

**EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA
CHURCH COUNCIL**

**MINUTES
August 16, 2009
Hilton Hotel
Minneapolis, Minnesota**

The sixty-second meeting of the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) was convened in Salon E of the Hilton Hotel in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

ORGANIZATION OF MEETING

(Agenda I.A.-I.F.)

The following persons were present for all or part of the meeting:

Voting Members

Officers:

Pr. Mark S. Hanson, presiding bishop
Mr. Carlos E. Peña, vice president
Mr. David D. Swartling, secretary
Ms. Christina Jackson-Skelton, treasurer

Church Council:

Pr. David P. Anderson	Pr. Steven P. Loy
Mr. Baron Blanchard	Mr. John S. Munday
Ms. Rebecca Jo Brakke	Mr. Mark W. Myers
Ms. Judith Anne Bunker	Ms. Ann C. Niedringhaus
Ms. Deborah L. Chenoweth	Pr. J. Pablo Obregon
Pr. Rachel L. Connelly	Pr. J. Paul Rajashekar
Mr. John R. Emery	Ms. Lynette M. Reitz
Ms. Karin L. Graddy	Pr. John C. Richter
Mr. Mark S. Helmke	Ms. Sandra Schlesinger
Ms. Norma J. Hirsch	Pr. Norene A. Smith (<i>excused</i>)
Pr. Keith A. Hunsinger	Pr. Jeffrey "Jeff" B. Sorenson
Pr. David E. Jensen	Mr. David Truland
Mr. Mark E. Johnson	Mr. Richard L. Wahl
Pr. Susan Langhauser	Ms. Phyllis L. Wallace
Mr. William R. Lloyd Jr.	Mr. Gary L. Wipperman
	Pr. Philip R. Wold

Representatives of the Conference of Bishops

Bp. Allan C. Bjornberg	Bp. H. Gerard Knoche
Bp. Leonard H. Bolick	Bp. Gerald L. Mansholt
Bp. Murray D. Finck	Bp. Peter Rogness
Bp. Callon W. Holloway	Bp. Paul Stumme-Diers
Bp. Marie C. Jerge	Bp. Martin D. Wells

Resource Persons

Office of the Presiding Bishop:

Pr. M. Wyvetta Bullock, executive for administration
Pr. Walter S. May, executive for synodical and constituent relations
Pr. Marcus R. Kunz, executive for discernment of contextual and theological issues
Ms. Myrna J. Sheie, executive for governance and institutional relations

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Office of the Secretary:

Pr. Karen G. Bockelman, executive assistant to the secretary
Pr. Ruth E. Hamilton, executive for Office of the Secretary administration
Mr. Phillip H. Harris, general counsel
Ms. Mary Beth Nowak, executive assistant to the secretary
Mr. David A. Ullrich, associate general counsel

Press:

Mr. John R. Brooks, director, ELCA News Service

**Sunday, August 16, 2009
Plenary Session I**

Vice President Carlos E. Peña called to order the first plenary session of the sixty-second meeting of the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America at 1:18 P.M. Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson opened with prayer and a reading from Romans 10. Vice President Peña welcomed all those present and introduced a new council member, the Rev. Philip R. Wold of the Montana Synod. Vice President Peña made a number of routine announcements about the council's procedures.

**ADOPTION OF AGENDA
(Agenda I.E)**

Background:

Agenda items had been distributed by mail and electronically. Additional items were distributed at the meeting.

Church Council Action:

Vice President Carlos E. Peña called on Mr. David D. Swartling, secretary, to read the action pertaining to adoption of the agenda. Vice President Peña called for a second, then opened the floor for discussion. There being no discussion, he called for the vote.

VOTED:

CC09.08.45 To adopt the agenda and to permit the chair to call for consideration of agenda items in the order the chair deems most appropriate.

**RESPONSES TO SYNODICAL RESOLUTIONS
(Agenda III.C; Agenda/MINUTES Exhibit B)**

Background:

At its May 2009 meeting, the Executive Committee discussed the place of memorials and resolutions in the priorities of the churchwide organization, especially related to the current context of reduced budget and staff. After discussion, the Executive Committee voted (EC09.05.18):

To postpone consideration of the resolutions from the Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana Synod on the use of military language in worship and on suicide prevention, from the LaCrosse Area Synod on the Hmong military veterans, from the Eastern Washington-Idaho Synod on the West Bank and Gaza, from the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod on the fullness of leadership and on Lutheran Disaster Response until the June meeting of the Executive Committee.

Synod Assemblies for 2009 have been completed, and the Office of the Secretary has notified synods of which actions will be received as memorials and which will be received as resolutions. As a result, some of the topics indicated in the action above were considered as memorials by the Memorials Committee at its June 26-27, 2009, meeting.

The appendix to the Report of the Memorials Committee includes the following information:

The Office of the Secretary has determined that eleven synod assembly memorials are resolutions that more properly should have been forwarded to Synod Councils for transmission to the Executive Committee of the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

The Church Council voted in November 1988 "that future communications from synods will be dealt with according to ELCA constitutional and bylaw provisions. . . ." This affirms that

- Synod Assemblies address the Churchwide Assembly;
- Synod Councils address the Church Council; and
- Synod Councils address churchwide units through the Church Council's Executive Committee, including forwarding resolutions adopted by the Synod Assembly.

The content of a synod assembly's action determines whether it is a memorial or a resolution. Generally, memorials are reserved for broad policy matters that are the primary work of the assembly. Resolutions concern implementation of policies that already have been established or specific requests that concern either work already assigned or work that is related to the responsibilities of churchwide units. For example, if a previous assembly has taken action to establish a policy, the work is

underway. Advice about the work goes to those units carrying out this responsibility.

The Office of the Secretary has provided the following information for all synods prior to each synod assembly:

Memorials

Synod assemblies pass memorials to the Churchwide Assembly. This is in keeping with bylaw 12.21.c. in the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, which declares, "The Churchwide Assembly shall . . . receive and consider proposals from synod assemblies." Memorials should be reserved for broader policy issues that belong in the Churchwide Assembly. A memorial addresses only the Churchwide Assembly, not the Church Council or churchwide units. Memorials adopted by a Synod Assembly are submitted to the secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for transmittal to the Churchwide Assembly with a recommendation for action prepared by the Memorials Committee of the Churchwide Assembly. One of the final "Resolved" clauses should make clear that the action is a memorial, and should contain the concern to be discussed, such as:

RESOLVED, that the _____ Synod Assembly memorialize the [YEAR] Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to . . . [describe the proposed course or action for consideration.]

Resolutions

Synod Councils may pass resolutions to the Church Council. Resolutions follow a more direct route than memorials, which must go to the Churchwide Assembly. "The Church Council shall act on resolutions from synod councils," according to bylaw 14.21.11. Synod Councils also may seek to address churchwide units through resolutions. These must be submitted to the Church Council's Executive Committee for appropriate referral, according to bylaw 14.41.11.b., which specifies that the council's Executive Committee shall "transmit resolutions from synods to the appropriate unit or units of the churchwide organization."

Synods also may forward resolutions emerging from the Synod Assembly for attention by the Church Council or referral to churchwide units by the Church Council's Executive Committee. This is the appropriate method for addressing specific churchwide units about a given concern.

In the final "Resolved" clause of a resolution to be referred to a churchwide unit, the Synod Assembly's action should include the following:

RESOLVED, that the _____ 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.

In response to the sixteen synod assembly actions listed below, the Executive Committee recommended specific actions for consideration by the Church Council at its August 2009 meeting. A report of the recommendations and referrals was distributed to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly as information. The synod assembly actions are:

- Use of Military Language in Worship [Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana (4D), 2009] (*removed from en bloc*)
- Suicide Prevention [Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana (4D); Metropolitan Chicago (5A); Southeastern (9D); Northeastern Iowa (5F), 2009]
- Save the Hmong Vietnam Veterans and Their Families [LaCrosse Area (5L), 2009]
- Creation of a Department of Peace in the U.S. Government [Minneapolis Area (3G), 2009]
- Permanent Resident Status for Liberian People [Minneapolis Area (3G), 2009]
- Darfur [New England (7B), 2009]
- Grace Matters [South-Central Synod of Wisconsin (5K), 2009]
- Benefits for Domestic Partners [South-Central Synod of Wisconsin (5K), 2009]
- The Lesser Festivals of the Church [Southwestern Pennsylvania (8B), 2009]
- Board of Pensions Health Plan [New England (7B), 2009]
- Health Care [New England (7B), 2009]
- Translation of the Psalms [Allegheny (8C), 2009]
- Vote Margin on Ministry Policies [Northwestern Minnesota (3D), 2009]

At its July 2009 meeting, the Executive Committee discussed the resolutions and appointed a working group to bring

recommendations to the August 2009 meeting. The working group included the following Mr. William R. Lloyd Jr., Ms. Norma J. Hirsch, Ms. Myrna J. Sheie (staff), and Secretary David D. Swartling. Following a report from the working group, the Executive Committee voted [EC09.08.23] to recommend to the Church Council that it approve responses to each of the resolutions.

Church Council Action:

Vice President Carlos E. Peña called on Secretary David D. Swartling to present the proposed action on behalf of the Executive Committee. Vice President Peña then called for the vote.

VOTED:

CC09.08.46 To approve the following responses to synodical actions:

A. Save the Hmong Vietnam Veterans and Their Families

La Crosse Area Synod (5L)

WHEREAS, the U.S. recruited Hmong to fight in the Vietnam War alongside U.S. soldiers, and these veterans and their families have since 1975 experienced systematic persecution and the daily threat of death:

- During the Vietnam War from 1961–1975, the U.S. came to Laos to recruit tens of thousands of Hmong to fight in the Vietnam War. The Hmong saved thousands of U.S. soldiers by blocking the North Vietnamese from extending the Ho Chi Minh Trail into Laos. They rescued many American pilots who were shot down by the North Vietnamese. Approximately 60,000 American soldiers and over 35,000 Hmong died as a result of this war.
- Since 1975, the military of the Lao People's Democratic Republic (LPDR) has continuously used chemical weapons, air and ground attacks, and starvation tactics to exterminate the Hmong who have been in hiding for the past 33 years, causing the deaths of an additional 65,000 Hmong. Those Hmong who surrendered to the LPDR have never been seen again; and

WHEREAS, there is a current escalation of violence by the LPDR against the Hmong:

- Approximately 15,000 Hmong are still surrounded by the military and trapped in the jungles of Laos. These are mostly women and children of the second and third generation of the Hmong veterans of the Vietnam War. On March 23, 2008, the current government of Laos (LPDR), in cooperation with the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV), issued a new order and drafted a comprehensive strategy to mount a major military offensive to exterminate thousands of Hmong who continue to hide in the jungles and mountains of Laos, including thousands of unarmed women and children.¹ Soldiers who kill a Hmong person who is hiding receive an increase in rank and a \$600 reward²;
- Over the last eight years, approximately 8,000 Hmong have come out of the jungles of Laos to seek refugee status. They now live in the Huay Nam Khao camp in Phetchabun Province of Thailand. According to the Thai government, they are illegal immigrants and will be repatriated. If sent back to Laos, they risk being tortured, jailed, and even killed. Both the Lao and Thai governments have refused to allow the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees³ to monitor these people;
- Many Hmong, whether they fought in the Vietnam War or not, have had to flee from Laos to seek asylum in Thailand due to genocide or religious and political persecution; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the La Crosse Area Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA) encourage its congregations to offer its members the opportunity to sign a letter addressed to the U.S. government requesting the following:

- For the Hmong Vietnam veterans and families who are hiding in the jungles of Laos:
We ask the U.S. government (a) to send a delegation to work closely with the Lao government to grant permission for the Hmong Vietnam veterans and their families to leave the jungles of Laos, (b) to arrange for

¹See http://presszoom.com/story_144108.html.

²See <http://frontpagemagazine.com/Articles/Read.aspx?GUID=BFCDA612-EC24-4237-BDC1-5FC0E61F6C3F>.

³The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was established on December 14, 1950, by the United Nations General Assembly. The agency is mandated to lead and co-ordinate international action to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide. Its primary purpose is to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees. It strives to ensure that everyone can exercise the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge in another state, with the option to return home voluntarily, integrate locally, or resettle in a third country.

their placement in a safe zone outside of Laos, (c) to grant them refugee status, and (d) to allow them entry into the U.S. and/or other countries.

- For the Hmong Vietnam veterans and families currently in Phetchabun, Thailand:
We ask the U.S. government (a) to send a delegation to work closely with the Thai government to allow the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to screen the Hmong Vietnam veterans and their families, (b) to grant them refugee status, and (c) to allow them entry into the U.S. and/or other countries.
- For all other Hmong who are seeking asylum because of genocide or religious and political persecution:
We ask the U.S. government (a) to send a delegation to put pressure on the Thai and Lao governments to follow the International Human Rights Law⁴ and (b) to allow the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and Amnesty International to monitor the living conditions and safety of these Hmong in Laos and Thailand; and be it further

RESOLVED, that Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson be requested to send a letter expressing the concerns expressed in the aforementioned “resolved” to the U.S. President, Secretary of State, and members of Congress, and to the member churches of the Lutheran World Federation; and be it further

RESOLVED, that Pastor Houa Moua furnish ongoing educational materials regarding these issues and that each congregation be requested to seek out a contact person or committee (such as an ELCA Hunger Advocate, Mission Interpreter, pastor, or social ministry committee) to educate its members about these issues; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the La Crosse Area Synod encourage congregations (a) to consider sponsoring Hmong refugees, and (b) to find resources or set aside financial support for food and shelter for up to three months or until such time that these families can find work or other assistance; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the La Crosse Area Synod Council forward this resolution to the ELCA Church Council’s Executive Committee for proper referral and disposition under the bylaws and continuing resolutions of this church, including possible consideration and action by the Church Council and referral to the Global Mission unit and the Church in Society unit; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2008 La Crosse Area Synod Assembly request that the Church Council forward this resolution to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly.

Response from the Church in Society unit:

Violations of human rights often occur in the shadows where parties to injustice hope their actions will not be seen. Addressing such violations begins when a few people shine a light on the injustice. This exposure requires perseverance. The La Crosse Area Synod has undertaken to do this for Hmong Vietnam veterans and their families, who are persecuted to this day for the role they played when they were recruited in Laos by the United States between 1961 and 1975 to fight in the Vietnam War. The synod wishes to speak to the actions of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic as well as the government of Thailand under whose jurisdiction some Hmong have fled for protection in refugee camps.

The 2003 ELCA Churchwide Assembly passed a motion [CA03.06.30] expressing this church’s “common concern that the basic human rights of all people of the world be protected” and, in light of this, voted to convey to the Lao People’s Democratic Republic “concern about reported ill treatment of Hmong Lao nationals, and ask that they be given access to lawyers, medical treatment, and trials that meet international standards of justice.” The assembly appealed to the Lao government to permit international human rights organizations and religious humanitarian agencies to have access to these people. Finally, the assembly “urge[d] members of ELCA congregations and advocacy agencies to express these same concerns to U.S. and Lao government officials.”

According to the ELCA’s social statement “For Peace in God’s World” (1995), the just war tradition includes principles for post-war conduct that include “showing mercy to the defeated and assisting them to rebuild” (p. 11). Because we believe that humans are created in God’s image, the statement supports the application of human rights, protests their violation, and supports ways “to monitor and ensure compliance” with them (p. 14).

⁴The International Human Rights Law is a system of laws, both domestic and international, designed to promote human rights. Human rights law is made up of various international human rights instruments, including treaties that are intended to punish some violations of human rights, such as war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. There are also a number of international courts that have been constituted to judge violations of human rights, including the European Court of Human Rights and the International Criminal Court.

The social statement

- oppose[s] genocide and other grievous violations of human rights such as torture, religious and racial oppression, forced conscription (impressment), forced labor, and war crimes (including organized rape)”; and
- defend[s] the human rights of groups most susceptible to violations, especially minorities, women, and children” (p. 14).

Finally, “For Peace in God’s World” notes that “unprecedented numbers [of] people have had to flee their homes because of persecution or general violence” and “support[s] compassionate survival assistance for refugees and vigorous international protection for them” (p. 20).

VOTED:

CC09.08.46a To thank the La Crosse Area Synod for its concern for the human rights of Hmong Vietnam veterans and their families;

To encourage La Crosse Area Synod congregations to draw upon the expertise of the Lutheran Office for Public Policy in Wisconsin in communicating with elected federal representatives;

To request that Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson, through the ELCA Washington Office working in collaboration with Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, communicate the concerns raised by the La Crosse Area Synod to the public officials named in the resolution and communicate this action to the general secretary of the Lutheran World Federation for possible sharing with other LWF member communions; and

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

B. Permanent Resident Status for Liberian People

Minneapolis Area Synod (3G)

WHEREAS, the country of Liberia experienced a civil war lasting almost 15 years; and

WHEREAS, it has only been five years since peace has been established; and

WHEREAS, it has only been three years since presidential elections have established political stability; and

WHEREAS, it has only been two years since the Truth and Reconciliation process has been established; and

WHEREAS, many displaced people from Liberia have settled in the Minneapolis area; and

WHEREAS, there are many congregations in the Minneapolis Area Synod where Liberians are members; and

WHEREAS, many of the displaced were forced to leave without refugee status; and

WHEREAS, the “temporary protected status” that the United States Congress has issued for over 11 years does not provide many of the benefits of permanent residency, such as eligibility for college loans and scholarships, application for citizenship, and application for sponsorship; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Minneapolis Area Synod, meeting in assembly, memorialize the 2009 Churchwide Assembly to go on record as supporting U.S. Congressional Bill S656, “Liberian Refugee Immigration Fairness Act of 2009”; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Minneapolis Area Synod, meeting in assembly, memorialize the 2009 Churchwide Assembly to direct the Office of the Presiding Bishop or his designee(s) contact all congressional legislators in the U.S. Congress to convey this decision.

Response from the Church in Society unit:

Liberian nationals in the United States were granted Temporary Protected Status (TPS) by the United States government when civil war broke out in Liberia in 1990. When rebel leader Charles Taylor was deposed and President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was elected, there were reports of improving economic conditions, and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced that TPS would not be extended for Liberians after it expired on October 1, 2007.

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS), the lead Lutheran advocacy presence on immigration and refugee issues, together with members of Congress and the administration, helped to win a new decision from President George W. Bush, who authorized a Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) for the Liberians for 18 months after the October 2007 deadline.

Expiration of DED may mean forced deportation of thousands of Liberians to their home country, resulting in the

separation and the displacement of Liberians, many of whom have lived, worked, and contributed to communities and churches in the United States for nearly 20 years.

On March 19, 2009, the Liberian Refugee Immigration Fairness Act of 2009 (S.656) was introduced in the Congress. It proposes to adjust to permanent resident status qualifying Liberian nationals or their dependents, with adjustment applications to be filed before April 1, 2011.

The Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America responded in November 2008 to a resolution on "Temporary Protected Status for Liberians" from the Minneapolis Area Synod. The Church Council voted [CC08.11.44b]:

To commend the Minneapolis Area Synod for bringing its experience in community-building and hospitality and this important issue to the attention of this church, and to thank them for witnessing to the importance and relevance of this church's public voice; and

To note in response to the third "resolved" that advocacy efforts by appropriate Lutheran bodies, in coalition with other partners, were responsible for removing the initial threat of forced deportation caused by the non-renewal of Temporary Protected Status and to note the ongoing advocacy efforts to protect Liberians in the United States under Deferred Enforced Departure status in order to establish a longer-lasting and more dependable legal basis for their presence in this country; and

To indicate in response to the fourth "resolved" that the Church in Society program unit will work closely with LIRS to monitor the status of the DED agreement and involve ELCA leaders in appropriate responses to members of Congress and relevant administration officials about pending decisions by DHS [Department for Homeland Security] and related federal agencies relating to the DED agreement or other resulting status for the Liberians.

Since that time, the Church in Society unit has partnered with Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service in response to the situation confronting Liberians displaced by the civil war and living in the U.S.

The ELCA's social statement "For Peace in God's World" (1995) notes that, as a result of conflicts, persecution, and general violence, millions of refugees have been forced to flee to other countries or have been internally displaced. The statement says: "We support compassionate survival assistance for refugees and vigorous international protection for them. The world community has a responsibility to aid nations that receive refugees and to help change the situations from which they have fled. In our own country we support a generous policy of welcome for refugees and immigrants. We pledge to continue our church's historic leadership in caring for refugees and immigrants" (pp. 20-21).

VOTED:

CC09.08.46b To receive the resolution of the Minneapolis Area Synod related to permanent resident status for Liberian people;

To request that the Church in Society unit through the ELCA Washington Office, in partnership with Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, consider appropriate response to pending legislation related to permanent resident status for Liberian people; and

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

C. Darfur

New England Synod (7B)

RESOLVED, that the New England Synod in assembly submit the following memorial for consideration by the 2009 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA); and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2009 Churchwide Assembly encourage the congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to learn about the situation in Darfur and to pray for the people of Darfur, for the relief efforts, and for the peace process; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2009 Churchwide Assembly request that the congregations and individual members of the ELCA consider sending messages to their leaders in the federal government, encouraging them to take stronger measures towards achieving peace in Darfur, including supporting funding for peacekeepers, multilateral sanctions against the perpetrators of genocide, and diplomatic efforts to encourage other countries with influence to support a comprehensive and just peace in Darfur; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2009 Churchwide Assembly request that the presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America make advocating for peace in Darfur a priority and communicate the importance of advocating for peace in Darfur and supporting relief efforts in Darfur to the members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, to the members of the Lutheran World Federation, and to the heads of state and leaders of government whom he often has the opportunity to meet.

Response from the Church in Society unit:

Sudan has been plagued by internal conflict for nearly 40 years. A variety of complex factors, including race, ethnicity, religion, and economic disparities, fueled a 22-year conflict between the north and south and also are largely at the heart of the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Darfur that began in 2003.

On January 9, 2005, the government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) to end the decades-long civil war between the north and south. The CPA culminates in 2011 when the south is scheduled to have the opportunity to vote for independence from the rest of Sudan. While the CPA provides a roadmap for peace between north and south, implementation of various aspects of the agreement has been slow, and renewed fighting between the north and south is very possible. The signing of the CPA continues to be overshadowed by the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Darfur, the western region of Sudan. The U.S. government has asserted that the Sudanese Government is committing genocide against the people in Darfur, with estimates of innocent civilians killed ranging from 200,000 to more than 450,000. With more than half of Darfur's seven million people either internally or externally displaced and exclusively dependent on external aid for shelter, food, and water, the conflict in Darfur represents an extraordinary humanitarian crisis.

For some time, the New England Synod has encouraged its congregations and individual members as well as the ELCA as a whole to learn about this situation, to pray for the people of Darfur and for peace, and to advocate to federal government leaders. The synod submitted a memorial to the 2007 ELCA Churchwide Assembly discussing concerns similar to those in this resolution.

The ELCA social statement "For Peace in God's World" states that this church's work for peace at times includes being a "disturbing presence" and a "serving presence." It is a disturbing presence "when it refuses to be silent and instead speaks the truth in times when people shout out, 'Peace, peace' when there is no peace" (Jeremiah 6:14). It is a serving presence "when it holds power accountable, advocates justice, stands with those who are poor and vulnerable, provides sanctuary, and meets human need" (p. 5). Helping the neighbor in need "may require protecting innocent people from injustice and aggression" (p. 11). The statement opposes "genocide and other grievous violations of human rights" (p. 14).

The ELCA has taken a number of steps to raise awareness about the situation in Darfur, bring relief, and advocate. Through the ELCA e-Advocacy network and collaborative efforts with ecumenical partners and the "Save Darfur Coalition," the Church in Society unit has taken action to demand that the Sudanese government accept the deployment of United Nations peacekeepers in Darfur. In September 2006, the ELCA urged all e-Advocacy members to send an e-mail calling upon President Bush to "make every effort to bring safety and security to the innocent civilians in Darfur by utilizing every diplomatic means available to ensure that the Sudanese government allows the U.N. peacekeeping force to enter Darfur before the African Union's mandate expires at the end of September." In May 2007, e-Advocacy members were asked to urge the President to take leadership to build the political will of the international community to bring peace to Darfur.

In April 2008, a joint delegation of bishops and staff from the Episcopal Church and the ELCA traveled to Sudan to express solidarity with those working for peace and to return with recommendations to their respective churches and to the U.S. government. The fact-finding group spent five days examining the status of the CPA. The delegation met with government leaders, church officials, leaders of non-governmental organizations, and refugee-resettlement experts.

Based on recommendations from this joint delegation, in June 2008, Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson and Episcopal Church Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori issued a joint statement on Sudan in which they "urge[d] all Americans to pray for peace in the Sudan and to call for strong action from the international community to restore stability in a land whose people have been entangled far too long in violence."

The ELCA at this time does not have the capacity to add Darfur to its current work priorities, which include the Middle East, HIV and AIDS, and the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, as requested by this synod.

However, the ELCA Washington Office will continue to work to address the situation in partnership with Lutheran World Relief (LWR), which is one of the few remaining non-governmental organizations in the Darfur region and which remains actively involved in advocacy and education related to Sudan and Darfur (<http://www.lwr.org/sudan/index.asp>). For example, as of July 2009, the ELCA Washington Office is working with LWR to initiate a letter calling for implementation of the CPA to be signed by pastors from several traditions. The Washington Office staff is asking Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson to provide a cover letter expressing the importance and urgency of the situation.

VOTED:

- CC09.08.46c** **To express appreciation to the New England Synod for its continued advocacy in support of Darfur and to acknowledge the significant work of this church on behalf of this region in partnership with Lutheran World Relief;**
 To commit this church to continue its advocacy for Darfur in partnership with Lutheran World Relief and other partners and to encourage members of this church to participate in support of this work through the ELCA's e-Advocacy network; and
 To request that the secretary of this church inform the synod of this action.

D1. The Lesser Festivals of the Church

Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod (8B)

WHEREAS, the Lesser Festivals provide opportunity for congregations to teach and celebrate many events in Jesus' life and to remember the most significant examples of faith (e.g., evangelists, apostles, and Mary, the mother of our Lord); and

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) through *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* and the ELCA Web site (http://archive.elca.org/worship/faq/occasional_services/lesserfestivals.html) promotes local choices in worship; and

WHEREAS, since the inception of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, Augsburg Fortress has stopped publishing the bulletin service with the option of celebrating the lesser festivals of the church; and

WHEREAS, only a small portion of the lesser festivals fall on a Sunday in any given year; and

WHEREAS, allowing Augsburg Fortress to provide the festival track option for its bulletin service gives congregations wishing to celebrate the Lesser Festivals the opportunity to do so while still being good stewards of the resources entrusted to them; and

WHEREAS, many congregations in the ELCA have found the Lesser Festivals beneficial in the teaching and worship life of their congregations; and

WHEREAS, purchasing the online version of *Sundays and Seasons* and producing complete bulletins bulletin inserts is prohibitive for cost and time to many small congregations and for environmental reasons; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly memorialize the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America 2009 Churchwide Assembly and Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, to restart the festival track for its bulletin service and for the Celebrate, Jubilate, and weekly lesson bulletin inserts.

D2. Translation of the Psalms

Allegheny Synod (8C)

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is rightfully encouraging its congregations and members to return to the study and use of the Holy Bible; and

WHEREAS, with its new hymnal, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, this church has laudably expanded its psalter to include all 150 Psalms for the devotional use of congregations and individuals; and

WHEREAS, the texts of these Psalms, in many instances, cease to be translations of the Hebrew texts and have become poor representations of what the psalmist actually sang and prayed, but, even worse, the texts hide the beauty of Hebrew poetry with its unique parallelisms; and

WHEREAS, in the ELCA corporate worship aids (lectionary series and new hymnals), people are being exposed to these distortions of Holy Writ, some of which are downright silly, such as in Psalm 23 where worshipers are forced to eliminate the words "he, his, him," thus making the psalm anything but a faithful translation; and

WHEREAS, any reader may see how this affects corporate and private devotions by comparing the following:

Evangelical Lutheran Worship

The LORD is my shepherd;
I shall not be in want.
The LORD makes me lie down in green pastures
and leads me beside still waters.
You restore my soul, O LORD
and guide me along right pathways for your name's sake.
Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I shall fear no evil;
for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they
comfort me.
You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil, my cup is running over.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

The Holy Bible (Revised Standard Version)

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want;
he makes me lie down in green pastures.
He leads me beside still waters;
he restores my soul,
He leads me in paths of righteousness
for his name's sake.
Even though I walk through the valley
of the shadow of death, I fear no evil;
for thou art with me;
thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.
Thou preparest a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
thou anointest my head with oil,
my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall
follow me all the days of my life;
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
for ever.

therefore, be it

RESOLVED that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in its future publishing of the Lectionary Series and in the further printings of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* make use of texts from *The Holy Bible (New Revised Standard Version)*, which is a trustworthy translation that presently is in the common domain and not tainted by the hierarchical fads of today.

Response from the Worship and Liturgical Resources section:

In the 30 years since the publication of *Lutheran Book of Worship*, the pace of change has quickened, both within this church and beyond it. There has been an explosion of new worship and musical resources available to this church, both electronically and in print. This church has embraced broadened understandings of culture, increasing musical diversity, ecumenical consensus, and changes in the use of language.

In light of these changes, the Renewing Worship process leading to the production of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (2006) evaluated the use of the treasury of liturgy and song, working with a representative sample of over 600 ELCA congregations and other congregations or individuals who completed evaluations forms. Such provisional volumes as *Congregational Song* (2001) and *Renewing Worship Songbook* (2003) were used, along with five volumes of liturgical material and a proposed hymn list, and made widely available for evaluation throughout this church. Another group of pastors, musicians, and theologians, bringing a variety of perspectives from across the ELCA, in consultation with full communion partners, considered the use of language, music, preaching, and worship space in the Christian assembly in *Principles for Worship* (2002).

Evangelical Lutheran Worship acknowledges in its introduction that it is “a core rather than a comprehensive resource. The collection of materials is more expansive than its predecessor; it reflects a body of prayer and song that our churches consider worthy to hold in common; and, in many contexts, it will provide most or all of what is needed for the assembly’s worship. Still, it is not possible or necessary for a single worship book to contain all the expressions of worship desired in every context by an increasingly diverse church. The book contains notable representatives of a wide variety of liturgical texts and musical forms that point to larger repertoires outside this volume.”

Congregations and worshiping assemblies are free to—and encouraged to—make use of any musical resources that are both faithful to the message of the Gospel as articulated in the Lutheran tradition and meaningful to the specific context in which they find themselves. There are many sources to access additional song, many of which are in the public domain.

The emended version of the Psalms in *ELW* does not seek to change Scripture. It seeks to provide a collection that is intended for use as common sung prayer rather than as a translation for study. Further information is provided in the introductory material in the Psalms section of *ELW* (p. 335). As that introduction states, other translations, such as the *New Revised Standard Version*, are readily available for congregations that choose to use them.

Finally, the observance of the lesser festivals of the church year is discussed in detail in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship—Leaders Desk Edition* (2006), pages 10-13. While guidance is given for the observance of these days based on the principle that all Sundays of the year are festivals of the Lord Jesus Christ and the weekly celebration of the resurrection, the notes counsel, “local congregations may consider whether observing a lesser festival (with its propers) . . . outweighs the value of observing the Sunday with its propers.”

Future print and electronic liturgical and musical resources that supplement *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* will continue to be developed as much as possible in consultation with this whole church, be subject to the liturgical review policies of the ELCA, and meet the missional needs of the contemporary church.

VOTED:

CC09.08.46d

To receive the resolution of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod related to the lesser festivals of the Church and of the Allegheny Synod related to translation of the psalms;

To refer the resolutions to the Worship and Liturgical Resources section of the churchwide organization in consultation with Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, as information for the ongoing development of worship and liturgical resources for this church; and

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

E. Creation of a Department of Peace in the U.S. Government

Minneapolis Area Synod (3G)

WHEREAS, Jesus Christ is the Prince of Peace, who calls us to love our neighbors and to be a peace with one another; and

WHEREAS, citizens of the United States and people around the globe desire nonviolent approaches to conflict resolution so that God’s children live in peace; and

WHEREAS, we applaud and seek to augment the marvelous work the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) does to promote peace in our world; and

WHEREAS, the Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA on August 20, 1995, adopted “For Peace in God’s World,” a social statement on the responsibility of this church to work for peace; and

WHEREAS, House Resolution 808 (HR808) would implement action in keeping with the goals stated in “For Peace in God’s World,” by creating a Cabinet-level Department of Peace; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA’s former director of international relations and human rights, the Rev. Dr. James Vigen, wrote in a letter, dated November 14, 2005, that “The goals of this legislation [HR808] are worthy and well in line with our ELCA social statements on seeking peace, and are certainly ones we would support”; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Minneapolis Area Synod, meeting in assembly, memorialize the 2009 Churchwide Assembly to endorse HR808 by calling on the Church in Society unit to notify its co-workers in the nationwide network of state public policy advocacy offices and the members of the United States House of Representatives of this church’s support for HR808; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Minneapolis Area Synod, meeting in assembly, memorialize the 2009 Churchwide Assembly to call for the Communication Services unit to provide ELCA congregation members and staff with information about HR808 through all appropriate media including, but not limited to, *The Lutheran* magazine and the ELCA Web site.

Response from the Church in Society unit:

The idea for a United States Department for Peace has been discussed for a number of years. Based on this discussion, a United States Institute for Peace was established to provide “the analysis, training and tools that prevent and end conflicts, promote stability and professionalize the field of peacebuilding” (<http://www.usip.org/about-us>). While the Institute’s information and resources are made available to the executive and legislative branches of the federal government, as well as to the general public, it lacks authority to be directly involved in the implementation of public policy.

Currently, the concept for a Department for Peace is promoted by a bill sponsored by Rep. Dennis Kucinich (D-OH). To date, this bill has not garnered bi-partisan sponsorship and is unlikely to move through legislative committees to final passage.

The goal of peacemaking, however, is of central concern for people of faith and one of several long-standing thematic foci for ELCA ministries, programs, and relationships. The ELCA has made a commitment to peacemaking in substantive ways. In 1995, the ELCA adopted the social statement, "For Peace in God's World," which recognizes "sin's persistent, pervasive, and subtle power" to undermine peace, but declares that "God continues to work through people, their communities and structures, to make earthly peace possible" (p. 7). One implication of this faith is the task of building a culture of peace (p. 13). The social statement calls upon "nations to provide leadership, education, structures, and funds for the peaceful resolution of conflict" with "the same commitment that they prepare people to settle disputes with military force" (p. 15). Because of its commitment to peace-building, the 1999 Churchwide Assembly voted to participate in the United Nations Decade for a Culture of Non-violence (2000 to 2010). Lutheran Peace Fellowship, an independent Lutheran organization that relates to the ELCA through the Church in Society unit, has provided resources, experiences, and advocacy for peace-building for nearly 70 years.

The proposed Department for Peace would include in its purview domestic issues and priorities, such as sentencing, domestic violence, criminal justice, and conflict resolution, as well as international and foreign policy priorities. In support of these, the ELCA has worked to address criminal justice and community and domestic violence. It has promoted peace abroad through inter-religious dialogue, multilateral peace-building efforts through the United Nations, sustainable development through the Lutheran World Federation and Lutheran World Relief, and poverty-focused foreign assistance, among other activities.

There is a convergence of the ELCA's peace-building priorities with the constitutive goals of a United States Department for Peace worthy of further exploration by the ELCA's expressions and affiliated and related independent organizations.

VOTED:

CC09.08.46e

To receive with thanks the resolution of the Minneapolis Area Synod related to the creation of a Department of Peace in the U.S. government;

To decline the specific requests made in this resolution, but to refer the resolution to the Church in Society unit as information with the request that it continue its advocacy and related programmatic work that promotes peace-building; and

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

F1. Suicide Prevention

Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana Synod (4D)

WHEREAS, suicide is the eleventh leading cause of death in the United States and claimed over 32,000 lives in 2005 (more deaths than homicide and HIV-AIDS combined) and is the eighth leading cause of death for men of all ages, the second leading cause of death for people ages 25–34, the third leading cause of death among 15–24 year olds, and claims the lives of over 350 members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) annually; and

WHEREAS, suicides carry a burden of stigma, impacting an ever widening circle of people from the immediate family to friends, neighbors, work, school, faith and health communities—and all of society—that severely impedes the recovery efforts of those impacted by suicides and the efforts to help suicidal people; and

WHEREAS, those who have lost a loved one to suicide (survivors of suicide) represent a population at least 20 times the number of suicides and, due to stigma, are a group largely without help and recovery resources or support; and

WHEREAS, those who have made a life-threatening act to end their lives represent a group estimated to range from 20 to 100 times larger than those who die by suicide, comprise a group estimated to be six times more likely than others to complete suicide in the future, are largely unknown, and need the understanding, care, and support of faith communities; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA Message on Suicide Prevention, approved by the Church Council on November 14, 1999, provides a basis for ELCA suicide-prevention action in these words: "Our efforts to prevent suicide grow out of our obligation to protect and promote life, our hope in God amid suffering and adversity, and our love for our troubled neighbor"; and

WHEREAS, numerous new suicide prevention resources have become available since 1999, including inexpensive, Web-based suicide-prevention educational and training materials; federal funding for college and university prevention programs; a national

suicide-prevention resource center; the ELCA Suicide Prevention Endowment Fund; and broad interest from national faith communities in collaborating to fight suicide; and

WHEREAS, suicide happens in local congregations and communities where people live, work, and play; it is also clear that prominent and repeated support from the top leadership of the ELCA is essential for this church to move from policy statement to action to prevent suicide, and since no existing church mechanism addresses suicide prevention; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana Synod encourage the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to commit itself, within the availability of funding and staff resources, to take the following actions:

1. authorize the creation of a volunteer Suicide Prevention Ministry Task Force under the supervision of the Church in Society unit for a trial period of two years (with continuance beyond that left to the discretion of the Church in Society unit), with a charge to:
 - a. examine the prevalence of suicide and its impact on this church and its members, institutions, and rostered persons, along with ways in which such impact may be reduced,
 - b. collaborate with other organizations on suicide prevention,
 - c. invite ELCA survivors of suicide and those who have been suicidal to serve on the Task Force;
2. encourage the Communication Services unit of the churchwide organization to promote this church's suicide prevention work and its Suicide Prevention Endowment Fund;
3. encourage all rostered personnel to take a Web-based survey on knowledge of suicide prevention;
4. direct this church's Washington office to advocate for expanded federal suicide-prevention research; and
5. require the Task Force to provide the executive director of the Church in Society unit a report on the work of the Task Force and its recommendations.

F2. Suicide Prevention

Metropolitan Chicago Synod (5A)

WHEREAS, suicide is the eleventh leading cause of death in the United States and claimed over 32,000 lives in 2005 (more deaths than homicide and HIV combined) and is the eighth leading cause of death for men of all ages, the second leading cause of death for people ages 25–34, the third leading cause of death among 15–24 year olds, and annually claims the lives of more than 350 members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA); and

WHEREAS, suicides carry a burden of stigma, which has an impact on a wide circle of people, from the immediate family to friends and neighbors and from workplaces and schools to faith and health communities and all of society; and

WHEREAS, the stigma attached to suicide severely impedes both the recovery of those impacted by suicide and efforts to help suicidal people; and

WHEREAS, the number of those who have lost a loved one to suicide (suicide survivors) is at least 20 times the number of suicides and, due to stigma, these people remain largely without help and support; and

WHEREAS, survivors of suicide have, as a group, terrific potential to be a foundation of strength and energy to prevent additional suicides; and

WHEREAS, the number of people who have made a life-threatening act to end their lives is estimated to be anywhere from 20 to 100 times the number of those who die by suicide; and

WHEREAS, those who have attempted suicide are six times more likely than others to complete suicide in the future, and so are especially in need of the understanding, care, and support of faith communities, even though they are largely unidentified; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA Message on Suicide Prevention, approved by the Church Council on November 14, 1999, provides a basis for ELCA suicide-prevention action in these words: "Our efforts to prevent suicide grow out of our obligation to protect and promote life, our hope in God amid suffering and adversity, and our love for our troubled neighbor"; and

WHEREAS, numerous new suicide prevention resources have become available since 1999, including inexpensive, Web-based suicide-prevention educational and training materials; federal funding for college and university prevention programs; evidence-based prevention programs; a national "hotline"; a national suicide-prevention resource center; an ELCA Suicide Prevention Endowment Fund; and broad interest from national faith communities in collaborating to fight suicide; and

WHEREAS, suicide happens in local congregations and communities where people live, work, and play; it is also clear that prominent and repeated support from the top leadership of the ELCA is essential for this church to move from policy statement to action to prevent suicide, and since no existing church mechanism addresses suicide prevention;

WHEREAS, it is clear that prominent and repeated support from the top leadership of this church is essential for the ELCA to move from policy statement to action to prevent suicide; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan Chicago Synod memorialize the 2009 Churchwide Assembly to authorize the creation of a volunteer Suicide Prevention Ministry Task Force for a trial period of two years (with continuance beyond that left to the discretion of the Church in Society unit) with a charge to:

1. be supervised by the Church in Society unit;
2. examine the prevalence of suicide and its impact on this church and its members, institutions, and rostered persons, along with ways in which such impact may be reduced,
3. collaborate with other organizations on suicide prevention,
4. invite ELCA survivors of suicide and those who have been suicidal to serve on the task force; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan Chicago Synod memorialize the 2009 Churchwide Assembly to encourage the Communication Services unit of the ELCA to promote this church's suicide prevention work and its Suicide Prevention Endowment Fund; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan Chicago Synod memorialize the 2009 Churchwide Assembly to direct this church's Washington advocacy office to advocate for expanded federal suicide-prevention research; and

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan Chicago Synod memorialize the 2009 Churchwide Assembly to require the task force to provide the executive director of the Church in Society unit a report on the work of the task force and its recommendations.

F3. Suicide Prevention

Southeastern Synod (9D)

WHEREAS, suicide is the eleventh leading cause of death in the United States and claimed over 32,000 lives in 2005 (more deaths than homicide and HIV combined) and is the eighth leading cause of death for men of all ages, the second leading cause of death for people ages 25–34, the third leading cause of death among 15–24 year olds, and claims the lives of more than 350 members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) annually; and

WHEREAS, suicide carries a burden of stigma throughout society that seriously impedes the recovery efforts of those affected by suicide and the intervention efforts of those who seek to help suicidal persons; and

WHEREAS, those who have lost a loved one to suicide (survivors of suicide) represent a population at least 20 times the number of suicides and who, due to stigma, are a group largely without help and recovery resources or support, but are also a group, if identified, with terrific potential to be a foundation of strength and energy to prevent additional suicides; and

WHEREAS, those who have made a life-threatening act to end their lives represent a group estimated to be anywhere from 20 to 100 times the number of those who die by suicide, and who comprise a group estimated to be six times more likely than others to complete suicide in the future, but are largely unknown, and who need the understanding, care, and support of faith communities; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA Message on Suicide Prevention, approved by the Church Council on November 14, 1999, provides a basis for ELCA suicide-prevention action in these words: "Our efforts to prevent suicide grow out of our obligation to protect and promote life, our hope in God amid suffering and adversity, and our love for our troubled neighbor"; and

WHEREAS, numerous new suicide prevention resources have become available since 1999, including inexpensive, Web-based suicide-prevention educational and training materials; federal funding for college and university prevention programs; evidence-based prevention programs; a national "hotline"; a national suicide-prevention resource center; an ELCA Suicide Prevention Endowment Fund; and broad interest from national faith communities in collaborating to fight suicide; and

WHEREAS, suicide happens in local congregations and communities where people live, work, and play; it is also clear that prominent and repeated support from the top leadership of the ELCA is essential for this church to move from policy statement to action to prevent suicide, and since no existing church mechanism addresses suicide prevention; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod memorialize the 2009 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to commit itself, within the availability of funding and staff resources, to take the following actions:

1. authorize the creation of a volunteer Suicide Prevention Ministry Task Force for a trial period of two years (with continuance beyond that left to the discretion of the Church in Society unit) with a charge to:
 - a. be supervised by the Church in Society unit;
 - b. examine the prevalence of suicide and its impact on this church and its members, institutions, and rostered persons, along with ways in which such impact may be reduced;
 - c. collaborate with other organizations on suicide prevention;
 - d. invite ELCA survivors of suicide and those who have been suicidal to serve on the task force; and

2. encourage the Communication Services unit of the ELCA to promote this church's suicide prevention work and its Suicide Prevention Endowment Fund; and
3. encourage all rostered personnel to take a Web-based survey on knowledge of suicide prevention; and
4. direct this church's Washington advocacy office to advocate for expanded federal suicide-prevention research; and
5. require the task force to provide the executive director of the Church in Society unit a report on the work of the task force and its recommendations; and
6. direct the appropriate churchwide unit to identify and study the five to ten occupations internationally most prone to suicide.

F4. Suicide Prevention

Northeastern Iowa Synod (5F)

WHEREAS, suicide is the eleventh leading cause of death in the United States and claimed over 32,000 lives in 2005 (more deaths than homicide and HIV combined) and is the eighth leading cause of death for men of all ages, the second leading cause of death for people ages 25-34, the third leading cause of death among 15-24 year olds, and claims the lives of over 350 members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) annually; and

WHEREAS, suicides carry a terrible burden of stigma, impacting an ever widening circle of people from the immediate family to friends, neighbors, work, school, faith, health communities—and all of society—that severely impedes the recovery efforts of those impacted by suicides, and the efforts to help suicidal people; and

WHEREAS, those who have lost a loved one to suicide (survivors of suicide) represent a population at least 20 times the number of suicides, and who, due to stigma, are a group largely without help and recovery resources or support but are also a group, if identified, with terrific potential to be a foundation of strength and energy to prevent additional suicides; and

WHEREAS, those who have made a life-threatening act to end their lives represent a group estimated to range from 20 to 100 times larger than those who die by suicide, and who comprise a group estimated to be six times more likely than others to complete suicide in the future, but are largely unknown, and who need the understanding, care, and support of faith communities; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA Message on Suicide Prevention, approved by the Church Council on November 14, 1999, provides a basis for ELCA suicide prevention action in these words: "Our efforts to prevent suicide grow out of our obligation to protect and promote life, our hope in God amid suffering and adversity, and our love for our troubled neighbor"; and

WHEREAS, numerous new suicide prevention resources have become available since 1999, including inexpensive, Web-based suicide prevention educational and training materials, federal funding for college and university prevention programs, evidence-based prevention programs, a national "hotline," a national suicide prevention resource center, an ELCA Suicide Prevention Endowment Fund, and broad interest of national faith communities in collaborating to fight suicide; and

WHEREAS, suicide happens in local congregations and communities where people live, work, and play; it is also clear that prominent and repeated support from the top leadership of this church is essential for this church to move from policy statement to action to prevent suicide, and since no existing church mechanism addresses suicide prevention; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Iowa Synod encourage the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to commit itself, within the availability of funding and staff resources, to take the following actions:

1. authorize the creation of a volunteer Suicide Prevention Ministry Task Force under the supervision of the Church in Society unit for a trial period of two years (with continuance beyond that left to the discretion of the Church in Society unit), with a charge to:
 - a. be supervised by the Church in Society unit,
 - b. examine the prevalence of suicide and its impact on this church, its members, institutions, and rostered persons, along with ways in which such impact may be reduced,
 - c. collaborate with other organizations on suicide prevention,
 - d. invite ELCA survivors of suicide and those who have been suicidal to serve on the Task Force;
2. encourage the Communication Services unit of the churchwide organization to promote this church's suicide prevention work and its Suicide Prevention Endowment Fund;
3. encourage all rostered personnel to take a Web-based survey on knowledge of suicide prevention;
4. direct this church's Washington office to advocate for expanded federal suicide-prevention research; and
5. require the Task Force to provide the executive director of the Church in Society unit a report on the work of the Task Force and its recommendations.

Rationale for recommended action:

The resolutions of the Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana Synod, the Metropolitan Chicago Synod, the Southeastern Synod, and the Northeastern Iowa Synod come at a time when “the availability of funding and staff resources” is challenging. Given budget constraints, staffing responsibility for projects currently in process, and unit commitments to focus work around two churchwide priorities,⁵ it is recommended that the Church Council decline the requests of the synods, but invite the possibility of resubmission of the request when the budget constraints are less challenging.

VOTED:

CC09.08.46f **To receive the resolutions of the Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana Synod, the Metropolitan Chicago Synod, the Southeastern Synod, and the Northeastern Iowa Synod related to suicide prevention;**

To acknowledge with gratitude the deep concerns and strong commitments expressed by the resolutions, but to decline to initiate a process for response to the synods' requests due to budget constraints and the resulting capacity limitations related to additional work in this area;

To invite resubmission of the requests by the synods in consultation with the Church in Society program unit as funding and staff resources permit; and

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

G. Grace Matters

South-Central Synod of Wisconsin (5K)

WHEREAS, outreach and evangelism are essential to the growth of faith and the spread of the Good News of Jesus Christ, and “Grace Matters” and its predecessor “Lutheran Vespers” have a long history of just such outreach and evangelism; and

WHEREAS, while much “Christian” radio is slanted toward a fundamentalist and conservative understanding of faith and the Bible, “Grace Matters” has served as an effective balance, bringing in the voice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), which is centered on the fact that “Grace Matters”; and

WHEREAS, many who cannot attend weekly worship find that “Grace Matters” is one of the few sources of Lutheran emphasis they can receive on a weekly basis, that much of the material and stories provided by “Grace Matters” cannot be found anywhere else, and that through the Web cast, these stories are always available, making it a very accessible source of solid faith issues; and

WHEREAS, the means by which this mission was cancelled did not seem to have any broad discussion or broad attempts at other funding or attempts to refashion the mission to make it more cost effective; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin of the ELCA memorialize the 2009 Churchwide Assembly asking for a one-year extension of “Grace Matters,” during which time:

- funding sources will be explored; and
- input from all interested parties will be included in determining the best way of proceeding with this vital ministry;

and be it further

RESOLVED, that a review will be made of how this decision was made, with recommendations for improvements in the decision process, so that in the future interested parties will have the opportunity for input.

Response from the Communication Services unit:

Grace Matters and its predecessor, *Lutheran Vespers*, were for more than 60 years an important presence for listeners, supporters, and sponsors, especially in those pockets of the country where the program was broadcast. Many saw value in the program as an outreach and evangelism tool. Some called it the voice of the ELCA. Those unable to attend weekly worship relied on it as a source of connection to the church.

⁵ The churchwide organization, working collaboratively with congregations, synods, agencies and institutions and other partners, will give priority to: accompanying congregations as growing centers for evangelical mission; and building capacity for evangelical witness and service in the world to alleviate poverty and to work for justice and peace.

To meet these expectations, the program required the following: three full-time staff and two contract staff (at one point, four contract staff), regularly updated and upgraded media broadcast equipment, and marketing and fundraising assistance. Expenses for this ministry were significant.

Lutheran Vespers was a program of one of the ELCA's predecessor church bodies. With the birth of the ELCA, the churchwide organization's Communication Services unit (CO) became home to and producer of the program. This arrangement was made with the understanding that the program would continue as it had originated: a self-funded, donor-supported ministry.

Thus, in addition to producing the program, CO worked to raise the funds necessary to maintain the program's self-funded status by soliciting donor support through regular appeal letters, quarterly newsletters, gift offers, special events, and at least one verbal "ask" in every broadcast program. CO also coordinated a volunteer network to raise funds in several local contexts, partnered with two or three synods for local sponsorship, and searched repeatedly (albeit unsuccessfully) for corporate sponsors in larger, expensive markets where the program was required to buy air time.

Three years ago, in the face of mounting costs, CO instituted an annual fund (including phonathons in 2007 and 2008) in an all-out effort to increase the donor base and the level of giving. The response was flat. Over the last 20 years, the donor base remained relatively static.

In recent years the program did not generate enough gift revenue to cover its annual costs. In those years, CO drew from its already limited budget to cover the shortfall. The unit also provided other CO staff support, at no charge, to market and promote the program.

Other factors contributing to the eventual cancellation of the program included an aging listener/donor cohort and a limited broadcast reach with only 180 stations nationwide, most in rural Midwest locations. (For purposes of comparison, *The Lutheran Hour* broadcasts on nearly 900 stations and is entirely self-funded.) These factors, combined with the effects of this nation's economic downturn, made it increasingly difficult for CO to sustain the production, distribution, and broadcast of *Grace Matters*.

In the fall of 2008, all units in the churchwide organization were required to make difficult decisions in order to reduce budgets and staffing levels. A significantly reduced budget meant that the ELCA's Communication Services unit could no longer cover *Grace Matters*' expenses (including full-time and contract staff compensation) over and above gift income. Reduced staffing patterns meant that CO could no longer justify dedicating three full-time staff and two contract staff positions solely to the production of a radio broadcast with a limited reach. Thus, the painful decision was made to end this broadcast ministry.

VOTED:

CC09.08.46g To receive the resolution of the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin requesting a one-year extension of *Grace Matters*;
To acknowledge the background information provided by the Communications Services unit as the response of the Church Council to the synod's request; and
To request that the secretary of this church notify the synod of this action, including the background information.

H1. Benefits for Domestic Partners

South-Central Synod of Wisconsin (5K)

WHEREAS, the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin adopted the "Resolution on ELCA Board of Pensions and Domestic Partners" at its 2008 assembly; and

WHEREAS, economic impacts have only worsened in that time; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA Board of Pensions has not changed its policy of unjustly preventing unmarried partners to "unbundle" pensions from other parts of the program; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the 2009 Assembly of the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin memorialize the 2009 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) to call on the ELCA Board of Pensions to change the policies of the Pension and Other Benefits Program to more justly support domestic partners by allowing them to opt out of health benefits in the same fashion as current policy allows for married participants; and be it further

RESOLVED that the bishop of this synod report to the 2010 Synod Assembly how the president and trustees of the ELCA Board of Pensions have responded to this concern.

H2. Board of Pensions Health Plan

New England Synod (7B)

RESOLVED, that the Board of Pensions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) shall offer health and benefit packages for same-sex domestic partners that are equal in value and coverage to those plans offered to heterosexual spouses, and that the ELCA Board of Pensions consult with its insurance contractors to determine how best to accomplish this mandate in a timely and equitable fashion; and

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

H3. Health Care

New England Synod (7B)

RESOLVED, that the New England Synod join with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) in acknowledging the issue of affordable healthcare coverage for all as a justice issue that calls for action and that guidance for such action is found in the 2003 social statement on health and healthcare; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the New England Synod direct the ELCA Board of Pensions to re-evaluate its policies and procedures for the purpose of providing support to rostered leadership with benefit coverage that is equalized and affordable; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the New England Synod further direct the ELCA Board of Pensions to develop a program that empowers rostered leadership to better health without infringing on their individual rights or using information for data gathering; and be it further

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

VOTED:

CC09.08.46h

To receive the resolutions of the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin and the New England Synod related to benefits for same-gender domestic partners and other health care issues;

To acknowledge that pending actions of the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly may inform response to these resolutions;

To refer the resolutions to the ELCA Board of Pensions in consultation with the Office of the Secretary with the request that a report and possible recommendations be brought to the November 2009 meeting of the ELCA Church Council; and

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

NOMINATIONS, APPOINTMENTS, AND ELECTIONS

(Agenda III.D; Agenda/MINUTES Exhibit F)

Between meetings of the Churchwide Assembly, the Church Council has the responsibility of electing people to fill unexpired terms on churchwide boards, steering committees of churchwide commissions, and certain advisory committees. The Executive Committee serves as the nominating committee for the Church Council.

ELECTION TO THE CHURCH COUNCIL AND THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO *THE LUTHERAN MAGAZINE*

Church Council Action:

Vice President Carlos E. Peña called on Secretary David D. Swartling to present the action. The motion was seconded, and Vice President Peña opened the floor for discussion. Secretary Swartling called attention to the biographical information on the nominees. There being no discussion, Vice President Peña called for the vote.

VOTED:

CC09.08.47 To receive the written report of the Nominating Committee and request that a written ballot be prepared:

Church Council

Clergy [Term 2011] - to replace Pr. Jonathan Linman, New York, N.Y. (8B)

Pr. William B. Diehm, Pittsburgh, Penn. (8B)

Pr. Heather S. Lubold, Pittsburgh, Penn. (8B)

The Lutheran Magazine Advisory Committee

Clergy Male [Term 2013] to replace Pr. Harold Eppley, Milwaukee, Wisc. (5J)

Pr. Paul L. Campbell, Scottsdale, Ariz. (2D)

Pr. Wilbert S. Miller, San Diego, Calif. (2C)

Lay Male [Term 2013] (Person of color or language other than English) to replace Mr. Frank Ramos, Guaynabo, Puerto Rico (9F)

Mr. Tony C. Aguilar, Brooklyn, N.Y. (7C)

Mr. Keith E. Gatling, Liverpool, N.Y. (7D)

Ballots were distributed. Following prayer, Church Council members cast their ballots.

ELECTION REPORT

Vice President Carlos E. Peña called on Secretary David D. Swartling for a report on the results of the ballot. Secretary Swartling reported the following results:

1. Church Council

Clergy [Term 2011] to replace Pr. Jonathan Linman, New York, N.Y., (8B)

Pr. William B. Diehm, Pittsburgh, Pa. (8B) – 7

Pr. Heather S. Lubold, Pittsburgh, Pa. (8B) – 26

2. The Lutheran Magazine Advisory Committee

Clergy Male [term 2013] to replace Pr. Harold Eppley, Milwaukee, Wis. (5J)

Pr. Paul L. Campbell, Scottsdale, Ariz. (2D) – 22

Pr. Wilbert S. Miller, San Diego, Calif. (2C) – 11

Lay Male (PCL) [term 2013] to replace Mr. Frank Ramos, Guaynabo, Puerto Rico (9F)

Mr. Tony C. Aguilar, Brooklyn, N.Y. (7C) – 14

Mr. Keith E. Gatling, Liverpool, N.Y. (7D) – 18

VOTED:

CC09.08.48 To declare elected Pr. Heather S. Lubold elected to a term ending 2011 on the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; and
To declare elected the following to a term ending 2013 on *The Lutheran Magazine Advisory Committee*: Pr. Paul L. Campbell and Mr. Keith E. Gatling.

CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY CITATIONS

(Agenda III.B)

Background:

Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson requested that the Church Council consider and approve two citations to honor at the 2009 Churchwide Assembly two retiring partners in ministry: the Rev. Dr. Ishmael Noko, general secretary of the Lutheran World Federation, and the Rev. Dr. Ralston H. Deffenbaugh Jr., president and chief executive officer of Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service.

Church Council Action:

Vice President Carlos E. Peña called on Secretary David D. Swartling to present the proposed action. He called for a second and opened the floor for discussion. There being none he called for the vote.

VOTED:

CC09.08.49a To approve the following citation:

WHEREAS, in response to God's love in Christ, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) has since its beginnings in 1939 provided a Lutheran presence in the United States and through global partnerships to welcome the stranger, bringing new hope and new life through ministries of service and justice; and

WHEREAS, through its collaboration with Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America deepens and extends its ministry with refugees and migrants by building welcoming communities; and

WHEREAS, Ralston H. Deffenbaugh Jr., president of Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, has provided exemplary leadership since being appointed LIRS's fifth president in 1991; and

WHEREAS, over the past 18 years under the leadership of Ralston Deffenbaugh, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service has:

- resettled more than 100,000 refugees through 25 affiliates across the United States;
- advocated for increased U.S. resettlement of refugees from Africa (including the so-called "Lost Boys" from Sudan), the Balkans, Burma, and Bhutan;
- revived the U.S. system for resettlement and foster care for unaccompanied refugee children;
- advocated for and currently administers federally funded child-friendly non-detention care for undocumented unaccompanied children in federal custody;
- advocated for federally funded "Know Your Rights" presentations in immigration detention facilities and for increased availability of legal representation for persons held in immigration detention;
- advocated for federally funded alternatives to detention programs for asylum seekers and others in immigration proceedings;
- advocated for and currently administers federally funded programs of assistance for victims of torture being held in immigration detention;
- advocated for and currently administers the availability of refugee resettlement assistance for asylees;
- worked closely with the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees to revive the full use of resettlement as a durable solution for refugees;
- collaborated with UNHCR to identify and apply Best Interests Determinations for unaccompanied and separated refugee children;
- solidified the reputation of LIRS as a "partner of choice" because of its commitment to mutually supportive relationships;

- provided strong and visible leadership in this decade's contentious debates over immigration reform;
- strengthened the commitment of U.S. Lutherans to welcome and accompany immigrants and refugees;
- tripled the programs and staff of LIRS, expanding its capacity to a \$25 million annual budget with more than 100 staff; and

WHEREAS, Ralston Deffenbaugh has been called the "moral compass" of response to refugees in the United States because of his unwavering commitment to treat all people with dignity, compassion, and respect; and

WHEREAS, Ralston Deffenbaugh will complete his service with Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service on August 31, 2009; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, acting on behalf of all expressions of this church, express its deepest appreciation to Ralston H. Deffenbaugh Jr. for his exemplary service and leadership as president of Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Church Council request that Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson convey this heartfelt expression of thanks to Ralston Deffenbaugh for his leadership of Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, along with this church's belief that his rich gifts and experience will continue to contribute to a world that is marked by hospitality, grace, and love for the neighbor.

VOTED:
CC09.08.49b

To approve the following citation:

WHEREAS, the Rev. Dr. Ishmael Noko has dedicated his life to the work of the Lutheran global community; and

WHEREAS, in his exemplary leadership of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) as general secretary since 1994, Ishmael Noko has been a passionate advocate for the empowerment of LWF member churches; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Noko's theological wisdom has contributed significantly to the growth of the Lutheran World Federation's self-understanding as a communion of churches; and

WHEREAS, under his leadership, the Lutheran World Federation has developed an understanding of and commitment to prophetic diakonia, keeping service inseparable from justice-seeking and peace-making;

WHEREAS, Ishmael Noko, a son of Africa rooted in the Pan-African experience, is the first person from the global South to serve as general secretary; and

WHEREAS, Ishmael Noko has played an active role as an ambassador to other Christian churches on behalf of the Lutheran World Federation; and

WHEREAS, Ishmael Noko's exceptional skills as a negotiator have reduced tensions, mediated agreements, and reconciled divisions within and between churches and in civil society; and

WHEREAS, in his support of theological understanding and ecumenical conversations with a wide range of Christian churches, and in his encouragement of cooperative and caring ministries with Christians throughout the world, Ishmael Noko has been a masterful diplomat and a skillful theologian; and

WHEREAS, Ishmael Noko's commitment to building interfaith cooperation led him to be instrumental in convening the creation of Interfaith Action for Peace in Africa, a council of the largest religions in Africa;

WHEREAS, as general secretary, he has been a model of ecumenism and has provided dynamic leadership for the reception of ecumenical dialogues, including the historic “Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification”;

WHEREAS, Ishmael Noko has been a trusted partner, wise colleague, patient mentor, and beloved friend to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; and

WHEREAS, Ishmael Noko will complete his service as general secretary of the Lutheran World Federation on October 31, 2010; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), acting on behalf of all expressions of this church, express its deepest appreciation to Ishmael Noko for his exemplary service and leadership as general secretary of the Lutheran World Federation; and be it

RESOLVED, that the Church Council request that Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson convey this heartfelt expression of thanks to Ishmael Noko for his leadership of the Lutheran World Federation along with the ELCA’s conviction that Lutherans will continue to build upon the strong foundation of his leadership and to draw from it courage, vision, and hope for the future.

CONSIDERATION OF ITEMS REMOVED FROM THE *EN BLOC* ACTION (Agenda III.C; Agenda/MINUTES Exhibit B1a.4c)

D3. USE OF MILITARY LANGUAGE IN WORSHIP

Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana Synod (4D)

WHEREAS, the new *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* hymnal has removed language of soldiers, armies, and military language from hymns (for example, “Onward, Christian Soldiers” was dropped; “Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus” was dropped; “The Son of God Goes Forth to War” was dropped; verse three of “Lift High the Cross,” was changed from “All newborn soldiers of the crucified” in the *Lutheran Book of Worship* to now read “All newborn servants of the crucified”; “For All the Saints” dropped a stanza, the stanza that read “Oh, may your soldiers, faithful, true and bold/ Fight as the saints who nobly fought of old./ And win with them the victor’s crown of gold./ Alleluia! Alleluia!”; “Earth and All Stars” was rewritten so that the phrase “Loud shouting army!” in verse one was omitted); and

WHEREAS, this effort suggests that there is something inappropriate or unworthy about military language and imagery; and

WHEREAS, military language and imagery is frequently used in the Bible, as the Bible speaks in terms of “fight the good fight” (1 Timothy 1:18), “desires of the flesh that wage war against the soul” (1 Peter 2:11), “fellow soldier” (Philippians 2:25), “a good soldier of Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 2:3), “Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Ephesians 6:13), and Christians being an “army” (Revelation 19:19); and

WHEREAS, we as Lutherans understand ourselves to be both saint and sinners, people who are involved in a daily battle, a battle between sin and faith, death and salvation; as Paul writes in Romans 7:23: “I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members”; and

WHEREAS, many of our members have served or do serve in the military and see this service as part of their Christian vocation; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana Synod encourage the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) to ensure that the congregations of this church have options for wording within the available worship materials and educational resources, including the option to use appropriate military language and images.

Response from the Worship and Liturgical Resources section:

In the 30 years since the publication of *Lutheran Book of Worship*, the pace of change has quickened, both within this church and beyond it. There has been an explosion of new worship and musical resources available to this church, both electronically and in print. This church has embraced broadened understandings of culture, increasing musical diversity, ecumenical consensus, and changes in the use of language.

In light of these changes, the Renewing Worship process leading to the production of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (2006) evaluated the use of the treasury of liturgy and song, working with a representative sample of over 600 ELCA congregations and other congregations or individuals who completed evaluations forms. Such provisional volumes as *Congregational Song* (2001) and *Renewing Worship Songbook* (2003) were used, along with five volumes of liturgical material and a proposed hymn list, and made widely available for evaluation throughout this church. Another group of pastors, musicians, and theologians, bringing a variety of perspectives from across the ELCA, in consultation with full communion partners, considered the use of language, music, preaching, and worship space in the Christian assembly in *Principles for Worship* (2002).

Evangelical Lutheran Worship acknowledges in its introduction that it is “a core rather than a comprehensive resource. The collection of materials is more expansive than its predecessor; it reflects a body of prayer and song that our churches consider worthy to hold in common; and, in many contexts, it will provide most or all of what is needed for the assembly’s worship. Still, it is not possible or necessary for a single worship book to contain all the expressions of worship desired in every context by an increasingly diverse church. The book contains notable representatives of a wide variety of liturgical texts and musical forms that point to larger repertoires outside this volume.”

Congregations and worshiping assemblies are free to—and encouraged to—make use of any musical resources that are both faithful to the message of the Gospel as articulated in the Lutheran tradition and meaningful to the specific context in which they find themselves. There are many sources to access additional song, many of which are in the public domain.

Future print and electronic liturgical and musical resources that supplement *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* will continue to be developed as much as possible in consultation with this whole church, be subject to the liturgical review policies of the ELCA, and meet the missional needs of the contemporary church.

Church Council discussion and action:

Mr. Richard L. Wahl expressed his concern that there has not been adequate discussion of this issue, including in the response from the Worship and Liturgical Resources section.

Mr. William R. Lloyd Jr. commented that the resolved clause does not ask for explanation but rather that the Church Council ensure congregations have options. He moved to approve the recommended action.

Vice President Carlos E. Peña called for a second and then opened the floor for discussion.

Mr. Wahl asked for response from the Worship and Liturgical Resources section. The Rev. Robert Schaefer, executive for Worship and Liturgical Resources, referred to the written response, emphasizing that *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* is intended to be a “core,” not a “sole” resource. He added that other songs are available in additional resources and that congregations are free to use any resources.

There being no further discussion, Vice President Peña called for the vote.

VOTED:

- CC09.08.50** **To receive the resolution of the Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana Synod related to military language in worship;**
 To refer the resolution to the Worship and Liturgical Resources section of the churchwide organization in consultation with Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, as information for the ongoing development of worship and liturgical resources for this church; and
 To request that the secretary of this church inform the synod of this action.

EN BLOC APPROVAL OF CERTAIN ITEMS

(Agenda IV)

Inclusion of items in the *en bloc* action reflects a judgment that these items are relatively non-controversial in nature and may not require plenary discussion and a separate vote. Early in the council meeting, the chair provided an opportunity for members to indicate whether they wish to discuss separately any of the items listed in the *en bloc* resolution; any such item will be removed from the *en bloc* resolution and discussed at the appropriate point in the agenda.

VOTED:

CC09.08.51 **To take action *en bloc* on the items listed below, the full texts of which are found in the minutes or exhibits as indicated:**

VOTED: *En Bloc*

CC09.08.52 **Other Nominations, Appointments, and Elections, p. 23;**

VOTED: *En Bloc*

CC09.08.53 **Authorization of Executive Committee, p. 24;**

VOTED: *En Bloc*

CC09.08.54 **Ratification of Church Council Committees for the 2009-2011 Biennium, p. 24;**

VOTED: *En Bloc*

CC09.08.55 **Approval of Synod Constitutions, p. 24.**

1. OTHER NOMINATIONS, APPOINTMENTS, AND ELECTIONS

(Agenda IV.A)

A. SOCIAL MINISTRY ORGANIZATIONS

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America serves as a corporate member of certain inter-Lutheran organizations and affiliated social ministry organizations. The role of corporate members includes the responsibility to elect ELCA representatives to the organization's board of directors as prescribed in the organization's governing documents. The relationship of the ELCA to certain inter-Lutheran organizations and affiliated social ministry organizations is expressed through the Church in Society unit.

The ELCA serves as a corporate member of Mosaic, Inc., Omaha, Neb.; Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, Baltimore, Maryland; and the Lutheran Medical Center, Brooklyn, New York. The Church in Society program unit has forwarded to the Church Council the following nominations for boards of these organizations.

VOTED:

En Bloc

CC09.08.52a **To elect to the board of directors of the Lutheran Medical Center: Dr. Genevieve Go, Ms. Brenda Grandell, Dr. Anthony Kovner, Ms. Violet Maya, Ms. Miriam Katowitz, Mr. George Renert, Mr. Vincent Rohan, Mr. Danny Tsoi, Mr. Peter Turchi, and Ms. Kathryn Wylde to three-year terms expiring in 2012;**

To elect Ms. Christine Grumm to the board of directors of Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service to fill an unexpired term ending in 2011;

To elect Mr. Richard Toftness to the board of directors of Mosaic, Inc., to fill an unexpired term ending in 2012; and

To authorize the Executive Committee to act on behalf of the Church Council relative to elections to the board of directors of Mosaic, Inc. between meetings of the Church Council.

B. ELCA RISK MANAGEMENT, INC. (ELCARM)

The Vocation and Education unit is charged to "provide risk management services for the colleges, universities, and seminaries of this church" (CR16.12.C06.c.9). Since 1988, this requirement has been met successfully through ELCA

Risk Management, Inc. (ELCARM), an Illinois not-for-profit corporation created specifically to provide these and related insurance services to educational institutions affiliated with the ELCA.

At its March 2009 meeting, the ELCA Church Council approved amendments to ELCARM's governing documents in order to: 1) comply with the ELCA governance changes established after the 2005 reorganization of churchwide units and committees; and 2) vest in the participating institutions sufficient membership rights so that ELCARM becomes eligible under federal law to be a member of a risk retention group [CC09.03.38].

The council also appointed members to serve on the ELCARM board of directors, noting that one additional appointment, to be nominated by the Council of Seminary Presidents, was pending. The action below will finalize this delayed action.

VOTED: *En Bloc*
CC09.08.52b **To appoint Don Lewis to serve on the Board of Directors of ELCA Risk Management, Inc., on the basis of nomination by the Council of Seminary Presidents.**

2. AUTHORIZATION OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
(Agenda IV.B)

At its pre-council meeting on August 16, 2009, the Executive Committee considered how the functions of the Executive Committee would be carried out between the Churchwide Assembly in August 2009 and the first regular meeting of the newly constituted Church Council in November 2009.

VOTED: *En Bloc*
CC09.08.53 **To authorize the officers of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the continuing members of the Executive Committee to serve as the Executive Committee of the Church Council between the 2009 Churchwide Assembly and the November 2009 meeting of the Church Council.**

3. APPOINTMENT OF CHURCH COUNCIL COMMITTEES FOR THE 2009-2011 BIENNIUM
(Agenda IV.C)

In preparation for the August 2009 meeting of the Church Council, continuing members were invited to indicate their preferences for service on one of the four standing committees of the Church Council, plus the Board Development Committee: Budget and Finance; Legal and Constitutional Review; Planning and Evaluation; and Program and Services.

Following the elections at the Churchwide Assembly, newly elected members will indicate their preferences prior to the November meeting. A final listing of committee membership for the biennium will be appointed by the Church Council at its November meeting upon recommendation by the Executive Committee.

At its November 2009 meeting, the Church Council also will appoint members to related advisory committees for the biennium. Members of the Board Development Committee for the 2009-2011 biennium will be ratified by the Executive Committee in November 2009.

VOTED: *En Bloc*
CC09.08.54 **To make the following appointments of continuing members of the ELCA Church Council to Church Council committees for the 2009–2011 biennium:**

- **Budget and Finance Committee:** Pr. David P. Anderson, Ms. Deborah L. Chenoweth, Mr. John R. Emery, Pr. Keith A. Hunsinger, Ms. Ann C. Niedringhaus;
- **Legal and Constitutional Review Committee:** Mr. Mark S. Helmke, Mr. Mark E. Johnson, Ms. Lynette M. Reitz;
- **Planning and Evaluation Committee:** Mr. Baron Blanchard, Ms. Karin L. Graddy, Pr. Susan Langhauser (chair), Pr. J. Pablo Obregon, Pr. Jeffrey “Jeff” B. Sorenson, Mr. David Truland; and

- Program and Services Committee: Ms. Rebecca Jo Brakke, Pr. Rachel L. Connelly, Mr. Steven P. Loy (chair), Mr. John S. Munday, Mr. Mark W. Myers, Ms. Sandra Schlesinger.

4. APPROVAL OF SYNOD CONSTITUTIONS (Agenda IV.E)

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

VOTED:

En Bloc

CC09.08.55a

To ratify the following amendments to the Southeastern Minnesota Synod constitution:

- amend provision †S8.12.e. to make it consistent with the required provision in the model Constitution for Synods:
Attest letters of call for persons called to serve congregations in the synod, letters of call for persons called by the Synod Council, and letters of call for persons on the rosters of this synod called by the Church Council ~~on the rosters of this synod.~~
- amend provision †S13.23. to make it consistent with the required provision in the model Constitution for Synods:
Provision 9.71. of the ELCA constitution shall govern the relationship of this synod and a congregation of this synod regarding the property of the congregation. This synod may transfer or convey property to a congregation of the synod, subject to restrictions accepted by the congregation, including provision that if the Synod Council, in its sole and exclusive discretion, determines (1) that the property is not being used to serve the mission and ministry needs of this church, or (2) that the congregation has transferred, encumbered, mortgaged, or in any way burdened or impaired any right, title, or interest in the property without the prior approval of the Synod Council, then title to the property shall revert to the synod, and the congregation, upon written demand, shall reconvey the property to the synod.
- amend provision †S15.32. to make it consistent with the required provision in the model Constitution for Synods:
This synod shall maintain adequate, continuous insurance coverage in accordance with standards recommended by the churchwide organization. Insurance programs offered or endorsed by the churchwide organization shall be deemed to fulfill this obligation.

VOTED:

En Bloc

CC09.08.55b

To ratify the following amendments to the Southwestern Minnesota Synod constitution:

- amend provision S11.50. and accompanying bylaw S11.50.01. as follows:
S11.50. ~~Serving Christ's Mission Board~~ Serving in God's World Board
S11.50.01. There shall be a twelve-member board for oversight, evaluating, and planning the synod's work of serving ~~Christ's mission in God's world.~~
- amend provision S7.23. to make it consistent with required provision †S7.21.b. in the model Constitution for Synods:
All retired ordained ministers, all ordained ministers on leave from call, all associates in ministry on leave from call or retired, all deaconesses of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America on leave from call or retired, and all diaconal ministers of this church on leave from call or retired, all of whose names appear on the rosters of this synod, shall have the privilege of voice but not vote at all meetings of the Synod

Assembly. If retired or on-leave-from-call associates in ministry, deaconesses, or diaconal ministers are elected by their congregation as voting members, they shall have the privilege of voice and vote. The presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and other official representatives of this church as may be designated from time to time by the Church Council shall also have voice but not vote in the meetings of the Synod Assembly. Like privileges shall be accorded to those members of the Synod Council who are not voting members of the Synod Assembly and to those additional persons whom the Synod Assembly or the Synod Council shall from time to time designate.

AMENDMENTS TO “GUIDELINES ON CANDIDACY ISSUES FOR GERMAN STUDENTS OR PASTORS FROM THE EVANGELICAL CHURCH IN GERMANY”

(Agenda IV.D; Agenda/MINUTES Exhibit C, Parts 1–2b)

Background:

An agreement between the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) was signed on September 24, 2007. The agreement, in part, allows for short-term service and exchangeability for rostered people from both church bodies. The Church Council was asked to approve revisions to the ELCA’s “Guidelines on Candidacy Issues for German Students or Pastors from the Evangelical Church in Germany.” The suggested revisions include changes to the layout to clarify the pathways for service under exchangeability, the candidacy process for already ordained EKD pastors coming onto the ELCA roster, and the candidacy process for candidates who are not yet ordained. This item was removed from *en bloc* for separate consideration.

Church Council Action:

Mr. Richard L. Wahl commented that he found the revisions burdensome.

Vice President Carlos E. Peña invited the Rev. Stanley N. Olson, executive director, Vocation and Education, to comment. Pr. Olson reviewed the purpose for the suggested revisions and, in response to the question, stated that not many people are affected by this agreement.

The Rev. H. Gerard Knoche, bishop of the Delaware-Maryland Synod, said he found the ELCA’s unwillingness to accept the requirements for ordination of other Lutheran World Federation (LWF) churches offensive and patronizing. He added that there are people in the Delaware-Maryland Synod who have found the process a burden and an affront.

The Rev. Rafael Malpica-Padilla, executive director, Global Mission, pointed out that recognition of ordination differs from reception onto the roster. Pr. Olson commented that the ELCA has direct reception only with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada.

Ms. Lynette M. Reitz commented that in dealing with two such cases there was no question of ability.

The Rev. John C. Richter wondered if, before reception to the roster, spending more time on cultural, rather than theological, issues would be helpful.

Ms. Rebecca Jo Brakke asked about seminary structure in Germany and wondered if some seminaries were more Reformed and others more Lutheran.

Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson stated that the LWF Council would be discussing this issue in October and suggested this item could be brought to the Church Council in November, allowing preparation for further discussion.

The Rev. Keith A. Hunsinger asked if such a postponement would hurt anyone. Pr. Olson replied in the negative.

Pr. Hunsinger moved to postpone discussion until the November 2009 Church Council meeting. Vice President Carlos E. Peña called for a second.

Moved;

Seconded: To postpone action on the revisions to “Guidelines on Candidacy Issues for German Students or Pastors from the Evangelical Church in Germany” until the November 2009 Church Council meeting.

There being no further discussion, Vice President Peña called for the vote.

VOTED:

CC09.08.56

To postpone action on the revisions to “Guidelines on Candidacy Issues for German Students or Pastors from the Evangelical Church in Germany” until the November 2009 Church Council meeting.

RECESS

The August 2009 meeting of the Church Council recessed at 2:00 P.M.

**Sunday, August 16, 2009
Plenary Session Two**

EXECUTIVE SESSION: UPDATE FROM THE BOARD OF PENSIONS

(Agenda III.A; Agenda/MINUTES Exhibit E)

At 2:10 P.M., the Church Council entered into executive session, joined by the Conference of Bishops, to receive a confidential, financial update from the Board of Pensions, which included discussion of legal matters. No actions were taken, and no minutes were kept of that session. The executive session ended at 2:53 P.M.

BOARD OF PENSIONS PLAN AMENDMENTS

(Agenda III.A; Agenda/MINUTES Exhibit E)

Vice President Carlos E. Peña called on Secretary David D. Swartling to present the proposed amendments to the ELCA Retirement Plan. Vice President Peña called for a second and opened the floor for discussion. There being none, he called for the vote.

VOTED:

CC09.08.57

To adopt amendments to the ELCA Retirement Plan as printed in Exhibit E: Section 1.02 and the addition of Section 1.07 of Article I; Sections 2.13, 2.26 and 2.27 of Article II; Section 3.02 of Article III; Section 4.05 of Article IV; Section 5.05 of Article V; Sections 7.01 and 7.02 of Article VII; Sections 8.01 and 8.03 of Article VIII; Sections 9.07, 9.08 and 9.11 of Article IX; and Sections 10.01(a) and (c), 10.03, 10.04, 10.05 and 10.06 of Article X.

Sunday, August 16, 2009
Plenary Session Three

The joint session of the Church Council, the Conference of Bishops, and synodical vice presidents began with a worship service led by the Rev. Allan C. Bjornberg, bishop of the Rocky Mountain Synod and chair of the Conference of Bishops.

INTRODUCTION

Mr. Carlos E. Peña, vice president of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and chair of the Church Council, called Plenary Session Three to order at 3:48 P.M. He welcomed the members of the Conference of Bishops, synodical vice presidents, and regional coordinators.

REPORT OF THE TREASURER

(Agenda II.A.1; Agenda/MINUTES Exhibit A)

Vice President Peña called on Ms. Christina Jackson-Skelton, treasurer of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for her report.

Ms. Jackson-Skelton reviewed the written material in Exhibit A, highlighting the following items:

- A 2009 net operating deficit of about \$2.5 million, but a year-to-date variance better than plan.
- Mission Support revenue of \$24.6 million favorable to what was projected for the period, but a reduction of 5.2 percent over the first five months of 2008.
- Bequests and trusts income was significant in 2008, but it is not expected to remain at the same level for 2009.
- The Office of the Treasurer has worked with program units showing an unfavorable variance in actual expenses compared to spending authorization in order to make adjustments to the operating budget.
- January 2008 experienced a significant decrease in mission support. May and June 2009 showed very slight increases in mission-support income, stabilizing around \$64 million.
- World Hunger general income of \$5.1 million was behind both the estimate and income during the same period in 2008. The shortfall in World Hunger gifts coming from congregations through synods was not expected.

REPORT OF THE PRESIDING BISHOP

(Agenda II.A)

Vice President Carlos E. Peña called on Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson for his report.

Presiding Bishop Hanson began by asking “What shall be our witness? What story shall we tell?” He continued: “The witness and the story has not yet been written and told. I come into this assembly, only our eleventh Churchwide Assembly, in a spirit of confident hope because the source of our hope is the promise of the Gospel, Jesus Christ, and the Spirit. I have been contending that if news reporters use this lens, they will see us at our best. We have built a strong foundation, a foundation that gives us grounds for hope and that will be evident all week.

“We are a praying church and prayer will be key to our life together this week.” He noted the broad response to the call to engage in 50 days of prayer leading up to the Churchwide Assembly.

“We are a worshipping church. In the middle of every day [of the Churchwide Assembly] baptized believers will gather for worship around the means of grace. This is the center of our life together.

“We are a Book of Faith church. Throughout this assembly the Word of God will engage us in worship, in Bible study, in debate.

“We are an evangelizing, witnessing church. Throughout this week we will hear testimonies from congregations growing in evangelical mission. On Saturday afternoon we will go into a Committee of the Whole discussion focused on what shall be our witness together.

“We are a missional church engaged in God’s work through our hands. This is not just a tag line, but will be an evident part of our self-understanding as we consider actions on HIV and AIDS, the Lutheran Malaria Initiative, immigration, Israel and Palestine, a social statement on Justice for Women, and as we see some of the 200-plus video segments from the video contest.

“We are an ecumenical church. It is amazing that, only 20 years into our life, we are about to consider a sixth full communion relationship with the United Methodist Church.

“We are a discerning church that has matured in how we engage difficult discussions. This, our tenth social statement, will inform this church, but it will not define this church as church.

“We come to this assembly with a foundation of strong shared leadership. I am sharing leadership with you so the assembly will feel this is their best effort in making decisions.

“We are a church that has always sought to be faithful, careful, and consistent in how we select and prepare people for leadership. For 20 years we have taken standards for our leaders very seriously; our discussion this week will be a continuation of that concern.

“We are an interdependent church. It will be tempting for some to feel that this assembly is only one part of the church; but the whole church will be in the room—not only our three expressions, but our institutions, our global partners, and our ecumenical partners.

“What shall be our witness this week? What stories shall we tell?”

CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY OVERVIEW (Agenda V.A; Agenda/MINUTES Exhibit D)

Background:

At its March 2009 meeting, the Church Council voted [CC09.03.13]:

To amend the proposed Rules of Organization and Procedure for the 2009 Churchwide Assembly . . . ; and

To authorize the presiding bishop and secretary of this church to prepare further editing and scheduling revisions that may be found necessary for the Rules prior to their publication in the *Pre-Assembly Report*; and

To report any changes to the Church Council at its August 2009 meeting.

Church Council Discussion:

Vice President Carlos E. Peña called on Mr. David D. Swartling, secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, for an overview of Churchwide Assembly business and procedures.

Secretary David D. Swartling provided an update on further editorial changes to the proposed Rules of Organization and Procedure for the 2009 Churchwide Assembly. Pursuant to the authority provided to the secretary and presiding bishop at the March 2009 Church Council meeting, the following editorial revisions were incorporated in the rules:

Part Five: Voting Procedures

- the order of the first two sections were changed because most voting will be by electronic device, so that section was placed first.
- the section on voting by electronic device was re-written to reflect accurately operation and use of the portable voting devices.
- reference to numbered ballots was deleted because there will not be serial written ballots.
- reference to impediments to voting because of physical limitations was revised.

Part Twelve: Nominations

- reference to the online nominations form was added in two places.
- the hours that the Nominations Desk would be open was revised to conform to the Order of Business.

Part Eighteen: Deadlines

- the deadlines were amended to conform to the Order of Business.

Secretary Swartling reviewed the assembly program and order of business, calling attention to the various deadlines. He noted that Plenary Session One will include the adoption of the Rules of Organization and Procedure as well as the Order of Business. Plenary Session Two will include the first of three quasi committees of the whole.

Presiding Bishop Hanson added that the first quasi committee of the whole will be a discussion of the proposed social statement on human sexuality in the plenary hall. On Thursday morning, the quasi committee of the whole discussion of the ministry policies recommendation will begin with 90 minutes of discussion at breakfast tables. The first segment, "My Two Minutes" will give each person two minutes to respond to the policies, followed by guided table talk about the four resolutions. The quasi committee of the whole will conclude with an hour of discussion in the plenary hall.

Secretary Swartling reported that a daily Legislative Update will be provided by the Office of the Secretary. He made a number of routine announcements about available forms, floor nominations, and the wireless voting machines.

Secretary Swartling noted the three sources of rules for the work of the Churchwide Assembly: the governing documents of the ELCA, *Robert's Rules of Order*, and the assembly's own rules of organization and procedure. The procedure for consideration of the rules will be the same as at previous assemblies.

Presiding Bishop Hanson announced his intention to be more directive regarding separate consideration of rules, asking if the separate consideration is for the purpose of discussion of the rule, amendment by changing language in the rule, or adding a new rule. The remaining rules will be considered *en bloc*, followed by consideration of those removed from *en bloc* in the order of the rule.

Presiding Bishop Hanson outlined the procedure for getting a message to him during the assembly. He added: "How we begin and end will be important to what we do. We will do all we can to make sure people understand what's before them. It is very, very important that assemblies not be reserved for those who master *Robert's Rules*. How we end will also be important. We have set up a fairly intricate system of every-two-week check-ins following the assembly." He urged those present to stay focused on shared purpose; stay connected with one another; stay self-differentiated; and remain non-anxious.

Vice President Carlos E. Peña opened the floor for questions.

The Rev. John C. Richter asked what would happen regarding controversial rules not adopted by the assembly. Secretary David D. Swartling responded that *Robert's Rules* would apply to any gaps in the assembly's Rules of Organization and Procedure.

Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson noted that because the Church Council chose not to bind the Churchwide Assembly, questions will begin to arise regarding the four ministry policy resolutions. He stated his intention to bring the resolutions sequentially before the assembly.

Ms. Karin L. Graddy asked if the program and order of business could be downloaded. Secretary Swartling responded in the affirmative but added that the floor of the assembly would not have electrical power or WIFI for computers.

In response to a question Secretary Swartling noted that volunteers would be assigned to distribute materials on the assembly floor.

The Rev. H. Gerard Knoche, bishop of the Delaware-Maryland Synod, said he heard that all of the ministry policy resolutions would be considered even if the first failed. Secretary Swartling responded that the Church Council did not propose a special rule implementing the recommendations of the task force on studies on human sexuality. The problem with a special rule is how to deal with substitutions and amendments; however, it would be in order to propose such a rule if someone desires to do so.

The Rev. Ray Tiemann, bishop of the Southwestern Texas Synod asked about possible demonstrations. Secretary Swartling responded that no one had applied for a parade permit, nor was he aware of any planned demonstrations.

The Rev. Robert L. Driesen, bishop of the Upper Susquehanna Synod, commented that there had been no advance notice that computers could not be used in the plenary hall. Secretary Swartling addressed the difficulties related to the use of computers but added that no one would keep members from bringing computers into the hall.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Vice President Carlos E. Peña made a number of routine announcements.

RECESS

The Church Council entered into recess at 4:45 P.M.

Sunday, August 16, 2009
Plenary Session Four

CLOSED SESSION: DISCUSSION WITH THE CHURCH COUNCIL CLASS OF 2009

(Agenda V.B)

At 5:03 P.M., the Church Council entered into closed session for the purpose of debriefing council members of the class of 2009: Ms. Judith Anne Bunker, Ms. Norma J. Hirsch, Pr. David E. Jensen, Mr. William R. Lloyd Jr., Pr. J. Paul Rajashekar, Pr. John C. Richter, Mr. Richard L. Wahl, Ms. Phyllis L. Wallace, and Mr. Gary L. Wiperman. Mr. Kenneth W. Inskeep, executive for research and evaluation, using questions distributed earlier, led the discussion as the retiring members reflected on their experiences on the Church Council.

Background:

Members of the Church Council Class of 2009 were asked to submit confidential electronic responses to the following questions:

1. How well you believe the Church Council has accomplished any, or all, of the following responsibilities given to it by the ELCA Constitution.
 - review the procedures and programs of the churchwide units to assure that churchwide purposes, policies, and objectives are being fulfilled.
 - review and act on the policies of churchwide units.
 - adopt policies for the whole church.
 - submit a budget proposal for approval by the Churchwide Assembly
 - adopt the personnel policies for the church.
 - act on resolutions from synod councils.
 - provide for the installation of the churchwide officers.
 - establish ranges for the salaries for the presiding bishop, secretary, and treasurer.
 - exercise responsibility for the corporate social responsibility of this church.
 - determine the appropriate churchwide unit for the fulfillment of particular program or policy responsibilities identified in the bylaws.
 - establish the criteria and policies for the relationship between this church and independent, cooperative, and related Lutheran organizations.
2. What do you believe have been the strengths of the Council?
3. What do you believe have been the weaknesses of the Council?
4. What suggestions would you offer to how the work of the Council be strengthened or improved?

Seven of the 10 members of the Church Council whose terms were ending had responded to the online questionnaire or sent comments by e-mail.

The Constitutional Responsibilities of the Church Council

Of the responsibilities given to the Church Council by the *ELCA Constitution*, the respondents were most likely to rate the council's accomplishments high (an average of 4 or above on a 5 point scale) on the following: submitting a budget proposal for approval by the Churchwide Assembly; on establishing the criteria and policies for the relationship between the ELCA and independent, cooperative, and related Lutheran organizations; and on reviewing the procedures and programs of the churchwide units to assure that churchwide purposes, policies, and objectives are being fulfilled.

Rated lower (an average between 3 and 4 on the 5 point scale) were the following: exercising responsibility for the corporate social responsibility of the ELCA; adopting policies for the whole church; reviewing and acting on the policies of churchwide units; determining the appropriate churchwide unit for the fulfillment of particular program or policy responsibilities identified in the bylaws; and establishing ranges for the salaries for the presiding bishop, secretary, and treasure.

No items had an average rank of lower than 3.

Strengths of the Council

The respondents believe those who are members of the council are committed to this church as a whole and to its mission. The respondents, for the most part, see their fellow members as collegial, intelligent, and gracious. They have been willing to deal civilly with difficult issues and they are committed to transparency.

Challenges

The members of the Church Council come with different levels of experience, especially with regard to the churchwide organization. This means that the learning curve can be steep. In this context, continued board development work is important. Some of the respondents also noted that the amount of material is too much to master for people who are volunteers and that there is too little engagement of council members between meetings. Finally, the council meets only two times a year, and if there is a “big” issue in the church, this issue can absorb large amounts of council time, making it more difficult for council to adequately address its other responsibilities.

These challenges produce a dynamic that many of the respondents referred to in their comments. It is very difficult for council members to know what needs to be known to make good decisions. This is the case in the review of churchwide policies and churchwide units, with regard to the budget, in setting salaries, or in responding to resolutions from synod councils. Because, according to the respondents, many council members feel their knowledge is limited, they defer to the recommendations of staff. The respondents noted that this dynamic makes the council feel like a “reactive group” or an “endorsing group” or a “rubber stamp.”

Suggestions

The primary suggestions made by respondents had to do with increasing the knowledge level of council members for the sake of good decision-making. This issue, according to the respondents, could be addressed in three ways.

1. Board development that continues to stress both process and content.
2. More conscientious time management on the part of the council, including fewer oral reports and greetings not directly related to issues directly before the Council. This would also include possible guidelines for participating in council discussion for the members themselves.
3. More exposure of council members to the debates that occur behind the scenes among churchwide staff, synod bishops, and other church leaders. This exposure to “alternative” perspectives would give the council a better sense that various points of view have been considered and the stronger and weaker aspects of the “arguments.”

Mr. Inskeep reviewed the process and the written report, noting in particular the challenges reported. He then asked for general discussion and comment.

Church Council Discussion:

The Rev. John C. Richter commented on the challenges inherent when the Church Council only meets twice a year. Fewer meetings mean more staff responsibility. He wondered how to build in a wider perspective for council members.

Ms. Rebecca Jo Brakke suggested a pocket-sized handbook with photos and contact information for each council member as well as key staff.

The Rev. Susan Langhauser noted that new members, faced with reading a lot of material, can take longer to get involved in conversations. She suggested that electronic resources could be helpful in dealing with the mass of information; e.g., a listing of action items, staff talking points, executive session communication, and references to background information.

The Rev. Keith A. Hunsinger thought asking staff for more detailed information on those topics before the council would be burdensome but suggested that sharing talking points electronically would be helpful. He favored facilitating discussion between council members with staff being able to enter in when asked.

Ms. Brakke asked about the ELCA’s open meeting policy, the rules related to executive session and other types of closed meetings, and media access to information. While the decision to enter into executive or closed session remains with the council, she thought that staff is able to suggest what issues would be appropriate for such sessions.

The Rev. Jeffrey “Jeff” B. Sorenson commented that his first impression was of a very stiff Church Council, with members’s positions on issues already determined. He thinks members have become more relaxed and more able to ask questions, explore options, and take the time to consider together.

Ms. Lynette M. Reitz noted it took her two years to understand her role on the Church Council. Not having attended a Churchwide Assembly, she found some discussions difficult to follow. Although she was aware of budget constraints, she felt people nominated for the Church Council should attend a Churchwide Assembly prior to election.

Ms. Judith Anne Bunker commented on the increasing effort of council members to pray before making decisions. She also stressed the importance of establishing relationships over time and of having some time for recreation.

Ms. Phyllis L. Wallace indicated that it is difficult for a lay person not working in this church to feel comfortable in the council at the beginning of their term. NetCommunity has been helpful in providing access to resources. More frequent communication would be helpful.

The Rev. David E. Jensen expressed his feeling that the 2009 class experience was rather truncated due to restructuring. He described it as a very difficult period and perhaps a bit more isolating than usual.

Ms. Norma J. Hirsch encouraged ongoing members to try to work on building relationships with synods. She added her thanks to the staff who spend time and energy providing council members with necessary information.

Ms. Myrna J. Sheie, executive for governance and institutional relations, reported on two items suggested by the class of 2007: name tags identifying members of the Church Council at the Churchwide Assembly and the recognition of the class of 2009 in plenary session rather than at a banquet prior to the assembly.

ADJOURNMENT (Agenda VI)

The sixty-second meeting of the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) adjourned at 5:32 P.M.