




Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

November 18, 2013

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

FROM:  The Rev. Wm Chris Boefger, secretary

SUBJECT: Report of Church Council Responses to and Referrals of
 Synodical and Churchwide Assembly Actions (November 8–10, 2013)

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I. RESPONSES TO SYNODICAL RESOLUTIONS

A. Analysis, Assessment and Measurement of New Starts Southwest California Synod Council (2B) [2012]

WHEREAS, since 2004, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA) has spent \$80,627,031 on new and renewing congregations. According to outside statistics, of the \$80 million invested over the past eight years, \$36 million has not produced lasting viable congregations; and

WHEREAS, in the past decade, no Southwest California Synod mission start has become self-sustaining; and

WHEREAS, within the territory of the Southwest California Synod, the level of investment through 2011 for existing mission starts and redevelopments was \$1,292,281, and, of that amount, \$145,700 went to new congregations that have, as yet, failed to organize; and

WHEREAS, the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit has expressed a need to reduce financial support for five mission start congregations in the Southwest California Synod; and

WHEREAS, overall, Protestant denominations and the Catholic Church have raised and spent over one trillion dollars on domestic ministry during the past two decades, yet there has been no measurable increase in one of the primary expressed purposes of the Church: to lead people to Christ and have them commit their lives to him; and

WHEREAS, the churchwide organization does not keep failure statistics but current inter-denominational statistics show, at worst, the failure rate of mission developments and redevelopments as an 80 percent failure rate over a 10-year period, and at best, within the first four years, the failure rate is over 45 percent. These percentages lead one to the conclusion that the ELCA has a 55 percent success rate for mission developments, inferring that, of every dollar being invested in mission starts, 45 cents has no return. Most organizations would understand these numbers to be a sign of poor stewardship and flawed methodology; and

WHEREAS, studies indicate that mission starts that have more than three set years of funding have a declining opportunity for viability and sustainability; and

WHEREAS, coaching is seen as “the most effective means of empowering missional leaders in a changing world.” Furthermore, mission developers that have met with a mentor weekly have congregations that are more than twice the size of mission developers that did not have mentors; and

WHEREAS, research shows that pastors who experience a traumatic failure in their first mission start never overcome that experience; and

WHEREAS, mission developers with a clear picture of the process, risks, possibilities, goals, and expectations have a 400 percent increased chance at successful development; and

WHEREAS, mission developers that have clear modes of accountability from their denomination, their local network (i.e., synod) within the areas of finances, entrepreneurial leadership, mentorship, and call expectations have an increased opportunity toward viability by over 563 percent. Where assessment is done early and often, by year four those communities are 27 percent larger than communities where little to no assessment was done; and

WHEREAS, three of our Synod Goals focus on intentional outreach and two other Goals focus on development of new congregations and the transformation of existing congregations; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Southwest California Synod Council request that the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America direct the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit to create a research design using appropriate methodology and standardized measurement scales for mission starts and redeveloping congregations, specifically looking at early qualitative and quantitative assessments of mission development pastors, realistic financial support strategies, concurrent assessment practices, and further diversification of church planting strategies, including concepts for further long-term development and support for developing pastors, inner-city, and ethnocentric specific mission start strategies and early viability and sustainability assessments; and be it further

RESOLVED, that this church use additional psychological and behavioral standardized assessment tools in the process of identifying mission developers; and to implement a mentoring program for every mission developer; and be it further

RESOLVED, that this church looks toward our full-communion partnerships for alternative methodologies and analytical tools, for direct partnerships and for church developer peer support teams.

Executive Committee Action (EC12.04.12)

To receive the resolution of the Southwest California Synod Council related to new mission starts and congregations in redevelopment;

To refer the resolution to the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit with a request that a report and possible recommendations be brought to the November 2012 meeting of the ELCA 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 (November 2012)

We addressed this request with the Program and Services Committee of the Church Council at the April 2012 meeting. At that time, Kenneth Inskip of Research & Evaluation worked with the CSM unit on a process for this study. After an initial review of the literature and additional conversation with CSM and the Office of the Presiding Bishop, Research and Evaluation is proposing a comprehensive review of the actions of this church with regard to new mission starts and congregations. Over the years, both the environment for starting new missions and the increasingly participatory approach to new mission development have added to the complexity of evaluation. The important and significant involvement of synods and local congregations deserves attention and this takes time. We also want to more fully explore the strategies of other religious groups. A preliminary report, which gives initial results of the church's actions from 2006 to the present, will be available by the November 2012 meeting of the Church Council, but we are

requesting additional time to fully engage developers, synods, congregations, and other religious groups in the review. We are proposing a full report be made to the November 2013 meeting of the Church Council.

Church Council Action (CC12.11.44c)

To acknowledge and affirm the ongoing work of the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit;

To anticipate a full report and possible recommendations to the November 2013 meeting of the ELCA 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 (November 2013)

Due to the complexity and importance of this issue, a New and Renewing Congregations Working Group was established to undertake a full review of the new and renewing congregations enterprise as part of an expanded response to the Southwest California Synod resolution. The response from the working group of the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit is extensive (45 pages including appendices). The report is divided into three sections. Section 1 includes a brief rationale for Lutheran mission in the United States and the Caribbean, a review of the current broader social context for mission, a case for the missional strength of ELCA Lutheran theology and a review of ELCA Lutherans in the present context. Section 2 includes a review of this church's most recent efforts in starting new ministries. Section 3 is a direct response to the memorial from the Southwest California Synod.

The full text of the response was provided to the Church Council in Exhibit G, Part 1.

Church Council Action:

To thank the Southwest California Synod for its resolution related to New Mission Starts and Redevelopment;

To acknowledge the work of the New and Renewing Congregations Working Group;

To request that the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit implement the recommendations provided in the New and Renewing Congregations Working Group report as financial and personnel resources become available;

To request the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit provide a progress report on the implementation of the recommendations by the November 2014 Church Council meeting; and

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

B. A Churchwide Policy of Parental Leave for Rostered Persons

Lower Susquehanna Synod (8D) [2013]

WHEREAS, questions arise between rostered persons and congregations concerning the compensation and benefit package for parental leave; and

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) document, "Definition of Compensation Benefits, and Responsibilities of the Pastor," item D.6. states, "Where applicable, parental leave up to six weeks with full salary, housing and benefits;" and

WHEREAS, the ELCA document, "Definition of Compensation, Benefits, and Responsibilities for Associate in Ministry, Deaconess, or Diaconal Minister Under Call," item D.6. states, "Where applicable, parental leave up to six weeks with full salary and benefits;" and

WHEREAS, ordained persons and congregations have not been consistent with the application of the parental leave benefit as stated in the "Definition of Compensation Benefits, and Responsibilities of the Pastor;" and

WHEREAS, the church is called to support and uplift parents and families; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Lower Susquehanna Synod memorialize the Churchwide Assembly to direct the Office of Secretary to amend the documents, "Definition of Compensation, Benefits, and Responsibilities of the Pastor" and "Definition of Compensation, Benefits, and Responsibilities for Associate in Ministry, Deaconess, or Diaconal Minister Under Call," items D.6. to state "parental leave of at least six weeks with full salary and benefits;" and further be it

RESOLVED, that the Lower Susquehanna Synod memorialize the Churchwide Assembly to encourage all congregations to adopt a parental leave policy consistent with the above-referenced documents and in which congregations are encouraged to offer all employees the same benefit.

The Office of the Secretary determined that the Lower Susquehanna Synod Assembly memorial, "Churchwide Policy of Parental Leave for Rostered Persons," was a resolution that more properly should have been submitted to the Synod Council for referral to a churchwide office through the Church Council's Executive Committee.

Executive Committee Action (EC13.07.21c)

To receive the resolution of the Lower Susquehanna Synod regarding A Churchwide Policy of Parental Leave for Rostered Persons;

To refer the resolution to the Office of the Secretary, in consultation with the Office of the Presiding Bishop and the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit; and

To request that a report with recommendations be brought to the November 2013 Church Council meeting.

Response from the Office of the Secretary (November 2013)

After reviewing the resolution more extensively, we request additional time in order to consult with colleagues to properly address the resolution. This additional time will also be helpful as the newly elected secretary is acclimated to the position and responsibilities.

Church Council Action:

To receive the response from the Office of the Secretary;

To postpone the report with recommendations to the April 2014 Church Council meeting; and

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

C. Boy Scouts of America Units Sponsored by Congregations of the ELCA

Metropolitan Chicago Synod (5A) [2013]

WHEREAS, there are numerous Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) congregations which are chartering organizations for Boy Scout units throughout the United States; and

WHEREAS, these units are re-chartered annually; and

WHEREAS, the current policy of the Boy Scouts of America which bans homosexuals from serving as Boy Scout leaders is contrary to the ELCA's social statement, *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*, which opposes all forms of violence or discrimination against homosexuals and is committed to welcoming all people, regardless of sexual orientation, and their families into our congregations; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan Chicago Synod Assembly, commend the National Council of Boy Scouts of America for its recent change in policy that excluded gay youth from participating in Boy Scouts of America (BSA) and encourage the National Council of the BSA to re-examine its policy banning homosexual persons in leadership roles; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan Chicago Synod Assembly encourage congregations which charter BSA units to engage unit leaders at the time of charter renewal, encouraging them to communicate with the National Council and the executive board of the BSA to rescind the policy banning homosexual persons from serving as Boy Scout leaders and volunteers; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan Chicago Synod Assembly encourage synod congregations to affix an addendum to their charters, advising the BSA that the congregation opposes the BSA's discriminatory policy, urging full inclusion for all leaders; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan Chicago Synod Assembly direct the Synod Council to forward this resolution to the National Council of the BSA: and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan Chicago Synod Assembly direct the Synod Council to forward this resolution to the Church Council for consideration and action.

Church Council Action (CC13.07.35a)

To receive the resolution of the Metropolitan Chicago Synod regarding Boy Scouts of America units sponsored by congregations of the ELCA;

To refer the resolution to the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit in consultation with the Conference of Bishops and the Office of the Presiding Bishop;

To request that a report and possible recommendations be presented to the November 2013 meeting of the Church Council; and

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

Response from the Congregational and Synodical Mission Unit

Although many congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) are chartered organizations recognized by the Boy Scouts of America (BSA), the ELCA as a church body has no formal relationship with the BSA. It would be most appropriate for each congregation associated with the BSA as a chartered organization to speak for itself by responding on the basis of its own understanding of BSA policies and of its own teaching and practice as a community of Christian faith.

The Congregational and Synodical Mission unit continues to feel that this issue is best considered and decided in conversation between the sponsoring congregation and the local BSA troop leadership. We believe this position makes the most sense in light of the 2009 Churchwide Assembly actions with respect to “bound conscience.” CSM will continue to advise congregations to ask serious questions about their sponsorship of BSA troops in light of their teaching and practice as a community of faith.

ELCA congregations may refer to the following public ELCA statements for guidance:

- “To fulfill these purposes, this church shall ... Lift its voice in concord and work in concert with forces for good, to serve humanity, cooperating with church and other groups participating in activities that promote justice, relieve misery, and reconcile the estranged.” (ELCA Constitution 4.03.g; see www.ELCA.org/constitutions)
- “While Lutherans hold various convictions regarding lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships, this church is united on many critical issues. It opposes all forms of verbal or physical harassment and assault based on sexual orientation. It supports legislation and policies to protect civil rights and to prohibit discrimination in housing, employment, and public services. It has called upon congregations and members to welcome, care for, and support same-gender couples and their families and to advocate for their legal protection.” (*Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*, a social statement adopted by the ELCA Churchwide Assembly in 2009; see www.ELCA.org/sexuality)
- “We also call attention to the action of the 1991 Churchwide Assembly that declared ‘gay and lesbian people, as individuals created by God, are welcome to participate fully in the life of the congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.’ At the 1993 assembly, that declaration was extended to express ‘strong opposition to all forms of verbal or physical harassment or assault of persons because of their sexual orientation,’ and support for the civil rights of all persons, regardless of their sexual orientation. Taken together, these clear actions remind us that our congregations should reflect our Lord’s invitation to all (Matthew 11:28) by being safe places for those who are persecuted or harassed in our society. We repudiate all words and acts of hatred toward gay and lesbian persons in our congregations and in our communities, and extend a caring welcome for gay and lesbian persons and their families. We call upon all our pastors, as they exercise pastoral care, to be sensitive to the gifts and needs of gay and lesbian members. We urge our congregations to reach out to all God’s people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.” (“A Word of Welcome to Gay and Lesbian Persons,” a pastoral letter from the ELCA Conference of Bishops in 1996; see <http://archive.ELCA.org/synods/bishops/welcome.html>)

Church Council Action:

To receive the response from the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit and to thank the Metropolitan Chicago Synod for their resolution on Boy Scouts of America units sponsored by congregations of the ELCA;

To acknowledge that there is no formal relationship between the ELCA as a church body and the Boy Scouts of America;

To encourage congregations which charter Boy Scouts of America units to engage unit leaders at the time of charter renewal to speak for itself by responding on the basis of the congregation’s own understanding of Boy Scouts of America policies and of the congregation’s own teaching and practice as a community of Christian faith; and

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

D. To Commission an Adult Catechism

Metropolitan New York Synod (7C) [2013]

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan New York Synod memorialize the Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to request the Church Council to commission, through the appropriate channels with appropriate funding, the development of an Adult Catechism as a resource for the church; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan New York Synod memorialize the Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to request that this catechism be prepared as an educational resource to supplement Luther's Catechisms, not as a vehicle for establishing specific policies or norms within this church or for binding the consciences of its members; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan New York Synod memorialize the Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to request that the Church Council invite full communion partner churches to participate in this project so that continued inter-church dialogue may be enriched and shared throughout the churches, and so that this church may further live out the promise of its partnerships; and be it further

RESOLVED, that this catechism take into account and reference the extensive bilateral ecumenical dialogues of the past 50 years.

The Office of the Secretary determined that the Metropolitan New York Synod Assembly memorial, "To Commission an Adult Catechism," was a resolution that more properly should have been submitted to the Synod Council for referral to the Church Council. The resolution was transmitted to the Church Council through its Executive Committee.

Executive Committee Action (EC13.07.21b)

To receive the resolution of the Metropolitan New York Synod regarding To Commission an Adult Catechism;

To refer the resolution to the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit in consultation with Office of the Presiding Bishop and the Conference of Bishops; and

To request that a report with possible recommendations be brought to the November 2013 Church Council meeting.

Response from the Congregational and Synodical Mission Unit (November 2013)

In conversations with other churchwide staff, we recommend that this resolution be reassigned to the Office of the Presiding Bishop. The staff in that office is primarily responsible for theological discernment, 500th anniversary work and has direct contact with our full communion partners. They are in a better position to review the various aspects of the resolution recommended by the Metropolitan New York Synod.

In reassigning this resolution, we further recommend additional time is granted so that the Office of the Presiding Bishop can consult with colleagues in our unit as well as with the Conference of Bishops and Augsburg Fortress.

Church Council Action:

To receive the response from the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit;

To refer the resolution to the Office of the Presiding Bishop, in consultation with the Conference of Bishops, Augsburg Fortress and the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit;

To request that a report with possible recommendations be brought by the April 2014 meeting of the ELCA Church Council; and

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

E. The Isolation of Individuals Living in Our Communities

Virginia Synod (9A) [2013]

WHEREAS, we are called by the Gospel to live in community; and

WHEREAS, we are called to love and care for our neighbor in body, mind, and soul, including the fullness of mental health; and

WHEREAS, isolation separates individuals of all ages from the love and support of a helping community; and

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) calls us to do God's work with our hands; and

WHEREAS, our synodical leadership encourages mutual support and accountability; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that members of the Virginia Synod Assembly encourage their congregations to pray for those living in isolation; and be it further

RESOLVED, that members of the Virginia Synod Assembly encourage their congregations to identify and reach out to those who are living in isolation; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Virginia Synod encourage congregations and individuals to partner with institutions and agencies who work with children, youth, adults, and senior citizens to identify and reach out to those who are living in isolation; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Virginia Synod of the ELCA forward this to the ELCA Church Council for further consideration.

Church Council Action (CC13.07.35c)

To receive the resolution of the Virginia Synod on The Isolation of Individuals Living in Our Communities;

To refer the resolution to the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit;

To request that a report be brought to the November 2013 meeting of the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; and

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

Response from the Congregational and Synodical Mission Unit

The Congregational and Synodical Mission unit is requesting an extension to our response to this Church Council action until April 2014 due to limited staff capacity.

Church Council Action:

To receive the response from the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit;

To postpone the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit report with possible recommendations to the April 2014 meeting of the ELCA Church Council; and

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

II. CHURCH COUNCIL REFERRALS OF 2013 CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY ACTIONS

A. Category A1: Gender Identity Discrimination

CA13.03.07a

To receive with gratitude the memorials of the Eastern North Dakota, Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana, Eastern Washington-Idaho, South-Central Synod of Wisconsin, Southwestern Texas, Saint Paul Area, Sierra Pacific, Northwest Washington, Greater Milwaukee, Southwest California, Minneapolis Area, Metropolitan New York, Northwestern Minnesota, Upstate New York, Northeastern Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Southwestern Minnesota, Southwestern Pennsylvania, Metropolitan Washington, D.C., and Indiana/Kentucky* synods regarding their concern for the important issue of employment non-discrimination and their common cause in memorializing the 2013 Churchwide Assembly;

To acknowledge the continued lack of state and federal anti-discrimination workplace laws addressing the categories of sexual identity and gender identity and the recent and recurring proposals concerning the employment non-discrimination legislation, including a proposal to provide a religious exemption;

To recommit this church to principles of non-discrimination in employment and to call for other employers to engage in similar practices;

To affirm the work by the ELCA advocacy ministries and Corporate Social Responsibility Team in supporting employment non-discrimination legislation and request that they continue to support legislation that opposes workplace discrimination;

To request that the presiding bishop of this church communicate to members of Congress the support of the ELCA for legislation that prohibits employment discrimination on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity while providing for religious exemptions; and

To encourage all ELCA synods, congregations, and members to add their voices in support of legislation that prohibits employment discrimination on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity.

Church Council Action:

To ask the Congregational and Synodical Mission Unit, in consultation with the Office of the Presiding Bishop, to bring a report on the ELCA advocacy activities related to Gender Identity Discrimination by the November 2014 meeting of the Church Council.

B. Category A2: Uniting American Families

CA.13.03.07b

To receive with gratitude the memorials of the Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana, Eastern Washington-Idaho, South-Central Synod of Wisconsin, Southwestern Texas, Saint Paul Area, Oregon, Florida-Bahamas, Sierra Pacific, Northwest Washington, Southwest California, Minneapolis Area, Central States, Metropolitan New York, Northwestern Minnesota, Upstate New York, Northeastern Pennsylvania, Southwestern Pennsylvania, Metropolitan Washington, D.C., and Indiana/Kentucky synods related to the Uniting American Families Act;

To affirm the Uniting American Families Act or its equivalent in the Congress of the United States;

To request the presiding bishop of this church to communicate to the president and members of Congress the action of the 2013 ELCA Churchwide Assembly; and

To encourage rostered leaders and members of congregations in this church, if consistent with their individual bound consciences, to support the Uniting American Families Act, or its equivalent, to their elected representatives and encourage them to co-sponsor and to support a just, comprehensive reform of U. S. immigration law that includes the principles of the Uniting American Families Act.

Church Council Action:

To ask the Office of the Presiding Bishop, in consultation with the Congregational and Synodical Mission Unit, to bring a report on its activities related to Uniting American Families Act by the April 2014 meeting of the Church Council.

C. Category A6: Immigration Reform

CA.13.03.08

To receive with gratitude the memorials of the Northeastern Pennsylvania, Lower Susquehanna, New Jersey, Southwestern Pennsylvania and Metropolitan Washington, D.C., synods regarding comprehensive immigration reform;

To advocate for the adoption of comprehensive immigration reform legislation, consistent with guidance articulated in the ELCA message on "Immigration" and as set forth by Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services:

- Provide an earned pathway to lawful permanent residency and eventual citizenship for undocumented immigrants and their families
- Ensure the humane and just enforcement of U.S. immigration laws, specifically by reducing the use of immigration detention and expanding the use of community support programs for immigrants who do not need to be detained
- Protect families from separation and ensure an adequate supply of visas for families seeking to reunite
- Provide adequate resources and protections to ensure the successful integration of refugees, asylees, survivors of torture and trafficking, unaccompanied minors, and other vulnerable migrants
- Ensure the protection of U.S. citizen and migrant workers;

This legislation should provide a reasonable path to citizenship for undocumented individuals currently living and working in the United States, and set fair immigration quotas that are not discriminatory;

To call on rostered leaders, in their preaching and teaching, to promote an understanding of immigration issues that addresses welcome, promotes concern for the vulnerable, and calls believers to foster the highest possible level of moral discourse in church and society;

To call on congregations to engage in prayerful, reasoned discussion and education on issues related to immigration, availing themselves of resources prepared by the ELCA and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service;

To call on rostered leaders and congregations of the ELCA to communicate with the President of the United States, Senators, and Members of Congress, to develop and pass such comprehensive immigration reform legislation in the current session; and

To call on the presiding bishop of this church to continue to communicate to members of Congress the ELCA's position on immigration reform.

Church Council Action:

To ask the Congregational and Synodical Mission Unit, in consultation with the Office of the Presiding Bishop and the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, to bring a report on the ELCA advocacy activities related to comprehensive immigration reform by the November 2014 meeting of the Church Council.

**D. Category A6: Immigration Reform—Refugee Sunday
CA13.03.09**

To receive with gratitude the memorial from the Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod related to 75 years of welcoming migrants and refugees through Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS);

To declare Sunday, June 22, 2014, as Refugee Sunday; and

To request the presiding bishop to:

- invite congregations to tell the stories of their acts of welcome to refugees and migrants—signs of witness, mercy, and life together;
- utilize ELCA communications mechanisms to share these stories and inspire action throughout 2014; and
- encourage congregations and organizations to engage with and support the LIRS mission of welcoming the stranger through gifts of time, talent, and treasure.

Church Council Action:

To request the Office of the Presiding Bishop, in consultation with the Congregational and Synodical Mission Unit and the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, to bring a report on its activities related to welcoming migrants and refugees by the April 2015 meeting of the Church Council.

**E. Motion H: A Social Policy Resolution Concerning the Guarantee of Voting Rights to All Citizens
CA13.06.27**

WHEREAS, the guarantee that all citizens may exercise the right to vote on an equal basis is a fundamental requirement for a just society; and

WHEREAS, the laws and practices that, in effect, exclude whole groups of citizens from fully and equally exercising this right; and

WHEREAS, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was passed and subsequently reauthorized by the United States Congress to remedy or prevent patterns of discrimination that preclude racial-minority groups from fully and equally exercising the right to vote; and

WHEREAS, the United States Supreme Court has recently held Section 4(b) of the Voting Rights Act unconstitutional, a holding that four of the Court's nine justices believe "terminates the remedy that proved to be best suited to block that discrimination" (US Supreme Court, *Shelby County v. Holder*, 570 US_ (2013), dissenting opinion by Justice Ginsburg); and

WHEREAS, this church has recognized that "many find it difficult to participate in public life because of racial or ethnic barriers...", and it has committed to "actively promote a public life worthy of the name. We encourage public witness by members, and stand publicly as a church against injustice." (ELCA Social Statement on Race, Ethnicity, and Culture, p. 6); and

WHEREAS, this church has established, as a matter of social policy, that it "will support legislation, ordinances, and resolutions that guarantee ... to all citizens, the right to vote" (ELCA Social Statement on Race, Ethnicity, and Culture, p. 7); and

WHEREAS, this church continues to "encourage members, congregations, synods, and agencies and institutions to join the churchwide organization in its commitment ... to confront the scandalous realities of racial, ethnic, cultural ... barriers that often manifest themselves in exclusion, poverty, hunger, and violence; and pursue ardently the ELCA's commitment to becoming more diverse, multicultural, and multigenerational in an ever-changing and increasingly pluralistic context" (ELCA Churchwide Assembly Action CA03.06.22, "Working Against Racism"); therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America call upon local, state, and federal governments to guarantee the right to vote to all citizens and to discourage or eliminate all laws, ordinances or regulations that would have the effect of racial and ethnic discrimination in the exercise of that right; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Presiding Bishop and synodical bishops of this church be urged to support publically and stand as an advocate to proposed local, state, or federal legislation and regulations that, consistent with this church's social teaching, seek to guarantee to all citizens the right to vote; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Conference of Bishops be requested to include, as part of one of its 2014 meetings, an educational session on voting rights; and be it further

RESOLVED, that members, congregations, and synods of this church be encouraged to "promote public lifeworthy of the name" by speaking out as an advocate and engaging in local efforts such as voter registration and supporting legislation to guarantee the right to vote to all citizens; and be it further

RESOLVED, that appropriate churchwide staff be requested to identify and publicize resources for members, congregations, and synods of this church to advocate for voting rights for all citizens.

Church Council Action:

To refer Motion H: A Social Policy Resolution Concerning the Guarantee of Voting Rights to All Citizens to the Office of the Presiding Bishop, in consultation with the Conference of Bishops and the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit; and

To request that a report be presented by the April 2015 Church Council meeting.

F. Motion I: Term Limits

CA13.06.28

Motion I: Term Limits

To amend the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* by inserting the following provisions:

- 13.23. No person shall be eligible to be elected to a third consecutive six-year executive term to the office of presiding bishop.
- 13.33. No person shall be eligible to be elected to a third consecutive six-year term to the position of vice president.
- 13.43. No person shall be eligible to be elected to a third consecutive six-year term to the office of secretary.

Rationale of the Reference and Counsel Committee

The Reference and Counsel Committee receives the motion with gratitude. We are not advocating for or against term limits.

The proposed resolution requested consideration of term limits for all officers selected by the Churchwide Assembly. In the coming days, we will have many conversations about this assembly's decisions. The conversations about leadership needs and our future elections are already taking place. The proposed motion engages one of many points of conversation.

Recommendation of the Reference and Counsel Committee

To refer this resolution to the ELCA Church Council and Conference of Bishops for broad-based conversation beginning in spring 2014 (for example – inviting the input of our vice presidents) with a possible report by the November 2015 meeting of the Church Council with sufficient time for potentially bringing action to the 2016 Churchwide Assembly.

The items for attention include:

- Identification of the needs of the Churchwide Organization for each office (that are deeper than the constitutional descriptions);
- Identifying leaders to potentially serve; and
- Conversation about possible limitation of duration in terms.

Churchwide Assembly Action (CA13.06.28)

To refer Motion I to the Church Council and Conference of Bishops for broad-based conversation (e.g. inviting the input of synodical vice presidents) beginning in spring 2014 with a possible report to the Church Council at its November 2015 meeting and recommendations to the 2016 Churchwide Assembly.

The items for attention include identifying the needs of the churchwide organization for each office that are deeper than the constitutional descriptions, identifying leaders to potentially serve, and discussing the possible limitation of duration in terms.

Church Council Action:

To refer Motion I: Term Limits to the Office of the Secretary, in consultation with the Conference of Bishops and the Office of the Presiding Bishop; and

To request that a report with possible recommendations be brought to the November 2015 meeting of the Church Council.

**G. Motion N: American Indian and Alaska Native Peoples
CA13.06.29**

Motion N: American Indian and Alaska Native Peoples

WHEREAS, the ELCA has proclaimed its welcoming of all people with special emphasis on immigrants from all parts of the world; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA, as do so many institutions and people, often forgets the people who were and are native to these lands before and while immigrants arrived to these lands; and

WHEREAS, most of the population of the United States of America and most of the membership of our church are uneducated about American Indian and Alaska Native People and their history, culture, and oppression and atrocities suffered, and

WHEREAS, Lutheran church bodies were once the leaders of advocacy for American Indian and Alaska Native legal rights, most directly when partnered with and supporting the American Indian Movement during the 1960s and 1970s, and the development of the National Indian Lutheran Board; and

WHEREAS, all treaties made by the United States of America with tribal nations and governments have been broken, and promises made 25 years ago by this church to American Indian and Alaska Native leaders and the National Indian Lutheran Board, when it was encouraged to dissolve, have not been kept; and

WHEREAS, American Indian and Alaska Native Peoples have suffered tremendously for too many years, and continue to suffer rates of poverty, homelessness, disease, addiction, violence against women, among a list that is too long to list here, is much higher than the national average; our faith tells us that when one suffers, we all suffer; and

WHEREAS, culture and language is important to our American Indian and Alaska Native sisters and brothers, and supporting their needs and rights to preserve and live out and share their culture in all regards should also be important, even within the church; and

WHEREAS, there has been a decline in some congregations of participation by American Indian and Alaska Native Peoples, leadership in the ELCA among American Indian and Alaska Native Peoples has declined; presently there are only three students who are members or citizens of a federally recognized tribe who are seeking ordination in the ELCA through the Theological Education for Emerging Ministries program, and presently there are zero full or part-time Master of Divinity students and one part-time Master of Theology student attending our eight seminaries; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that this assembly commits this church, the ELCA, to go beyond apologies and begin working on renewed, healthy and responsible relationships with American Indian and Alaska Native Peoples; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA commits to becoming the leader among churches in the area of advocacy and active support of justice, self-determination, sovereignty, and advancement of American Indian and Alaska Native Peoples and their nations and governments; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA endorses the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples adopted by the U.N. General Assembly on September 13, 2007, adopts the declaration as the standard for our own practices, and commits to implementing the values and principles of the declaration within the work and structure of this church; and be it further

RESOLVED, that this assembly asks the presiding bishop to write to the president of the United States of America, encouraging the president to continue building strong government-to-government relationships with all of the federally recognized tribes, as well as to work collaboratively with tribes and the National Congress of American Indian on discerning how to best fully and effectively implement the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples for the sake of justice in the lives and communities of American Indian and Alaska Native Peoples; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA actively supports the work and goals of the ELCA's director of American Indian and Alaska Native Ministries, the American Indian and Alaska Native Advisory Team, and the American Indian and Alaska Native Lutheran Association and, further, that this church will actively seek their counsel, in order to deepen our understanding of the oppression and colonized histories lived and remembered by American Indian and Alaska Native Peoples, as well as to gain insight on the present situations of injustices experienced by and opportunities that lie before American Indian and Alaska Native Peoples; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA encourage its membership, and especially its leadership, to educate themselves about American Indian and Alaska Native Peoples; starting with the tribes and Peoples whose reservations and/or nations are nearest us, then the tribes and Peoples who first inhabited the lands whereupon church buildings now sit; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA actively explore funding opportunities to better serve American Indian and Alaska Native Peoples and social services organizations that provide direct services such as the Oaks Indian Mission, Lakota Lutheran Center, Navajo Lutheran Mission and others, so that they may have sufficient resources to feed and house children and families in serious poverty; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA periodically encourage synods and congregations to go beyond mission trips to American Indian and Alaska Native communities and become active advocates for and supporters of them; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA commits to being a part of dreaming, praying and working together with American Indian and Alaska Native Peoples for a reconciled and hopeful future, recognizing that immediate action and long-term commitment are required for renewed, healthy and responsible relationships to be built.

Rationale of the Reference and Counsel Committee

The Reference and Counsel Committee receives the motion with gratitude. We acknowledge ongoing efforts of American Indian and Alaska Native Ministries in the ELCA. We also recognize that we have for too long as a church failed to act more intentionally on and to educate each other about issues of justice for American Indian and Alaska Native peoples. The Churchwide Assembly is unable to endorse the United Nations document that it has not yet read and studied. There is further work to be done if we are to seriously move forward with the goals of this motion.

Churchwide Assembly Action (CA13.06.29)

To refer Motion N to the Congregational and Synodical Mission and Global Mission units.

Church Council Action:

To refer Motion N: American Indian and Alaska Native Peoples to the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit, in consultation with the Global Mission unit and the working group of the ELCA American Indian and Alaska Native Ministries Program; and

To request that a report and possible recommendations be presented to the November 2014 meeting of the Church Council.

H. Motion O: Confirmation

CA13.06.30

Motion O: Confirmation

WHEREAS, the word “confirmation” does not appear in Scripture or in the Confessions; and

WHEREAS, the ritual and tradition of “confirmation” no longer confers real responsibility for discipleship, leadership, or vocation from congregational leaders to youth emerging from “childish ways”, and only really frees most youth from needing to continue to attend to study, worship, service, and receiving the Sacraments with this church once the requisite number of recorded instances of study, worship, service, and receiving the sacraments needed to achieve “confirmation” have been achieved; and

WHEREAS, the youth are not the future of the Church, but the once and immediate Church; and

WHEREAS, the congregations of this church who grow spiritually also study, worship, serve, and pray intergenerationally; and

WHEREAS, various (though few) congregations of this church have discovered avenues toward lifelong intergenerational discipleship among their members either by delaying such rituals of passage known as “confirmation”, or by replacing a “confirmation” tradition with an intergenerational model of faith formation and discipleship training; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the ELCA discontinue published use of the term “confirmation” as it relates to the education tradition of the ELCA from all future publications (curricula, model constitutions, hymnals, etc.); and be it further

RESOLVED, that the congregations of the ELCA discontinue practice of “confirmation” as it relates to the ritual of passage for youth or young adults into voting membership in congregations; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA fully implement Luther’s doctrine of vocation as the rationale and basis for preparation for lifelong discipleship; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA encourage congregations to develop and establish rituals of passage into adult discipleship and ministry, such that those congregations’ baptized members who recognize and who are able to articulate God’s call to practice their various vocations and Spiritual gifts as disciples of Christ in the world also receive the public recognition and affirmation of those gifts and vocations by the congregations into which and among whom those individuals live out their vocations and Spiritual gifts; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the congregations of the ELCA become centers of lifelong and intergenerational study of Scripture and catechesis, worship and service, prayer and giving; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the congregations of the ELCA end “confirmation” as ritualized right of youth who have completed required steps and requirements.

Rationale of the Reference and Counsel Committee

The Reference and Counsel Committee receives the motion with gratitude. We share these concerns and join the lament that, for many, confirmation is understood to mark the end of faith formation. We lift up resolves 3, 4 and 5. However, the discontinuation of the word and practice of confirmation has ecclesiastical, constitutional and pragmatic implications.

Churchwide Assembly Action (CA13.06.30)

To refer Motion O to the Church Council in consultation with the Conference of Bishops.

Church Council Action:

To refer Motion O: Confirmation to the Office of the Presiding Bishop, in consultation with the Conference of Bishops and the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit; and

To request that a report and possible recommendations be presented to the April 2015 meeting of the Church Council.

III. RESPONSES TO CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY ACTIONS

A. 2011 Motion B: Perpetual Prayer Vigil

CA11.05.30

Submitted by: Philip K. Van Dam, Southern Ohio Synod

WHEREAS, the Apology to the Augsburg Confession Ch. V 71 Article XIII says that we can consider prayer a sacrament, and

WHEREAS, we seek to be moved by the Holy Spirit, and

WHEREAS, prayer helps this to happen, and

WHEREAS, prayer vigils help to motivate people to pray, and

WHEREAS, the Moravians had an international prayer vigil for over 100 years, be therefore

RESOLVED, that the synods of the ELCA hold prayer vigils for the entirety of Lent in 2012 and be it further

RESOLVED, that by Lent 2013 the ELCA have a plan in place for a perpetual prayer vigil.

Rationale of the Reference and Counsel Committee

We receive with appreciation and acknowledge the need for more study and review of the dynamics of such a sweeping proposal, specifically inclusion of synod directives, and refer the motion to the Office of the Presiding Bishop in consultation with the Conference of Bishops.

Churchwide Assembly Action (CA11.05.30)

To refer Motion B to the Office of the Presiding Bishop in consultation with the Conference of Bishops.

Church Council Action (CC11.11.83j)

To request that the Office of the Presiding Bishop, in consultation with the Conference of Bishops, present a report and possible recommendations on Motion B: Perpetual Prayer Vigil to the April 2013 meeting of the Church Council.

Response from Office of the Presiding Bishop (April 2013)

The Office of the Presiding Bishop is requesting an extension to our response to this motion until November 2013. The proposal's request is broad and thus requires further conversation and study. This extension would offer time to facilitate additional discussion about the proposal's request with the Conference of Bishops and for a possible recommendation in sufficient time for Lent 2014.

Church Council Action (CC13.04.27j)

To receive the response from the Office of the Presiding Bishop;

To authorize a delay in the response of the Office of the Presiding Bishop to Motion B: Perpetual Prayer Vigil; and

To request that a report and possible recommendations be brought to the November 2013 meeting of the ELCA Church Council.

Background and response from Office of the Presiding Bishop (November 2013)

Prayer has been a mainstay of Christian communities for centuries. As a church, the ELCA continues in the tradition and practice of grounding our life and work in prayer. Daily, we seek God's guidance in all that we do as we beseech the Holy Spirit to lead us. Prayer is also an embodied expression of the unity we share. Such an understanding is presented in chapter three of our ELCA Constitution and is outlined in chapter four.

Chapter 4.02.d. Worship God in proclamation of the Word and administration of the sacraments and through lives of prayer, praise, thanksgiving, witness, and service.

Chapter 4.02.f. Manifest the unity given to the people of God by living together in the love of Christ and by joining with other Christians in prayer and action to express and preserve the unity which the Spirit gives.

The ELCA is deeply committed to a life of prayer not only on Sundays but also each and every day. The introduction of the *Daily Prayer* section of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* reads:

... the Christian life is prayer: openness to the presence of God, responsiveness to the word of God, recognition that all of life is in Christ, and engagement in care for one another and for the whole creation. Daily prayer is a gift that nourishes growth toward living all of daily life in prayer." (ELW Assembly Edition, p. 295)

Prayer is one dimension of living every day in relationship with God, with the church, and with the neighbor—a relationship that is marked at various times by conversation, listening, responding, waiting, watching, even wrestling with God. In its deepest expression, daily prayer includes an active reflection of the self in the context of faith and the needs of the world.

It needs to be noted that contrary to the language of the original resolution, the Augsburg Confession does not encourage the consideration of prayer as a sacrament. Indeed, prayer is sacramental in nature, but for all purposes here and in our prayer life, prayer is not a sacrament.

As Lutherans, we understand our daily prayer to flow from the assembly of God's people around word and sacrament—the Sunday celebration deepens our prayer and our daily prayer informs the Sunday celebration. Daily prayer is an opportunity to be nourished each day in the word of God and to turn to God for help and support, for guidance, and for understanding—the ongoing benefits of baptism. Daily prayer calls the people of God back to baptism and sends them forth renewed in their baptismal vows. The prayerful reminder of baptism is the mediation on the daily dying and rising with Christ.

The practice of continual prayer, and/or daily prayer, is often related to Paul's admonition to the church in Thessalonica, "pray without ceasing...for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." (1 Thessalonians 5:17-18) Continuous prayer vigils have been practiced by many churches, societies and communities throughout the history of Christianity. The most popular and often cited example is the 100+ year Prayer Vigil started by the Moravian community in Herrnhut, Saxony, 1727. A more recent movement is the 24-7 Prayer, begun in England in 1999. Since its "accidental" beginning, 24-7 Prayer has grown to 111 communities throughout the world, 40 of which are located in the United States of America.

The idea of a perpetual prayer vigil in this church is well intended and calls this church to prayer. Yet, as noted above, this church is already deeply committed to a life of prayer. Daily, across all expressions of this church worldwide—across many time zones, we give thanks to God for gifts of creation and our lives of faith, we call upon the Holy Spirit to guide our church, we seek healing for all people in need, we plead for justice and peace in the world, we beg for mercy, and we listen for God's call to us. To engage in a perpetual prayer vigil in some ways would seem to ignore the deep prayer life this church already has. In the same manner, assigning a period of time, or a season in the church year, as a time for the church to enter into special prayer practice would also run contrary to our current prayer life. Rather than create a prayer vigil that would be extraordinary to our current life, we find it would be more effective to encourage prayer as an integral part of our life together as a church.

With this understanding we recommend the following actions be taken to continue to encourage this church to engage in daily prayer.

- Highlight the Daily Prayer patterns in our current worship resources.
- Draw attention to the ELCA Prayer Ventures at www.elca.org.
- Provide information about other daily prayer resources available.

- Encourage synods, congregations and members to engage in daily prayer practices through small groups, meetings, and other possible venues.
- Highlight communities of this church that are engaged in the practices of daily prayer.

With these actions we hope to foster growth in the prayer life of this church seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit, which is, to our understanding, the main goal of this resolution.

**Portions of this proposal were taken and/or adapted from *Renewing Worship 7: Daily Prayer*, copyright 2004 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Church Council Action:

To receive the response from the Office of the Presiding Bishop;

To affirm that the ELCA is deeply committed to a life of daily prayer, seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit; and

To encourage ELCA synods, congregations and members to continue to engage in daily prayer practices through small groups, meetings and other possible venues.

B. 2011 Motion J: Native Americans and Alaska Natives

CA11.04.18

To refer Motion J to the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit for consultation with the American Indian and Alaska Native Ministries to identify ways to address the intent of the motion.

Submitted by Mr. Vance Blackfox, Metropolitan Chicago Synod (5A)

WHEREAS, the historic relationship between predecessor/partner Lutheran church bodies and American Indian and Alaska Native peoples was so significant during the struggle for American Indian and Alaska Native civil rights, known as the American Indian Movement; and

WHEREAS, support of American Indian and Alaska Native peoples has declined significantly since the constituting of the ELCA in 1988; and

WHEREAS, all ELCA churchwide organization's events and participants are hosted in and participants enter into various sovereign American Indian and Alaska Native nations, geographically, and/or historic tribal lands that have systematically been taken from American Indian and Alaska Native peoples by extinction/termination or by the removal of the original tribal inhabitants; and

WHEREAS, the general population of the United States and the general membership of the ELCA is largely uneducated about American Indian and Alaska Native cultures and histories, as well as uninformed about American Indian and Alaska Native sovereignty, their nations, and present challenges; and

WHEREAS, American Indian and Alaska Native people are under-represented in our church usually under-represented at churchwide and synodical events; and

WHEREAS, this church's purpose, in part, is 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 and committing itself to their need;" [ELCA Constitution 4.02.C] and

WHEREAS, contrary to popular belief, American Indian and Alaska Native people continue to statistically be the poorest populations in the countries in the "western hemisphere" with, reportedly, the greatest needs related to poverty, e.g. disease, lacking clean water, addiction, length of life expectancy, education, unemployment, and access to nutrient rich foods; and

WHEREAS, organizations that are working to make a difference and honoring the lands and original people of the "western hemisphere," such as the International Olympic Committee when they partnered with and honored as dignitaries the leaders of the First nations peoples in and around the region near Vancouver, British Columbia, during the 2010 Winter Olympics; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the ELCA churchwide organization be committed to inviting the tribal leader or a representative of the sovereign tribal or region wherein any and at ever ELCA churchwide organization-sponsored event held—e.g. Churchwide Assemblies, Global Mission Events, ELCA Youth Gatherings, smaller or regional events, etc.—with costs incurred to be supported by each event's budget, to bring a word of welcome/greetings from their nations or peoples; and that consultation with the ELCA director for American Indian and Alaska Native Ministries be done so as to ensure the invitation is extended appropriately; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA Churchwide Organization be committed to ensuring at least one educational component is developed and offered to participants at every Church Organization sponsored event—e.g. Churchwide Assemblies, Global Mission Events, ELCA Youth Gatherings, smaller or regional events, etc.—regarding American Indian and

Alaska Native tribal peoples of the nation or region where in the Churchwide Organization sponsored events is being held, with costs incurred to be supported by each event's budget; and that consultation with the ELCA's director for American Indian and Alaska Native Ministries be done so as to ensure such and educational experience is developed and presented appropriately.

Church Council Action (CC11.11.83p)

To request that the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit bring a report and possible recommendations on Motion J: Native Americans and Alaska Natives to the November 2012 meeting of the Church Council.

Response from the Congregational and Synodical Mission Unit (November 2012)

The Congregational & Synodical Mission unit is requesting an extension to our response to this Church Council motion until April 2013. This is due to the unexpected vacancy with our Program Director for American Indian/Native Alaska position in the CSM unit. We feel that the unit response would benefit from the leadership of the primary staff person who would be facilitating our response efforts as well as providing implementation and follow up. We are hoping that we would have staffing in place by the end of 2012.

Church Council Action (CC.12.11.34n)

To receive the response from the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit; and

To postpone the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit report with possible recommendations to the April 2013 meeting of the ELCA Church Council.

Background and response from the Congregational and Synodical Mission Unit (April 2013)

We recognize and appreciate the past efforts of congregations and synods, particularly the Montana Synod and Grand Canyon Synod, in making apologies to tribal councils and illustrating support of American Indians and Alaska Natives. We also welcome the recent action taken by the ELCA Church Council at its November 2012 meeting to "join synods and congregations in greeting the tribes who originally inhabited the North American Continent, apologizing for injustices rendered in the past, and pledging to work together in the future." (CC12.11.42)

Therefore, it is a welcomed opportunity to provide a report and recommendations to the Church Council in responding to the Churchwide Assembly action "to address the intent of the motion." (CA11.04.18)

The new program director for American Indian and Alaska Native Ministries convened a teleconference to discuss recommendations for a response to Motion J on February 8, 2013. Present at the meeting were the following people: The Rev. Mark Allred (Inupiat Eskimo), Program Director for the ELCA American Indian and Alaska Native Ministries program (AIANMP); Elizabeth Gaskins (Muscogee-Creek), President of the American Indian Alaska Native Lutheran Association (AIAN); The Rev. Marlene "White Rabbit" Helgemo (Ho-Chunk), Executive Director for the Council for American Indian Ministry (United Church of Christ) and Sr. Pastor at All Nations Indian Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

All participants at the meeting stated that Motion J is a wonderful and respectful acknowledgement of American Indian and Alaska Native ancestral lands and further that Motion J affirms our people. We offer the following recommendations to the Church Council as to the intent of Motion J.

As to the first resolve in seeking to provide invitations to "the tribal leader or a representative of the sovereign tribal or region", we recommend that a working group of the AIANMP be created. The working group will recommend guidelines for this church on ways to approach and offer invitation to Indian Nations. For example, who is the proper person to invite from a region? What do you do if multiple Indian Nations are within the region where your meeting is being held?

These and other questions including the types and sizes of events that might be appropriate will be recommended by the group to the Congregational and Synodical Mission Unit. The working group would also recommend guidelines to the American Indian and Alaska Native community on acceptable ways to provide greetings at ELCA events like synod assemblies. In addition, the considerations will include cost estimates for participation in such events and consideration of how they will be funded.

As to the second resolve in seeking to provide an "educational component" at appropriate events, we offer the following recommendations. A series of six 5-minute professionally produced educational videos would be planned and used at appropriate events introducing participants to the Lutheran historical commitment to accompany American Indian

and Alaska Native Christian peoples of North America throughout the past century and to lift up the current concerns in Indian Country. The AIANMP and the AIAN association will serve as consultants to the production of the videos.

While we understand that this would require funding, the AIANMP, in consultation with the AIAN association, commits to making every effort at finding partners and advocates who are sensitive to the plight of the American Indian people to provide joint funds for the proposed recommendation.

This step is a welcome one in lifting up and honoring America's First people.

Church Council Action (CC13.04.27f)

To receive the report of the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit in response to Motion J: Native Americans and Alaska Natives;

To thank the Rev. Mark Allred (Inupiat Eskimo), Program Director for the ELCA American Indian and Alaska Native Ministries program (AIANMP); Elizabeth Gaskins (Muscogee-Creek), President of the American Indian Alaska Native Lutheran Association (AIAN); the Rev. Marlene "White Rabbit" Helgemo (Ho-Chunk), Executive Director for the Council for American Indian Ministry (United Church of Christ) and Sr. Pastor at All Nations Indian Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota, for their attentive recommendations to raise awareness and honor America's First people;

To recommend the establishment of a working group of the ELCA American Indian and Alaska Native Ministries Program for the purpose of recommending guidelines for this church on ways to approach and offer invitations to the American Indian and Alaska Native community, guidelines for the American Indian and Alaska Native community on acceptable ways to provide greetings at ELCA events, suggestions for which events or opportunities might be most appropriate for greetings, a possible educational experience, and consideration of the costs and monies of funding such participation; and

To request that a report of the findings from the working group be brought to the Congregational and Synodical Mission (CSM) unit and a report from CSM be made to the ELCA Church Council at its November 2013 meeting.

Response from the Congregational and Synodical Mission Unit (November 2013)

Since the 2013 Churchwide Assembly, another resolution was adopted related to the American Indian and Alaska Native community. The working group of the ELCA American Indian and Alaska Native Ministries Program will be working on both resolutions. The working group has also invited representatives from the Church Council and the Conference of Bishops to assist in its work. Due to this additional work, the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit is requesting an extension until the November 2014 Church Council meeting in order to provide adequate time for a comprehensive response on both motions.

Church Council Action:

To receive the response from the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit; and

To postpone the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit report with possible recommendations to the November 2014 meeting of the ELCA Church Council.

C. 2011 Category D2: Sacramental Obedience in Holy Communion

CA11.03.06f

Upper Susquehanna Synod

WHEREAS, our Lord said, "You are my friends if you do what I command you" (John 15:14); and

WHEREAS, St. Paul indicated an enduring tradition when he repeated the Lord's command: "For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, [gave] thanks...broke it and said 'This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me'" (1 Corinthians 11:23-24); and

WHEREAS, Christ established a covenantal relationship in this sacrament when he said, "... for this is the blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many . . ." (Matthew 26:28), and as children of God we have a duty and delight to obey his will: "Take, eat; this is my body. . . . Drink from it, all of you" (Matthew 26:26-27); and

WHEREAS, our Lord warned us, "Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you" (John 6:53); and

WHEREAS, the Augsburg Confession claimed, "Our churches are falsely accused of abolishing the Mass. In fact, the Mass is retained among us and is celebrated with the greatest reverence" (CA XXIV, 1); and ". . . one common Mass is held on every holy day, and it is administered on other days if there are those who desire it. . . . Chrysostom says that the priest stands daily at the altar, inviting some to Communion and keeping others away" (CA XXIV, 34, 36); and

WHEREAS, Martin Luther in the Large Catechism observed, “. . . we go to the sacrament because there we receive a great treasure . . . as a daily food and sustenance so that our faith may be refreshed and strengthened” (LC V, 22, 24), “. . . those who want to be Christians should prepare themselves to receive this blessed sacrament frequently” (LC V, 39), “. . . no one under any circumstances should be forced or coerced. . . . Nevertheless, it must be understood that such people who abstain and absent themselves from the sacrament over a long period of time are not to be considered Christians” (LC V, 42), “As in other matters . . . there must also be daily exhortation, so that on this subject we must be persistent in preaching” (LC V, 44), “What should move and induce you is that he [Christ] desires it, and it pleases him” (LC V, 52), “For if you wait until you are rid of your burden in order to come to the sacrament purely and worthily, you will have to stay away from it forever” (LC V, 73); and

WHEREAS, our congregational constitutions call the Augsburg Confession “a true witness to the Gospel” (*C2.05.), accept the other confessional writings including the Large Catechism as “further valid interpretations of the faith of the Church” (*C2.06.), and state that the congregation “accepts the canonical Scriptures of Old and New Testaments as the inspired Word of God and the authoritative source and norm of its proclamation, faith, and life” (*C2.03.); and

WHEREAS, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession professed, “Among us the Mass is celebrated every Lord’s day and on other festivals” (Ap XXIV, 1), and all Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) congregations by ratifying the ELCA model constitution for congregations have already accepted their responsibility to defend and implement the practice of celebrating the Eucharist weekly; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that, in obedience to the unquestionable command of Christ and in concord with this church’s Confessions and constitutions, the Upper Susquehanna Synod in annual assembly memorialize the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) in its next biennial assembly to embrace this Gospel treasure with joy; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Upper Susquehanna Synod in annual assembly memorialize the ELCA in its next biennial assembly to recognize that this is a divine mandate and not a human agenda, and is already firmly established in Scripture, confessional documents, and constitutions of this church; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Upper Susquehanna Synod in annual assembly memorialize the ELCA in its next biennial assembly to devise and implement a plan to encourage all of the congregations of the ELCA to exhort one another to obedience to Christ’s command to the desirable end that all congregations share in the Holy Communion weekly by Reformation Sunday in 2012.

Background and response from the Office of the Presiding Bishop Theological Discernment Team (August 2011)

The Use of the Means of Grace: A Statement on the Practice of Word and Sacrament, adopted by the 1997 ELCA Churchwide Assembly, affirms the Scriptures and Lutheran confessional writings, which teach that Holy Communion is a great treasure, a gift of grace from God to be received by Christians joyfully, thankfully and frequently. “At the table of our Lord Jesus Christ, God nourishes faith, forgives sin, and calls us to be witnesses to the Gospel” (Principle 31; p. 36). “According to the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Lutheran congregations celebrate the Holy Communion every Sunday and festival. This confession remains the norm for our practice” (Principle 35; p. 39). The encouragement to celebrate the Lord’s Supper weekly (Principle 35B) is rooted in “Christ’s command, his promise, and our deep need” (Principle 35A, quoting A Statement on Communion Practices, adopted by the 1989 ELCA Churchwide Assembly).

Nonetheless, weekly observance of the Lord’s Table as the primary worship service of the congregation or local assembly has not been a uniform practice throughout the ELCA. In some remote locations or in places where there is no resident ordained minister, a Sunday service of Holy Communion every week is not yet or no longer feasible. Moreover, while circumstances have changed for other Lutheran worshipping communities, the community’s practice of less frequent observance was established already and has become the tradition in that community. Some congregations have a living memory of changing from quarterly celebration of Holy Communion to their current practice of monthly celebration.

For these reasons and others, weekly observance of Holy Communion, including both Word and Sacrament, as the central worship service in all congregations remains a goal that calls for renewed attention throughout the ELCA. Gracious invitation and encouragement to individuals and congregations to make full use of means of grace is one part of the needed attention. Policies and procedures that promote the availability of ordained ministers and lay presiders in all locations are another factor that may affect the feasibility of weekly observance in some congregations. Toward this end, an arbitrary deadline is less likely to be helpful than clear authorization and support for the actions needed to make weekly observance both feasible and graciously inviting for all in every place.

Churchwide Assembly Action (CA11.03.06f)

To receive with gratitude the memorial of the Upper Susquehanna Synod concerning Holy Communion and to affirm its commendation of faithful and joyful reception of this sacrament; and

To refer the memorial to the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit in consultation with the Conference of Bishops for consideration of actions that will promote more frequent reception of Holy Communion by ELCA members and weekly observance of Holy Communion as the primary worship service of each ELCA congregation.

Church Council Action (CC.11.11.83h)

To request that the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit, in consultation with the Conference of Bishops, present to the spring 2013 Church Council meeting a report and possible recommendations concerning its activities related to Memorial Category D2: Holy Communion.

Response from the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit (April 2013)

The Congregational & Synodical Mission unit is requesting an extension to our response to this Church Council motion until November 2013. This extension would offer time to facilitate discussion about the proposal in the memorial with the Office of the Presiding Bishop and the Conference of Bishops.

Church Council Action (CC13.04.27i)

To receive the response from the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit;

To authorize a delay in the response of the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit to the memorial on Sacramental Obedience in Holy Communion;

To request that a report and possible recommendations be brought to the November 2013 meeting of the ELCA 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 (November 2013)

Due to unforeseen circumstances and limited staffing capacity, the Congregational and Synodical Mission (CSM) unit was unable to facilitate a discussion by the requested deadline. In addition, at the 2013 Churchwide Assembly another memorial was received referencing the Sacrament of Holy Communion. This memorial was also directed to CSM for a response and possible recommendations. Therefore, CSM needs additional time to consult with the Conference of Bishops and the Office of the Presiding Bishop and requests an extension to the April 2014 Church Council meeting to appropriately address the memorial.

Church Council Action:

To receive the response from the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit;

To postpone the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit report with possible recommendations to the April 2014 meeting of the ELCA Church Council; and

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

D. 2013 Category A3: Community Violence

CA13.06.24

To receive with gratitude the memorials of the Sierra Pacific and New Jersey synods concerning gun violence and the memorials of the Pacifica, Southwest California, New England and Metropolitan Washington, D.C., synods concerning confronting the culture of violence;

To reaffirm this church's commitment to addressing issues of violence through worship, education, service, advocacy, ongoing moral deliberation and the work called for in the 1993 Churchwide Assembly resolution, the 1994 social message on Community Violence and the 2013 Conference of Bishops' Pastoral letter on Violence;

To educate members of this church that more people die from suicide than from homicide in the United States and to lift up the ELCA social messages on suicide prevention, community violence, mental health, and to call upon congregations and synods to engage their members on ways to prevent suicide;

To refer the matter of evaluating the feasibility and advisability of developing additional investment screens and related recommendations to the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit with the request that it ask the Corporate Social Responsibility Team to provide a report with possible recommendations to the Church Council at its November 2013 meeting; and

To refer requests for education and resource development on issues of violence in society to the ELCA Church Council for appropriate action in keeping with the recommendations of the Addressing Social Concerns Review Task Force.

Response from the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit (November 2013)

Due to limited staffing capacity, the Congregational and Synodical Mission (CSM) unit was unable to adequately evaluate the feasibility and advisability of developing additional investment screens and related recommendations. CSM is requesting an extension to the April 2014 meeting of the ELCA Church Council.

Church Council Action:

**To receive the response from the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit;
To postpone the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit response of the fourth resolve including possible recommendations to the April 2014 meeting of the ELCA Church Council; and
To request that the secretary of this church inform the synod of this action.**