thank the Indiana-Kentucky Synod for its resolution regarding “Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service” and to receive the report from the Domestic Mission unit;

To thank ELCA Advocacy and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service for its ongoing strategic work in support of refugees and protection of migrants;

To thank the presiding bishop for her continued communications to the U.S. President and members of Congress regarding this church's commitment and support for the resettlement of refugees;

To encourage the staff of the churchwide organization and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service to continue to choose strategic opportunities to communicate to the U.S. President and members of Congress of this church's resolute commitment; and

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

E. Ministry Support and Protection for Immigrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Northwest Washington Synod (1B) [2017]

RESOLVED, that the Northwest Washington Synod give thanks for and affirm the importance of ministry to and among immigrants and refugees and endorse and support the work of Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, Lutheran Services in America and its member organizations, Lutheran Community Services Northwest, the Faith Action Network, and other ELCA-related and affiliated programs and organizations in this work; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northwest Washington Synod — mindful of its identity as a public church for the sake of the world and committed in baptism to strive for justice and peace in all the earth — encourage its members, rostered ministers and bishop to prophetic speech that advocates compassionate immigration reform and refugee relief and resettlement, promotes family unity and further encourages bold actions that will offer safety, companionship and protection for people without regard to immigration status; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northwest Washington Synod request the ELCA Church Council, and memorialize the 2019 ELCA Churchwide Assembly, to request that the presiding bishop communicate this church's resolute commitment to the resettlement of refugees in the United States and encourage steadfast support for this program to the President and Members of Congress.

Executive Committee Action [EC17.08.19a]

To receive the resolution from the Northwest Washington Synod on Ministry Support and Protection for Immigrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers;

To refer the resolution to the Domestic Mission unit for a report or for a timeline on when this resolution will receive further attention; and

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

Response from the Domestic Mission unit (November 2017)

See the response from the Domestic Mission unit that begins on page 4.

Church Council action:

To thank the Northwest Washington Synod for its resolution regarding “Ministry Support and Protection for Immigrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers” and to receive the report from the Domestic Mission unit;

To thank ELCA Advocacy and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service for its ongoing strategic work in support of refugees and protection of migrants;

To thank the presiding bishop for her continued communications to the U.S. President and members of Congress regarding this church's commitment and support for the resettlement of refugees;

To encourage the staff of the churchwide organization and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service to continue to choose strategic opportunities to communicate to the U.S. President and members of Congress of this church's resolute commitment; and

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

F. "Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust" (2009)

Northwest Washington Synod (1B) [2017]

RESOLVED, that the Northwest Washington Synod requests that the Church Council of the ELCA initiate a review and edit of "Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust" to reflect changes in laws and language, as well as the changing faith and secular perspectives on the wide variety of family structures included in this church and society, especially in relation to LGBTQ+ individuals and families; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northwest Washington Synod requests that the Church Council of the ELCA bring a reviewed and edited version of "Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust" to the floor of the 2019 Churchwide Assembly for a vote; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northwest Washington Synod urges rostered and lay leaders throughout this church, including the bishop of the Northwest Washington Synod and the presiding bishop, to continue to publicly speak and act against legislation that discriminates against the LGBTQ+ community in this country, and practices that persecute the LGBTQ+ community globally.

Executive Committee action [EC17.08.19b]

To receive the resolution from the Northwest Washington Synod on the proposed updates to "Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust" (2009);

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 action; and

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

Response from the Office of the Presiding Bishop (November 2017)

The resolution from the Northwest Washington Synod brings into focus the landmark shift in U.S. law regarding marriage rendered by the decision of the Supreme Court of the United States of June 26, 2015, (*Obergefell v. Hodges* 576 U.S.); that decision made marriage possible for same-sex couples in all 50 states. The synod resolution references the rapid and widespread growth in understanding and support for people of all gender identities, gender expressions and sexual orientations as well as other efforts against discriminatory legislation and violence. It claims that discrimination and persecution remain grounded in the language, practices and traditions of faith communities and that the ELCA has "found its way to a different perspective on the LGBTQ+ community that can serve as a faith-based antidote to other faith-based messages...."

For these reasons, the synod's resolution requests three actions. The first requests that the Church Council of the ELCA *initiate* a review and edit of "Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust" (Human Sexuality; 2009) while the second requests that the Church Council *bring* a reviewed and edited version of Human Sexuality to the floor of the 2019 Churchwide Assembly for a vote. The third resolve urges leaders of this church to continue to publicly speak and act against discriminatory legislation violent practice.

The first two resolves are directed as a request for Church Council action in relation to the Churchwide Assembly while the third resolve is a general appeal to ELCA leadership.

While the concerns prompting this request of the Church Council are clearly stated, the actions requested of the Church Council are not possible for it to consider. [Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns](#) (Policies and Procedures) maintain that only a "Churchwide Assembly, by a two-thirds vote, may call for the reconsideration of a social statement at the next assembly" (p. 17). It is possible, then,

only for a churchwide assembly, by a two-thirds vote, to consider authorizing the review and edit of “Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust.” If an assembly did authorize a review and edit, the effort to do so would be referred to the Office of the Presiding Bishop and, in accord with Policies and Procedures, would bring proposed changes and reasons for those changes to the next assembly for consideration.

It is important to explain that this protocol regarding social statements safeguards the status of ELCA social statements as the fundamental teaching authority expressed in documents prepared by this church. In other words, since only a churchwide assembly, as the highest legislative body, can establish a statement, only another churchwide assembly can initiate its editing, revision or removal. All actions, likewise, require two-thirds support.

The synod’s third resolve is a fresh expression of support for existing policy of this church (see, for instance, the 2013 social policy resolution on [Gender Identity Discrimination](#)), and the efforts by ELCA leaders to continue to publicly speak and act against legislation and practices that persecute the LGBTQ+ community globally. It does not specify any legislative action.

Church Council action:

To thank the Northwest Washington Synod for its resolution regarding “Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust;” and

To ask the secretary of this church to communicate to the synod that the actions it requests of the Church Council are not possible for it to consider according to the protocol of “Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns.”

II. RESPONSES TO CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY ACTIONS

The reports of the Memorials Committees to the 2013 Churchwide Assembly and the 2016 Churchwide Assembly include the full texts of the synod memorials to those respective assemblies.

A. Increase Suicide Prevention Research Funding

Churchwide Assembly action [CA16.02.03h]

To receive with gratitude the memorial of the Southeastern Synod regarding Increased Funding for Suicide Prevention Research;

To affirm the commitment of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in its social message on “Suicide Prevention” to call upon this church to advocate for efforts to prevent suicide;

To request that the presiding bishop communicate to the U.S. President and members of Congress the support of the ELCA for doubling, over five years, the federal funding to the National Institutes of Health for suicide prevention research; and

To encourage ELCA synods, congregations, members and the ELCA Advocacy Office in Washington, D.C., to add their voices in support of such action.

Response from the Domestic Mission unit (November 2016)

ELCA Advocacy has taken the lead for the Domestic Mission unit by consulting with the authors of the memorial to discuss the scope of work and opportunities for engagement. Advocacy staff are reaching out to the National Foundation for Suicide Prevention in Washington, D.C., to examine coalition engagement and funding priorities in the 115th Congress that begins January 2017. Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton will be communicating the intent of the memorial to the Administration and members of Congress in consultation with the advocacy staff for the most effective timing. The authors of the memorial, in collaboration with ELCA Advocacy, are currently compiling a list of existing ELCA suicide prevention stakeholders to update for their website to support advocacy efforts of congregations and members. A final report will be made in November 2017 following activity in the 115th Congress and engagement with the relevant congressional committees and leaders.

Church Council action [CC16.11.46r]

To receive the response from the Domestic Mission unit on the timeline and to request a report be received by the November 2017 Church Council meeting.

Response from the Domestic Mission unit (November 2017)

On September 28, 2017, Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton sent a letter to U.S. President Donald J. Trump and congressional leaders on the importance of suicide prevention work in church and society. It concludes, “It is the intent of the ELCA to contribute to our role in preventing the preventable by calling on our congregations, synods and churchwide ministries to a commitment on education, understanding and action. On behalf of the ELCA, I strongly urge you to consider doubling the funding for suicide prevention over the next five years to ensure that both public and private institutions can commit to preventing suicide in our communities.”

Church Council action:

To receive the response from the Domestic Mission unit on “Increase Suicide Prevention Research Funding”; and

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

B. Time of Prayer and Worship Resources on Human Trafficking

Churchwide Assembly action [CA16.02.03k]

To receive with gratitude the memorials of the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin, East-Central Synod of Wisconsin and La Crosse Area Synod calling for a dedicated time of prayer to end human trafficking and to create resources to support congregations in this endeavor;

To encourage congregations to incorporate attention to the issue of human trafficking in their communication and resource development plan and to foster ecumenical and inter-religious cooperation, including dedicated times of prayer each year, such as January 11, Human Trafficking Awareness Day; and

To refer to the worship team within the Office of the Presiding Bishop for its deliberation and discretion the creation of worship resources surrounding the issue of human trafficking and the creation of prayers and litanies for the dedicated time of prayer.

Response from the Office of the Presiding Bishop (November 2016)

In early November, the worship team in the Office of the Presiding Bishop will be meeting with colleagues in Global Mission, Domestic Mission, Theological Discernment and Women of the ELCA to discuss the creation of worship resources regarding human trafficking. We intend to provide a report on the activities by the end of 2017.

Church Council Action [CC16.11.46aa]

To receive the response from the Office of the Presiding Bishop and to anticipate a report by the November 2017 Church Council meeting.

Response from the Office of the Presiding Bishop (November 2017)

The executive for worship met with colleagues from Domestic Mission, Global Mission, Theological Discernment, Women of the ELCA, and Cherish all Children in November 2016. Following that meeting and conference calls that followed, a worship resource, Bible study, and Sunday bulletin insert were created for January 11, National Human Trafficking Day. These resources are available on the [worship page](#) and the [Justice for Women page](#) of ELCA.org. Ongoing, the worship team and theological discernment team will work together to make sure these resources are updated.

Church Council action:

To receive the response from the Office of the Presiding Bishop on “Time of Prayer and Worship Resources on Human Trafficking”;

To commend the resources created for National Human Trafficking Day to congregations; and

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

C. Examining the implications of becoming a sanctuary denomination

(Reference: Sanctuary Background, Appendix to this report)

Churchwide Assembly action [CA16.02.03j]

To receive with gratitude the memorial of the Oregon Synod regarding the sanctuary movement;

To reaffirm the ELCA's partnership with Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service in calling for fair and compassionate immigration policies and practices that keep families together;

To encourage ELCA synods, congregations and members to advocate for legislation that welcomes the stranger to this country and to their communities;

To refer the request to the Domestic Mission unit to examine the opportunities and implications of endorsing the practice of congregations offering sanctuary and of the ELCA declaring itself a sanctuary denomination and request a report and recommendations be provided to the Church Council.

Response from the Domestic Mission unit and Office of the Secretary (November 2016)

The Domestic Mission unit, the general counsel of the ELCA, and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) discussed next steps for the Domestic Mission unit to examine the endorsement of congregations offering sanctuary and to consider the ramifications of the ELCA declaring itself a sanctuary denomination. The group intends to pursue additional conversations with leaders from the Oregon Synod to further understand the purpose and to define terms in the memorial. This conversation may lead to consultation with other denominations and will be followed by research and analysis. The unit expects to bring a report and possible recommendations to the November 2017 meeting of the Council.

Church Council Action [CC16.11.46ee]

To receive the response from the Office of the Secretary and the Domestic Mission unit; and

To anticipate a report with possible recommendations by the November 2017 Church Council meeting.

Response from the Domestic Mission unit in consultation with the Office of the Secretary (November 2017)

Based on the research analysis in "Sanctuary Background," the Domestic Mission unit in consultation with the Office of the Secretary does not recommend that the ELCA go through the process of becoming a sanctuary denomination. Staff recommend that the ELCA have a clear position supporting the protection of migrants through sanctuary under the umbrella of the AMMPARO Strategy. The churchwide organization is committed to giving synods and congregations guidance regarding the new sanctuary movement.

The ELCA already has several pathways for churches and congregants to provide services, advocate and welcome migrants through synod immigration task forces, AMMPARO and LIRS. Synod task forces, LIRS, AMMPARO and formal churchwide actions already call on churches to walk alongside migrants and become part of a Lutheran network working with migrant communities in different capacities. To compliment these networks, the ELCA should verbalize its support for the spirit of the sanctuary movement while calling churches to be involved in activities to protect migrants through our existing networks.

Language addressing the sanctuary movement should:

1. Verbalize support for the sanctuary movement, which is often manifest as an ecumenical or interfaith effort;
2. Provide educational and practical resources and information for congregations as they consider their part in providing sanctuary, including ways for congregations to understand possible legal risks;
3. Encourage synod immigration task forces to be engaged with the sanctuary movement in their area; and
4. Call on all congregations, including current sanctuary congregations, to support the spirit of the new sanctuary movement by serving the migrant communities around them, becoming [Welcoming Congregations](#) and/or joining the [AMMPARO movement](#).

Church Council action:

To thank the Office of the Secretary and the Domestic Mission unit for its responses to "Examining the Implications of Becoming a Sanctuary Denomination";

To decline the request for the ELCA to declare itself a sanctuary denomination;

To support the spirit of the sanctuary movement by encouraging congregations to serve and support the protection of migrants in their communities;

To request the churchwide organization to provide guidance and information regarding the new sanctuary movement under the umbrella of the AMMPARO Strategy; and

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

D. Report on Criminal Justice Social Statement

Churchwide Assembly action [CA13.05.19]

To adopt the following implementing resolutions as amended:

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 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 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 Church Council in the fall of 2017.

Response from the Domestic Mission unit (November 2017)

In recent social statements, an implementing resolution has been included that directed or called upon units of the churchwide organization to provide for accountability and report on implementation. Resolution 11 of "The Church and Criminal Justice: Hearing the Cries" (2013) called for such a report to the Church Council in the fall of 2017.

Christian Education

Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton called this church into deeper conversations about race and racism in “[Confronting Racism: A Holy Yearning](#)”—a live webcast aired on January 14, 2016. This was Presiding Bishop Eaton’s second live webcast on the topic of racism. The January webcast raised the question of the racial disparity in the U.S. criminal justice system, emphasizing the ELCA’s commitment to pray for the incarcerated, their families and communities, and those wrongly convicted, as well as to pray for law enforcers and those who work in the system. The webcast underscored the [denomination’s declaration](#) to name racism as a sin and highlight the ELCA’s ongoing work to eliminate racial, ethnic discrimination in the church and society.

Mr. William B. Horne II, a member of St. Paul’s Lutheran Church in Clearwater, Fla., and vice president of the ELCA, served as webcast host. ELCA members Judge Yolanda Tanner, an associate judge for the Baltimore City Circuit Court addressed racial disparities within the justice system; seminarian Leonard Duncan shared his experience of incarceration, poverty and homelessness; and seminarian Charlene Guiliani, a former police sergeant joined Presiding Bishop Eaton and Vice President Horne. Links to the ELCA social statement “[The Church and Criminal Justice: Hearing the Cries](#)” along with the congregational study guide “[Called to Hear](#)” were made available during the webcast.

Congregational Engagement

ELCA congregations are actively and creatively developing resources to connect with formerly incarcerated individuals. For example, Redeemer Lutheran in the Metropolitan Chicago Synod supports Under the Door (prison ministry) and Inside-Out Connections (ex-offender ministry). They are a visible, viable, valuable alternative to the current way of doing prison and ex-offender ministry. They have also produced a resource, **Spiritual Survival Guide for Prison** and a **Re-Entry Directory (RED)** for the Chicago area. [RED Chicago](#) aids in finding housing, clothing, food, legal, mental, physical, educational, employment, financial, transportation and spiritual support services.

In June 2015, Grace Lutheran in the New England Synod launched Fresh Start Pallet Products. Used pallets are turned into chairs, tables, planters, stools, window boxes and knickknack shelves. The endeavor provides homeless men, many whom are formerly incarcerated, with work skills to build furniture and resources to rebuild their lives.

Leadership Development

In 2015, the Domestic Mission unit entered into a formal agreement with [Prison Congregations of America, Inc.](#) (PCA) a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization whose mission is to collaborate with Christian denominations and prison officials to establish prison congregations in state prisons and correctional facilities across the United States. The PCA model is built on establishing relationships between churches on the outside and the congregations on the inside of prisons. PCA is a primary resource to ELCA synods in establishing prison congregations. PCA is a consultant for new start congregations to assist them with launching new ministries, to provide training for pastors of this unique ministry style, and to provide ongoing mentoring for pastors and prison congregation boards.

In 2016, Domestic Mission developed a Mission Developer Training Curriculum in partnership with PCA. In February 2017, the ELCA offered a PCA Congregations Mission Developer Training Track. The partnership with ELCA Domestic Mission New Congregations, PCA and many key ELCA leaders is bearing fruit. In August 2017, the ELCA offered another 350 people Mission Developer Training and Congregational Development Training with an expanded Prison Congregations Mission Developer Track, which now includes Recovery Congregations as well. These recovery congregations expand on the life-changing ability of prison congregations to gather people for worship outside of prisons for setting hundreds and hopefully more people free with the gospel of Jesus Christ. In 2015, two new ELCA Prison Congregation New Starts were approved and one ELCA Recovery Congregation New Start was approved. In 2016, seven new ELCA Prison Congregation New Starts were approved and one ELCA Recovery Congregation New Start was approved. In 2017, four new ELCA Prison Congregation New Starts were approved and one ELCA Recovery Congregation New Start was approved. Currently there are 31 prison congregations and worshiping communities in 14 states and 15 ELCA synods, representing nine denominations. Many PCA congregations are of our ELCA full communion partner denominations. About one-third of PCA congregations are ELCA.

Worship

The worship team of the Office of the Presiding Bishop has developed many liturgical resources and worship services in response to the many forms of racial injustice in our country and the ongoing violence that ensues. In March 2017, the executive for worship, publisher for 1517 Media, director for federal chaplains and the director for the Federal Bureau of Prisons ministry met with an eclectic group from around the country. The consultation addressed the areas of

ministry resources named in this social statement. The recommendation from the consultation was to look at the possibility of publishing a Prayer Book/Worship Resource(s) for Prison Ministry. The cost, staffing and accessibility with the legality of the Federal Prison System are still under consideration for resource development. Further planning and conversation will take place with 1517 Media and the ELCA program director for worship resource development in December 2017. Future development of materials would occur in Fall 2018.

Advocacy

Sentencing reform is a judicial imperative at the federal and state public policy level for ELCA advocacy. Supported by the social statement “The Church and Criminal Justice: Hearing the Cries,” this work happens in coalition with interfaith and full communion partners in Washington, D.C., and in cooperation with our State Public Policy Offices. ELCA Advocacy has demonstrated leadership by engaging House and Senate leaders and encouraging the development of legislation that:

- Restores judges’ discretion in the sentencing decisions of those convicted of non-violent drug crimes — which disproportionately affect people of color;
- Lowers mandatory minimum sentences in certain offenses and retroactively in some cases; and
- Encourages rehabilitation programs for the incarcerated in preparation for re-entry into society.

ELCA Advocacy’s efforts have been successful in both the 114th and 115th Congress beginning January 2015 and 2017 respectively with the introduction of bi-partisan legislation addressing sentencing reform in both chambers of Congress. Efforts included direct engagement with lawmakers, grassroots advocacy and the engagement of an ELCA bishop co-writing an op-ed piece in the strategically important state of Iowa that was printed, which prompted a response from the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee as well as a pro-reform editorial in the chairman’s home state. This work continues and will remain a priority in 2017 and 2018.

In 2015, hundreds of Christian advocates gathered April 17-20 in Washington, D.C., for the 13th National Gathering of Ecumenical Advocacy Days for Global Peace with Justice. The theme, “Breaking the Chains: Mass Incarceration and Systems of Exploitation,” focused on the difficult issues and injustices in domestic U.S. and international criminal justice and immigrant detention system. The gathering provided participants with tools to be effective Christian witnesses to justice and peace. ELCA members participated in a series of interactive plenary sessions, workshops addressing aspects of the criminal justice system, skills training and denomination networking time. ELCA members lobbied with their members of Congress to support federal criminal justice reform legislation.

Ministry of Presence

Cases of police brutality and extrajudicial killings of unarmed black and brown people by majority white law enforcement has sparked mass demonstrations in support of #BlackLivesMatter across this country. The slaying of police officers has fueled further divisions along racial lines. This church, in all three expressions, sent for the sake of the world, is committed to showing up. In response to racial tensions, the ministry of presence was initiated to accompany communities from chaos to building right relationships. Congregations, synods and churchwide staff have been present in walking with the community. This ministry encourages this church to work together in all three expressions by listening to voices and stories from those most affected, praying with and for the community and discerning where and how God is calling us to respond. Thus far, this church has participated in prayer vigils for slain victims, hosted ecumenical dialogues on race, walked neighborhoods, worshiped ecumenically, spoken out against injustices, joined with others in peaceful solidarity for equality, and prayed with and for law enforcement officers.

Currently, Domestic Mission’s stewardship and faith practices teams are in the early stages of beginning a ministry in ELCA congregations to promote enhanced community-police relations. This ministry would encourage congregations to build relations with local law enforcement within their community. Congregations will serve as central locations for law enforcement and the community to come together for conversations; congregations will extend hospitality to law enforcement and rostered leaders will provide pastoral care. Thrivent Financial has expressed an interest in supporting this ministry.

Church Council action:

To receive the report from the Domestic Mission unit 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” (2013).

E. Peace with Justice in the Holy Land

Churchwide Assembly action [CA16.05.15]

To receive with gratitude the memorials of the Northwest Washington, Sierra Pacific, Southwest California, Rocky Mountain, Minneapolis Area, Southwestern Texas, Southeastern Iowa, South-Central Wisconsin, Southeast Michigan, Indiana-Kentucky, Metropolitan New York, Northeastern Pennsylvania, Upper Susquehanna and West Virginia-Western Maryland synods related to Israel and Palestine;

To reaffirm the commitment of this church to:

1. Continue its awareness-building, accompaniment, and advocacy on behalf of a peaceful resolution of the conflict between Israel and Palestine;
2. Take steps to assist the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) and other Christians in sustaining their endangered presence in the Holy Land;
3. Promote the economic empowerment of Palestinians, including investment in Palestinian projects and businesses;
4. Promote the protection of the human rights of Palestinians and Israelis and oppose all violence and actions which discriminate against or deny any people their basic freedom, dignity or human rights;
5. Embrace the principles of restorative justice as part of the ELCA's advocacy and engagement for the just resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and actively seek ways to support Palestinians and Israelis engaging in restorative justice dialogue and other projects; and
6. Continue to pray for the ELCJHL and the work of The Lutheran World Federation Jerusalem program;

To encourage this church's members, congregations, synods and agencies as well as the presiding bishop to call on the U.S. President, in coordination with the United Nations Security Council, to offer a new, comprehensive and time-bound agreement to the governments of Israel and Palestine, resulting in a negotiated final status agreement between Israel and Palestine leading to two viable and secure states with a shared Jerusalem;

To urge this church's members, congregations, synods, agencies and presiding bishop to call on their U.S. Representatives, Senators and the Administration to take action requiring that, to continue receiving U.S. financial and military aid, Israel must comply with internationally recognized human rights standards as specified in existing U.S. law, stop settlement building and the expansion of existing settlements in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, end its occupation of Palestinian territory and enable an independent Palestinian state; and

To encourage this church's members, congregations, synods and agencies to call on the U.S. President to recognize the State of Palestine and not prevent the application of the State of Palestine for full membership in the United Nations.

Response from the Office of the Presiding Bishop (November 2016)

The churchwide organization's communication with this church's members and congregations regarding Israel and Palestine matters is handled through our Peace Not Walls network. Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations in the Office of the Presiding Bishop has provided communication and interpretation of the 2016 Churchwide Assembly's actions with inter-religious partners as foundational work in support of communications within and beyond this church. Concerning the three requests for communications to the President and Congress, we intend to monitor political developments closely in order to discern the most propitious time for such communications, but we will wait at least until after the election season is completed. We expect to provide a response to the Churchwide Assembly action by the November 2017 Church Council meeting.

Church Council action [CC16.11.46u]

To receive the response from the Office of the Presiding Bishop and to request a report be provided by the November 2017 Church Council meeting.

Response from the Office of the Presiding Bishop (November 2017)

Three requests for communications to the President and Congress were included in the 2016 Churchwide Assembly action for "Peace with Justice in the Holy Land." ELCA Advocacy has been closely monitoring the political developments in order to discern the most propitious time for the communications.

In addition, Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton sent a letter to then-President Barack H. Obama in late November 2016 on full membership of Palestine in the United Nations. In June 2017, Presiding Bishop Eaton joined an ecumenical letter to President Donald J. Trump encouraging a negotiated resolution and a just peace for both peoples and an end to the occupation. She joined the National Interreligious Leadership Initiative for Peace in the Middle East in a letter sent

to President Trump in July 2017. The letter asked for a meeting to discuss how the inter-religious group could help support efforts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The meeting request has yet to be granted. As an organization, the ELCA joined the Faith Forum on Middle East Policy on a briefing paper that was sent to U.S. Congress in February 2017.

Through the Peace Not Walls network, several advocacy action alerts were sent regarding Israel and Palestine. They were as follows:

- November 2016 — Call on the president to act now for a just peace in Palestine and Israel (specifically ask him to support Palestine at the United Nations and take firm action to stop Israeli settlements)
- January 2017 — Tell Congress: Support peace, don't undermine it (opposed the "Safeguard Israel Act" that would stop U.S. contributions to the U.N. "until the President certifies to Congress that United Nations Security Council Resolution 2334 has been repealed")
- February 2017 — Urge Congress: Speak out against settlements, speak up for peace (asking Congress to speak out on these issues)
- March 2017 — Urge Congress: Support peace, justice and equality in Israel and Palestine (referencing a February briefing paper sent to Congress calling for U.S. policies that promote peace, justice and equality for Israelis and Palestinians)
- April 2017 — Tell Congress: Freedom of speech must remain guaranteed! (concerning the "Israel Anti-Boycott Act" and a similar piece of legislation)
- May 2017 — Urge members of Congress to attend a briefing on life for Palestinian children under Israeli military occupation
- June 2017 — Tell Congress: Support Palestinian refugees! (urging Congress to continue to fund UNRWA [the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East])
- July 2017 — Urge Congress: Support urgent humanitarian assistance to Gaza; end the blockade! (calling for immediate humanitarian relief assistance for Gaza, U.S. pressure on Israel and the Palestinian Authority to end the urgent electricity crisis and an end to the blockade on Gaza)
- August 2017 — Tell Congress: Freedom of speech must remain guaranteed! (similar to April alert)
- September 2017 — Call on Congress to put an end to Israel's demolition of Palestinian homes and schools (ask U.S. Congress to urge the State Department to firmly appeal to the Israeli government to stop demolishing Palestinian property and ask Congress to insist that U.S. military aid be conditioned on Israel's compliance with U.S. law and policy, including respect for human rights)

The timing has not been strategic for some of the memorial requests. The staff notes that sending a letter in a non-strategic time would be more symbolic than effective and could have the unintended consequence of causing conflict with our inter-religious partners as a result. Therefore, the staff intends to continue to look for strategic moments to send letters to the President and Congress regarding the memorial requests.

Church Council action:

To receive the Office of the Presiding Bishop response on "Peace with Justice in the Holy Land";

To encourage the staff to continue to find strategic moments to address the specific Israel and Palestine issues noted in the 2016 Churchwide Assembly action CA16.05.15 with the U.S. President and members of Congress; and

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

F. Gender Identity

Churchwide Assembly action [CA16.02.03q]

To receive with gratitude the memorial of the Sierra Pacific Synod regarding Gender Identity;

To refer this memorial to the Church Council for study of gender identity;

To ask the Church Council, the Office of the Presiding Bishop and the Office of the Secretary to review existing definitions and policies in light of the council's study; and

To report to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA actions and proposals for additional actions as may be required.

Response from the Office of the Secretary (November 2016)

The Office of the Secretary will be working with Theological Discernment in the Office of the Presiding Bishop to recommend how the council might engage this study process. The hope is that this will start by Spring 2017.

Church Council action [CC16.11.46x]

To receive the response from the Office of the Secretary and to anticipate a progress report by the November 2017 Church Council meeting.

Response from the Office of the Secretary (November 2017)

Motion D and CA16.02.03q both dealt with the issue of gender identity and specifically call for a review of the “representational principles” in light of a study of the issue by the Church Council. The Office of the Secretary is in conversation with Theological Discernment staff in the Office of the Presiding Bishop about how to provide materials or a presentation to the council on this topic. It is hoped that the April 2018 meeting of the council will have time set aside for work on this issue.

Church Council action:

**To receive the progress report from the Office of the Secretary regarding “Gender Identity”; and
To anticipate a further response by the April 2018 Church Council meeting.**

G. Compensation for the Council Vice President

Churchwide Assembly action [CA16.06.34]

To adopt Motion E: Resolution on Compensation for the Council Vice President.

RESOLVED, that the Churchwide Assembly requests the Church Council study the removal of constitutional bylaw 13.32.02., which prohibits compensation for the vice president except for reimbursements; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Churchwide Assembly requests the Church Council study compensation or reimbursement for child or elder care and salary or stipend for service related to the duties of the vice president; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Church Council bring a report and recommendation to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly.

Response from the Office of the Secretary (November 2016)

The Office of the Secretary will be working with Research and Evaluation in the Office of the Presiding Bishop to recommend how the council might engage this study process. The hope is that this will start in Spring 2017.

Church Council action [CC16.11.46z]

To receive the response from the Office of the Secretary and to anticipate a progress report by the November 2017 Church Council meeting.

Response from the Office of the Secretary (November 2017)

Motion E asks the Church Council to study the removal of bylaw **13.32.02.**, relating to the prohibition of compensation for the vice president. In looking at the required duties of the vice president, there does not appear to be the work load that would call for compensation. The bylaw does permit reimbursement for expenses incurred by the vice president in doing this work.

Church Council action:

To receive the response from the Office of the Secretary regarding “Compensation for the Vice President”; and

To refer the motion to the Office of the Secretary for further review and study and to request a response be submitted to the April 2018 and November 2018 Church Council meeting for further consideration.

H. Resolution on the call process (Motion F)

Churchwide Assembly action [CA16.06.35]

To adopt Motion F: Resolution on Call Process.

RESOLVED, that the assembly asks the ELCA Church Council, in consultation with the Conference of Bishops, to initiate a conversation including synod leadership regarding rostered minister vacancies throughout this church; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the assembly encourages the Conference of Bishops to continue their work of facilitating and always reforming the call process for congregations and institutions in our changing contexts; and be it further

RESOLVED, that regions, institutions, synods, and congregations be encouraged to raise up leaders in this church for rostered leadership with the encouragement and oversight of the Theological Education Advisory Committee of the Church Council; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Conference of Bishops communicate with the ELCA Church Council and mutually review the status of this work every year and a half for three years.

Response from the Conference of Bishops (November 2016)

The Executive Committee of the Conference of Bishops has not yet had a chance to consider a response to “Resolution on Call Process” (Motion F) [CA16.06.35], which was passed at the 2016 Churchwide Assembly and for which the Conference of Bishops has been designated to take the lead. In consultation with the Office of the Presiding Bishop, Domestic Mission and the Church Council, we will establish a working group at the Spring 2017 meeting of the Conference of Bishops with the expectation of an initial report, including a plan for addressing the resolution, at the Fall 2017 Conference of Bishops meeting to be presented, in turn, to the November 2017 Church Council meeting.

Church Council action [CC16.11.46ff]

To receive the response from the Conference of Bishops and to anticipate a report with possible recommendations by the November 2017 Church Council meeting.

Response from the Conference of Bishops (November 2017)

The Executive Committee of the Conference of Bishops discussed Motion F further at its meeting in the fall of 2017. Rather than establish a working group to address this motion, the Conference of Bishops Executive Committee reports and recommends the following:

- Recommendation 1: The Conference of Bishops has regular conversations “regarding rostered minister vacancies throughout this church” as part of its work as a conference. Unless the Church Council desires to initiate a different conversation, we believe this aspect of the resolution is being addressed and will continue to be addressed in the course of Conference of Bishops meetings as well as other meetings of bishops with one another and with churchwide and synodical leadership.
- Recommendation 2: Again, the continuation of the conference’s “work of facilitating and always reforming the call process for congregations and institutions in our changing contexts” is an on-going conversation and task of the Conference of Bishops. We are also working on related concerns in our intentional partnership with seminary leaders. All conversations about call processes are rooted in an understanding that local context plays a significant role in evoking different forms of reform of call processes across the synods.
- Recommendation 3: Members of the Conference of Bishops regularly encourage the raising up of rostered leaders. The call to prayer issued last spring is one aspect of this encouragement. Most bishops and other synod leaders encourage the raising up of rostered leaders in many other ways in their local contexts. The remainder of this aspect of the resolution seems to be directed to Theological Education Advisory Committee.
- Recommendation 4: The Executive Committee of the Conference of Bishops will welcome conversation, even guidance, from the Church Council about what communication with the Church Council and mutual review of the status of this work every year and a half for three years would look like or what form would be most helpful and fruitful.

Church Council action:

To receive the report from the Conference of Bishops Executive Committee regarding “Resolution on Call Process”;

To encourage the Conference of Bishops to continue to engage in conversation regarding rostered minister vacancies throughout this church as part of its work as a conference;

To encourage the Conference of Bishops to continue to engage in conversation regarding the work of facilitating and always reforming the call process for congregations and institutions in changing contexts;

To commend the Conference of Bishops for its call to prayer and ongoing work in raising up leaders for this church; and

To ask the Executive Committee of the Church Council and the Executive Committee of the Conference of Bishops to discuss how and in what form a mutual review of the status of this work every year and a half for three years would be most helpful and fruitful.

I. African Descent Lutherans

Churchwide Assembly action [CA16.05.17]

To receive with gratitude the memorials of the Arkansas-Oklahoma, Metropolitan Chicago, Southeast Michigan, New Jersey, Metropolitan New York, Northeastern Pennsylvania, Southeastern Pennsylvania, Metropolitan Washington, D.C., North Carolina and Southeastern synods regarding African Descent Lutheran Lives Matter;

To direct the Office of the Presiding Bishop, the Domestic Mission unit and the Global Mission unit to assist in connecting, supporting and involving ELCA representation (particularly though not exclusively) of the people of African descent with the observance of the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation and the initiatives of the U.N. International Decade for People of African Descent; to be intentional in the inclusion of the contributions of African descent Lutherans as part of these observances;

To confess and repent of the Lutheran church’s complicity in 400 years of enslavement, oppression and marginalization of African descent people and other marginalized populations;

To acknowledge with regret that the ELCA as an institution has and continues to contribute to racial harassment and discrimination against people of African descent through corporate action, policy and practices and to request the Office of the Secretary, in consultation with appropriate churchwide organization units, to review and report on current governing documents in light of these concerns;

To encourage synods and ELCA related institutions to do the same in its review and report of current governing documents related to setting policy and procedures on workplace harassment and discrimination, including racial harassment and discrimination;

To request the Domestic Mission unit through its African Descent Ministries desk, in consultation with the African Descent Lutheran Association, to create a “Declaration of the ELCA to the African Descent Community” and to bring this declaration with recommendations of how to include the declaration in this church’s governing documents by the April 2018 meeting of the Church Council;

To urge the seminaries, colleges, universities and other academic institutions of this church to work with the Conference of International Black Lutherans (CIBL) to recognize and dismantle white hegemony by lifting up, encouraging and incorporating the academic exploration of Black Liberation Theology and Womanist Theologians;

To urge the seminaries, colleges, universities and other academic institutions of this church to develop anti-racism resources;

To reaffirm the Church Council action to call upon the seminaries, in collaboration with churchwide organization units and partners, to develop networked theological education programs, resources and opportunities for ethnic-specific communities;

To reaffirm the commitment of this church to create, sustain and reinvest in African descent communities, congregations and ministries including an update of the African Descent Ministry Strategy;

To request the Domestic Mission unit, in partnership with the African Descent Lutheran Association, to find ways to increase the number of African descent leaders, congregations and communities served by at least 10 percent; and

To recommit this church to growing its ethnic and racial diversity.

Response from the Domestic Mission unit (November 2016)

There are numerous resolves within this assembly action. The initial response from the Domestic Mission unit is to address the ones that directly impact the churchwide organization.

Part of the action of the assembly represents two separate though intersecting initiatives: the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation and the United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent 2015-2024. Other parts are related to: review of governing documents, creation of a 'Declaration of the ELCA to the African Descent Community,' and an increase in the number of African Descent leaders, congregations and communities served....

Regarding a "Declaration of the ELCA to the African Descent Community"

The African Descent Ministries desk and the director for racial justice ministries will consult with the African Descent Lutheran Association regarding the work to create a "Declaration of the ELCA to the African Descent Community." (The resolution originated at the 2015 biennial assembly for the African Descent Lutheran Association.) A progress report on the development of the declaration will be presented to the Church Council at its November 2017 meeting.

Regarding a review and report on current governing documents

The assembly action requested that this church's governing documents be reviewed regarding its contribution to racial harassment and discrimination against people of African descent. Within the next six months, the director for ethnic specific, multicultural and racial justice ministries will schedule a conversation with a representative from the Church Council, the Office of the Secretary, the Office of the Presiding Bishop, the African Descent Lutheran Association, the director for racial justice ministries and the African Descent Ministries desk. A report will come to Church Council at its November 2017 meeting.

Regarding ways to increase the number of African descent leaders, congregations and communities served

In consultation with the Conference of Bishops, Domestic Mission unit leadership team, the African Descent Lutheran Association, executive for administration, director for leadership and candidacy and Mission Advancement unit, the Domestic Mission unit will create a plan to assess current and proposed work as first steps toward implementation. A report will come to Church Council by its November 2017 meeting.

Church Council action [CC16.11.46gg]

To receive the response from the Domestic Mission unit on a proposed timeline to address the implementation of the African Descent Lutherans assembly action;

To anticipate a report on actions related to the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation and the U.N. International Decade for People of African Descent by the April 2017 Church Council meeting; and

To anticipate a report on actions related to the "Declaration of the ELCA to the African Descent Community," review on current governing documents and ways to increase the number of African Descent leaders, congregations and communities served at the November 2017 Church Council meeting.

Response from the Domestic Mission unit (November 2017)

Regarding a "Declaration of the ELCA to the African Descent Community"

The African Descent Lutheran Association held its biennial association gathering in August 2016. The assembly, through resolution, requested further engagement with the Church Council, the Office of the Presiding Bishop and the Domestic Mission unit regarding a process for relationship building and systemic analysis in response to a public apology. Recommendations include:

- In preparation for creating a substantive declaration, engage in a series of cleansing consultative conversations aimed at awakening moral conscience to how and where both polity and practice the ELCA has been, and is complicit in, perpetuating system racism.
- The Office of the Presiding Bishop, Church Council, the Office of the Secretary and the Office of the Treasurer engage in these conversations convened by the Domestic Mission unit executive.
- Representatives from the African Descent Lutheran Association, the Ethnic Specific Multicultural Ministries and Racial Justice team participate in these conversations.

A letter with recommendations for this process to be sent to the Rev. Stephen P. Bouman, executive director of the Domestic Mission unit.

Regarding a review and report on current governing documents

The director for ethnic specific multicultural ministries and the staff of the Office of the Secretary have met on multiple occasions to discuss a process to review the current governing documents.

Regarding ways to increase the number of African descent leaders, congregations and communities served

In consultation with the program director for seminaries, the seminary presidents designated Dr. David C. Ratke and Dr. Theresa F. Latini to represent the seminaries in facilitating action called for by the 2016 Churchwide Assembly. Dr. Quentin L. Robertson (United Lutheran Seminary) and Dr. James R. Thomas (Lenoir-Rhyne University) have been identified as seminary staff for work with Domestic Mission staff in response to the 2016 Churchwide Assembly action.

The seminary network provided support and was represented by staff at the African descent young adult discernment/leadership development event in October (Elisha's Call 2017). The African descent ministries desk and strategy team will collaborate with seminary representation to design and convene in 2018 a series of two-to-three similar relationship building events aimed at increasing the number of African descent leaders and communities served by 1) deepening relationships between seminaries and African descent community in the ELCA, 2) identifying barriers to African descent candidates entering and successfully navigating seminary process, and 3) equipping African descent young adult leaders for engaging their own circles of influence to identify, encourage and engage candidates for seminary and rostered leadership.

Church Council action:

To receive the progress report from the Domestic Mission unit regarding African Descent Lutherans;

To affirm the recommendations adopted at the African Descent Lutheran Association biennial gathering related to a process for relationship building and systematic analysis in response to a public apology;

To urge the Office of the Secretary and the Domestic Mission unit to continue its work in reviewing current governing documents to address contributions to racial harassment and discrimination against people of African descent;

**To request a further response be brought to the April 2019 meeting of the Church Council; and
To request that the secretary of this church inform the synods of this action.**

J. Strategy Toward Authentic Diversity within the ELCA (Motion B)

Churchwide Assembly action [CA16.05.25]

To refer Motion B to the Church Council.

Motion B: Resolution for a Strategy Toward Authentic Diversity within the ELCA

RESOLVED, the Churchwide Assembly direct the ELCA Church Council to form a task force for the purpose of developing a comprehensive set of strategies to equip congregations and synods to work towards becoming a more authentically diverse church. The work of the task force shall include but is not limited to:

- consulting with Women of the ELCA, the ethnic specific ministry associations, the multicultural and racial justice team, the Conference of Bishops and ecumenical partners
- collecting existing resources such as those available from Women of the ELCA and the ethnic specific ministry associations and beyond the ELCA
- identifying needs for additional resources
- supporting synods in identifying their specific opportunities for growth
- assessing the effectiveness of diversity strategies across the three expressions church in order to identify strategies that have yielded authentic diversity; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the task force be composed of one person from each of the nine regions and one bishop who will serve as co-chair. The composition of the task force shall conform with the representational principles in section 5.01.f. of the ELCA constitution except that persons of color

and/or persons whose primary language is other than English shall comprise 100 percent of the task force, and the task force shall be ethnically diverse. The members of the task force shall be appointed by the Church Council in consultation with the ELCA director of ethnic specific and multicultural ministries; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Church Council designate funds to support the work of the task force as soon as funds become available, no later than April 2017. The work of the task force shall begin no later than August 2017 and conclude at the 2019 Churchwide Assembly; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the task force submit a report and recommendations to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly that includes:

1. a summary of the information gathered by the task force and
2. a proposal of recommendations for metrics and supports to provide mutual accountability for our commitment to diversity across the three expressions of the church and a proposal for funding these efforts.

Response from the Domestic Mission unit (November 2016)

Work toward becoming a more authentically diverse church is currently being carried out through the Ethnic Specific Ministry Associations and the Ethnic Specific, Multicultural Ministries and Racial Justice team. In addition, Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton was asked [CC15.11.55] by the Church Council at its November 2015 meeting “to include the current efforts in a broader, comprehensive strategy toward becoming a racially and ethnically diverse church committed to dismantling racism.” It is worth noting that the Called Forward Together in Christ process identified a goal that this church becomes “an inviting, inclusive church that reflects the diversity of our communities and embraces the gifts and opportunities that diversity brings.” While the Domestic Mission unit has continued the work, it requests more time for consultations and further reflection before advising the council on a proposed task force and the scope of work prescribed. A full report will be prepared for the April 2017 Church Council meeting.

Church Council action [CC16.11.46hh]

To receive the response from the Domestic Mission unit and to anticipate a report by the April 2017 Church Council meeting.

Response from the Domestic Mission unit (Spring 2017)

The director for ethnic specific multicultural ministries and the racial justice program director convened a video conference (February 2017) with the presidents of the six ELCA ethnic associations to continue visioning relative to CA16.05.25 and current initiatives that intersect the action called for by the resolution. The current leadership/representation of the ethnic associations is comprised of active leaders from six different synods and five different regions. The broad relational reach of the ethnic associations is more than sufficient to produce a team representative of all nine regions as called for by CA16.05.25.

Currently, the ethnic associations with support of the Ethnic Specific Multicultural Ministries and Racial Justice (ESMMRJ) team are engaged in updating and/or developing new strategic plans for mission and ministry relative to our ELCA community with and among people of color. All previously adopted strategic plans will be ready for review by Church Council at its November 2018 meeting and, if needed, submitted for adoption at the 2019 Churchwide Assembly. The racial justice program director convened a webinar, “Transforming White Privilege” <https://vimeo.com/200713450> (January 2017), to offer resources to assist synods in furthering work of cross cultural and racial justice engagement within synods and congregations. The link for the resource site for “Transforming White Privilege: A 21st Century Leadership Capacity” is: <https://www.racialequitytools.org/module/overview/transforming-white-privilege>.

The racial justice program director represented the ESMMRJ team at the March 2017 Conference of Bishops to introduce the work of the team and the ethnic associations as a resource to bishops, synods and congregations for deepening capacity for racial/cross cultural engagement. At that Conference of Bishops meeting, the racial justice program director and the executive for research and evaluation made a presentation to further the work of equipping synods and congregations towards becoming a more authentically diverse church.

Following are the recommendations to Church Council from the Domestic Mission unit:

- In lieu of creating a task force, the Domestic Mission unit recommends that Church Council authorize the collaborative efforts of the ethnic associations in concert with the Domestic Mission unit Ethnic Specific

Multicultural Ministries and Racial Justice Team as designated agency to develop a plan for implementation of action called for by CA16.05.25.

- The Church Council will receive a full report and further recommendations at its November 2017 meeting, including an analysis of the scope of work called for by the resolution, configuration of implementation team (pending consultation with Women of the ELCA and ecumenical partners) and projections of funds/support for implementation.

Church Council action [CC17.03.07]

To authorize the Domestic Mission unit and representatives of the ethnic specific ministry associations, in consultation with Conference of Bishops, Women of the ELCA, and ecumenical partners, to provide recommendations of names of persons to be appointed to the task force for implementation of action CA16.05.25;

That the task force be convened by the Domestic Mission unit comprised of both association and non-association participants with attention to regional representation, lay/clergy and gender balance; and

To receive a progress report and further recommendations including analysis of scope of work called for by Motion B, names of recommended members to the task force, and a projection of funds to support implementation at the November 2017 Church Council meeting.

Response from the Domestic Mission unit (November 2017)

The Domestic Mission unit and representatives of the ethnic specific ministry associations recommend the following people be appointed to the task force for implementation of Strategy Toward Authentic Diversity within the ELCA:

Region	Name	
6	Bishop Abraham Allende	To serve as co-convenor of the task force; Bishop of Northeastern Ohio Synod
6	The Rev. Rani Abdulmasih	Pastor, Mother of the Savior, Dearborn Michigan; Association of Lutherans of Arab and Middle Eastern Heritage
1	Abel Arroyo	Latino association recommendation; 2017 graduate of LSTC (MDiv)
1	The Rev. Priscilla Austin	Pastor, Immanuel Lutheran Church, Seattle, Washington; co-author of Motion B
2	Joseph Castaneda	Latino association recommendation; Southwest California Synod area ministries LGBTQ/advocacy
3	Dr. Cheryl Chatman	To serve as Church Council liaison on task force; Diversity officer, Concordia College Minneapolis
3	The Rev. Joann Conroy	President, American Indian Alaska Native Association; Chaplain Good Samaritan Center St. Paul, Minn.
7	Grace El-Yateem	Association of Lutherans of Arab and Middle Eastern Heritage; Salem Arabic Lutheran Church Brooklyn N.Y.
8	The Rev. Maria G. Sijera Grant	President, Asian Pacific Islander Lutheran Association; Pastor, First Lutheran Church
4	Jennifer Kirby	United Nations Forum on Indigenous Women of the ELCA representative; Ebenezer Lutheran Church, Oaks, Oklahoma
9	Maribel Lorenzana	Attorney and advocate for rights of immigrants in the U.S.; Latino Ministries Diversity Network
6	Vickie Murph	Women of the ELCA recommendation; Anti-racism facilitator Women of the ELCA Southern Ohio Synod
8	The Rev. Surekha Nelavala, Ph.D.	Asian International Lutheran Conference; Steering Committee; Pastor, Global Peace Lutheran Fellowship Frederick, Maryland
3	The Rev. Larry Thiele	Pastor, Dacotah Oyate Lutheran Church, Sheyenne, North Dakota; American Indian Alaska Native Ministries
7	The Rev. Lamont Wells	President, African Descent Lutheran Association; Director of Evangelical Mission, Metro New York Synod

Scope of work for task force:

- Assess and summarize synod and churchwide work toward becoming an authentically diverse church prior to 2016 Churchwide Assembly;
- Develop working definition of “authentic diversity”;
- Prepare report and recommendations for benchmarks, accountability and support for attaining diversity goals in all expressions of this church in advance of the 2019 Churchwide Assembly.

Recommendations for task force:

- Participate in anti-racism/racial justice training;
- Engage ecumenical partners in consultation/advisory capacity;
- Request European American Association for Racial Justice representative(s) to be available in consultation/advisory capacity;
- Review and take into advisement recommendations and action called for by the 2016 Multicultural Summit and 2018 proposed summit follow up;
- Work in concert with the Office of the Secretary, Domestic Mission unit and Research and Evaluation relative to ongoing resolutions calling for synod reporting of diversity and anti-racism work.

Projection of funds to support implementation of task force:

\$150,000 for travel and contract staff. Projecting two in-person task force meetings per year 2018-2019 and additional travel and conferencing as needed.

Timeline:

Upon approval of the November 2017 recommendations by Church Council, participants will be notified. First in-person convening of task force is projected for late January/early February 2018. First task force report to Church Council is scheduled for Spring 2018.

Church Council action:

To receive the progress report from the Domestic Mission unit regarding the implementation of the Strategy Toward Authentic Diversity within the ELCA (Motion B);

To appoint Bishop Abraham Allende [Northeastern Ohio Synod], the Rev. Rani Abdulmasih, Mr. C. Abel Arroyo Traverso, the Rev. Priscilla N. Paris-Austin, Mr. Joseph Castañeda Carrera, Ms. Cheryl T. Chatman, the Rev. Joan A. Conroy, Ms. Grace Kuttub El-Yateem, the Rev. Maria G. Sijera Grant, the Rev. Moses P.P. Penumaka, Ms. Jennifer Kirby, Ms. Maribel Lorenzana, Ms. Vickie L. Murph, the Rev. Surekha Nelavala, the Rev. Lorenzo (Larry) T. Thiele, Mr. Kevin O. Vandiver and the Rev. Lamont A. Wells to the task force assigned with providing benchmarks, accountability and support for attaining diversity goals in all expressions of this church towards becoming an authentic diverse church; and

To request a progress report be submitted to the Church Council at its April 2018 meeting.

K. AMENDMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT SOCIAL CRITERIA INVESTMENT SCREEN***Churchwide Assembly action [CA16.06.30]***

To receive with gratitude the memorials of the Saint Paul Area, Metropolitan New York, Northeastern Pennsylvania, Upper Susquehanna and Northwestern Pennsylvania synods related to climate change and fossil fuels;

To urge all ELCA members, congregations and synods to inform and educate themselves about the effects of climate change through the lens of the “Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope and Justice” social statement, and to advocate for policies that reduce energy use and our dependence on fossil fuels and encourage development of renewable energy sources as an expression of our commitment to address climate change and caring for God’s creation;

To affirm the action of the 2013 Churchwide Assembly and subsequent action of the Church Council in 2014 related to the development of revised or additional investment screens on fossil fuels, and to support and commend ELCA members, congregations, synods, the churchwide organization, and related institutions and agencies such as ELCA

Endowment Fund and Portico Benefit Services for their leadership efforts to invest in companies that are taking steps toward a sustainable environment;

To affirm Portico's balanced approach to supporting this church's principles and directives as stated in the social statements — including the commitment to help transition to an economy less dependent on fossil fuels. That approach has included:

- shareholder advocacy (filing and supporting resolutions on environmental issues, including 150 resolutions in 2015),
- focused investment screening, which has identified 113 companies screened for environmental reasons, and
- ramping up positive social investments, such as investments in companies that develop solar, wind and water power generation systems, repurposing waste products and reducing toxic emissions; and now

To call upon Portico to evaluate the viability of an optional fossil -free fund for retirement plan participants;

To call upon the ELCA to heed the call of the Lutheran World Federation Council in 2015 to member churches “not to invest in fossil fuels and to support energy efficiency and renewable energy companies, and to encourage their institutions and individual members to do likewise”;

As part of this church's response to the Lutheran World Federation's call, to request that the ELCA churchwide organization review the ELCA's applicable social teachings and Corporate Social Responsibility policies and procedures, with the goal of not investing in, and removing the largest fossil fuel companies as identified by Carbon Tracker, and investing in corporations which are taking positive steps toward a sustainable environment;

To support the ELCA network of affiliated social ministry organizations with programs to address unemployment caused by changing patterns of fossil fuel use, to advocate for retraining workers — especially for renewable energy jobs, to advocate for programs that will support those in transition, and to encourage congregations and ministries to address the resulting unemployment and poverty; and

To urge ELCA members, congregations and synods to set measurable goals to reduce their consumption of fossil fuels and improve their stewardship of energy resources, transition to renewable energy sources and promote care for God's creation.

Response from the Corporate Social Responsibility review team (November 2016)

At the request of the 2013 Churchwide Assembly, the Corporate Social Responsibility review team during the years of 2014 and 2015 explored the ELCA social criteria environmental screen and the issue papers on the environment and climate change. All of the documents were updated and the environmental screen added the language “certain fossil fuel companies” in the definition of the problem which was approved by Church Council in November 2014. The issue papers were revised in November 2015. Since that time the Lutheran World Federation's call has been issued.

It is proposed that the Corporate Social Responsibility review team will do the following:

1. Review the relevant social teachings of the ELCA with assistance from the Theological Discernment Team.
2. Seek input from Lutheran World Federation as to the steps that organization has taken, plans to take and feedback received since adoption of the resolution.
3. Review the Corporate Social Responsibility policies and procedures to examine the best steps forward.
4. Review the status of ‘Carbon Tracker’ as an appropriate tool for identifying the largest fossil fuel companies, aided by Portico.
5. Take into consideration the Social Impact First investment program of Portico in light of the request for positive investments.
6. Seek input from partners such as Ceres and other research groups for additional information on assessing corporation's positive steps toward a sustainable environment which might be named as positive investments.
7. Seek input from the Endowment Fund, Mission Investment Fund and Portico to discern the feasibility of this goal and the impact on their work.

The Corporate Social Responsibility review team will meet regularly during 2017 to review the information discovered in the steps above and prepare an interim report for Church Council in November 2017. When this is completed, the Corporate Social Responsibility review team will meet to analyze and synthesize what has been discovered with the intention of presenting a brief report and recommendation to Church Council by April of 2018 with final work expected to be completed by November 2018.

Church Council action [CC16.11.46q]

To receive the response from the Corporate Social Responsibility review team on the timeline; and

To anticipate interim reports in November 2017 and April 2018 with a final report by the November 2018 Church Council meeting.

Background:

Based on its review of investment screens related to fossil fuels, the Corporate Social Responsibility table revised the Environment Social Criteria Investment Screen.

Church Council action:

To receive the response from the Corporate Social Responsibility table regarding “Toward a Responsible Future”;

To approve the amendments to the following corporate social responsibility economic social criteria investment screen: Environment Social Criteria Investment Screen; and

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

Overview of the Sanctuary Movement

Christians have offered sanctuary for 2000 years, continuing an ancient biblical practice in which cities and houses of worship provide refuge and asylum for people fleeing injustice. Beginning in the 1980s, the Sanctuary Movement was a faith-based initiative to protect Central American refugees fleeing civil war and seeking safety in the U.S. Today, the New Sanctuary Movement is a revived movement to protect undocumented migrants from deportation. In contrast with the historic sanctuary movement, many of the migrants protected under sanctuary have lived in the U.S. for an extended period. While there is no uniform definition of “sanctuary,” its overall purpose is to protect people from immigration laws that lead to the deportation of undocumented people who are part of our communities and may have U.S. citizen children. The ways in which sanctuary is provided varies by congregation, but it can include providing a physical shelter, inviting and welcoming all to worship regardless of immigration status, providing services to migrants, aiding all regardless of immigration status, and actively advocating for migrants. While many of these activities are completely legal, knowingly concealing, harboring, or shielding (or attempting to conceal, harbor, or shield) an undocumented immigrant from detection by the authorities is not. Likewise, knowingly transporting or moving (or attempting to transport or move) an undocumented immigrant from one place to another, where the transportation helps the immigrant remain in the United States unlawfully is illegal. Each congregation has their own theological reasons for taking part in the Sanctuary Movement, but it is universally seen as a way to protect human dignity in an unjust system, as guided by our faith.

The ELCA, in all its expressions, has a long-documented history of standing alongside migrants and refugees. Recognizing that our confidence in God’s grace leads us to engage immigration issues differently, and that in a political climate where migrants and refugees are aggressively targeted for deportation and depicted often as security threats, it is imperative for all faith communities to be vocal about our belief that people are created in God’s image, worthy of dignity and safety. The sanctuary movement has been an interfaith expression of the commitment of faith communities to welcome the stranger.

ELCA Sanctuary Timeline

Lutherans have a long history of standing alongside immigrants and refugees through church ministries or by connecting with Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS). ELCA churches were essential in the sanctuary movement in the 1980s. Today, ELCA churches, including Angelica Lutheran Church in Los Angeles, California and Lutheran Church of the Good Shepard in Brooklyn, New York have joined the new sanctuary movement independently through their local networks. Notably, Augustana Lutheran Church in Portland, Oregon gave sanctuary in 2014 to Francisco Aguirre, a migrant from El Salvador facing deportation

In 2016, in response to the increasing numbers in unaccompanied children arriving to this country starting in 2011, the ELCA Churchwide Assembly passed the [AMMPARO \(Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities\)](#) strategy. AMMPARO re-commits the church to accompanying migrant children and families in the U.S., in the countries of origin and in transit. Through AMMPARO, ELCA congregations can become Welcoming Congregations by committing themselves to accompanying migrants in their community through service and advocacy. While there is no central database of individual churches that have joined the sanctuary movement, sanctuary churches wanting to tap into the AMMPARO network have been welcomed to do so by joining the list of Welcoming Congregations without having to take additional steps.

In May 2016, shortly before the Churchwide Assembly adopted the AMMPARO strategy, the Oregon Synod introduced and passed a resolution declaring itself the first sanctuary synod in the ELCA. This resolution, which called on the whole ELCA to become a sanctuary denomination, was memorialized at the 2016 Churchwide Assembly. The churchwide assembly memorial action instructed the “Domestic Mission unit... to examine the opportunities and implications of endorsing the practice of congregations offering Sanctuary and of the ELCA declaring itself a Sanctuary denomination, and to provide a report to the Church Council.”

Sanctuary Synods and Congregations in the ELCA

During the 2017 synod assembly season, four additional synods have declared themselves sanctuary synods: Sierra Pacific, Southwest California, New England, and Metro New York (through its synod council). All four of these synods, together with the Oregon Synod, relate to AMMPARO. Further, there are ELCA congregations that have declared themselves sanctuary congregations and consider themselves to be part of the AMMPARO network. Since this kind of close relationship already exists between sanctuary synods and congregations with AMMPARO, there would be a need to define what added value a declaration of the ELCA as a sanctuary denomination would bring.

Research on Sanctuary in Other Denominations: Summary of Findings

To understand the realities and implications of sanctuary, ELCA Advocacy interviewed staff responsible for articulating sanctuary and equipping churches in their contexts. ELCA Advocacy interviewed staff from The United Methodist Church, The Episcopal Church, and the Presbyterian Church USA. These interviews took place in June 2017. The findings of those interviews can be found below.

Overall, we found that none of the three churches are sanctuary denominations, but they all allow their congregations to make their own decisions regarding their involvement with sanctuary. For the United Methodist Church (UMC), any policies and laws attempting to limit or restrain the church’s work of responding to the needs of others, are contrary to its most fundamental beliefs as stated in the Gospel. The UMC is an open-door church, where every person is invited to come in, get closer to God, and become a part of a community of faith. According to UMC’s Resolution 6028 (adopted in 2008), the response of the church to migration assistance includes “to recognize the right of sanctuary in any UMC local church for migrants subject to detention or deportation by government security forces.” The UMC urges churches and members to commit to opposing these types of laws and encourages congregations to prayerfully choose to affirm the sanctuary movement. In practice, this means disseminating resources to congregations that want to know how to become sanctuaries and continuing the UMC Immigration Task Force, that works on action and analysis of the policy realities affecting migrants.

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has supported congregations and members participating in the Sanctuary Movement since its inception in the 1980s. The church states it will open congregations and communities as sanctuary spaces for those targeted by hate, to ensure the human rights of all people. The denomination has not declared sanctuary status, but supports congregations in doing so as witness on immigrants’ behalf. In 2016, they passed a resolution reaffirming the ministry of sanctuary and the support of congregations that have provided sanctuary for immigrants and refugees. The resolution also calls for congregations and individuals to advocate and organize “for humanitarian, just immigration policies on the local, state, and federal levels.” Through this, the Presbyterian Church provides resources, including legal resources, to help individuals be informed on how to assist. Most of the pushback received on the resolution language has been a minority voice.

The Episcopal Church's most recent resolution (2015-D057) reads: "That the 78th General Convention recommit to the spirit of the New Sanctuary Movement by supporting congregations, so they can assist immigrant individuals, unaccompanied minors, families, and communities by being centers of information, services and accompaniment, and by supporting families facing separation in the absence of comprehensive, humane immigration reform." The Episcopal Church encourages dioceses and congregations to commit to protecting migrants but, similarly to the UMC and Presbyterian Church, does not declare itself as a sanctuary denomination. In practice, the extent to which the dioceses commit to the recent resolution vary, but the Los Angeles and New Jersey dioceses, for example, have declared themselves sanctuary dioceses.

In conclusion, none of the ELCA's full communion partners in this report have become a sanctuary denomination. All three churches support the Sanctuary Movement overall, but still leave the decision of how the congregations and individuals would like to participate to the individual congregations in it. This is the same guidance the churchwide staff encourages.