



Office of the Secretary
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

April 13, 2011

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

FROM: David L. Swartling, secretary

SUBJECT: Report of Responses by the Church Council to Synodical Actions
(April 8–10, 2011)

I. RESPONSES TO SYNODICAL RESOLUTIONS

A. Genetics Social Statement

Nebraska Synod (4A)

WHEREAS, a proposed Social Statement on Genetics has been developed and is scheduled for consideration by the 2011 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA); and

WHEREAS, the time and effort to study issues related to genetics has resulted in valuable discussion among people of faith; and

WHEREAS, the Nebraska Synod Council is genuinely appreciative of the work of all those involved in the study and development of the proposed Social Statement on Genetics; and

WHEREAS, the Nebraska Synod Council believes that the length of the proposed Social Statement on Genetics, combined with the complexity of its language, has led reasonable people to disagree as to its meaning and impact; and

WHEREAS, the Nebraska Synod Council believes that more time is needed to prayerfully discuss and reflect on the proposed Social Statement on Genetics; and

WHEREAS, the Nebraska Synod Council believes that this church needs more time to heal and focus on unity following the 2009 adoption of new ministry rostering policies; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Nebraska Synod Council request that the proposed Social Statement on Genetics be received as a study document for more time for further, deeper conversation within this church; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Nebraska Synod Council request that the ELCA Church Council take necessary and appropriate actions to postpone consideration of the proposed Social Statement on Genetics to give members more time to prayerfully discuss and digest its language and its impact; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Nebraska Synod Council

request that the ELCA Church Council take necessary and appropriate actions to lengthen the time period between consideration of upcoming and future proposed social statements; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the secretary of the Nebraska Synod Council be directed to transmit a copy of this resolution to the secretary of the ELCA for consideration and possible action by the ELCA Church Council.

Response from the Office of the Presiding Bishop:

The Church Council is scheduled at its April 2011 meeting to consider the proposed social statement on genetics, *Genetics, Faith and Responsibility*, for recommendation to the 2011 Churchwide Assembly. The 2005 Churchwide Assembly called for the development of a social statement on the topic of genetics in response to a memorial from the Northeastern Iowa Synod [CA05.06.25]. In accordance with the ELCA's "Policy and Procedures for Addressing Social Concerns," a task force of members of this church who have different perspectives, backgrounds, and experience related to genetics was assembled. The task force spent several years studying the topic. It produced educational materials and generated a draft social statement. Input on the topic in general and these resources was received from across the ELCA. Updates on the work regularly have been received by the Conference of Bishops and the Church Council.

Church Council Action, November 2010 [CC10.11.61]

At its November 2010 meeting, the Church Council, acting in response both to concerns that had been expressed about the time tables for social statements and

to the diminished capacity of the churchwide organization in the wake of budget and personnel cuts, approved the following action:

To request that future social documents be scheduled with sensitivity to the time demands involving elected churchwide leadership, including bishops, Church Council members, and synodical leaders;

To acknowledge the preference that only one major document be in process at any one time;

To adopt the schedule provided [below] . . . ;
and

To request that the Program and Services Committee, at its November 2011 meeting and considering the actions of the 2011 Churchwide Assembly, reassess the revised time line and question of capacity.

The schedule adopted is as follows:

Social Statement on Genetics

Fall 2010: Hearings
Winter 2011: Proposed Statement
Spring 2011: Church Council consideration
Summer 2011: Churchwide Assembly consideration
Fall 2011: Publication, if adopted

Social Statement on Criminal Justice

Winter 2011: Study
Spring 2011: Study
Summer 2011: Study
Fall 2011: Study
Spring 2012: Hearings on draft statement
Summer 2012: Hearings on draft statement
Fall 2012: Hearings on draft statement
Winter 2013: Proposed statement
Spring 2013: Church Council consideration
Summer 2013: Churchwide Assembly consideration
Fall 2013: Publication, if adopted

Social Statement on Justice for Women

Fall 2012: Formation of Task Force
Fall 2014: Study
Winter 2015: Study
Spring 2015: Study
Summer 2017: Churchwide Assembly consideration

Message on Persons Living with Disabilities

Fall 2010: Proposed Message
Church Council consideration

Winter 2011: Publication

Message on Mental Health Issues

Fall 2011: Consultation
Winter 2012: Proposed Message
Spring 2012: Church Council consideration
Publication, if adopted

Recommendations from the Living into the Future Together (LIFT) Task Force

Another entity concerned about the development of and time tables for social statements is the Living Into the Future Together (LIFT) task force, which has been studying the interdependent ecology of the whole Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to prepare it for mission in the twenty-first century. The task force brought a report and recommendations, including a recommendation on future social statements to the April 2011 meeting of the Church Council. The Church Council recommended the report of the LIFT task force to the 2011 Churchwide Assembly but referred the recommendations and implementing resolutions to a writing committee for consideration at a special meeting in May.

Future Actions

The Church Council has acted on one of the requests of the Nebraska Synod Council already. In its November 2010 action, it has increased the time between upcoming social statements as well as messages of concern, and it has called for a further review of the time tables after the 2011 Churchwide Assembly. The actions that the Church Council takes at the April 2011 meeting concerning the proposed social statement on genetics and the recommendations of the LIFT task force will constitute a response to the Nebraska Synod Council concerning its other requests, as will its actions at the special meeting in May. Ultimately, the 2011 Churchwide Assembly will decide the matter.

Regardless of the actions of the Church Council at its April 2011 meeting, a memorial from the Nebraska Synod Assembly to the 2011 Churchwide Assembly concerning postponement of consideration of the genetics social statement would be in order and would be received by the Memorials Committee at its June 2011 meeting.

Church Council Action:

To receive with gratitude the resolution from the Nebraska Synod Council concerning the proposed social statement on genetics;

To acknowledge as the council's response to the resolution from the Nebraska Synod Council both the action of the Church Council at its November 2010 meeting on the time tables for social statements and the actions of the Church Council at its April 2011 meeting regarding the proposed social statement on genetics and the recommendations of the Living Into the Future Together (LIFT) task force regarding social statements; and

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

Church Council Action:

To recommend the following for adoption by the 2011 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America:

To authorize the Church Council, in consultation with the Conference of Bishops and the Communal Discernment task force, to establish a review process of current procedures for the development and adoption of social statements, following consideration of the social statement *Genetics, Faith and Responsibility* at the 2011 Churchwide Assembly.

B. Accessibility in the ELCA and South-Central Synod of Wisconsin

South-Central Synod of Wisconsin (5K)

WHEREAS, Jesus commissions his followers to gather disciples everywhere, and the ELCA seeks to follow this call by welcoming diversity in its communities of faith and also by continuing a healthy tradition of self-examination and change when it discovers bias in its words or actions; and

WHEREAS, liturgical and scriptural literacy is highly valued among the people of the ELCA and the ELCA has chosen the NRSV translation of the Scriptures as its accepted translation and embarked on a churchwide biblical literacy program—the Book of Faith Initiative; and

WHEREAS, Augsburg Fortress is the designated publishing house of the ELCA that provides pastors, educators, worship planners, and other members of the ELCA with products and services that communicate the Gospel, enhance faith, and enrich the life of the Christian community from a Lutheran perspective; and

WHEREAS, printed resources produced by the ELCA and Augsburg Fortress are rarely published in accessible formats, i.e., formats other than small-size print; and further, it is understood that the ELCA and Augsburg Fortress have no plans to expand the selection; and

WHEREAS, people with most kinds of vision impairment, people with certain learning disabilities, and people with other disabilities affecting the activity of reading are not able to use most of the ELCA or Augsburg Fortress materials in the available format; and

WHEREAS, individuals and congregations must spend large amounts of money and time to create or re-create materials so that people with disabilities affecting the activity of reading are able to participate fully in worship, spiritual development, and educational activities at home, school, or church; and

WHEREAS, people who are blind or otherwise visually impaired are currently involved in a struggle for basic civil rights like access to education, employment, and voting, and the ELCA ignores this struggle by promoting worship and educational materials that are available only in small-size print and by allowing inaccessible features on their Web sites thus further marginalizing many children and adults with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, in spite of these barriers, people with vision impairments and other disabilities, through their commitment to

the Gospel, are already active as worshipers and leaders in ELCA congregations, schools, colleges, and seminaries; and

WHEREAS, modern technology makes production and distribution of accessible format materials easier than ever, and centralizing these functions would allow congregations across the ELCA to have more convenient and less expensive access to such materials; and

WHEREAS, the resurrection of a comprehensive ministry to provide accessible format materials to ELCA congregations would benefit and uplift the entire body of Christ; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin memorialize the Church Council to direct Augsburg Fortress to report to the 2011 Churchwide Assembly a plan to implement in its own publishing, partnership publishing, or other contracted manufacturing a way to make available at reasonable cost its printed materials (books and other forms) upon request in an appropriate accessible format that maintains the structural integrity of the original material; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin requests the Church Council at its November 2010 meeting to direct all churchwide units and encourage auxiliary organizations to design their Web sites in ways that respect the accessibility needs of people with vision impairment by using high-contrast, following W3C standards, and incorporating feedback from users with disabilities; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin requests the Church Council to direct all churchwide units of the ELCA to include information on plans to implement the accessibility to the April 2011 Church Council meeting; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2010 Synod Assembly of the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin requests the Synod Council to examine synodically created materials and policies on accessibility for those with disabilities and order changes to said materials and policies in the spirit of this resolution and as the Synod Council directs; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2010 Synod Assembly of the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin encourages all congregations within this synod to review their internal policies and materials and to make changes as needed in the spirit of this resolution; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Bishop of this Synod shall report to the 2011 Synod Assembly any actions taken on this subject by the Church Council and the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin Synod Council; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2010 Synod Assembly of the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin directs the Synod Secretary to forward this resolution to the Church Council and the ELCA Secretary, for consideration and possible action, and to each congregation within this synod.

Church Council Action, November 2010 [CC10.11.66c]

To receive the resolution of the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin related to accessibility in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin;

To refer the resolution to the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit in consultation with the Office of the Presiding Bishop and Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, especially as a Message on Disabilities is drafted as requested by the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly;

To request that a report and possible recommendations be brought to the April 2011 meeting of the Church Council; and

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

*Response from the
Congregational and Synodical Mission unit*

The resolution "Accessibility in the ELCA" from the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin (5K) calls for a report to the April 2011 Church Council meeting from the Congregational and Synodical Mission (CSM) unit in consultation with the Office of the Presiding Bishop and Augsburg Fortress, Publishers. This is a progress report in anticipation of a more complete report from Augsburg Fortress to the 2011 Churchwide Assembly.

The CSM unit is responsible for overseeing the churchwide organization's work with disability ministries. Because of reductions in the general budget these past years, all programming work and much of the limited staff support are funded through restricted endowments and a small accumulated reserve. The endowments, which aggregate many gifts and bequests, generate about \$24,000 annually for disability ministries in general and an additional \$6,000 for Braille and tape ministries. No large additions have been made to principal of the endowments in recent years, but there are occasional smaller donations. Within these funding limits, CSM will determine the future use of these funds to create more accessibility. CSM's payroll includes part-time staff consultants in Braille, audio, and large-print ministries and in deaf ministries. The director for leadership for mission portfolio includes oversight of these responsibilities. We anticipate that endowment income can continue to assist with the production and distribution of Braille, large-print, and audio *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* hymns and worship settings.

The social message "People Living With Disabilities," adopted by the Church Council in November 2010, is being prepared for publication online, in print (including Spanish), and possibly in Braille or a comparable media. The Lutheran Services in America Disability Network (LSA-DN) has discussed the

possibility of shared distribution and publicity.

The redesign of the churchwide organization has necessitated a change in the website design; standards addressing accessibility will be considered by Information Technology. In addition, with the formation of new units in the churchwide organization, each unit will be asked to consider accessibility in their unit planning and to include them as part of their unit updates for each meeting of the Church Council.

Church Council Action:

To thank the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin for its resolution related to accessibility in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the South Central Synod of Wisconsin;

To receive the report of the Congregational and Synodical Ministries unit prepared in consultation with the Office of the Presiding Bishop and Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, and to anticipate additional updates related to accessibility planning by the publishing house and the churchwide organization;

To acknowledge with gratitude the ongoing work to make the ELCA social message, "People Living with Disabilities" broadly available; and

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

**C. The Decade of Women—Gender Equality:
Theological Reflections and Congregational
Action Strategies**

Southwest California Synod (2B)

WHEREAS, we celebrate this church's ordination of women as a clear public witness of the equality of women and men intended by Jesus and the early Christian community; and

WHEREAS, we globally profess to love our wives, mothers, sisters and daughters, yet leave millions of women and children displaced in the wilderness, or homeless on highways and streets, ignoring their cries for help, and remaining blind to their bruises and wounds from the violence they suffer; and

WHEREAS, a global study on the discrimination and disempowerment women face throughout their lives and how that impacts children's lives entitled the *UNICEF 2007 Report on the State of the World's Children* concluded the following:

- Gender equality is not only morally right, it is pivotal to human progress and sustainable development;
- Gender equality furthers the cause of child survival and development;
- Gender equality will not only empower women to overcome poverty and live full and productive lives, but will better the lives of children, families and countries as well;
- Women's equal rights and influence in the key decisions that shape their lives and those of children must be enhanced in three distinct arenas: the household, the workplace and the political sphere; and

WHEREAS, the 2009 Churchwide Assembly approved the creation of a Social Statement on Justice for Women (which was memorialized by this Synod); and

WHEREAS, the ELCA's implementation of "The Decade for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence" and the "Stand With Africa" formats successfully highlighted ministry opportunities and can be readily adapted to focus directly on the obstacles and challenges faced by women around the world; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Southwest California Synod Assembly direct the Synod Council to forward this resolution to the Church Council for timely consideration and possible action to adopt 2011–2020 as "The Decade of Women" within our denomination by incorporating those successful strategies as exhibited in "The Decade for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence," and "Stand With Africa" and other gender-equality action strategies for congregations, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwest California Synod lend its voice and efforts in promoting gender equality which contributes to achieving the goals of reducing poverty and hunger, saving children's lives, improving maternal health, ensuring universal education, combating HIV and AIDS, malaria, and other diseases, and ensuring environmental sustainability, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwest California Synod Assembly commend and enhance the efforts of this church's Global Mission unit, the ELCA World Hunger Program, Lutheran World Relief, Women of the ELCA, and other ecumenical and interfaith advocacy efforts by raising awareness and funds for their important work in honoring women by faithfully addressing issues critical to their survival, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwest California Synod, through its staff, conferences, congregations and members, exercise intentional efforts to labor for real change on women's issues, especially in the areas of sexual violence, domestic violence, healthcare, human rights, displaced refugees, reproductive rights, poverty, economic and property rights, among others.

Church Council Action, November 2010 [CC10.11.66e]

To receive the resolution of the Southwest California Synod requesting consideration of a "The Decade of Women" (2011–2020) within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America;

To refer the resolution to the Office of the Presiding Bishop in consultation with the Administrative Team with a request that a report and possible recommendations be brought to the April 2011 meeting of the Church Council; and

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

Response from the Office of the Presiding Bishop

The justice for women program, on behalf of the Office of the Presiding Bishop, is pleased to respond to the resolution that calls for "The Decade of Women" 2011–2020. At the heart of this resolution is a grassroots call to advocacy, both legislative and social, for justice for women. Implicit in this resolution are the urgent demands that the church not shy away from its role to see gender-based disparity, injustice, and violence as ecclesiological issues; to see the unjustly interrelated ways that life in the United States influences the well-being of people, especially women and children, in other nations; and to do something about these problems. In shorthand, this resolution calls for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to be engaged in gender analysis and action globally.

The justice for women program is grateful for this grassroots calling to the church's responsibility to take the global effects of sexism and patriarchy seriously. This resolution reflects the central message of the program's call to the church at the 2007 Churchwide Assembly when it invited and urged the church to educate for justice, advocate for change, and lead into the future to make justice for women and girls a reality.

On behalf of the Office of the Presiding Bishop, the justice for women program recommends a delay in Church Council action until November 2011. In the intervening time, staff members will consider options related to this resolution.

Church Council Action:

To receive the background information provided by the justice for women program in response to the resolution of the Southwest California Synod related to "The Decade of Women—Gender Equality: Theological Reflections and Congregational Action Strategies";

To authorize a delay until the November 2011 meeting of the Church Council; and

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

D. Increasing Church Involvement in Mental Illness

Central States Synod (4B)

WHEREAS, in Matthew 14:14 we read, "When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick" (NIV), and in Luke 4:40 we read, "When the sun was setting, the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness, and laying his hands on each, he healed them" (NIV), which shows that Jesus had compassion on the sick and healed them—the blind, the deaf, the lepers, the lame, and many other sicknesses, even those who were possessed with demons, who

would likely today have their illnesses diagnosed as schizophrenia or companion brain disorders; and

WHEREAS, one of five families cope with mental illness, and individuals and families affected by mental illness are members of our congregations; and

WHEREAS, mental illness is a disease of the brain, similar to and yet unique compared to many physical illnesses; and

WHEREAS, mental illness is often a sickness that is no fault of the patient, yet the stigma associated with mental illness continues to deter individuals and their families from seeking timely treatment; and

WHEREAS, persons suffering from mental illness sense being shunned by society and thus tend to isolate themselves from social contacts, which results in the loss of a support system that can be an essential part of a treatment plan; and

WHEREAS, health care professionals may treat the physical and psychological aspects of mental illness but are ill prepared to treat the spiritual or to be available outside of scheduled structured appointments; and

WHEREAS, a 2008 study by the Rand Corporation shows that nearly 20 percent of military service members who have returned from Iraq and Afghanistan—300,000 in all—report symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or major depression; and

WHEREAS, this same report states if PTSD and despair go untreated or are undertreated, there is a cascading set of consequences—drug use, suicide, marital problems, and unemployment—which affect a widening circle of people in our congregations and communities; and

WHEREAS, the Healthcare Clinicians Network of the National Healthcare for the Homeless Council states, “It is an outrage that here in America—the wealthiest country on earth in the year 2000—so many people who suffer from mental illness remain homeless. . . . These individuals are among the most vulnerable, not only to multiple co-morbidities including substance abuse, but also to stigmatization, exploitation, and brutal victimization. Consequently, they are at highest risk for prolonged homelessness”; and

WHEREAS, great progress to improve the quality of life has been made in treatment of persons afflicted with mental illness and even more can be made; and

WHEREAS, Jesus has directed us to care for the sick and homeless and all of the “least of these”; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Central States Synod in assembly recommend to its congregations:

1. That they become “the rod and the staff” that “comfort” all persons who suffer from illnesses, including the individuals and families who cope with mental illness;
2. That they designate and make known to the congregation a member (preferably a volunteer) to be the liaison for the congregation on matters related to mental illness who will help members understand mental illness and be a source of information on where individuals and families who cope with the illness can get treatment and find a support group;
3. That they seek opportunities for pastors, pastoral ministry associates, parish nurses, and other

interested members to receive training for their unique role in providing spiritual guidance to individuals even as they are being treated by mental health professionals who might not recognize that the patient’s faith is important to the patient and should be considered when developing a treatment plan;

4. That the church provide a non-judgmental meeting place for persons who avoid being seen in public places because of their illness;
5. That the congregation in its role of supporting members with mental illness communicate to its legislative representative the need for increased funds and resources that will help people access mental health services; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Central States Synod in assembly

1. memorialize the 2009 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) to direct development of a social statement on mental illness to serve as a companion to “Caring for Health: Our Shared Endeavor,” a 2003 social statement on health, healing, and health care; and
2. direct the Central States Synod Council to refer this resolution to the ELCA Church Council, requesting that it direct development of congregational resources for use in ministry to those afflicted with mental illness, in addition to those resources currently available from the Lutheran Network for Mental Illness/Brain Disorders.

NOTE: The Central States Synod requests that this action be treated as a resolution since the social statement “Caring for Health” addresses issues of mental illness.

Executive Committee Action, August 2010 [EC08.10.22a]

To receive the resolution of the Central States Synod requesting increasing ELCA involvement in mental illness through the development of a social statement on mental illness;

To refer the resolution to the Church in Society unit in accordance with the “Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns” and to 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 synod of this action.

Response from the former Church in Society unit

The medical understanding of mental illness as a disease of the brain has made immense strides since the 1990s (often called the Decade of the Brain) and new means of treatment show hopeful signs. At the same time, it now is estimated that as many as one out of five families cope with mental illness and that members of the military returning from war zones may suffer post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) at a rate as high as 20 percent. Despite the possibilities of better medical response and new awareness of the widespread presence of mental illness in our society, individuals with mental illness and their families continue to experience considerable suffering—including homelessness and victimization for some—and isolation. The social stigma, lack of access to health care, reduction of social services in this economic climate, and especially the general lack of understanding, deter individuals and their families from seeking treatment or experiencing appropriate support and care, both in society and in ELCA congregations and at other ministry sites.

Biblical injunctions and Jesus' example of care for the mentally ill, as well as the ELCA's social statement on health care, *Caring for Health: Our Shared Endeavor*, provide firm grounding for the development of a message on mental illness. Such a message should provide a focus for teaching, deliberation, engagement, and action within this church that will enable a deeper understanding of current needs and issues, as well as the means to address mental illness for individuals and as a social concern.

The development of an ELCA message requires approximately \$17,000 in order to hold a small consultation, provide for miscellaneous expenses, and print and mail the document. It requires the quarter-time commitment of a studies staff member for about six months. Staff time and dollars should become available for such work in the middle of 2010, permitting a proposed message to be brought to the spring 2011 meeting of the Church Council. It is anticipated that it would be formatted for both Web and print distribution by late spring of that year.

Church Council Action, November 2009 [CC09.11.86c]

To thank the Central States Synod for its concern for people with mental illness and their families;

To authorize staff of the program unit for Church in Society, in accordance with "Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns," to initiate the development of an ELCA message on mental illness to be brought to the Church Council for adoption in April 2011; and

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

Response from Office of the Presiding Bishop

Concerns about the ELCA's capacity to process a high volume of social teaching and policy documents led to action by the Church Council in November 2010 [CC10.11.61] that urged a rescheduling of the work on authorized but pending social documents. The initiation of work on a social message regarding mental health, therefore, was delayed until the fall of 2011.

As of April 2011, the studies team in the Office of the Presiding Bishop has plans for keeping that timeline and anticipates consideration of a message by Church Council at its spring 2012 meeting.

It should be noted, however, that adoption by the 2011 Churchwide Assembly of the recommendations of the Living into the Future Together (LIFT) task force concerning social documents would place on hold initiation of pending social documents and further delay the message's initiation, since the recommendation on social documents calls for a delay until completion of a review of the process.

Church Council Action:

To receive the response of the Office of the Presiding Bishop to the resolution of the Central States Synod requesting the development of an ELCA message on mental illness;

To thank the synod for its concern for people with mental illness and their families and receive the response provided by the studies team in the Office of the Presiding Bishop;

To acknowledge that the decisions of the 2011 Churchwide Assembly related to the recommendations of the Living into the Future Together (LIFT) task force may affect the initial planning for a possible social message on mental health; and

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