




# Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

November 15, 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 Church Council Responses to Synod Resolutions  
 and Churchwide Assembly Actions (November 8-11, 2018)

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## I. RESPONSES TO SYNOD RESOLUTIONS

### A. Toward an open and healthy articulation of human sexuality Pacifica Synod (2C) [2018]

WHEREAS, we live in a time and place where casting a healthy and open vision for human sexuality in word and deed, both within and outside the institution of marriage, is of dire importance; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA’s social statement “Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust” (2009) recognizes a spectrum where “physical intimacy should be carefully matched to degrees of growing affection and commitment” (page 31); and

WHEREAS, the ELCA’s social statement “Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust” (2009) also states “some cohabitation arrangements can be constructed in ways that are neither casual nor intrinsically unstable” and recognizes the social forces at work leading to such arrangements (page 33); and

WHEREAS, an expanding body of sociological research affirms that healthy expressions of human sexuality can take place in consensual relationships both within and outside the institution of marriage; and

WHEREAS, the current use of “Vision and Expectations,” along with that of a related document, “Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline,” contribute to a “don’t ask, don’t tell” culture of distrust regarding expressions of human sexuality amongst rostered ministers, candidates for rostered ministry and their respective faith communities and candidacy committees; therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**, that the Pacifica Synod Assembly direct the Synod Council to forward this resolution to the Church Council for consideration and possible action:

1. To undertake the necessary studies and procedures to develop replacements for “Vision and Expectations” and “Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline” with new documents and related processes by January 2021 that cast a more complete vision of healthy expressions of human sexuality centered on openness and trust both within and outside the institution of marriage; and to make a report on progress toward this end during the 2019 Churchwide Assembly;
2. To affirm the work of the ELCA’s justice for women program and the ELCA Task Force on Women and Justice in the development of a draft social statement;

3. To develop other resources necessary to assist rostered ministers and congregations in casting an alternative moral vision to pervasive misogyny and heteronormativity, articulating an open and healthy vision of human sexuality both within and outside the institution of marriage; and
4. To form a task force to carry out this work composed of approximately half women and at least 20% LGBTQIA+ people, 20% single adults and 20% people of color.

*Executive Committee action [EC18.06.15b]*

To receive the resolution from the Pacifica Synod on “Toward an open and healthy articulation of human sexuality”;

To refer the resolution to the Office of the Secretary and Domestic Mission unit, in consultation with 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.

**Toward an open and healthy articulation of human sexuality**

**Upstate New York Synod (7D) [2018]**

WHEREAS, the current use of “Vision and Expectations” along with that of a related document, “Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline,” contributes to a “don’t ask, don’t tell” culture of distrust regarding expressions of human sexuality amongst rostered ministers, candidates for rostered ministry and their respective faith communities and candidacy committees; and

WHEREAS, the Upstate New York Synod affirms the work of the ELCA justice for women program and the ELCA Task Force on Women and Justice: One in Christ in the development of a draft social statement; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Upstate New York Synod Assembly request the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to consider:

- the undertaking of the necessary studies and procedures to develop replacements for “Vision and Expectations” and “Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline” with new documents and related processes that cast a more complete vision of healthy expressions of human sexuality centered on openness and trust in monogamous relationships both within and outside the institution of marriage; and
- the development of the resources necessary to assist rostered leaders and congregations in casting an alternative moral vision to pervasive misogyny and articulating an open and healthy vision of human sexuality both within and outside the institution of marriage; and be it further

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

*Executive Committee action [EC18.06.15c]*

To receive the resolution from the Upstate New York Synod on “Toward an open and healthy articulation of human sexuality”;

To refer the resolution to the Office of the Secretary and Domestic Mission unit, in consultation with 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 Secretary and Domestic Mission unit in consultation with Office of the Presiding Bishop (November 2018)*

Thank you for the opportunity to address the resolutions from the Pacifica Synod and the Upstate New York Synod titled “Toward an open and healthy articulation of human sexuality.” These resolutions call for, among other things, to replace Vision and Expectations (V&E) and Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline by 2021 with new documents “that cast a more complete vision of healthy expressions of human sexuality centered on openness and trust both within and outside the institution of marriage.” They also “call for the development of other resources necessary to assist rostered ministers and congregations in casting an alternative moral vision to pervasive misogyny and heteronormativity, articulating an open and healthy vision of human sexuality both within and outside the institution of marriage.” The Pacifica Synod resolution also calls for the appointment of a task force to perform this work.

V&E and Definitions and Guidelines are crucial documents in the life of this church, as they set forth the expectations and rules for rostered ministers. Perhaps most importantly, they seek to protect members of congregations and others from abuse and from the power imbalances inherent in the relationship between congregants and rostered ministers. They were last revised by the Church Council in 2010, prior to the U.S. Supreme Court’s 2015 decision in Obergefell, which legalized same-gender marriage throughout the United States.

Recognizing the need to update V&E, the churchwide organization commenced a revision in 2016. The Rev. Gregory J. Villalón, director for leadership for mission/candidacy, has taken the lead on preparing a revision, with assistance from the Office of the Secretary and the Office of the Presiding Bishop. A draft was presented to the Conference of Bishops in advance of its meeting in March 2018, at which time the bishops provided helpful feedback. A revised version was presented to the Conference of Bishops in October 2018, at which time the bishops committed to work with Domestic Mission leadership to further revise the document for ultimate presentation to Church Council. In their action, the Conference of Bishops specifically stated that the timeline for this project should reflect a sense of urgency. This process should not be restarted or delayed, nor should the additional expense of a task force be incurred to redo or duplicate work which is well underway.

The writing and revision of Definitions and Guidelines is constitutionally committed to the Committee on Appeals, subject to approval by the Church Council (constitutional provision 20.20.). Once the revision to V&E is complete, the Committee on Appeals will begin the work of revising Definitions and Guidelines. Appointing a task force to do work that is constitutionally committed to an existing entity will add unnecessary expense and delay to this process.

Crucially, in revising these documents, the churchwide organization is carefully following and is bound by the ELCA's social statement, "Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust" (2009). This was adopted by the 2009 Churchwide Assembly and cannot be overruled by the Church Council or the churchwide staff. To the extent these resolutions call for revisions to V&E and Definitions and Guidelines which are inconsistent with "Human Sexuality," they seek that which is beyond the authority of the Church Council (provision 14.13.a.).

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

**To receive with gratitude the resolutions of the Pacifica Synod and the Upstate New York Synod titled "Toward an open and healthy articulation of human sexuality;"**

**To confirm the importance of updating and revising "Vision and Expectations" and "Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline";**

**To report that the revision of "Vision and Expectations" is forthcoming, with the revision of "Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline" to follow;**

**To note that the revision of "Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline" is constitutionally committed to the Committee on Appeals;**

**To affirm that any revision to "Vision and Expectations" and "Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline" must follow the ELCA's social statement, "Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust" (2009); and**

**To request that the secretary of this church inform the synods of this response.**

## **B. 50th anniversary of the ordination of women**

### **Nebraska Synod (4A) [2018]**

WHEREAS, in 1970, the conventions of both the Lutheran Church in America and American Lutheran Church voted to ordain women; and

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) rejoices in these actions of its predecessor church bodies and in 2020 will recognize the 50th anniversary of the ordination of women; and

WHEREAS, the Nebraska Synod expresses its profound gratitude for the many and varied ways that the gifts of ordained women have advanced God's mission through this church; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA learned in research related to the 45th anniversary of women's ordination of some progress but also significant disparities for women in the areas of preparation for ministry, all calls including first calls, mobility, compensation, ministry roles, and debt following seminary education; and

WHEREAS, the same research uncovered denigrating and discriminatory experiences of many ordained women, some particularly acute for ordained women of color; and

WHEREAS, this church is called to reflect in church and society its roles as advocate and model for the respect, dignity and equal rights due all women, including the ordained women of this church; and

WHEREAS, this church is simultaneously addressing justice and women in its social statement under consideration and the 50th anniversary of the ordination of women; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Nebraska Synod Assembly call upon ELCA seminaries, colleges, campus ministries, outdoor ministries, social ministry organizations, synods and congregations to highlight women preachers, teachers and speakers throughout 2020 in recognition of the diversity of gifts women's ordination has brought to our church; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Nebraska Synod Assembly call upon ELCA seminaries to include intentional course work and resources to equip pastoral leaders in identifying and ministering in situations of gender-based discrimination and violence; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Nebraska Synod Assembly call upon the churchwide organization's Domestic Mission unit to develop, undertake and successfully complete a strategy specifically related to the debt of women of color after seminary within the overall issue of debt after seminary; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Nebraska Synod Assembly call upon all candidacy committees to examine their practices in light of the findings in the 45th anniversary research; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Nebraska Synod Assembly ask the Office of the Presiding Bishop to provide in 2025 updated research on achievement of these initiatives and other matters pertinent to the full and just participation of ordained women in this church; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Nebraska Synod Assembly request all church publications to plan features in 2020 on the ordination of women, lifting up the amazing talents and gifts this church has received from its ordained women, the barriers ordained women still experience in this church, and the steps outlined in this resolution to overcome these barriers; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Nebraska 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 [EC18.07.18a]*

To receive the resolution from the Nebraska Synod on "50th anniversary of the ordination of women";

To refer the resolution to the Office of the Presiding Bishop and 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.

**50th anniversary of the ordination of women**

**Upstate New York Synod (7D) [2018]**

WHEREAS, in 1970, the conventions of both the Lutheran Church in America and American Lutheran Church voted to ordain women; and

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) rejoices in these actions of its predecessor church bodies and in 2020 will recognize the 50th anniversary of the ordination of women; and

WHEREAS, the Upstate New York Synod expresses its profound gratitude for the many and varied ways that the gifts of ordained women have advanced God's mission through this church; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA learned in research related to the 45th anniversary of women's ordination of some progress but also significant disparities for women in the areas of preparation for ministry, all calls including first calls, mobility, compensation, ministry roles, and debt following seminary education; and

WHEREAS, the same research uncovered denigrating and discriminatory experiences of many ordained women, some particularly acute for ordained women of color; and

WHEREAS, this church is called to reflect in church and society its roles as advocate and model for the respect, dignity and equal rights due all women, including the ordained women of this church; and

WHEREAS, this church is simultaneously addressing justice and women in its social statement under consideration and the 50th anniversary of the ordination of women; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Upstate New York Synod Assembly urge the Church Council and churchwide organization to develop strategies to promote and protect gender equity and justice, with particular focus on addressing the areas of compensation, ministry roles, and debt following seminary education; and be further

RESOLVED, that the Upstate New York Synod Assembly call upon the churchwide organization's Domestic Mission unit to develop, undertake and successfully complete a strategy specifically related to the debt that women of color experience after seminary; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Upstate New York Synod Assembly request that the Office of the Presiding Bishop to provide in 2025 updated research on the achievement of these initiatives and other matters pertinent to the full and just participation of rostered women in this church; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Upstate New York Synod Assembly invite the prayers of all members of this church for the successful outcome of these initiatives; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Upstate New York 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 [EC18.06.15d]*

- To receive the resolution from the Upstate New York Synod on "50th anniversary of the ordination of women";
- To refer the resolution to the Office of the Presiding Bishop and 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 Office of the Presiding Bishop and Domestic Mission unit (November 2018)*

This report is offered with gratitude to the Nebraska Synod and the Upstate New York Synod.

Collaborative work to support the recognition and celebration of predecessor churches' decisions to ordain women into ministry in 1970 is underway. Plans for this celebration include the recognition of the fact that although the Lutheran Church in America and the American Lutheran Church voted to ordain women in 1970, a woman of color was not ordained until 1979. The ELCA will also celebrate the 10th anniversary of this church's decision to ordain into ministry persons who are gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender.

Bishop Jessica Crist is chair of a committee comprised of the following: the Rev. Sarah Anderson-Rajarigam, the Rev. J. Elise Brown, the Rev. Joann Conroy, the Rev. Elizabeth Ekdale, the Rev. Amanda Gerken-Nelson, the Rev. Meredith Harber, the Rev. April Ulring Larson, the Rev. Linda Norman, the Rev. Niveen Sarras and the Rev. Maria Valenzuela. The work is supported by the following churchwide staff members: Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton, the Rev. Cherlyne Beck, the Rev. Brenda Smith, Dr. Mary Streufert and Ms. Heather Dean.

The theme for the anniversary is "We are church: We are called." The sub-themes are "Proclaiming, Reforming, Celebrating." The timeline of events planned is:

- August 2019, Churchwide Assembly
- Friday Churchwide Assembly Banquet celebrating the 50th Anniversary
- Launch of resources (Bible Study, Study Guide, Worship Resource)
- July 2020, Women of the ELCA Triennial Gathering, special events or celebration
- July 2020, Rostered Ministers Gathering with workshops and highlights of women's ordination and celebration within concurrent meetings of American Indian and Alaska Native Association, chaplains, and young leaders, for example
- Possible add-on event to the Rostered Ministers Gathering for ordained women

The Office of the Presiding Bishop is working on a survey to follow the 45th anniversary report, with findings anticipated in the early summer of 2020. A process to engage synod offices, candidacy committees and congregations in practices to address concerns (e.g., compensation, debt and harassment) will be generated collaboratively among the anniversary committee, the Office of the Presiding Bishop and the Domestic Mission unit.

Mission Advancement and Women of the ELCA are planning communication strategies.

***Church Council action:***

**To receive the response from the Office of the Presiding Bishop and Domestic Mission unit on the "50th anniversary of the ordination of women";**

**To encourage the efforts of the Office of the Presiding Bishop in its survey work related to its research on the achievements of strategies to promote and protect gender equity and justice and other matters pertinent to the full and just participation of ordained women;**

**To ask the 50th Anniversary of the Ordination of Women Committee, the Office of the Presiding Bishop and the Domestic Mission unit to continue its efforts to engage synods, candidacy committees and congregations to address such concerns as compensation, debt and harassment; and**

**To request that the secretary of this church inform the synods of this response.**

### **C. The National Poor People's Campaign Metropolitan Chicago Synod (5A) [2018]**

WHEREAS, the prophetic ministry begun in 1967 by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and others called for a "revolution of values" in the United States of America and invited people who had been divided to stand together against three forms of systemic evil: militarism, racism and economic injustice; and

WHEREAS, this prophetic ministry was built into a national coalition of poor people, allies, and grassroots and community organizers called the Poor People's Campaign; and

WHEREAS, the current social fabric of the United States of America and her territories is stretched thin by widening economic inequality, criminalization of the poor, racism and xenophobia dividing the poor, budget increases for a well-funded military and ecological degradation adversely affecting the poor, and the largest tax breaks for our wealthiest neighbors leaving fewer public resources available to care for the poor; and

WHEREAS, after more than a decade of work by grassroots, community and religious leaders, organizations and movements, the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival is being renewed to bring an end to systemic racism, poverty, militarism, environmental destruction and related injustices; and

WHEREAS, in mid-May 2018, the Poor People's Campaign launched 40 days of direct action and civil disobedience in Illinois, at least 24 other states, and the District of Columbia; and

WHEREAS, the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival is a broad, deep, national, long-term moral movement rooted in the leadership of poor people and reflecting great moral teachings in order to build a just, sustainable and participatory society; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA's social statements "The Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective" (1991), "Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture" (1993), "Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice" (1993) and "Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All" (1999) all provide theological grounding and support for the goals, methods and efforts of the Poor People's Campaign; and

WHEREAS, at the time of this resolution's submission, other synods are considering similar resolutions and urging churchwide units to participate in and endorse the Poor People's Campaign; and

WHEREAS, congregations, individuals and affiliated ministries within multiple synods of the ELCA already have been volunteering with state-based Poor People's Campaign efforts; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan Chicago Synod Assembly request that the ELCA Church Council authorize denominational endorsement of the National Poor People's Campaign; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan Chicago Synod Assembly direct the Metropolitan Chicago Synod Council to forward this resolution to the Church Council's Executive Committee for proper referral and disposition under the bylaws and continuing resolutions of this church.

#### *Executive Committee action [EC18.07.18b]*

To receive the resolution from the Metropolitan Chicago Synod on "The National Poor People's Campaign";

To refer the resolution to the Domestic Mission unit, in consultation with 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.

### **National Poor People's Campaign Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod (4C) [2018]**

WHEREAS, the prophetic ministry begun in 1967 by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and others called for a "revolution of values" in the United States of America and invited people who had been divided to stand together against three forms of systemic evil: militarism, racism and economic injustice; and

WHEREAS, this prophetic ministry was built into a national coalition of poor people, allies, and grassroots and community organizers called the Poor People's Campaign; and

WHEREAS, the current social fabric of the United States of America and its territories is stretched thin by widening economic inequality, criminalization of the poor and racism, with fewer public resources available to care for the poor; and

WHEREAS, after more than a decade of work by grassroots, community and religious leaders, as well as by organizations and movements, the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival is being renewed to bring an end to systemic racism, poverty, militarism, environmental destruction and related injustices; and

WHEREAS, in mid-May 2018, the Poor People's Campaign launched 40 days of direct action and nonviolent civil disobedience in at least 25 states and the District of Columbia; and

WHEREAS, the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival is a broad, deep, national, long-term moral movement rooted in the leadership of poor people and reflecting great moral teachings in order to build a just, sustainable and participatory society; and

WHEREAS, ELCA social statements “The Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective” (1991), “Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture” (1993), “Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice” (1993) and “Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All” (1999) all provide theological grounding and support for the goals, methods and efforts of the Poor People’s Campaign; and

WHEREAS, at the time of this resolution’s submission, the ELCA churchwide organization had begun discussions about denominational endorsement of the Poor People’s Campaign; and

WHEREAS, congregations, individuals and affiliated ministries within multiple synods of the ELCA have already been volunteering with state-based Poor People’s Campaign efforts; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod Assembly ask the ELCA Church Council to authorize denominational endorsement of the National Poor People’s Campaign; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod Assembly direct the Synod Council to forward this resolution to the Church Council’s Executive Committee for proper referral and disposition under the bylaws and continuing resolutions of this church.

*Executive Committee action [EC18.06.15a]*

To receive the resolution from the Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod on the Poor People’s Campaign;

To refer the resolution to the Domestic Mission unit, in consultation with 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 Domestic Mission unit and Office of the Presiding Bishop (November 2018)*

The Domestic Mission unit and Office of the Presiding Bishop colleagues discussed the “Poor People’s Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival” and what it means to officially endorse the Poor People’s Campaign. The Poor People’s Campaign is “uniting tens of thousands of people across the country to challenge the evils of systemic racism, poverty, the war economy, ecological devastation and the nation’s distorted morality.” It is a grassroots movement that furthers the unfinished work of the 1968 Poor People’s Campaign called by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the leaders of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

To endorse the Poor People’s Campaign would require the denomination to officially declare agreement with the principles, vision, goals and activities of the Poor People’s Campaign. Staff reviewed the “Fundamental Principles” (<https://www.poorpeoplescampaign.org/fundamental-principles/>) and “A Moral Agenda based on Fundamental Rights” (<https://www.poorpeoplescampaign.org/demands/>) and on Sept. 24 engaged in conversation with leaders associated with Poor People’s Campaign. ELCA staff determined that this church has agreement with about half of the principles and demands. The other 50 percent named in the Fundamental Principles and the Moral Agenda claim beliefs and request activities that this church’s teachings have either not fully supported or for which no ELCA teaching or policy exists because the issue has not been discussed.

Staff acknowledges that this church does not need to be in full agreement with all that is named in the Poor People’s Campaign, yet the disparity of not agreeing or discussing about half of the Poor People’s Campaign issues is not wise for authorizing official denominational endorsement. We understand that ELCA members and congregations are and will continue to participate in Poor People’s Campaign activities and by doing so are faithfully witnessing to God’s call to do justice and showing love for their neighbor. The Poor People’s Campaign vision and goals are in alignment with this church’s commitments to systemic racism, poverty, economic justice and ecological devastation.

ELCA Advocacy has actively engaged in raising awareness about the Poor People’s Campaign through its advocacy blogs, highlighting ELCA member voices speaking to their involvement in local mobilizing and activism. Churchwide staff will continue to embrace opportunities to connect with the Poor People’s Campaign that speaks to systemic racism, economic injustice and ecological devastation and encourage grassroots involvement.

***Church Council action:***

**To receive the response from the Domestic Mission unit on “The National Poor People’s Campaign”;**

**To recognize the importance of the Poor People’s Campaign in bringing an end to systemic racism, economic injustice, ecological devastation and related injustices;**

**To support the vision and goals of the Poor People’s Campaign that are in alignment with this church’s social teachings;**

**To encourage the churchwide organization, synods, congregations and members to become involved with the issues as a faithful witness to God’s call to do justice and show love for the neighbor; and**

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

#### **D. Parental leave policy**

##### **North Carolina Synod (9B) [2018]**

WHEREAS, the Churchwide Organization Personnel Policies of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) currently provide the following parental leave policy on the occasion of the birth or adoption of a child: “Four consecutive weeks of paid maternity leave is available to a new mother and four consecutive weeks of paid paternity leave is available to a new father following the birth [adoption] of her or his child”; and

WHEREAS, the 2018 Approved Compensation Guidelines for rostered ministers in the North Carolina Synod recommend the following parental leave following the birth or adoption of a child: “Eight weeks of parental leave should be available to the parent primarily responsible for childcare. Four weeks of paid parental leave is recommended for the second parent. The needs of each rostered leader and congregation may vary. It is recommended that the congregation pay full salary and benefits during this time”; and

WHEREAS, of the 65 synods in the ELCA, at least 53 of them recommend a length of paid parental leave for primary caregivers that is greater than what the ELCA allows in its personnel policies for full-time ELCA employees; and

WHEREAS, ELCA employees are deployed across the ELCA and in various synods, including the North Carolina Synod; and

WHEREAS, The National Partnership on Women and Families reports that “parental leave allows new parents time to care for their children--giving them the best chance at a healthy start on life”; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA Task Force on Women and Justice: One in Christ has recently published the “Draft of a Social Statement on Women and Justice”; and

WHEREAS, the “Draft of a Social Statement on Women and Justice” suggests: “Society’s economic and social structures should provide generously for parents’ needs in order to support [arrangements that balance personal strengths and interests with both the needs of work and income and the need to care for children and others in the extended family or household]. This includes, for example, parental leave for parents who do not give birth, as well as adequate leave for parents who do give birth. It is critical in U.S. society that we find ways to increase paid parental leave for the care of family members and increased support for child care. Additionally, parents returning to work after raising children need profession-specific attention for support and advancement”; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the North Carolina Synod request that the ELCA Church Council review its current policy on parental leave; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the North Carolina Synod request that the ELCA Church Council increase paid parental leave from four weeks to eight weeks for primary caregivers who are full-time ELCA employees and maintain four weeks for secondary caregivers who are full-time ELCA employees; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the North Carolina Synod encourage the ELCA Church Council to consider changing, in its parental leave policy, the words “mother” and “father” to “primary caregiver” and “secondary caregiver” and “maternity leave” and “paternity leave” to “parental leave” to reflect a diversity of family structures; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the North Carolina Synod encourage the ELCA Church Council to make comparable changes in its parental leave policy for part-time ELCA employees; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the North Carolina Synod Assembly direct the Synod Council to forward this resolution to the Church Council for consideration and possible action.

##### *Executive Committee action [EC18.08.21]*

To receive the resolution from the North Carolina Synod on “Parental leave policy”;

To refer the resolution to the Office of the Presiding Bishop, in consultation with the Office of the Secretary, for a report or 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 in consultation with the Office of the Secretary (November 2018)*

In response to the resolution from the North Carolina Synod regarding the churchwide organization’s parental leave policy, Human Resources in the Office of the Presiding Bishop will work with the Administrative Team and the Office



of the Treasurer to assess potential workflow impact and cost analyses. Based on those results, human resources will prepare recommendations to present to the Church Council in April 2019.

**Church Council action:**

**To receive the timeline response from the Office of the Presiding Bishop on “Parental Leave Policy”;**

**To anticipate a further response by the April 2019 meeting of the Church Council; and**

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

## **II. RESPONSES TO CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY ACTIONS**

*The minutes of the 2016 Churchwide Assembly include the full texts of memorials and motions.*

### **A. Call to discernment on U.S. foreign and military policy**

#### **Churchwide Assembly action [CA16.06.32]**

To receive with gratitude the memorial of the Minneapolis Area Synod regarding its call for the ELCA to study, reflect, search and act in light of ongoing and widening war efforts;

To recognize with gratitude the efforts of the current and previous presiding bishops, the Church Council, synod bishops, clergy and the laity to engage as responsible citizens living out the baptismal calling;

To issue a call for congregations to engage in prayer, Scripture-study and communal reading of the teaching resources of this church, particularly “Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective,” “For Peace in God’s World” and “Talking Together as Christians about Tough Social Issues”;

To invite this church to a particular time of prayer and communal discernment over the next three years to promote robust examination of the consequences of expanded US war efforts since 1990. To refer to the Church Council to formulate the next steps, including any budgetary implications. To encourage the Office of the Presiding Bishop to consider dialogue with Called Forward Together in Christ, Declaration on the Way and other ecumenical partners in planning this initiative, including inviting, scholars whose work focuses in these areas, activists, seminaries, colleges/universities, synods, VA and other federal chaplains. We especially hope to include those whose lives are most impacted by these developments in the United States and world.

Topics of inquiry could include:

- The impact on well-being of all military personnel and veterans: active, reserve, retired, and national guard, contractors, affiliates, and their families;
- Chronic disabilities and loss (including chemical dependencies and brain injury),
- Collateral involvement with criminal justice system,
- Diminished lives and early deaths of veterans and their families from toxins, PTSD symptoms, and violence,
- Moral injury,
- Character and skill development, and

Broader societal impacts, such as:

- Climate change and global pollution load,
- Changes in policing practices,
- Engagement with and prejudice against neighbor Muslims,
- Policy decisions due to commercial motivations for the proliferation of arms,
- Social needs met and unmet due to prioritizing public spending on expanding war efforts;

with Church Council to recommend next steps by April 2017; and

To direct the presiding bishop to communicate this church’s time of prayer and discernment to the U.S. President and members of Congress and to encourage ELCA members in this election season of 2016 to communicate the same to candidates for federal office.

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

The Office of the Presiding Bishop with the Assistant to the Presiding Bishop for Federal Chaplaincy is taking the lead. The Office of the Presiding Bishop will continue its work in consultation with Domestic Mission, Office of the Treasurer and other colleagues in the Office of the Presiding Bishop.

ELCA Advocacy issued an Advocacy Alert calling the ELCA to prayer and action regarding broadening war efforts. Below are the recommended next steps:

- Church Council identifies two members of the council to serve as advisors on behalf of the Church Council to Federal Chaplaincy in developing recommended next steps before the April 2017 meeting.
- Federal Chaplaincy requests input for possible ELCA colleagues, ecumenical partners and interfaith representatives, synod leaders, scholars, academics, government service providers and non-government social service representatives who may be interested in participating in a day-long convening to address selected issues from the memorial.
- Budget Planning develop costs for a temporary staff position for one day per week administrative support from January through June 2018 to initiate contact with potential participants, arrange details at the Lutheran Center for a one-day “round table” with up to 40 participants (including facilitating lodging, local transportation, meals and support services).
- Federal Chaplaincy, along with two members of the ELCA Church Council, plan and present recommended next steps at the April 2017 meeting of the Church Council.

Proposed Outcome: ELCA serves as a convener for faith communities, academics, government and faith-based social service agencies to advance reflection on war and its consequences. ELCA Federal Chaplaincy synchronizes a one-day “round table” with interested participants to be held at the Lutheran Center in conjunction with the 2018 ELCA Federal Chaplains Education and Training event (likely June 18 or July 16 or 23, 2018). The result and outcome will be a “Report on a Day of Discernment.” The purpose of the report is to provide a concrete outcome to be read and shared with others as well as a potential guide for underpinning further action.

*NOTE: Participants will be invited to attend and join in the “round table” at their own expense. In addition to the estimated 40 participants for the “round table,” the program will be open to ELCA federal chaplains (military, VA and Bureau of Prisons) attending the annual Chaplains Education and Training event.*

*Church Council action [CC16.11.46dd]*

To receive the response from the Office of the Presiding Bishop on a proposed timeline and outcome for the initiative;

To authorize the Executive Committee to identify two people from the Church Council to serve as advisors with Federal Chaplaincy on developing next steps; and

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

*Response from Office of the Presiding Bishop (Spring 2017)*

The Office of the Presiding Bishop continues its work on convening up to 40 faith leaders, scholars and academics, ethicists, government and faith-based social service personnel with ecumenical and interfaith observers to reflect on expanding war efforts and their consequences. ELCA Federal Chaplaincy will synchronize a one-day “round table” with specialists and others at the Lutheran Center in conjunction with the 2018 ELCA Federal Chaplains Education and Training event (Thursday, July 26, 2018). Results will be a “Report on a Day of Discernment.” The report provides a resource that will be shared with others and used as a guide for underpinning further action. Participants invited to attend the “round table” will travel at their own expense. Presenters will be provided travel.

The basic framework for the “Day of Discernment” will structure sessions around major questions using teachings of social statements to provide an approach to the questions:

- 1) Context: “What’s going on? What are the facts?” (focused by questions and topics in the social policy resolution)
  - a) What does this expansion mean? For example:
    - i) Increased security and protecting the homeland vs. non-military use of power
    - ii) Government budget priorities and economic trade-offs: effects on social services
    - iii) Moral injury and care of vets
    - iv) Stand-off systems and use of drones

- v) Militarization of domestic law enforcement
- vi) Cybersystem warfare
- b) Are there other elements from the memorial?
- 2) “What are theological perspectives (from statement) used for viewing such issues?”
- 3) “What are key discernment issues?”
- 4) “What Can/Should Be Done? A practical discernment (Results will be a report on content, experience and process)
- 5) “How do we turn this into a churchwide discernment?” — Lessons that may be central to aid churchwide discernment – provide resources (e.g., Study guide for elective use: adult forum, college classrooms, seminary classrooms, Bible studies, women’s studies (Women of the ELCA)

Budget planning continues to define costs for a temporary staff position one day per week for administrative support from January through June 2018. Estimated staff cost plus program costs provide an initial rough estimate between \$15,000 and \$20,000. The Office of the Presiding Bishop will work with the Office of the Treasurer to identify a possible source of funds for this event.

*Church Council action [CC17.03.10s]*

To receive with gratitude the progress report from the Office of the Presiding Bishop on the round table “Day of Discernment” event; and

To request that a final report be provided by the November 2018 Church Council meeting.

*Response from Office of the Presiding Bishop, Federal Chaplaincy (November 2018)*

A series of coordinating steps set the stage for conducting a “Day of Discernment.” Intervening steps included:

- working in consultation with Domestic Mission, Office of the Treasurer and colleagues in the Office of the Presiding Bishop,
- supporting ELCA Advocacy in issuing an advocacy alert calling the ELCA to prayer and action regarding broadening war efforts,
- including four members of Church Council to serve as advisors (EC17.01.05 and EC17.01.06), and
- developing a program, presenter and participant lists, and coordinate planning, conduct and follow-up for the “Day of Discernment.”

On July 26, 2018, Federal Chaplains Ministry convened a face-to-face gathering at the Lutheran Center. The anchor for consider on-going and expanding war-time efforts is the ELCA social statement, “For Peace in God’s World” (1995). The day provided opportunities for listening, learning, emphasizing resources in this church and identifying issues and emerging concerns. Over 150 people were included in the invitation list and nearly all remain on an “email update” list. There were a total of 45 participants, slightly larger than originally envisioned.

For a complete list of the agenda, presenters and topics from the “Day of Discernment,” see the Update on Day of Discernment [provided to the Church Council].

The “Day of Discernment” provided a chance to gather many forms of input: presentations addressing sequential themes, diverse respondents to each of the presentations and table talk. All elements of the day were aimed to inform and activate discussions of discernment in six table groups (with seven or eight people per table).

A very important program feature was having a designated scribe at each table group. All six scribes invested their efforts in collecting the presentations, taking careful notes of the responses, and doing heroic work to keep up with discussions at each table.

Bishops, chaplains, professors, pastors, Church Council members, deacons, churchwide staff and lay persons participated in the “Day of Discernment.” Thanks are due to all who made this happen. Participants expressed thanks and appreciation for what they considered a significant event.

The “Day of Discernment” will enable further discernment across the ELCA. Materials from the day, including presentations and scribal notes will be published online.

The follow-up work is to encourage further discernment across the ELCA. The primary tool for continuing efforts across the ELCA will be a new curriculum to study, *For Peace in God’s World*, written in a way informed by the information shared at the “Day of Discernment.” The final outcome is to foster continued discernment using this new study guide. This study guide will be published in 2019 under the direction of the Theological Discernment Team in the Office of the Presiding Bishop.

***Church Council action:***

**To receive with gratitude the report from the Office of the Presiding Bishop on the round table “Day of Discernment” event;**

**To commend the forthcoming study guide on “For Peace in God’s World” to synods, congregations and members in their discernment on U.S. foreign and military policy; and**

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

**B. Motion B: Resolution for a Strategy Toward Authentic Diversity**

*Addition background is provided in the minutes of the November 2017 meeting of the Church Council.*

*Church Council action [CC17.11.27]*

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 D. 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 Kuttab 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 toward becoming an authentic diverse church; and

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

*Response from the Domestic Mission unit (April 2018)*

The Rev. Abraham D. Allende, bishop of the Northeastern Ohio Synod, and the Rev. Albert Starr Jr., director for ethnic specific and multicultural ministries, co-convoked the first gathering of the Strategic Task Force Toward Authentic Diversity on March 14-15, 2018, at the Lutheran Center in Chicago, Ill. The purpose of the meeting was to establish working relationships among task force members and to provide direction on the scope of work. The task force is comprised of a racial and ethnic diversity of persons of color and/or whose primary language is other than English, with attention to gender balance, sexual orientation, regional and rostered/laity representation. It was noted that the current task force lacks participation from person(s) with disability. Task force members shared experiences of racial inequity and other barriers hindering this church in achieving racial parity — especially in places where resistance is high. Collectively, they expressed resilience and fruitful hope in moving forward. The Rev. Priscilla N. Paris-Austin, author of Motion B, presented the intent and background of the action. Her remarks named existing racial inequities within this church and the removal of the constitutional goal of achieving representation of 10 percent persons of color and/or whose primary language is other than English within the first ten years of the ELCA’s formation.

The task force reviewed the scope of its assignment in increasing racial and ethnic diversity within the ELCA. The group acknowledged previous efforts toward multiculturalism and existing denominational resources that are underutilized. Ms. Judith Roberts, program director for racial justice, presented an overview of all the diversity and racial justice resolutions adopted at the 2016 Churchwide Assembly in addition to Motion B. Work currently underway through the Ethnic Specific, Multicultural Ministries and Racial Justice team was also shared. In addition, the task force received a report from the 2016 Multicultural Leadership Summit. The task force will incorporate recommendations from the Multicultural Leadership Summit in its future reporting to the Churchwide Assembly. The task force divided into three working groups: Group 1 focused on a working definition of “authentic diversity”; Group 2 developed a process and timeline for the work; and Group 3 worked with support for the implementation of 2016 Churchwide Assembly actions.

Each task force member will engage synod bishops and councils within her or his related region to introduce/raise awareness of the task force. Bishop Allende will inform the Conference of Bishops of the task force and its participants so that synod leaders will know to expect to be approached for conversation by task force members seeking to gain insight of the synod’s past and present work around racial inclusivity, anti-racism and racial justice. A video conference with the task force is scheduled for April 19, 2018. The next in-person task force meeting is set for July 23-24, 2018. The group will adopt a working definition of “authentic diversity,” suggest a method for assessing diversity initiatives, and develop a timeline for reporting to Church Council and pre-2019 Churchwide Assembly work.

*Church Council action [CC18.04.12m]*

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

To request that the Domestic Mission unit provide periodic reports to the Church Council on the work of the Strategic Task Force Toward Authentic Diversity leading up to a final report to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly.

*Response from the Domestic Mission unit (November 2018)*

The Strategy Towards Authentic Diversity Task Force convened two in-person meetings in July and September; in addition to three video conference calls. During the spring 2018 meeting, it was determined that task force members would engage their perspective synod leadership in conversations about the role of the task force and to gain insight of the synod's past and present work around racial and ethnic diversity and inclusion. A questionnaire along with a letter of introduction was sent to each task force member. During the July meeting, task force members reported on their experiences with synod bishops and leaders. Five of the nine task force members present shared their findings. The following are responses from the synod questionnaire:

- Some synods were unsure exactly where to start this work and need direction where to begin.
- Some synods had developed anti-racism strategies and provided trainings such as the national resource Transforming White Privilege Curriculum, endorsed by the Kellogg Foundation.
- Some synods were working with increasing diversity through staffing and supporting existing ministries represented by people of color.
- Some synods did not see this work as a priority and were not allocating resources to support it.

In response to the synod questionnaire, the task force formed subcommittee working groups in the following areas: 1) Creating a theological framework that answers why this work is of importance; 2) Theological education and diversity within ELCA seminaries, colleges and universities; 3) Creating structural accountability across all three expressions of the ELCA; 4) Healing from internalized racial oppression and white privilege; 5) Incorporating lessons from full communion and partner organizations. Notes from the subcommittee reports will be compiled into a working draft document.

In addition, existing ELCA multicultural mission documents, a *Strategy for Proclamation of the Gospel* (affirmed in 1991 by Church Council) and *Recommitment to a Strategy for Proclamation of the Gospel* (adopted by the 1997 Churchwide Assembly) were also reviewed. The task force concluded that they did not see a need to develop a new multicultural mission strategy document, but the church had failed to implement the previous commitments. It was determined that it would be beneficial to revise the original documents *Multicultural Mission Strategy* and the *Recommitment to a Strategy for the Proclamation of the Gospel* and to incorporate the recommendations from the subcommittee draft document. It is important to note that the task force did see their work happening in conjunction with other 2016 Churchwide Assembly actions:

- **CA16.05.22 Resolution on Racial Justice**, *ELCA in assembly strongly encourage all rostered leaders to receive anti-racism training; and be it further RESOLVED, that the ELCA in assembly strongly encourage every synod to develop or maintain resources for anti-racism training for rostered leaders and congregations at least every two years.*
- **5.01.A16**. *This church commits itself to ethnic and racial diversity. Each expression of this church shall annually assess its ethnic and racial diversity when compared to the demographic data of its community or territory. The churchwide organization will work with synods as they assist congregations to reach out to persons of color or whose primary language is other than English.*
- **5.01.B16**. *Each synod shall submit its goal and strategies to the appropriate churchwide unit or office and shall annually submit a report on progress toward its goals to the Church Council.*

To further align their work with the goals of Future Direction 2025, the task force hosted a consultation with the Rev. Ruben Duran, director for congregational vitality and the Rev. Javier Goitia, program director for theological formation, seminaries and lay schools. The task force gained a better understanding of the current direction and vision of the Congregational Vitality team; and the role of leadership development for persons of color through seminary and lay school education.

Recommendation: A small writing team of the task force be formed to work on the revisions to the *Multicultural Mission Strategy (1991)* and the *Recommitment to a Strategy for the Proclamation of the Gospel (1997)*, incorporating recommendations derived from the work of the task force subcommittee draft. This work shall be done in consultation with the ELCA ethnic associations, including the European Descent Lutheran Association for Racial Justice, appropriate

churchwide staff and the director for justice of the Women of the ELCA. A draft document will be submitted at the Spring 2019 Church Council meeting.

***Church Council actions:***

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

**To affirm the creation of a small writing team within the task force for the purpose of revising “Multicultural Mission Strategy” and “Recommitment to a Strategy for the Proclamation of the Gospel”; and**

**To anticipate receiving these documents by the Spring 2019 meeting of the Church Council.**

**To form a working group composed of five members, of whom two shall be members of the Church Council, to draft a Declaration to People of African Descent;**

**To direct this working group to develop in this document a confession of this church’s bondage to the sins of slavery, racism, discrimination, white supremacy, and quietism, and begin the work of repentance, which this church confesses to be “the chief topic of Christian teaching” (Apology of the Augsburg Confession XXIV.46);**

**To direct this working group to bring a draft of this declaration to the April 2019 meeting of the Church Council in preparation for its proposal to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly;**

**To direct the Executive Committee of the Church Council to appoint members to this working group at its January meeting; and**

**To direct the Office of the Presiding Bishop to provide administrative and budgetary support for this work, including one in-person meeting if deemed necessary by the working group.**

**C. Repudiation of the doctrine of discovery**

**Churchwide Assembly action [CA16.02.04]**

To receive with gratitude memorials from the Alaska, Northwest Washington, Montana, Southwest California, Rocky Mountain, Eastern North Dakota, South Dakota, Minneapolis Area, Saint Paul Area, Arkansas-Oklahoma, Northwest Wisconsin, East-Central Wisconsin, Indiana-Kentucky, Upstate New York, Northwestern Pennsylvania, Metropolitan Washington, D.C., North Carolina and Southeastern synods regarding the Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery;

To repudiate explicitly and clearly the European-derived doctrine of discovery as an example of the “improper mixing of the power of the church and the power of the sword” (Augsburg Confession Article XXVIII, Latin text), and to acknowledge and repent from this church’s complicity in the evils of colonialism in the Americas, which continue to harm tribal governments and individual tribal members;

To offer a statement of repentance and reconciliation to native nations in this country for damage done in the name of Christianity;

To encourage the Office of the Presiding Bishop to plan an appropriate national ceremony of repentance and reconciliation with tribal leaders, providing appropriate worship resources for similar synodical and congregational observances with local tribal leaders, at such times and places as are appropriate;

To direct the Domestic Mission unit, together with the American Indian and Alaska Native community and ecumenical partners, to develop resources to educate members of the ELCA and the wider community about the doctrine of discovery and its consequences for native peoples;

To direct the Domestic Mission unit to develop a strategy with the American Indian and Alaska Native community during the next triennium to be referred to the Church Council for action, including a mechanism to grow the Native American Ministry Fund of the ELCA; and

To affirm that this church will eliminate the doctrine of discovery from its contemporary rhetoric and programs, electing to practice accompaniment with native peoples instead of a missionary endeavor to them, allowing these partnerships to mutually enrich indigenous communities and the ministries of the ELCA.

*Response from the Domestic Mission unit (November 2016)*

As was described in the 2016 Churchwide Assembly Memorials Committee report, the “doctrine of discovery” is a theological justification of colonization that later became nationalistic justification. Initiated when European monarchies invasively arrived in the Western Hemisphere in the 15th, 16th and later centuries, during the so-called “Age of Discovery,” they claimed the lands, territories and resources of the indigenous peoples, asserting that the monarchies had a right to appropriate on behalf of Christendom.

The doctrine of discovery is a key premise for non-indigenous government claims to legitimacy on and sovereignty over indigenous lands and territories. It is used in particular by former British colonies, specifically Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the United States of America.

For additional information on what is found in the doctrine of discovery and what its effect has had on indigenous peoples, we recommend reading the entire background information included in the “Report of the Memorials Committee.”

The repudiation of the doctrine of discovery by the 2016 Churchwide Assembly provides an invaluable teaching moment for our congregations to understand systemic and continuous impact of racism on the daily lives of indigenous peoples in the U.S. The assembly voted to eliminate the doctrine within the church’s contemporary politics, programs, outreach, structures and engagement with native communities. Through the assembly action, we have acknowledged there is a profound brokenness of our relationship with indigenous people that is deeply embedded in our identity as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America that calls us to a path for healing and reconciliation.

The doctrine of discovery, and the legal ramifications of it to this day, have profound effects on the issues of migration, racial and economic justice for indigenous people. This church is to promote efforts with indigenous communities within which our congregations and synods reside. In order to assist this church in its work to eliminate the doctrine of discovery from its contemporary rhetoric and programs, we recommend the development of synod native accompaniment teams with American Indian Alaska Native Ministries to help strengthen community leadership as well as provide structural support and relationship building with the directors for evangelical mission and synods, and reduce isolation of ministry leadership.

In the assembly action, this church is “to offer a statement of repentance and reconciliation to native nations in this country for damage done in the name of Christianity.” We will be working with the Office of the Presiding Bishop and the Native Ministry team to draft this statement. In consultation with the Native Ministry team, we recommend that this statement acknowledge the benefit of past apologies and bring attention to communities and issues of American Indian Alaska Native Tribes in the United States. The statement should also include the acknowledgment of the impact that the Lutheran church has had in American Indian, Alaska Native communities and bring attention to communities and issues of American Indian Alaska Native Tribes in the United States. The statement should also include the acknowledgment of the impact that the Lutheran church has had in American Indian, Alaska Native communities.

The Office of the Presiding Bishop will work with the program director for American Indian Alaska Native Ministry, worship staff and the American Indian community to plan and implement a national ceremony of repentance and reconciliation. In consultation with the program director and the American Indian Alaska Native Community leaders, we recommend the national ceremony and the reading of the statement of repentance and reconciliation will be done at the site of Pe’ Sla, in the lands held sacred by the Dakota Tribes in the Black Hills region of South Dakota. Doing the public announcement of the statement in this place not only commemorates sacred lands being reclaimed by Indigenous People, the action speaks to seeking a more meaningful relationship with American Indian Alaska Native People. The intended time frame for this ceremony is for it to take place during Spring 2017 or 2018 in partnership with the local tribes and tribal colleges when they allow visitors to the land.

The program director for American Indian Alaska Native Ministries and the community will work with synod bishops, synod leaders and congregations to assist them in planning observances with local tribal leaders. These actions acknowledge the statement of repentance and reconciliation on behalf of the church, and bring attention to the communities and issues of American Indian Alaska Native Tribes in the United States.

Through the 2016 Churchwide Assembly action, the visibility of the doctrine of discovery has been raised, and is itself a means of educating people about that doctrine and its continuing effects on indigenous nations and peoples. An immediate implementation plan on the repudiation of the doctrine of discovery will include educational resources about the doctrine. We will develop educational resources in partnership with the denominations that have currently repudiated the doctrine of discovery and Lutheran theological leaders, and foremost Native nation, indigenous leaders. The program director for American Indian Alaska Native Ministries will work with synod bishops, synod leaders and congregations to organize educational opportunities to better understand the realities and impact of the doctrine of discovery. A series

of informational resources, infographics, web videos and other resources will be developed in collaboration with our ecumenical partners and leaders within our American Indian, Alaska Native ELCA leaders. We intend to establish and/or utilize current Native Ministry team members and association to develop an implementation plan and timeline for the development of these resources in accordance with the next triennium.

The assembly action also requested the development of a strategy with the American Indian Alaska Native community. There is a strategic plan for the American Indian and Alaska Native ministry that was adopted by the 1997 Churchwide Assembly. Updating the strategy will include the work of developing strategic implementation for the repudiation of the doctrine of discovery. During the next triennium, we will use this time for discernment and conversations with communities as well as ecumenical partners to develop an overall strategy. In addition to updating the strategy, the Program Director for American Indian Alaska Native Ministries will establish a process with the community to review the Native American Ministry Endowment Fund, including its guidelines, priorities and philanthropy structure for growth and implementation. A draft strategy will be prepared for the Church Council's consideration at its April 2019 meeting to be forwarded to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly.

We will provide a progress report on the work of this action at the November 2018 meeting of the Church Council.

*Church Council action [CC16.11.46ii]*

To receive with appreciation the response from the Domestic Mission unit regarding the work underway to implement the repudiation of the doctrine of discovery;

To commend the American Indian Alaska Native Ministries in its work with synods and congregations to educate people about the doctrine of discovery and its continuing effects on indigenous nations and peoples;

To anticipate a progress report on the work at the November 2018 Church Council meeting; and

To request a revised American Indian and Alaska Native Strategic Plan be presented at the April 2019 Church Council meeting.

*Response from the Domestic Mission unit (November 2018)*

The American Indian Alaska Native (AIAN) Ministries program director, Ms. Prairie Rose Seminole, met with leadership from Domestic Mission and the Office of the Presiding Bishop to discuss 2019 Churchwide Assembly elements that would incorporate the commitments of the memorial on the repudiation of the doctrine of discovery [CA16.02.04]. It was decided that more visibility will be included in the 2019 Churchwide Assembly for American Indian and Alaska Native people and congregations. Elements include worship, informational resources and a space to be utilized to teach assembly participants the unique history and diverse gifts of American Indian Alaska Native ministries and leaders in the Lutheran Church. The presiding bishop will not make a statement of repentance and reconciliation at this time but will acknowledge the work that is necessary for the dominant culture of the church, building relationships and the commitments established in CA16.02.04.

The AIAN Ministries desk will work with ecumenical partners to develop resources and toolkits around the doctrine of discovery. Synods have already initiated work on toolkits around the doctrine of discovery including Northeastern Minnesota, Rocky Mountain, Sierra Pacific, South Dakota and Northwestern Minnesota Synods. Many engaged congregations are also sharing the ELCA documentary "Native Nations - Standing Together for Civil Rights." Worship resources for rostered ministers and lay leaders to observe the repudiation of the doctrine of discovery (e.g., prayers, litany and music) are expected to be completed by the 2019 Churchwide Assembly.

The Native Ministry Team that convenes biannually wishes to develop a report on AIAN Ministries for distribution at the 2019 Churchwide Assembly. The report would include highlights of Lutheran ministries, rosters, demographic analysis, leadership representation, social ministry, colleges, seminaries and lay schools, worship languages and programs.

After 18 months of work, inaugural distribution for the Native American Ministry Fund is planned for all AIAN Ministries by Nov. 1, 2018. Continued growth and funding mechanisms are in development. A group of leaders will be brought together as a committee to be trained in philanthropy and will work with the AIAN desk to further develop a plan of growth and distribution for the Native American Ministry Endowment Fund.

To amplify the voices and work of AIAN Ministries, peer groups have been established: Interfaith Doctrine of Discovery and Boarding School Working Group (relationship with the Rev. Amy Reumann and Ms. Ruth Ivory Moore). The group has regular conference calls, and has responded with action letters regarding Bear's Ears, Boarding School Healing Coalition, Standing Rock and Alaska/Arctic Refuge.

Faith Voice for Native Americans Advocacy Group provides training and presentations with ELCA Advocacy and our ecumenical partners (i.e., Episcopal Church, Mennonite Central Committee, United Church of Christ, Institute Justice



Team for the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, and Creation Justice Ministries). Another ecumenical partner the AIAN Ministries desk works with is Mid Council Ministries with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

The Native Ministry team that previously advised with the renewal process will be transitioning into more of an advisory/strategy group. The vitality process is changing how ethnic ministry tables are being utilized. Also, synod committees have been established to further the work of the memorial in Northwestern Minnesota, Northeastern Minnesota, Northwest Synod of Wisconsin, Rocky Mountain and Sierra Pacific Synods.

In addition, AIAN leaders are being profiled in *Living Lutheran* and the Rostered Women of Color resource, “God’s Faithfulness on the Journey.”

Deep listening sessions with American Indian and Alaska Native people are needed to further guide the work of this church and this memorial. Conversations with Domestic Mission staff on how best to do this are ongoing.

***Church Council action:***

**To receive the report from the Domestic Mission unit on the progress for implementing the repudiation of the doctrine of discovery;**

**To commend the ongoing work of the American Indian Alaska Native Ministries;**

**To encourage the presiding bishop to acknowledge the work needed to build relationships and honor commitments established in CA16.02.04; and**

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