



**Office of the Secretary**  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

God's work. Our hands.

April 18, 2012

**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 D. Swartling, secretary

**SUBJECT:** Report of Responses by the Church Council to Synodical and Churchwide Assembly Actions (April 13–15, 2012)

**I. RESPONSES TO SYNODICAL RESOLUTIONS**

**A. HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AGAINST THE OROMO PEOPLE**

**METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON, D.C., SYNOD (8G)**

WHEREAS, we are called to follow Jesus Christ “to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, and to let the oppressed go free” (Luke 4:18); and

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has repeatedly called upon its congregations to intercede for those around the world who are being subjected to systematic violation of human rights; and

WHEREAS, the constitution of the Oromo Evangelical Church in Washington, D.C., like the constitutions of many ELCA congregations, calls on members to “serve in response to God’s love to meet human needs, caring for the sick and the aged, advocating dignity and justice for all people, working for peace and reconciliation among the nations, and standing with the poor and powerless...” (\*C4.02.d.); and

WHEREAS, the Oromo people, who number 30 million within the territory of Ethiopia, have known more than a century of persecution at the hands of successive governments; and

WHEREAS, the people of the Oromia region of Ethiopia are presently being subjected to a massive campaign to deny their human and civil rights, including arbitrary detention, the torture of detainees, and extrajudicial executions; and

WHEREAS, Human Rights Watch, in a report released on April 6, 2011, called on the Ethiopian government to immediately release those detained without charge during “several waves of apparently politically motivated mass arrests of more than 200 ethnic Oromo Ethiopians;” and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Department of State, in its annual Human Rights report on Ethiopia (April 2011), has documented “unlawful killings, torture, beating, and abuse and mistreatment of detainees and opposition supporters by security forces... poor

prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention, particularly of suspected sympathizers or members of opposition or insurgent groups” and has called on the government of Ethiopia to comply with its commitments under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to cease its practice of jamming Voice of America broadcasts that seek to report on the present situation and its denial of access to federal prisons by the International Committee of the Red Cross; and

WHEREAS, the Oromo Evangelical Church of Washington, D.C., as well as other Oromo congregations, stand ready to provide documentation and study materials on the present situation in Ethiopia through the synod office; therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**, that the ELCA Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod Assembly encourage congregations of the synod to pray regularly for those in prison in Ethiopia and to devote time to studying the situation of the Oromo people; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, that the Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod Assembly direct the bishop of the synod to send a letter to the U.S. Secretary of State expressing the synod’s concern for the well-being of the Oromo people and requesting that all developmental and military aid to the government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia be tied to that government’s compliance with internationally-recognized human rights agreements; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, that the Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod Assembly memorialize the 2011 Churchwide Assembly, meeting in Orlando, Florida, to undertake programs of education and advocacy on behalf of the human rights of the Oromo people.

*Background:*

As baptized Christians, we are called by our baptismal covenant to stand in solidarity with people most affected by injustice and repression. To that end, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America continually has affirmed its commitment to the promotion, preservation, and protection of universal human rights.

The global engagement and awareness present in every expression of this church is formed through the practices of accompaniment, the mission theology of the ELCA. The blend of solidarity and accompaniment motivates ELCA members toward effective advocacy.

One of the commitments intrinsic to the practice of accompaniment is consultation with global companion churches prior to ELCA action outside the territories of the ELCA. In many areas, including governmental advocacy, operating without prior consultation can lead to unintended consequences, both for the ELCA and for its companion churches.

*Church Council Action [CC.11.07.46b]:*

To thank the Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod for its resolution related to human rights violations against the Oromo people;

To refer the resolution to the Congregational and Synodical Mission and Global Mission units for consultation with the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) with the request that a report and possible recommendations be brought to the November 2011 meeting of the Church Council; and

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

*Response from the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit (November 2011):*

Since the action by the Church Council on July 28, 2011, staff of the Congregational and Synodical Mission and Global Mission units have consulted with a variety of people, including staff of the Lutheran World Federation, with more detailed knowledge of the human rights situation in Ethiopia. These consultations have been undertaken to enable the ELCA both to gather additional information about the situation in Ethiopia and to avoid possible unintended consequences, as noted in the background statement. A number of options are being considered that would address the matter in an effective way while also giving due attention to the ELCA's practice of accompaniment with global companion churches. It is anticipated that another report will be prepared for the April 2012 meeting of the Church Council.

*Church Council Action [CC.11.11.83b]:*

To receive the background information provided by the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit in response to the resolution of the Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod related to "Human Rights Violations Against the Oromo People";

To authorize a delay in further response until the April 2012 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 and Global Mission units:*

Staff from the Congregational and Synodical Mission (CSM) and Global Mission (GM) units have conferred extensively on this resolution and considered several options to address this ongoing situation. They note this church's ongoing and longstanding concern for human rights and the theology and practice of accompaniment of global companion church bodies, as mentioned in the previous response. They recommend no further action by the churchwide organization at this time.

**Church Council Action:**

*[En Bloc]*

**To receive the report and recommendation of the Congregational and Synodical Mission (CSM) and Global Mission (GM) units;**

**To acknowledge with gratitude this church's ongoing work and consultation with global companion church bodies in addressing the longstanding concern for human rights violations against the Oromo people; and**

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

**B. CLOSE THE SCHOOL OF THE AMERICAS SOUTHWEST CALIFORNIA SYNOD (2B)**

WHEREAS, this resolution was reintroduced because on September 18, 2010, the Synod Council moved to object to consideration of Resolution 10-09 referred by the 2010 Synod Assembly; and

WHEREAS, according to "School of Americas (SOA) Watch" ([www.soaw.org](http://www.soaw.org)), SOA/WHINSEC, based at Fort Benning, Georgia, has gained international notoriety for its training of Latin American death squad leaders and military dictators; and

WHEREAS, in 1996, the Pentagon released School of the Americas Training Manuals, used at the school for at least a decade, that advocated the use of torture, execution, and blackmail; and

WHEREAS, the Southwest California Synod passed an anti-torture resolution in 2009; and

WHEREAS, the 111th Congress, with HR 2567, introduced legislation to close the SOA; and

WHEREAS, the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights states, "It is essential, if humankind is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law;" therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Southwest California Synod of the ELCA communicate to U.S. President Barack Obama to immediately close the School of the Americas (SOA/WHINSEC) by executive order and/or to support any legislative efforts to close the School of the Americas (SOA/WHINSEC), such as the bipartisan Latin America Military Training Review Act, which would suspend operations at the SOA/WHINSEC, investigate the use of torture manuals and human rights abuses associated with the school, and provide an overall assessment of foreign military training; and be it further

RESOLVED, that ELCA Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson be encouraged to speak truth to power and to boldly advocate these "grassroots" justice concerns.

*Executive Committee Action [EC.11.07.08]:*

To receive the resolution of the Southwest California Synod related to the School of the Americas (SOA/WHINSEC);

To refer the resolution to the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit with a request that a report and possible recommendations be brought to the April 2012 meeting of the ELCA Church Council; and

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

*Response from the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit:*

Operation of the SOA/WHINSEC is the subject of long-standing, faith-based activism, most notably large annual vigils at the gates of Fort Benning. The Congregational and Synodical Mission (CSM) unit appreciates the commitment of the Southwest California Synod to human rights and its concern for the actions of the U.S. government referred to in the resolution. To the extent the resolution addresses the churchwide organization and the presiding bishop, the CSM unit notes the importance of the issue and supports the request for positive action as based on the related social policy resolution passed by the 1995 Churchwide Assembly. The CSM unit recommends forwarding the request in the second "Resolved" clause to the presiding bishop's Public Policy Procedures Group (PPPG) for deliberations and decisions about the presiding bishop's statements addressing public policy and public issues.

**Church Council Action:** *[EN BLOC]*

**To receive the report and recommendation from the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit;**

**To request the Public Policy Procedures Group convened by the Office of the Presiding Bishop to recommend to the presiding bishop an appropriate response which supports the request for positive action as based on the related Social Policy Resolution passed by the 1995 Churchwide Assembly; and**

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

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

### **A. IMPLEMENTING RESOLUTIONS TO THE SOCIAL STATEMENT HUMAN SEXUALITY: GIFT AND TRUST [CA09.04.17]**

*2009 Churchwide Assembly Action:*

1. To embrace as a church our legacy of a rich theological tradition that proclaims God's gracious love expressed in Jesus Christ as the basis of our salvation, hope, and unity, and to call upon members of this church on this basis to commit themselves to finding ways to live together faithfully in the midst of disagreements;
2. To call upon this church to affirm the various studies created for the "Journey Together Faithfully" series as resources for ongoing deliberation and discernment, and to direct the program unit for Church in Society to maintain their availability as long as demand continues;
3. To request the Office of the Presiding Bishop to explore the feasibility of developing liturgical resources for use by rostered leaders, individuals, and families at the time of divorce;
4. To encourage Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, to consider developing education curricula with particular attention to the needs of children, middle school, high school youth, and their parents for understanding Christian values and making responsible choices;
5. To recognize that organizations like Women of the ELCA, Lutheran Men in Mission, Lutheran Youth Organization, and campus ministries foster and support friendships; to encourage them to lift up and celebrate the value of strong friendships and to support the formation of voluntary associations for nurturing them;

6. To call upon all congregations, pastors, and other rostered leaders to reach out in welcome to all in accord with previous Churchwide Assembly actions as reaffirmed by the 2005 Churchwide Assembly [CA05.05.18], and to assist members to understand what it means to be hospitable to all in the name of Christ regardless of sexual orientation;
7. To call upon the ELCA to amend the eligibility provisions of the ELCA Pension and Other Benefits Program, consistent with the policies of this church;
8. To call upon this church to encourage the availability and funding of comprehensive sex education programs in public schools, as well as in Lutheran private schools;
9. To affirm the 2001 ELCA Message “Commercial Sexual Exploitation” and its continuing value for the mission and ministry of the ELCA;
10. To call upon this church’s advocacy and corporate social responsibility ministries to support and advocate measures consistent with this social statement;
11. To express appreciation for the work being done by the churchwide organization, synods, institutions, and congregations to prevent sexual harassment and misconduct; to encourage strengthening these efforts by all expressions and ministries of this church; and to ensure the availability of effective resources for dealing with sexual misconduct and sexual harassment within this church;
12. To call upon teaching theologians, bishops, pastors, diaconal ministers, associates in ministry, deaconesses, educators, and others to continue to extend theological and biblical reflection as well as theoretical and practical understanding of human sexuality through intellectual discourse, moral deliberation, continued research, discussion, and writing;
13. To recognize that the ELCA has adopted a strategy that will guide its response to the HIV and AIDS epidemic, and to call upon all units and expressions of this church to support that strategy;
14. To call upon all congregations, synods, early childhood education centers, elementary and secondary schools, colleges and universities, seminaries, campus ministries, outdoor ministries, social ministry organizations, public policy advocacy ministries, and all churchwide units to carry out the substance and spirit of this statement; and
15. To call upon Church in Society and other appropriate churchwide units to oversee a process of implementation and accountability for this social statement and to report on implementation to the Church Council in early 2012.

*Responses from the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit:*

The Congregational and Synodical Mission (CSM) unit, in consultation with many of the following units and organizations, provide the following responses to the implementing resolutions.

*Mission Development*

Training for the prevention of sexual misconduct is provided during Mission Developer Training for new developers entering the field. It is an expectation that all developers attend. Mission Developer Training is offered twice a year.

*Worship*

Currently, there are prayer resources for families and individuals facing divorce included in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship: Pastoral Care*. A larger conversation about whether or not this church ritualizes divorce would need to take place before the development of such liturgical resources.

*Advocacy*

ELCA Advocacy Ministries and the Corporate Social Responsibility consultant have addressed policy issues consistent with this statement, including hate crime, workplace, and partner benefits legislation. Commercial Sexual Exploitation (ref. item 9), including its economic and cultural aspects, is a continuing advocacy priority addressed by international, domestic, U.N. and corporate responsibility portfolios.

ELCA Advocacy Ministries and the Corporate Social Responsibility consultant have written issue briefs raising the profile of the HIV and AIDS Strategy and addressing its policy implications. The Corporate Social Responsibility consultant and International Policy director take leadership positions in coalitions addressing funding for education and access to medical treatment, drugs, and long-term care. The Assistant to the Director of the U.N. office is leading an ELCA Inter-Unit Planning Team related to the 2012 International AIDS Conference in Washington, D.C.

*The HIV and AIDS Strategy*

A team was formed to fully engage the strategy. The team is composed of churchwide staff from the Mission Advancement, Congregational and Synodical Mission, and Global Mission units and staff from the Women of the ELCA. We continue to focus on the three goals and have joined with our partners domestically and globally in creating our response to halting the spread of HIV through effective prevention, treatment, and care; eliminating stigma and discrimination; and reducing the conditions of

poverty and marginalization that contribute to the spread of HIV. In a ten-year period, we have committed to spend \$10 million as part of our overall response to this continuing crisis.

#### *Campus Ministry*

Campus ministries across the country continue to foster and support strong friendships among undergraduate and graduate students. They also continue to carry out the substance and spirit of the social statement on human sexuality. One regional coordinator shared the story that at a recent quadrennial review at the University of Michigan, students who have faced the pain of being rejected by other faith communities because of their sexual identity dared to “darken the door” at Lutheran Campus Ministry/Lord of Light because it advertises itself as a Reconciling in Christ community. She reports that “they couldn’t say enough good things about the welcome they have received” from that campus ministry community.

#### *Schools*

Elementary schools and preschools operated by ELCA congregations continue to offer quality education in sexuality as part of instruction in health.

#### *Response from Augsburg Fortress, Publishers: General Guidelines*

Augsburg Fortress and its ecumenical division, sparkhouse, are committed to creating resources to assist with conversation and learning around Christian values and making responsible choices through age-appropriate language, images, questions, and activities. Different development and editorial filters/criteria, based on expertise with each end-user age/stage group, are used. For children and youth, the filter includes respecting and honoring diversity so that all children feel they (and their family) are included and loved members of God’s family.

#### *Spark Sunday School and Spark Family*

Issues surrounding human sexuality are not addressed in an explicit way in the Spark curriculum or Spark Family. They do reflect respectful, healthy, and diverse family relationships when depicting families in text and in pictures.

#### *Herewestandconfirmation.org*

Exploring the Commandments: Part 2 references the sixth commandment and healthy attitudes toward sexuality and relationships. There are no topics on the News Feed that specifically reference this.

re:form confirmation and youth resources

Three sessions relate directly to sexuality/decisions: Is it a sin to think about sex? How do I stop doing things I know I shouldn’t do? Is divorce a sin?

#### *Future*

We are open to developing a curriculum in the future that focuses specifically on issues of Christian values and responsible choices.

#### *Response from Lutheran Men in Mission:*

Assisting men to build strong, healthy friendships is at the heart of Lutheran Men in Mission’s (LMM) work. A part of the mission is to provide safe spaces for men to develop meaningful relationships. Of the many things we do to promote this, two stand out:

- 1) We have developed the I-Go model for older and middle-aged men to develop friendships, especially with younger men: identify, invite, and invest. Identify a younger man in your life, invite him into friendship and to spend some time together, and invest time in him.
- 2) Our One Year to Live retreat creates the safest of places for men to honestly open up and begin to develop life-changing relationships.

#### *Response from Portico Benefit Services:*

In 2010, Portico Benefit Services (formerly the ELCA Board of Pensions) amended plans contained within the ELCA Pension and Other Benefits Program to treat eligible same-gender partners the same as a spouse to the extent possible under each plan and as permitted by federal law.

#### *Church Council Action:*

**To receive the report from the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit in consultation with the Mission Advancement unit, Global Mission unit, Women of the ELCA, Lutheran Men in Mission, Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, and Portico Benefit Services in response to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly action related to the implementing resolutions for the social statement *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*; and**

**To express with appreciation the ongoing work of the churchwide organization, synods, institutions, agencies, and congregations in implementing the substance and spirit of this statement as the response of the Church Council to the Churchwide Assembly action.**

**B. INTERNATIONAL YEAR FOR PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT  
MEMORIAL CATEGORY A3 [CA11.03.12]**

*2011 Churchwide Assembly Action:*

To receive with gratitude the memorials of the Central/Southern Illinois, Northeastern Ohio, Southeastern Pennsylvania, and Virginia synods related to the International Year for People of African Descent;

To affirm these memorials and request that the presiding bishop of this church issue a statement acknowledging the International Year for People of African Descent and encouraging congregations to participate through prayer, ministry, forums, and presentations, as well as artistic, cultural, and worship expressions that affirm the gifts of people of African Descent;

To ask that the director for racial justice collaborate with the ELCA Church Council, congregations, synod anti-racism teams, strategy teams, ethnic associations, ELCA colleges and universities, and ELCA seminaries to deepen efforts to eradicate racism by examining the factors that inhibit people of color and/or whose primary language is other than English from experiencing the fullness of leadership and inclusion in this church;

To request the Global Mission and Congregational and Synodical Mission units to recognize this International Year in upcoming events; and

To anticipate that the director for racial justice and the staff of the Lutheran Office for World Community at the United Nations will monitor the events of the International Year for People of African Descent and provide current information for the ELCA website.

*Church Council Action [CC.11.11.83c]:*

To request that the director for racial justice, in consultation with the Congregational and Synodical Mission and Global Mission units bring to the April 2012 meeting of the Church Council a report on the ELCA activities associated with the International Year for People of African Descent.

*Response from the Director for Racial Justice Ministries:*

In response to the Churchwide Assembly action recognizing the U.N. International Year for People of African Descent, the Director for Racial Justice Ministries in consultation with the Lutheran Office for World Community:

- Utilized the ELCA website to post news and information regarding the International Year.
- Assisted the presiding bishop of this church in issuing a statement acknowledging the International Year for People of African Descent and encouraging congregations to participate through prayer, ministry,

forums, and presentations, as well as artistic, cultural and worship expressions that affirm the gifts of people of African Descent.

The Director for African Descent ministries in consultation with the National Council of Churches Black Ministerium drafted a letter requesting that the National Council of Churches in Christ (NCCC) Governing Board approve the U.N. Year. On November 9, 2011, the NCCC letter called on member communions to do the following:

- To embrace, honor, and celebrate “the rich histories, diverse cultures, vast contributions, and gifts for ministry of people of African descent” around the world;
- To work even more diligently “to eradicate racial injustice, discrimination, and xenophobia” so often directed at persons of African descent;
- To ask the member communions to advance the rights of such persons through prayer, advocacy, and action; to make an annual report to the NCCC on steps taken to promote the elimination of racism; and to raise awareness of the contributions of people of color; and
- To call for an Ecumenical Decade to Celebrate Persons of African Descent and their contributions to society.

The Director for Racial Justice Ministries, in partnership with the executive for human resources in the Office of the Presiding Bishop, the Director for Multicultural Ministries, the Director for Ethnic-Specific Ministries, the Director for Justice for Women, the Women of the ELCA’s Director for Justice, the African Descent Lutheran Association’s biennial gathering, the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta, the Carter Center in Atlanta at Emory University, and the Assistant to the Bishop/Director of Evangelical Mission in the Southeastern Synod hosted screening events of the United Nations Educational and Scientific Organization (UNESCO) documentary “Slave Routes: a Global Vision.” The documentary film, aimed at a general audience, provides an overview of the massive deportation of African populations to different parts of the world, including the Americas, Europe, islands in the Indian Ocean, the Middle East, and Asia.

The DVD highlights the African presence across continents, the significant contributions of the African diaspora to the host societies in various fields (arts, religion, knowledge, gastronomy, agriculture, behavior, linguistics, etc.), and the racism and discrimination inherited from this tragic past. Its scope moves beyond

the trauma of slavery and emphasizes slave resistance and resilience in surviving such a dehumanizing system.

Through the compilation of images, historical narration, and interviews with experts from all continents, the film shows how African slaves and their descendants, in contrast to incorrect “racial” theories, helped shape the modern world.

The film’s main objective is to give a global vision of the different dimensions of this tragedy and raise crucial questions regarding its consequences in modern societies in order to come to terms with this collective memory.

In response to the community screening of the film at the Carter Center in Atlanta, Ga., Dr. Rosetta E. Ross, Associate Professor of Religious Studies, wrote, “I want to express my deep gratitude to you [Judith Roberts] and Dr. Everett Flanigan for sponsoring the screening and discussion of the documentary ‘Slave Routes’ at the Carter Center in Atlanta. As creative director Dr. Sheila Walker indicated, the ELCA should be commended for providing a forum to begin discussing the history of enslavement and the legacy of Africans’ contributions to global development.”

**Church Council Action:** *[EN BLOC]*

**To receive with gratitude the report from the Director for Racial Justice Ministries;**

**To recognize with deep appreciation the collaborative work of the Director for Racial Justice Ministries and the Director for African Descent Ministries in recognizing the International Year for People of African Descent; and**

**To acknowledge the many ways this church has lifted up the International Year for People of African Descent and encouraged participation in prayer, ministry, forums, and presentations, as well as artistic, cultural, and worship expressions that affirm the gifts of people of African Descent as the response of the Church Council to the Churchwide Assembly action.**

**C. CONFRONTING INJUSTICE IN STATE IMMIGRATION INITIATIVES**

**MOTION C [CA11.05.31]**

*2011 Churchwide Assembly Action:*

RESOLVED, that the 2011 Churchwide Assembly declare its support of and encouragement for all efforts to prevent the enactment of punitive and unjust federal and state laws that target immigrants; and be it further

RESOLVED, that all congregations and institutions of this church are called to welcome and serve persons regardless of their documented status; and be it further

RESOLVED, that congregations, seminaries, camps, colleges, universities, synods, and all expressions of the ELCA are hereby called upon to deepen their understanding of the current issues related to immigration and their calling to stand for welcome, including the widespread study and use of the ELCA social policy resolution titled “Toward Compassionate, Just and Wise Immigration Reform,” adopted by the Church Council in 2009; and be it further

RESOLVED, that all members of this church, including its leaders, be encouraged to protest laws and proposed laws that ignore the Bible’s witness to care for the stranger among us and to serve all people and strive for justice and peace in all the earth, by communicating with legislators, governors, and the media; participating in public gatherings opposing unjust immigration policies; and taking all actions that demonstrate welcome and live out accompaniment of immigrants; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Churchwide Assembly affirm this church’s cooperation with and support for the ministry and advocacy of Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS); and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Church Council be asked to consider the designation of one day each year for “Stand for Welcome Sunday,” a moment to bring particular attention in congregations and communities to the presence and gifts of refugees and migrants, and the opportunities for mission and ministry with newcomers; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the presiding bishop and synodical bishops be called upon to communicate this resolution and the commitment of the ELCA to stand with and advocate for immigrants to the U.S. administration, Congress, all governors and state legislatures, and the media.

*Church Council Action [CC11.11.83k]:*

To refer Motion C: Confronting Injustice in State Immigration Initiatives to the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit in consultation with the Theological Discernment team in the Office of the Presiding Bishop; and

To request that a report and possible recommendations, particularly about the designation of “Stand for Welcome Sunday,” be presented to the Church Council at its April 2012 meeting.

*Response from the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit (CSM):*

The ELCA is deeply engaged with and committed to this issue. We have a valued partner, Lutheran

Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) that has developed resources, provided training, and advocated on our behalf regarding unjust federal and state laws that target immigrants. With our support the resource “Be Not Afraid: Resource for Congregations and Immigrant Families Fractured by Fear,” was developed, and training sessions were held. The resource is still available to congregations for additional training. It is in two languages, English and Spanish. We continue to provide support and funding to LIRS as they engage the ecology of the ELCA in various ways in the creation of our response to a broken immigration system. During 2011 and 2012, we have focused our Glocal Mission Gatherings upon educating our members on immigration issues. We are currently working with LIRS to identify congregations and local nonprofits to get more people visiting immigrants in detention centers. CSM is currently developing a work plan with LIRS that will guide and direct our joint priorities for 2012 and beyond. This work plan will also explore and consider the designation of one day each year for “Stand for Welcome Sunday.”

Our partnership with LIRS is an important ministry that is mutually beneficial, a win-win situation. Our commitment to being a church of hospitality and welcome is also reflected in our new starts where for the past three years over 50% have been ministries to and with immigrants. One area that has received sustained focus is along the southern border with Mexico, where La Frontera Ministry works to strengthen congregations and community groups to serve immigrants and economic migrants on both sides of the border.

Additionally, this motion called on the presiding bishop and synodical bishops to communicate to the nation’s leaders and media the ELCA’s support and commitment to immigration reform.

On November 1, 2011, the presiding bishop sent a letter to President Barack Obama and members of the U.S. Congress with such a statement. A response from President Obama was received by the Office of the Presiding Bishop, acknowledging the receipt of the letter.

In a separate response, 58 of the synod bishops sent a letter on November 2, 2011, to President Obama and members of Congress calling for immigration reform. The bishops wrote, “We, the undersigned ELCA bishops, stand with other religious, community, and business leaders in opposing misguided and punitive state immigration laws and working for the passage of much-needed federal immigration reform.”

Members of the ELCA Conference of Bishops’ Immigration Ready Bench also met with congressional leaders in November 2011 to communicate the commitment of the ELCA to stand with and advocate for immigrants.

Since August 2011, five ELCA news stories on immigration were released to the media and can be read at [www.elca.org/news](http://www.elca.org/news).

**Church Council Action:** *[EN BLOC]*

**To receive the report from the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit in consultation with the Theological Discernment team in the Office of the Presiding Bishop related to state immigration initiatives;**

**To acknowledge with gratitude the communication of this motion to the U.S. President and Congress by the presiding bishop and synod bishops and the subsequent news releases to the media;**

**To approve information regarding the deep engagement and commitment to this issue with the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) as the Church Council’s response to the Churchwide Assembly action; and**

**To anticipate a possible designation of one day each year for “Stand for Welcome Sunday” by the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit.**

#### **D. TREE FOR LUTHERGARTEN MOTION K [CA11.04.19]**

WHEREAS, the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation will happen in 2017;

WHEREAS, Lutheran World Federation in Wittenberg/Lutherstadt, under the work of Rev. Hans Kasch, is recognizing this Quincentennial anniversary by creating a park with 500 native fruit and deciduous trees;

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is a member of Lutheran World Federation;

WHEREAS, the cost for a mature tree in the Luthergarten is 500 Euros (approx. \$750);

WHEREAS, the Luthergarten project encourages benefactors to plant a “sister” tree in their location with an accompanying plaque stating its significance;

WHEREAS, the total cost of the project is no more than \$1000;

WHEREAS, we encourage Bishop Hanson, or a person of his choosing, to be present in Wittenberg/Lutherstadt on the day of the tree planting; therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**, that the 12th Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA direct the ELCA Church Council to purchase a tree in the Luthergarten and determine a location, and oversee the planting, of its sister tree and adjacent plaque.

*Churchwide Assembly Action [CA11.04.19]:*

To refer Motion K to the Office of the Presiding Bishop for consideration.



*Church Council Action [CC.11.11.83q]:*

To request that the Office of the Presiding Bishop present a report and possible recommendations on Motion K: Tree for Luthergarten to the April 2012 meeting of the Church Council.

*Response from the Office of the Presiding Bishop*

In response to the 12<sup>th</sup> Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA, a tree was planted in Wittenberg, Germany, by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, in observance of the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation in 2017.

The contribution of the Northeastern Ohio Synod provided the funding for this tree, which was planted in October 2011 on behalf of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

The request was for the planting of a horse chestnut tree, which is similar to a buckeye tree since Ohio is the Buckeye state.

*Church Council Action:*

**To acknowledge the value of planting a “sister” tree in the Luthergarten to recognize the quincentenary of the Protestant Reformation;**

**To receive the report and response from the Office of the Presiding Bishop; and**

**To acknowledge with gratitude the financial contribution from the Northeastern Ohio Synod to plant the Horse Chestnut tree in the Luthergarten.**