



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

April 10, 2018

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 Actions of the Church Council (April 5-8, 2018)

The Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) met at the Lutheran Center in Chicago, Ill., April 5-8, 2018. Here is a summary of particular actions along with background information.

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1. ELECTION OF Ms. SONJA WOLFE TO THE CHURCH COUNCIL

The 2016 Churchwide Assembly elected Ms. Carolyn D. Jewett, Milwaukee, Wis., to a six-year term on the Church Council in a lay female position nominated by the Greater Milwaukee Synod (5J). Ms. Jewett resigned her position on the council.

In accordance with ELCA bylaw 13.41.05., Secretary Wm Chris Boerger declared a vacancy on the Church Council and invited the Greater Milwaukee Synod Council to nominate a lay female for possible election. The Synod Council nominated Ms. Sonja Wolfe, Kenosha, Wis., to serve the balance of Ms. Jewett’s term.

Church Council action:

To elect Ms. Sonja Wolfe, Kenosha, Wis. (5J), to the Church Council for a term ending in 2022.

2. A PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING A GOVERNANCE POLICY MANUAL

As an outcome of the Church Council's retreat in April 2017, the council's Board Development Committee asked a sub-committee to propose a process for developing a governance policy manual for the council. The proposal was to take a two-part approach to consider the role of the Church Council and its governance, using an *ad hoc* committee to assist the council in this process.

Church Council action:

To approve the proposal for a process to develop an Evangelical Lutheran Church in America governance policy manual.

3. THE 2018-2019 OPERATIONAL PLAN FOR THE CHURCHWIDE ORGANIZATION

In November 2017, the Church Council received a draft of the 2018-2019 Operational Plan for the churchwide organization. The council's Planning and Evaluation Committee reviewed the final version. The plan frames the work of the churchwide organization during the two years around the goals and priorities identified through the Called Forward Together in Christ process and set out in Future Directions 2025.

Church Council action:

To affirm the 2018-2019 Operational Plan of the churchwide organization.

4. DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING THE ENTRANCE RITE FOR DEACONS

The 2016 Churchwide Assembly voted [CA16.05.11] to create a roster of Ministers of Word and Service and to endorse the recommendations of the Word and Service Task Force. The task force recommended that the question of an entrance rite for this new roster be considered by a different group. The Entrance Rite Discernment Group drafted recommendations that ordination be the rite for entrance to the roster, that a stole and lapel cross be the symbols for this roster and that members of this roster not be considered among the laity of this church for representational purposes.

Church Council action:

To receive with gratitude the report and proposed recommendations from the Entrance Rite Discernment Group;

To refer the proposed recommendations to the Office of the Secretary for preliminary work on possible amendments to the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*;

To encourage the Entrance Rite Discernment Group to share the proposed recommendations throughout the church for further conversation; and

To request the Entrance Rite Discernment Group present final recommendations to the November 2018 Church Council meeting.

5. ALLOCATION OF "WHERE NEEDED MOST" DOLLARS IN THE CAMPAIGN

Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA has a five-year goal to raise \$198 million for several specific ministries of this church. In addition to designated gifts, funds could be earmarked for "where needed most."

At its November 2017 meeting, the Church Council asked [CC17.11.28] that the churchwide organization prepare a plan for the process by which "where needed most" dollars in the campaign will be allocated. A staff oversight committee will review proposals and make decisions based on a policy that the money will only be used to fund the established, approved priorities of the campaign.

Church Council action:

To approve the policy and procedure for the allocation of "where needed most" dollars in *Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA*; and

To report results to the Budget and Finance Committee as part of the regular campaign reporting.

6. CHURCH COUNCIL DESIGNATED FUND IN THE AMOUNT OF \$2,750,000

The Office of the Treasurer reported that unaudited figures for fiscal 2017 indicate that the churchwide organization received \$71.72 million in revenue and support, and total expenses related to the current operating fund were \$68.97 million. Net revenue over expenses was \$2.75 million.

Church Council action:

To approve a Church Council Designated Fund in the amount of \$2,750,000 representing the excess revenue over expenses from fiscal year 2017 to be released to fund the post-retirement medical benefit obligations of the churchwide organization.

7. DESIGNATION OF CHURCHWIDE REPRESENTATIVES TO SYNOD ASSEMBLIES

Provision S7.23 of the *Constitution for Synods* states:

The presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and such other official representatives of this church as may be designated from time to time by the Church Council shall have voice but not vote in the meetings of the Synod Assembly. Like privileges shall be accorded to those additional persons whom the Synod Assembly or the Synod Council shall from time to time designate.

Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton provided the Church Council with a grid identifying potential representatives for each of the synod assemblies in 2018.

Church Council action:

To designate the persons identified in the “2018 Synod Assemblies by Synod” grid with voice but not vote in the meetings of the assigned Synod Assembly, including like privileges accorded to those additional persons whom the Synod Assembly or the Synod Council has designated.

8. HUMAN RIGHTS SOCIAL CRITERIA INVESTMENT SCREENS

In response to memorials from four synods regarding Justice for the Holy Land, the 2016 Churchwide Assembly voted [CA16.06.31]:

To direct the ELCA’s Corporate Social Responsibility review team to develop a human rights social criteria investment screen based on the social teachings of this church and, in the case of Israel and Palestine, specifically based on the concerns raised in the ELCA Middle East Strategy....

In November 2017, the Church Council adopted [CC17.11.26] a revised social message on “Human Rights” to support and inform the development of a human rights social criteria investment screen, while also striving to articulate this church’s positions on human rights in a single message.

The council’s Program and Services Committee and the Conference of Bishops provided feedback on the proposed human rights social criteria investment screen.

Church Council action:

To approve the “Political and Civil Human Rights: Equal Access and Participation” social criteria investment screen; and

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

9. APPROVAL OF THE REPORT OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE

ELCA continuing resolution 14.41.E15. provides that the Church Council’s Audit Committee “shall assist the Budget and Finance Committee and the Church Council in fulfilling oversight of the churchwide organization’s accounting and financial reporting, internal control systems, and audit functions, consistent with its responsibilities as specified in the charter recommended by the Audit Committee, reviewed by the Budget and Finance Committee, and approved by the Church Council.”

Church Council action:

To approve the report of the ELCA Audit Committee describing its review of the audited financial statements, management letter, and response of management for the Endowment Fund Pooled Trust's year ending December 31, 2017.

10. PRE-ASSEMBLY IDENTIFICATION PROCESS FOR THE ELECTION OF A SECRETARY

In November 2015, the Church Council adopted [CC15.11.51] continuing resolution 19.31.B15. to allow for an identification process in advance of the election of the vice president by the 2016 Churchwide Assembly. The assembly renumbered the continuing resolution as 19.01.A15. The 2019 Churchwide Assembly will elect a secretary, and the continuing resolution was amended to allow for a similar identification process in advance of that election.

Church Council action:

To approve the following amendments to the *Constitution, Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*.

19.01.A1518. *In a year when the vice president or secretary shall be elected, the voting members of elected to serve at the Churchwide Assembly shall be invited to identify the names of up to three persons who might be considered for election as vice president or secretary. Names shall be submitted to the Office of the Secretary at least four months prior to the assembly. The Office of the Secretary shall contact those persons identified and request biographical information. At least 60 days prior to the Churchwide Assembly, the biographical information received from those persons open to consideration shall be distributed to the voting members.*

11. REVISED BYLAWS OF THE LUTHERAN SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY AT CHICAGO

The Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago proposed amendments to its constitution and bylaws.

Church Council action:

To approve the revised constitution and bylaws of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, Illinois.

12. TASK FORCE TO CONSIDER A FUTURE CAMPAIGN AND GENERATING REVENUE

Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA was a five-year campaign that began in 2014 with the goal of raising \$198 million “to grow the resources of this church to support congregations, leadership, relief and development, and global mission.” The Church Council considered the implications of the campaign entering its final year.

Church Council action:

To create a task force composed of Church Council members, churchwide organization staff and liaison bishops to consider a future ELCA campaign and a strategic focus on generating additional revenue for this church; and

To authorize the Executive Committee of the Church Council to appoint members to the task force.

13. DRAFT STATEMENT: A DECLARATION OF OUR INTER-RELIGIOUS COMMITMENT

The 1989 Churchwide Assembly adopted [CA89.3.15] “Ecumenism: The Vision of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America” as a working document. The 1991 Churchwide Assembly adopted [CA91.3.7] its second part, “A

Declaration of Ecumenical Commitment: A Policy Statement of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,” as the policy of this church. The declaration stated:

Ecumenism ... should not be confused with the important but distinct responsibility for the church to enter into conversations and reach greater understanding with people of other faiths. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America does engage, in a variety of ways, in this inter faith work and needs in the future a separate, official statement to describe its commitments and aspirations in this area. When that statement is prepared, special attention must be given to the distinctiveness of Judaism.

Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton appointed an ELCA Inter-Religious Task Force in 2016 for the purpose of developing an official statement to describe this church’s commitments and aspirations in its interfaith work. The task force produced a draft policy statement and was conducting a review and comment period during the first six months of 2018.

The Rev. Patricia J. Lull, bishop of the Saint Paul Area Synod and chair of the task force, and Ms. Kathryn M. Lohre, assistant to the presiding bishop for ecumenical and interreligious relations, led the Church Council in a formal hearing on “A Declaration of Our Inter-Religious Commitment: A draft policy statement of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.”

A final version of the policy statement will be prepared for the Church Council to consider in either November 2018 or April 2019 for possible transmission to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly.

14. DRAFT OF THE SOCIAL STATEMENT ON WOMEN AND JUSTICE

The 2009 Churchwide Assembly voted [CA09.06.31] to request that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America develop a social statement on the topic of justice for women in church and society.

Ms. Leslie J. Swenson and the Rev. James H. Utt served as Church Council liaisons to the ELCA Task Force on Women and Justice: One in Christ, which was developing the social statement for consideration by the 2019 Churchwide Assembly.

In November 2017, the task force issued a draft social statement for study by and response from ELCA members until Sept. 30, 2018.

Ms. Swenson and Pastor Utt convened a formal hearing on the draft statement with the Church Council. Ms. Mary J. Streufert, director for justice for women, and the Rev. Roger A. Willer, director for theological ethics, served as recorders.

15. DISCUSSION ON GENDER IDENTITY AND EXISTING DEFINITIONS AND POLICIES

The 2016 Churchwide Assembly referred [CA16.02.03q] a memorial from the Sierra Pacific Synod to the Church Council for a review of ELCA policy regarding gender identity. The assembly also referred [CA16.05.27] “Motion D: Resolution on Gender Identity” to the Church Council.

In advance of the April 2018 meeting, council members completed a questionnaire about their familiarity with matters regarding gender identity. Ms. Mary J. Streufert, director for justice for women, and the Rev. Roger A. Willer, director for theological ethics, presented the results of that survey.

Church Council members discussed current policies of this church regarding gender identity and what resources they would need to make informed policy decisions at their November 2018 meeting.

16. DISCUSSION ON FUTURE DIRECTIONS 2025 AND GOVERNANCE TOPICS

In November 2016, the Church Council adopted [CC16.11.42] Future Directions 2025, setting out the goals and priorities identified through the Called Forward Together in Christ process of facilitated conversation across the ELCA. The council’s Board Development Committee led the Church Council, liaison bishops of the Conference of Bishops and the Administrative Team in a discussion of the fifth goal: a well-governed, connected and sustainable church.

The exchange built consensus around understandings of the Church Council serving as both legislative authority between churchwide assemblies and as the board of directors of the churchwide organization. Results of a survey of council members provided collective views on certain values of good governance. Participants discussed the roles and responsibilities of the Church Council, as well as some activities the council should not be involved with.

17. ELECTIONS, NOMINATIONS AND APPOINTMENTS

In keeping with ELCA constitutional provision 14.15., the Church Council fills vacancies on the governing boards of separately incorporated ministries.

The bylaws of certain organizations authorize the Church Council to nominate or elect members of their boards. ELCA bylaws 8.21.03. and 8.21.04. outline the parameters for the election or nomination of members to the boards of ELCA seminaries.

At its November 2017 meeting, the Church Council appointed [CC17.11.27] members to the Strategic Task Force Toward Authentic Diversity. Additional appointments were needed for the task force.

Church Council actions:

To elect to the board of directors of the Publishing House of the ELCA — 1517 Media — for a term ending in August 2019: Mr. Joel Peterson.

To re-elect to the board of directors of The Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago for a three-year term expiring in 2021: Ms. Rebecca R. Pallmeyer.

To nominate to the advisory council of Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary as part of Lenoir-Rhyne University for a term coterminous with his service as chair: The Rev. Lowell G. Almen.

To nominate to the advisory council of Trinity Lutheran Seminary at Capital University for a term coterminous with her service as chair: Ms. Judy K. Leidy; and

To nominate to the advisory council of Trinity Lutheran Seminary at Capital University for a three-year term expiring in 2021: Ms. Barbara J. Burgie and Mr. Roderick G.W. Chu.

To elect to the board of directors of Wartburg Theological Seminary for a three-year term expiring in 2021: Mr. Andrew N. Nuffer;

To elect to the board of directors of Wartburg Theological Seminary for a four-year term expiring in 2022: Ms. Elizabeth Lucht Jones; and

To elect to the board of directors of Wartburg Theological Seminary for a five-year term expiring in 2023: The Rev. Mary B. Froiland.

To elect to the board of trustees of United Lutheran Seminary for a three-year term expiring in 2021: The Rev. R. Guy Erwin, Mr. David A. Russell and the Rev. Mark K. Tyler; and

To authorize the Executive Committee to elect trustees to fill, until the November 2018 meeting of the Church Council, vacancies in the board of trustees of United Lutheran Seminary.

To appoint the Rev. Logan T. Vang and Ms. Kelly Sherman-Conroy to the Strategic Task Force Toward Authentic Diversity; and

To authorize the Executive Committee of the Church Council to make additional appointments as necessary.