



Office of the Secretary
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

April 22, 2010

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
Members of the Cabinet of Executives
Regional Coordinators

FROM: David D. Swartling, secretary

SUBJECT: Report of Responses by the Church Council to Synodical Actions
(April 9–11, 2010)

I. RESPONSES TO SYNODICAL RESOLUTIONS

A. MINISTRY POLICIES

South-Central Synod of Wisconsin (5K)

RESOLVED, that the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin Synod Council communicate to the ELCA Church Council this synod's strong support for the proposed revisions to this church's ministry policies (including changes to the pension and other benefits plan) that were developed pursuant to Churchwide Assembly action CA09.05.27 and published on March 15, 2010; and be it further

RESOLVED, that this council communicate to the ELCA Church Council this synod's strong support for the recommendation, reached by a consensus of the Conference of Bishops and announced on March 9, 2010, to admit pastors currently on the clergy roster of Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries to this church's roster of ordained ministers by a rite of reception, rather than of ordination; and be it further

RESOLVED, that this council request that the ELCA Church Council adopt, without substantial amendment, the above-named proposed revisions to the ministry policies and recommendation regarding Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries; and be it finally

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

Church Council Action: [En Bloc]
To receive the resolution of the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin related to revisions to the ministry

policies of this church;

To acknowledge the action of the ELCA Church Council on revisions to "Vision and Expectations," the Candidacy Manual, and "Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline" and on the "Rite for Reception to the Roster of Ordained Ministers" as the response of the Church Council to the synod's resolution; and

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

B1. BENEFITS FOR DOMESTIC PARTNERS

South-Central Synod of Wisconsin (5K)

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

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

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

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

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

B2. BOARD OF PENSIONS HEALTH PLAN

New England Synod (7B)

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

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

Executive Committee Action

At its August 2009 meeting, the Executive Committee of the Church Council voted [EC09.08.24]:

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

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

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

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

Response from the ELCA Board of Pensions

The Board of Pensions prepared an initial response to the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin prior to the August 2009 Churchwide Assembly. A slightly revised version of the response dated July 10, 2009, follows.

Following the affirmative action of the Churchwide Assembly on *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*, its implementing resolutions and, specifically, Implementing Resolution #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,” the staff of the Board of Pensions has been researching the implications of this resolution, fully aware that the Churchwide Assembly action requires “policies of this church” to be developed and approved by the ELCA Church Council. Specifically, policy

changes to ELCA documents, “Vision and Expectations,” and “Definition and Guidelines for Discipline” are to be approved by the ELCA Church Council. It is important that amendments to the ELCA Pension and Other Benefits Program be consistent with the policy changes.

Preliminary work on plan amendments began following the Churchwide Assembly and included introductory discussions at the October–November 2009 Board of Trustees meeting.

While it has been challenging to draft plan amendments prior to the approval of policy changes by the ELCA Church Council, the Board of Pensions drafted provisional amendments for the February–March 2010 Board of Trustees meeting, with the understanding that this time line preceded the spring 2010 Conference of Bishops and Church Council meetings. The Board of Pensions has worked with the ELCA Office of the Secretary and the Vocation and Education unit in order to be informed and updated with pertinent policy change recommendations as they have been developed.

Consequently, plan amendments approved by the Board of Trustees in February–March 2010 will be viewed as preliminary and subject to further revisions as necessitated by actions of the 2010 Conference of Bishops and Church Council meetings.

Church Council Action

At its November 2009 meeting, the Church Council voted [CC09.11.86a] [CC09.11.86b]:

To receive the update provided by the Board of Pensions as the initial response to the resolutions of the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin related to benefits for domestic partners and the New England Synod related to the Board of Pensions health plan for same-sex domestic partners;

To authorize a delay in the final response to these resolutions until the April 2010 meeting of the Church Council; and

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

Church Council Action: [En Bloc]

To acknowledge the action by the ELCA Church Council to approve amendments to the ELCA Pension and Other Benefits Program in response to implementing resolution 7 of *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* and revisions to “Vision and Expectations” and “Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline” as the response of the Church Council to the resolutions of the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin and the New England Synod; and

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

C1. REPEAL OF “HUMAN SEXUALITY: GIFT AND TRUST” Northeastern Iowa Synod (5F)

WHEREAS, the 2009 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has adopted the social statement *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*; and

WHEREAS, in Part IV (lines 620–628 in the *Pre-Assembly Report*) this statement reads:

The historic Christian tradition and the Lutheran Confessions have recognized marriage as a covenant between a man and a woman, reflecting Mark 10: 6–9: “But from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one put asunder.” (Jesus here recalls Genesis 1:27; 2:23–24.); and

WHEREAS, in Part IV (lines 740–744, as amended, of the *Pre-Assembly Report*) it reads:

Recognizing that this conclusion differs from the historic Christian tradition and the Lutheran Confessions, some people, though not all, in this church and within the larger Christian community, conclude that marriage is also the appropriate term to use in describing similar benefits, protection, and support for same-gender couples entering into lifelong monogamous relationships; and

WHEREAS, the statement then goes on to treat these two positions and the variants within them as of equal validity, on the basis of the “conscience-bound beliefs” of those who hold them (Part IV, lines 809–868 of the *Pre-Assembly Report*); and

WHEREAS, on this same basis of the “conscience-bound lack of consensus in this church” (lines 452–453 of the Report and Recommendation on Ministry Policies in Part V of the *Pre-Assembly Report*) the resolutions on ministry policies (CA09.05.23, 24, 26, and 27) were adopted; and

WHEREAS, neither the social statement nor the Recommendation on Ministry Policies presents an argument based on Scripture, the Lutheran Confessions, and with the aid of sound reason either to reject what is admitted to be the position of the historic Christian tradition and the Lutheran Confessions based on Scripture or to accept a position which is admitted to be contrary to the historic Christian tradition and the

Lutheran Confessions; and

WHEREAS, the Confession of Faith of the ELCA (Chapter 2 of the ELCA Constitution) commits the ELCA to accept the canonical Scriptures as the authoritative source and norm of our proclamation, faith, and life, and to accept the confessional writings of the Lutheran church as a true witness of the Gospel and valid interpretations of the faith of the Church; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Iowa Synod Council repudiate the decisions of the 2009 Churchwide Assembly in adopting the social statement *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* and the four Resolutions on Ministry Policies (CA09.05.23, 24, 26, 27) as violations of the Confession of Faith, Chapter 2 of the ELCA constitution; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Iowa Synod Council memorialize the ELCA Church Council to repudiate these actions as violations of the Confession of Faith, Chapter 2 of the ELCA Constitution, refuse to implement these actions, and begin the process to overturn these decisions at the 2011 Churchwide Assembly.

C2. IMPLEMENTATION OF MINISTRY POLICIES Northeastern Iowa Synod (5F)

WHEREAS, the 2009 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has adopted four Recommendations on Ministry Policies (CA09.05.23, CA09.05.24, CA09.05.26, and CA09.05.27); and

WHEREAS, CA09.05.23 states: “that in the implementation of any resolutions on ministry policies, the ELCA commit itself to bear one another’s burdens, love the neighbor, and respect the bound consciences of all”; and

WHEREAS, CA09.05.27, in the second “RESOLVED” states “that this church, because of its commitment to respect the bound consciences of all, declare its intent to allow structured flexibility in decision-making regarding the approving or disapproving in candidacy and the extending or not extending of a call to rostered service of a person who is otherwise qualified and who is living or contemplates living in a publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationship”; and

WHEREAS, the fifth “Whereas,” introducing CA.09.05.27, states: “other members, congregations, candidacy committees, and synods of the ELCA acknowledge those gifts and skills for ministry, but believe that this church must maintain an expectation of celibacy for any gay or lesbian person, whether or not that person is in a publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationship, and thus believe that this church cannot call or roster people in such relationships”; and

WHEREAS, the use of “structured flexibility” is portrayed in the “Report and Recommendation on Ministry Policies” as presented to the Churchwide Assembly on lines 488–498 of the *Pre-Assembly Report* in the following manner:

To choose structured flexibility does not imply that same-gender-oriented people in publicly accountable,

lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships would be able to serve everywhere in this church. The existing discernment processes for approval and call already assume that synods, bishops, candidacy committees, rostered leaders, and congregations will make decisions in keeping with their own conscience and convictions. If structured flexibility were added to the process, this assumption would still protect any congregation, candidacy committee, synod, or bishop from having to violate bound conscience by approving, calling, commissioning, consecrating, or ordaining anyone in a publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationship. Similarly, a structured flexibility process would protect the decisions of a congregation, candidacy committee, synod, or bishop who concludes that mission would be served best by approving or calling a particular candidate or rostered leader who is in a publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationship [emphasis added]; and

WHEREAS, it is evident from these portions of the materials adopted and presented at the 2009 Churchwide Assembly that the “all” whose “bound conscience” the actions of the assembly have committed the ELCA to honor includes “synods,” and that this “bound conscience” includes the ability to choose not to approve, call, commission, consecrate, or ordain someone in a publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationship; and

WHEREAS, the “bound conscience” of the Northeastern Iowa Synod can most clearly be determined by the actions taken at Synod Assembly; and

WHEREAS, actions of the Northeastern Iowa Synod Assembly in 2004 (SA04.06.9), 2005 (SA05.06.38), 2007 (SA07.06.33, SA07.06.36, SA07.06.38, and SA07.06.41), and 2009 (SA09.06.15 and SA09.06.18) have declared the position of the Northeastern Iowa Synod to be that “Marriage, an institution ordained by God, is the life-long union of one man and one woman for the creation of human life and for their mutual love and care. . . . Sexual intercourse is part of the vocation of marriage and is misused in any other context” (SA04.06.9); have opposed any changes in the church’s teaching concerning marriage and sexuality (SA04.06.9, SA09.06.15); and have opposed any changes in the ELCA’s standards for pastors and other rostered leaders as expressed in the 1990 documents “Vision and Expectations” and “Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline” (SA05.06.38, SA07.06.36, SA07.06.38, SA07.06.41, and SA09.06.18); therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Iowa Synod Council, recognizing the past actions of the Northeastern Iowa Synod Assembly as evidence of the Northeastern Iowa Synod’s strongly held views with respect to the approving, calling, commissioning, consecrating, or ordaining of one in a publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationship, determines that the standards for rostered ministry as outlined in the 1990 documents, “Vision and Expectations” and “Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline” shall remain in effect for

the Northeastern Iowa Synod, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Iowa Synod Council encourage the Northeastern Iowa Synod Candidacy Committee and the Office of Bishop of the Northeastern Iowa Synod to continue to abide by such standards for rostered ministry in the Northeastern Iowa Synod during the period leading up to the 2010 Synod Assembly, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Iowa Synod Council recommends the following continuing resolution to the 2010 Synod Assembly of the Northeastern Iowa Synod:

S14.02.A10 *In addition to the standards for ordained ministers in the current “Vision and Expectations” as adopted by the ELCA Church Council, this synod shall continue to maintain this expectation from “Vision and Expectations” (1990) in its candidacy process and in its standards for pastors and other rostered leaders:*

Ordained ministers, whether married or single, are expected to uphold an understanding of marriage in their public ministry as well as in private life that is biblically informed and consistent with the teachings of this synod. The expectations of this synod regarding the sexual conduct of its ordained ministers are grounded in the understanding that human sexuality is a gift from God and that ordained ministers are to live in such a way as to honor this gift. Ordained ministers are expected to reject sexual promiscuity, the manipulation of others for purposes of sexual gratification, and all attempts of sexual seduction and sexual harassment, including taking physical or emotional advantage of others. Single ordained ministers are expected to live a chaste life. Married ordained ministers are expected to live in fidelity to their spouses, giving expression to sexual intimacy within a marriage relationship that is mutual, chaste, and faithful. Ordained ministers who are homosexual in their self-understanding are expected to abstain from homosexual sexual relationships.

Executive Committee Action

At its January 2010 meeting, the Executive Committee voted [EC10.01.03]:

To receive the resolutions of the Northeastern Iowa Synod Council requesting repudiation of the social statement on human

sexuality and recommending procedures for the implementation of ministry policies within the synod;

To refer the resolutions to the Office of the Secretary with the request that a report and possible recommendations be brought to the April 2010 meeting of the Church Council; and

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

Response from the Office of the Secretary

At its meeting on January 30, 2010, the Northeastern Iowa Synod Council rescinded the resolutions it had passed at its November 14, 2009, meeting concerning the “bound conscience” of the synod with respect to ministry policies and its intention to begin the process to “rescind” and “repudiate” the adoption of the social statement on human sexuality. According to an open letter dated February 1, 2010, from Ms. Susan Armstrong, vice president of the synod, the council’s action was taken in response to concerns, particularly about the authority of the Synod Council, raised by members and congregations of the ELCA in the Northeastern Iowa Synod.

Since the resolutions were rescinded by the Northeastern Iowa Synod Council, the Church Council does not need to act on them.

Church Council Action: *[En Bloc]*

To acknowledge the action of the Northeastern Iowa Synod Council to rescind the two resolutions requesting repudiation of the social statement on human sexuality and recommending procedures for the implementation of ministry policies within the synod;

To express gratitude to the Synod Council for its deliberative process and for the “extensive and open conversation” that led to its decision and for the February 1, 2010, letter from Vice President Susan Armstrong notifying the Office of the Secretary of the Synod Council’s action; and

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

D. WINDSTORM INSURANCE CRISIS

Florida-Bahamas Synod (9E)

WHEREAS, Section 13.41.A03. of the *Constitution, Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* contains a provision assigning Responsibilities for Risk Management to the churchwide organization; and

WHEREAS, the provision further specifies that “The Office of the Secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, in collaboration with the treasurer of this church, shall provide and manage insurance (exclusive of life and health)

programs for the churchwide organization and shall make available insurance programs to **congregations, synods, regions, and related institutional, agencies, and organizations . . .”** *[emphasis added]*; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA Offices of the Secretary and Treasurer did establish, in 2006, with the urging and full support of the Florida-Bahamas Synod, an insurance task force to explore, review, and recommend an insurance plan and provider to serve as the recommended property and liability insurance provider for congregations and synods across this church; and

WHEREAS, the result of a two-year examination of solutions recommended Church Mutual as an initial provider and as a step leading to the development of a Risk Pooled Trust or Captive Insurance Program as a long-term objective and ultimate solution to rising insurance costs across this church; and

WHEREAS, Church Mutual has now, in order to reduce insurance costs to other geographical areas of this church, excluded and segregated congregations of the Florida-Bahamas Synod from coverage; and

WHEREAS, the result of a separate insurance program for many of the congregations of this synod has resulted in windstorm premium increases of 200 percent to 400 percent, now forcing many congregations to choose between underfunding mission and pastoral ministry or risking the possibility of catastrophic loss and the likelihood of inability to continue ministry due to depletion of assets by canceling windstorm coverage; and

WHEREAS, the result of the continual increased insurance costs now threatens not only congregational ministries, but also mission support for synodical and churchwide expressions as congregations find it more difficult to cover expenses and share generously in mission support; and

WHEREAS, insurance costs for all Florida-Bahamas and many other ELCA congregations will continue to rise in a disproportionate manner, gradually and further eroding the collective effort to be God’s church in a challenging world; and

WHEREAS, we are now at a time when we must address the continuing problem that will ultimately impact this whole church; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Church Council of the ELCA initiate direction that will assure that affected congregations and synods of the ELCA are not excluded from a comprehensive insurance solution because of cost savings for other congregations or synods of the ELCA; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Church Council direct the Offices of the Secretary and Treasurer to recommit their energies to finding an insurance solution more appropriate for this period in time and one that ensures and demands affordable insurance coverage for all congregations and synods of this church in the foreseeable future; and be it further

RESOLVED, that this program be undertaken immediately with full implementation planned no later than June 1, 2011.

Executive Committee Action

At its November 2009 meeting, the Executive Committee voted [EC09.11.37a]:

To receive the resolution of the Florida-Bahamas Synod Council related to comprehensive insurance coverage for congregations;

To refer the resolution to the Office of the Secretary, in consultation with the Office of the Treasurer, with the request that a report and possible recommendations be brought to the April 2010 meeting of the ELCA Church Council; and

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

Background from Office of the Secretary

The ELCA churchwide organization offers an endorsed insurance program for ELCA synods and congregations. That voluntary program seeks to provide a fairly priced level of coverage that addresses the needs of ELCA congregations across the country regarding many risk exposures, including natural disasters. ELCA congregations may become part of this program or may select their own insurance.

Prior to 2002, the insurance industry provided coverage, including windstorm, to congregations in Florida, except for those congregations in specific high-risk locations. A.J. Gallagher, at that time the ELCA's endorsed insurance program, promoted an endorsed program in the state, but also needed to address the named windstorm situation where necessary. They created a named Windstorm Loss Fund that congregations could join by contributing to a shared account. At the time, Florida congregations (as is the case today) chose their insurance carrier independently of the Florida-Bahamas Synod or the ELCA-endorsed program. Those congregations in high-risk areas gravitated to the A.J. Gallagher program and the Windstorm Loss Fund due to the lack of an alternative. However, only high-risk congregations participated. Over time, the program was modified but continued to attract mainly at-risk congregations. The Windstorm Loss Fund, therefore, was impacted negatively and suffered losses because it was populated largely by at-risk congregations.

By August 2005, it was clear that in order to sustain named windstorm coverage, an alternative, broader-based insurance product was needed. In that month and the two months following, Florida was hit by hurricanes Katrina, Wilma, and Rita. In late 2007, the Office of the Secretary and the Office of the Treasurer formed a task force to examine a number of insurance issues and ultimately recommend a solution to them. In the meantime, A.J.

Gallagher continued to offer the endorsed insured program in Florida with a modified solution for named windstorms, an aggregated product shared by all congregations in the endorsed program.

In May 2008, the ELCA moved its endorsement to Church Mutual Insurance Company, with Willis as the program broker, with the understanding that Florida congregations would be offered a package of coverages, including windstorm insurance. This insurance would have specific limits per congregation. Because of the ELCA's endorsement, Church Mutual agreed to return to the state of Florida. It had left the state after 2005 due to the adverse political situation regarding insurance, not due to its losses sustained during the hurricanes of 2005 and prior. Church Mutual has attempted to provide a named windstorm product, but up to now those congregations seeking quotations have found it to be too expensive.

Both the ELCA's previous insurance broker, A.J. Gallagher, and its current one have recommended a broader sharing of risk (i.e., pooling) in order to address the problem of windstorm insurance. The difficulty is the need to enroll a sufficient number of congregations to make the program viable and to collect information and underwriting data from congregations. The ELCA cannot require congregations to participate in this endorsed insurance program, and the Florida-Bahamas Synod cannot mandate that its Florida congregations participate. There is a sufficient number of congregations in Florida to attain a competitively priced insurance product covering named windstorms. However, the congregations must at minimum be willing to provide the broker with sufficient data to underwrite the product.

This information has been provided to the Florida-Bahamas Synod on several occasions, even as late as November 5, 2009.

The ELCA churchwide organization, the broker, Willis, and the carrier continue to desire to work with synods and congregations on such issues as insurance for named windstorms. However, no carrier will provide the type of product demanded in the resolution, and there are no immediate or quick-fix solutions. One way that the churchwide organization has sought to address this challenge is to have a growing endorsed insurance program that provides a good insurance resource for all congregations and synods. The strategic hope is that, as the program expands with the participation of more congregations, a shared-risk pooled program will become feasible. For such a program to move forward, significant churchwide funding needs to be found, and the ability to take some insurance-related financial risks needs carefully to be weighed and assumed.

The churchwide organization, Willis, and the ELCA-endorsed insurance program insurer, Church Mutual, in

consultation with synods and congregations, will continue to explore the challenges that Florida and other coastal states have in obtaining comprehensive insurance for windstorm loss at a fair and competitive rate and to develop a product that can provide an additional option for the congregations of the Florida-Bahamas Synod.

Church Council Action: *[En Bloc]*

To receive the resolution of the Florida-Bahamas Synod related to comprehensive insurance coverage for its congregations;

To acknowledge the importance of comprehensive and affordable insurance coverage for ELCA synods and congregations across this church and to acknowledge in particular the financial and risk challenges facing congregations and synods where there have been natural disasters impacting on coverage availability and premiums charged;

To recognize that the churchwide organization provides a program of insurance coverage to ELCA congregations while acknowledging that ELCA congregations have the ability to select the brokers, carriers, coverage, premium amounts, and policies of insurance that best suit their individual needs;

To encourage continuing efforts by the Office of the Secretary, in consultation with the Office of the Treasurer, to seek to promote comprehensive coverage at a fair price to all congregations across this church; and

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

II. RESPONSES TO CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY REFERRALS TO THE CHURCH COUNCIL

A. LUTHERAN DISASTER RESPONSE

1. Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod (7E) [Memorial Category E3] [CA.09.04.21]

WHEREAS, the presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) encourages this church to be “a public church that witnesses boldly to God’s love for all that God has created”; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA over the last decade has developed a nationally recognized and effective tool, known as Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR), for bringing comfort, healing, and renewal to those affected by disasters; and

WHEREAS, thousands of ELCA members have been empowered to do God’s work through their hands by being inspired, trained, and deployed by LDR and its affiliates to provide life-transforming ministry to those affected by disaster and by offering ongoing assistance to those in need well after others have left the affected area; and

WHEREAS, disasters can affect anyone, but disproportionately they affect the disenfranchised due to the historic location of poorer communities in vulnerable areas, mobility restrictions, and the lack of access to other resources; and

WHEREAS, disaster preparedness and response offer opportunities for members of the ELCA to manifest faith in action by growing spiritually and striving for justice; and

WHEREAS, disaster preparedness and response offer opportunity for this church to bear witness to the love of Christ through diverse efforts but coordinated response; and

WHEREAS, the scientific community is raising the alarm that natural disasters will be increasing due to climate change and, since September 11, 2001, this nation has become more acutely aware of the potential for disaster created by acts of terror; and

WHEREAS, the deficits in the nation’s response to Hurricane Katrina visibly demonstrated the need to be better prepared, and research has demonstrated that preparedness is a primary predictor of survival and recovery in disaster; and

WHEREAS, professionals for local preparedness and response are integral for leadership and coordination of Lutheran congregations, agencies, institutions, volunteers, and resources for best response; and

WHEREAS, the Lutheran Disaster Response office provides coordination, but the primary preparedness and response happen through the LDR local affiliates and congregations; and

WHEREAS, LDR lacks the resources to support preparedness plans that would allow the ELCA to be more effective in ministering to people affected by disaster; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod in assembly memorialize the ELCA in assembly to direct the presiding bishop to create an advisory committee charged with crafting a clear vision for LDR to help frame the expectations and requirements of LDR affiliates throughout the country and that the committee continue to develop guidelines to help affiliates create

standard preparedness and response tools; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod in assembly memorialize the ELCA in assembly to reaffirm the ELCA’s commitment to the mission of disaster preparedness through the Church in Society program unit by empowering the advisory committee to work with the staff of LDR to improve its funding streams to assure sustainability of the ministry and the work of LDR and of LDR affiliates; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod in assembly memorialize the ELCA in assembly to direct the Conference of Bishops and the Church in Society program unit to collaborate in facilitating conversation with ecumenical partners and community resources to create national and local coordinated service relationships in disaster response; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod in assembly memorialize the ELCA in assembly to direct Lutheran Disaster Response to use the technological tools available to it to effectively develop, support, and maintain a network to connect those affiliates engaged in response with the resources (equipment, supplies, and work teams) throughout the network.

2. Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod (7F) [Memorial Category E3] [CA.09.04.21]

WHEREAS, the Church in Society program unit of the churchwide organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) encourages this church to be “a public church that witnesses boldly to God’s love for all that God has created”; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA over the last decade has developed a nationally recognized and effective tool, known as Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR), for bringing comfort, healing, and renewal to those affected by disasters; and

WHEREAS, thousands of ELCA members have been empowered to do God’s work through their hands by being inspired, trained, and deployed by LDR and its affiliates to provide life-transforming ministry to those affected by disaster and by offering on-going assistance to those in need well after others have left the affected area; and

WHEREAS, disasters can affect anyone, but disproportionately they affect the disenfranchised due to the historic location of poorer communities in vulnerable areas, mobility restrictions, and the lack of access to other resources; and

WHEREAS, disaster preparedness and response offer opportunities for members of the ELCA to manifest faith in action by growing spiritually and striving for justice; and

WHEREAS, disaster preparedness and response offers opportunity for this church to bear witness to the love of Christ through diverse efforts but coordinated response; and

WHEREAS, the scientific community is raising the alarm that natural disasters will be increasing due to climate change and, since September 11, 2001, this nation has become more

acutely aware of the potential for disaster created by acts of terror; and

WHEREAS, the deficits in the nation's response to Hurricane Katrina visibly demonstrated the need to be better prepared, and research has demonstrated that preparedness is a primary predictor of survival and recovery in disaster; and

WHEREAS, professionals for local preparedness and response are integral for leadership and coordination of Lutheran congregations, agencies, institutions, volunteers, and resources for best response; and

WHEREAS, the Lutheran Disaster Response office provides coordination, but the primary preparedness and response happens through the LDR local affiliates and congregations; and

WHEREAS, LDR lacks the resources to support preparedness plans that would allow the ELCA to be more effective in ministering to people affected by disaster; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod in assembly memorialize the ELCA in assembly to request that the Church in Society program unit create an advisory committee charged with crafting a clear vision for LDR to help frame the expectations and requirements of LDR affiliates throughout the country and that the committee continue to develop guidelines to help affiliates create standard preparedness and response tools; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod in assembly memorialize the ELCA in assembly to reaffirm its commitment to the mission of disaster preparedness through the Church in Society program unit by empowering the advisory committee to work with the staff of LDR to improve its funding streams to assure sustainability of the ministry and the work of LDR and of LDR affiliates; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod in assembly memorialize the ELCA in assembly to request the Conference of Bishops and the Church in Society program unit to collaborate in facilitating conversation with ecumenical partners to create national and local coordinated service relationships in disaster response; and be it further

RESOLVED, that Lutheran Disaster Response use the technological tools available to it to develop, support, and maintain a network to connect those affiliates engaged in response with the resources (equipment, supplies, and work teams) throughout the network.

3. Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod (8A)

[Memorial Category E3] [CA.09.04.21]

WHEREAS, the presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) encourages this church to be "a public church that witnesses boldly to God's love for all that God has created"; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA over the last decade has developed a nationally recognized and effective tool, known as Lutheran

Disaster Response (LDR), for bringing comfort, healing, and renewal to those affected by disasters; and

WHEREAS, thousands of ELCA members have been empowered to do God's work through their hands by being inspired, trained, and deployed by LDR and its affiliates to provide life-transforming ministry to those affected by disaster and by offering ongoing assistance to those in need well after others have left the affected area; and

WHEREAS, disasters can affect anyone, but disproportionately they affect the disenfranchised due to the historic location of poorer communities in vulnerable areas, mobility restrictions, and the lack of access to other resources; and

WHEREAS, disaster preparedness and response offer opportunities for members of the ELCA to manifest faith in action by growing spiritually and striving for justice; and

WHEREAS, disaster preparedness and response offer opportunity for this church to bear witness to the love of Christ through diverse efforts but coordinated response; and

WHEREAS, the scientific community is raising the alarm that natural disasters will be increasing due to climate change and, since September 11, 2001, this nation has become more acutely aware of the potential for disaster created by acts of terror; and

WHEREAS, the deficits in the nation's response to Hurricane Katrina visibly demonstrated the need to be better prepared, and research has demonstrated that preparedness is a primary predictor of survival and recovery in disaster; and

WHEREAS, professionals for local preparedness and response are integral for leadership and coordination of Lutheran congregations, agencies, institutions, volunteers, and resources for best response; and

WHEREAS, the Lutheran Disaster Response office provides coordination, but the primary preparedness and response happens through the LDR local affiliates and congregations; and

WHEREAS, LDR currently lacks the resources to support preparedness plans that would allow the ELCA to be more effective in ministering to people affected by disaster; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod in assembly memorialize the ELCA in assembly to request that the Church in Society program unit create an advisory committee charged with crafting a clear vision for LDR to help frame the expectations and requirements of LDR affiliates throughout the country and that the committee continue to develop guidelines to help affiliates create standard preparedness and response tools; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod in assembly memorialize the ELCA in assembly to reaffirm its commitment to the mission of disaster preparedness through the Church in Society program unit by empowering the advisory committee to work with the staff of LDR to improve its funding streams to assure sustainability of the ministry and the work of LDR and of LDR affiliates; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northwestern Pennsylvania

Synod in assembly memorialize the ELCA in assembly to request the Conference of Bishops and the Church in Society program unit to collaborate in facilitating conversation with ecumenical partners to create national and local coordinated service relationships in disaster response; and be it further

RESOLVED, that Lutheran Disaster Response use the technological tools available to it to develop, support, and maintain a network to connect those affiliates engaged in response with the resources (equipment, supplies, and work teams) throughout the network.

4. Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod (8B)

[Memorial Category E3] [CA.09.04.21]

WHEREAS, the Rev. Mark S. Hanson, presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) encourages this church to be “a public church that witnesses boldly to God’s love for all that God has created”; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA over the last decade has developed a nationally recognized and effective tool, known as Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR), for bringing comfort, healing, and renewal to those affected by disasters; and

WHEREAS, thousands of ELCA members have been empowered to do God’s work through their hands by being inspired, trained, and deployed by LDR and its affiliates to provide life-transforming ministry to those affected by disaster and by offering ongoing assistance to those in need well after others have left the affected area; and

WHEREAS, disasters can affect anyone, but disproportionately they affect the disenfranchised due to the historic location of poorer communities in vulnerable areas, mobility restrictions, and the lack of access to other resources; and

WHEREAS, disaster preparedness and response offer opportunities for members of the ELCA to manifest faith in action by growing spiritually and striving for justice; and

WHEREAS, disaster preparedness and response offer opportunity for this church to bear witness to the love of Christ through diverse efforts but coordinated response; and

WHEREAS, the scientific community is raising the alarm that natural disasters will be increasing due to climate change and, since September 11, 2001, this nation has become more acutely aware of the potential for disaster created by acts of terror; and

WHEREAS, the deficits in the nation’s response to Hurricane Katrina visibly demonstrated the need to be better prepared, and research has demonstrated that preparedness is a primary predictor of survival and recovery in disaster; and

WHEREAS, professionals for local preparedness and response are integral for leadership and coordination of Lutheran congregations, agencies, institutions, volunteers, and resources for best response; and

WHEREAS, the Lutheran Disaster Response office provides coordination, but the primary preparedness and response happens through the LDR local affiliates and congregations; and

WHEREAS, LDR currently lacks the resources to support preparedness plans that would allow the ELCA to be more

effective in ministering to people affected by disaster; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod in assembly memorialize the ELCA in assembly to direct the Church in Society program unit create an advisory committee charged with crafting a clear vision for LDR to help frame the expectations and requirements of LDR affiliates throughout the country and that the committee continue to develop guidelines to help affiliates create standard preparedness and response tools; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod in assembly memorialize the ELCA in assembly to reaffirm its commitment to the mission of disaster preparedness through the Church in Society program unit by empowering the advisory committee to work with the staff of LDR to improve its funding streams to assure sustainability of the ministry and the work of LDR and of LDR affiliates; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod in assembly memorialize the ELCA in assembly to direct the Conference of Bishops and the Church in Society program unit to collaborate in facilitating conversation with ecumenical partners to create national and local coordinated service relationships in disaster response; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod in assembly memorialize the ELCA in assembly to direct Lutheran Disaster Response to use the technological tools available to it effectively to develop, support, and maintain a network to connect those affiliates engaged in response with the resources (equipment, supplies, and work teams) throughout the network.

5. Lower Susquehanna Synod (8D)

[Memorial Category E3] [CA.09.04.21]

WHEREAS, the presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) encourages this church to be “a public church that witnesses boldly to God’s love for all that God has created”; and

WHEREAS, over the last decade the ELCA, in cooperation with The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod, has developed a nationally recognized and effective tool, known as Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR), for bringing comfort, healing, and renewal to those affected by disasters; and

WHEREAS, thousands of ELCA members have been empowered to do God’s work through their hands by being inspired, trained, and deployed by LDR and its affiliates to provide life-transforming ministry to those affected by disaster and by offering ongoing assistance to those in need well after others have left the affected area; and

WHEREAS, disasters can affect anyone, but disproportionately they affect the disenfranchised due to the historic location of poorer communities in vulnerable areas, mobility restrictions, and the lack of access to other resources;

and

WHEREAS, disaster preparedness and response offer opportunities for members of the ELCA to manifest faith in action by growing spiritually and striving for justice; and

WHEREAS, disaster preparedness and response offer opportunity for this church to bear witness to the love of Christ through diverse efforts but coordinated response; and

WHEREAS, the scientific community is raising the alarm that natural disasters will be increasing due to climate change and, since September 11, 2001, this nation has become more acutely aware of the potential for disaster created by acts of terror; and

WHEREAS, the deficits in the nation's response to Hurricane Katrina visibly demonstrated the need to be better prepared, and research has demonstrated that preparedness is a primary predictor of survival and recovery in disaster; and

WHEREAS, professionals for local preparedness and response are integral for leadership and coordination of Lutheran congregations, agencies, institutions, volunteers, and resources for best response; and

WHEREAS, the Lutheran Disaster Response office provides coordination, but the primary preparedness and response happen through the LDR local affiliates and congregations; and

WHEREAS, LDR lacks the resources to support preparedness plans that would allow the ELCA to be more effective in ministering to people affected by disaster; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Lower Susquehanna Synod in assembly memorialize the ELCA in assembly to direct the presiding bishop to create an advisory committee charged with crafting a clear vision for LDR to help frame the expectations and requirements of LDR affiliates throughout the country and that the committee continue to develop guidelines to help affiliates create standard preparedness and response tools; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Lower Susquehanna Synod in assembly memorialize the ELCA in assembly to reaffirm the ELCA's commitment to the mission of disaster preparedness through the Church in Society program unit by empowering the advisory committee to work with the staff of LDR to improve its funding streams to assure sustainability of the ministry and the work of LDR and of LDR affiliates; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Lower Susquehanna Synod in assembly memorialize the ELCA in assembly to request the Conference of Bishops and the Church in Society program unit to collaborate in facilitating conversation with ecumenical partners to create national and local coordinated service relationships in disaster response; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Lower Susquehanna Synod Assembly memorialize the 2009 Churchwide Assembly to encourage Lutheran Disaster Response to use the technological tools available to it to effectively develop, support, and maintain a network to connect those affiliates engaged in response with the resources (equipment,

supplies, and work teams) throughout the network.

6. Upper Susquehanna Synod (8E) [Memorial Category E3] [CA.09.04.21]

WHEREAS, the presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) encourages this church to be "a public church that witnesses boldly to God's love for all that God has created"; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA over the last decade has developed a nationally recognized and effective tool, known as Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR), for bringing comfort, healing, and renewal to those affected by disasters; and

WHEREAS, thousands of ELCA members have been empowered to do God's work through their hands by being inspired, trained, and deployed by LDR and its affiliates to provide life-transforming ministry to those affected by disaster and by offering ongoing assistance to those in need well after others have left the affected area; and

WHEREAS, disasters can affect anyone, but disproportionately they affect the disenfranchised due to the historic location of poorer communities in vulnerable areas, mobility restrictions, and the lack of access to other resources; and

WHEREAS, disaster preparedness and response offer opportunities for members of the ELCA to manifest faith in action by growing spiritually and striving for justice; and

WHEREAS, disaster preparedness and response offer opportunity for this church to bear witness to the love of Christ through diverse efforts but coordinated response; and

WHEREAS, the scientific community is raising the alarm that natural disasters will be increasing due to climate change and, since September 11, 2001, this nation has become more acutely aware of the potential for disaster created by acts of terror; and

WHEREAS, this nation since September 11, 2001, has become more acutely aware of the potential for disaster created by acts of terror; and

WHEREAS, the deficits in the nation's response to Hurricane Katrina visibly demonstrated the need to be better prepared, and research has demonstrated that preparedness is a primary predictor of survival and recovery in disaster; and

WHEREAS, professionals for local preparedness and response are integral for leadership and coordination of Lutheran congregations, agencies, institutions, volunteers, and resources for best response; and

WHEREAS, the Lutheran Disaster Response office provides coordination, but the primary preparedness and response happens through the LDR local affiliates and congregations; and

WHEREAS, LDR currently lacks the resources to support preparedness plans that would allow the ELCA to be more effective in ministering to people affected by disaster; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Upper Susquehanna Synod in assembly memorialize the ELCA in assembly to request that the Church in Society program unit create an advisory committee charged with crafting a clear vision for LDR to help frame the expectations and requirements of LDR affiliates throughout the country and that the committee

continue to develop guidelines to help affiliates create standard preparedness and response tools; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Upper Susquehanna Synod in assembly memorialize the ELCA in assembly to reaffirm its commitment to the mission of disaster preparedness through the Church in Society program unit by empowering the advisory committee to work with the staff of LDR to improve its funding streams to assure sustainability of the ministry and the work of LDR and of LDR affiliates; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Upper Susquehanna Synod in assembly memorialize the ELCA in assembly to request the Conference of Bishops and the Church in Society program unit to collaborate in facilitating conversation with ecumenical partners to create national and local coordinated service relationships in disaster response; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Churchwide Assembly direct the Lutheran Disaster Response to use the technological tools available to it to develop, support, and maintain a network to connect those affiliates engaged in response with the resources (equipment, supplies, and work teams) throughout the network.

7. West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod (8H)

[Memorial Category E3] [CA.09.04.21]

WHEREAS, the Rev. Mark S. Hanson, presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) encourages this church to be “a public church that witnesses boldly to God’s love for all that God has created”; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA over the last decade has developed a nationally recognized and effective tool, known as Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR), for bringing comfort, healing, and renewal to those affected by disasters; and

WHEREAS, thousands of ELCA members have been empowered to do God’s work through their hands by being inspired, trained, and deployed by LDR and its affiliates to provide life-transforming ministry to those affected by disaster and by offering ongoing assistance to those in need well after others have left the affected area; and

WHEREAS, disasters can affect anyone, but disproportionately they affect the disenfranchised due to the historic location of poorer communities in vulnerable areas, mobility restrictions, and the lack of access to other resources; and

WHEREAS, disaster preparedness and response offer opportunities for members of the ELCA to manifest faith in action by growing spiritually and striving for justice; and

WHEREAS, disaster preparedness and response offer opportunity for this church to bear witness to the love of Christ through diverse efforts but coordinated response; and

WHEREAS, the deficits in the nation’s response to Hurricane Katrina visibly demonstrated the need to be better prepared, and research has demonstrated that preparedness is a primary predictor of survival and recovery in disaster; and

WHEREAS, the Lutheran Disaster Response office provides coordination, but the primary preparedness and response happens through the LDR local affiliates and congregations; and

WHEREAS, LDR lacks the resources to support preparedness plans that would allow the ELCA to be more effective in ministering to people affected by disaster; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod in assembly memorialize the ELCA in assembly to request that the Church in Society program unit create an advisory committee charged with crafting a clear vision for LDR to help frame the expectations and requirements of LDR affiliates throughout the country and that the committee continue to develop guidelines to help affiliates create standard preparedness and response tools; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod in assembly memorialize the ELCA in assembly to reaffirm its commitment to the mission of disaster preparedness through the Church in Society program unit by empowering the advisory committee to work with the staff of LDR to improve its funding streams to assure sustainability of the ministry and the work of LDR and of LDR affiliates; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod in assembly memorialize the ELCA in assembly to request the Conference of Bishops and the Church in Society program unit to collaborate in facilitating conversation with ecumenical partners to create national and local coordinated service relationships in disaster response; and be it further

RESOLVED, that Lutheran Disaster Response use the technological tools available to it to develop, support, and maintain a network to connect those affiliates engaged in response with the resources (equipment, supplies, and work teams) throughout the network.

Churchwide Assembly Action:

The 2009 Churchwide Assembly voted [CA.09.04.21]:

To thank the Northeastern Pennsylvania, Southeastern Pennsylvania, Northwestern Pennsylvania, Southwestern Pennsylvania, Lower Susquehanna, Upper Susquehanna, and West Virginia-Western Maryland synods for their strong support for and concern about Lutheran Disaster Response;

To acknowledge that Lutheran Disaster Response is a collaborative ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod (LCMS);

To acknowledge that Lutheran Disaster Response currently is involved in a strategic

planning process, including the chief executive officers from five Lutheran Disaster Response-affiliated social ministry organizations;

To give consideration to creating a permanent Lutheran Disaster Response advisory committee and to defining a process for succession of committee membership;

To anticipate that this process will address effective, appropriate, and sustainable response mechanisms and the future nature and focus of Lutheran Disaster Response;

To acknowledge that the ELCA and LCMS are currently involved in a facilitated process regarding their relationship in Lutheran Disaster Response;

To encourage the ELCA to continue to deepen and develop its process for working together with churchwide units, synods, and social ministry organizations in times of specific disasters; and

To request that the Church in Society program unit bring a progress report to the April 2010 meeting of the Church Council.

Church Council Referral

At its November 2009 meeting, the Church Council voted [CC09.11.87] to refer the memorials to the Church in Society program unit.

Response from the Church in Society unit

In response to memorials to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly from the Northeastern Pennsylvania, Southeastern Pennsylvania, Northwestern Pennsylvania, Southwestern Pennsylvania, Lower Susquehanna, Upper Susquehanna, and West Virginia-Western Maryland Synods regarding Lutheran Disaster Response, the program unit for Church in Society was requested to bring a progress report to the April 2010 meeting of the Church Council.

In its response to these memorials, the Churchwide Assembly action acknowledged that Lutheran Disaster Response currently was involved in a strategic planning process, and it anticipated that this process would address effective, appropriate, and sustainable response mechanisms and the future nature and focus of Lutheran Disaster Response. In addition, it requested that the planning process give consideration to creating a permanent Lutheran Disaster Response advisory committee and to defining a process for succession of committee membership. It further encouraged the ELCA to continue to deepen and develop its process for working together with churchwide units, synods, and social

ministry organizations in times of specific disasters.

The action also recognized that Lutheran Disaster Response is a collaborative ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod (LCMS). It acknowledged that the ELCA and LCMS currently are involved in a facilitated process regarding their relationship in Lutheran Disaster Response.

LDR Strategic Planning Task Force

An LDR planning task force was formed in May 2009 regarding a range of issues, including the ones raised by the memorials noted above.

The members of the task force included the following: Kenneth Aicher, assistant to the bishop, Florida-Bahamas Synod; James Barclay, chief executive officer, Lutheran Family Services of Colorado; Ruth Henrichs, chief executive officer, Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska; Marie Jerge, bishop, Upstate New York Synod; Barbara Droher Kline, chief executive officer, Lutheran Social Services, Northern California; Gerald Mansholt, bishop, Central States Synod; Kevin Massey, LDR director; Michael Nevergall, LDR assistant director; Gregory Pile, bishop, Allegheny Synod; Robert Rundle, president, Lutheran Social Services, South Central Pennsylvania; Julie Swanson, chief executive officer, Lutheran Family Services of Virginia; William Vanderwall, process consultant; Church in Society advisory members Josselyn Bennett, Leslie Weber, Rebecca Larson.

The task force began its work by reviewing documents and background literature. The task force met by conference call the following dates: July 2, 2009; September 11, 2009; November 12, 2009; January 21, 2010; and February 17, 2010. The task force met in person October 5–7, 2009, in addition to frequent e-mail and document exchanges. Task force meetings were facilitated by William Vanderwall.

The results of the work of the task force are contained in two framework documents:

- The Lutheran Disaster Response System Vision
- LDR Advisory Committee

Members of the task force have agreed to function as an interim advisory committee pending the appointment by Church in Society of the LDR Advisory Committee.

Church Council Action:

[En Bloc]

To receive with gratitude the report of the Church in Society unit in response to the memorial of the 2009 Churchwide Assembly related to Lutheran Disaster Response and its appended documents: the report of Lutheran Disaster Response Strategic Planning Task Force, “The Lutheran Disaster Response System Vision,” and the report and recommendations related to the establishment of an LDR advisory committee [see below];

To acknowledge these reports and recommendations as the response of the Church Council to the action of the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly; and

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

THE LUTHERAN DISASTER RESPONSE SYSTEM VISION

“How we work together”

In times when the network is responding to disasters, the LDR system has resources to commit to support long-term recovery: expertise, funds, relationships, services, system clout, durability, reliability, people, and preparedness.

In times between responding to disasters, the LDR system cultivates a culture of resilience, readiness, and preparedness:

- Action plans for disaster response
- Resource development plans
- Clearinghouse of information
 - ▶ Simple and easy-to-use resources
 - ▶ Communications, internal and external to the network
 - ▶ Awareness of long-term recovery
- Develops and maintains key relationships
- Maintains an asset map of resources
- Maintains continuity through long-term recovery operations

Case Statement

Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR) has a long history and tradition of mobilizing local, regional, and national Lutheran organizations to respond to domestic disasters. In the Lutheran faith tradition, serving others in time of need is a foundational principle. Lutheran congregations across the country are an integral part of this collaborative ministry of service to communities affected by disaster.

LDR is a nationwide network of social ministry organizations (SMOs), Lutheran church bodies, volunteers, and many partners, who focus on disaster preparedness and long-term recovery response efforts in disaster-affected areas of the United States. The focus of

LDR is serving the poor, the disenfranchised, and people and communities who fall between cracks of the existing response system. LDR also mobilizes care for the needs of congregations in times of disaster and builds the capacity for congregations to serve and respond by being prepared for disasters when they do occur. We care for the church, support community, and care for people in truly difficult times.

Shared strategies for accomplishing the LDR system vision:

- Network Strengthening/Positioning/
Capacity Building for the Future
- Communicating to the Community
- Partnerships/Relationships
- Educating Others
- Developing Funding Resources

Network Strengthening/Positioning/Capacity Building for the Future:

- Create an LDR Advisory Committee
- Build simple action plan templates for affiliates, synods, and congregations
- Define mutual expectations for being part of the LDR system as specified in the LDR Affiliate Agreement
- Create and maintain the system asset map (including leadership)
- Provide a volunteer management “toolkit”
- Develop and maintain “just in time” training opportunities for disaster response
- Define responsibility for maintaining key relationships
- Integrate network positioning strategies into a new branding and marketing plan
- Create a multi-level affiliate system that recognizes regional differences in disaster frequency, the capacity of adjacent social ministry organizations, and the capacity of local Lutheran communities to support disaster response

Affiliate system:

- ▶ 1st level - Primary response entities, regularly responding to disasters with full-time capacity and responding in multiple ways
 - ▶ 2nd level - Secondary response entities, responding less regularly with call-up staff and responding with one or two specialties
 - ▶ 3rd level - Irregularly responding entities, with limited capacity, knowledge, and ability to respond
- Draw upon other examples of best practices

Communicating to the Community

- Utilize technology to communicate within the LDR

network, reaching the broad mix of internal stakeholders

- Reinvent communications with judicatories
- Create simple and easy resources to disseminate information to affiliates, synods, and congregations
- Create a new plan for media relations across the network
- Strategize a new branding and marketing plan for the network, integrated with fundraising plans, and implemented jointly between affiliates and the LDR national office

Partnerships/Relationships

- Create new engagement plans that clarify relationship with or clarify roles and responsibilities with:
 - ▶ Other Lutheran systems, like health care, long-term care, other SMOs that are not LDR affiliates
 - ▶ Synods, clarifying expectations for both sides on the two-way relationship
 - ▶ Districts, clarifying expectations for both sides on the two-way relationship
 - ▶ Thrivent Chapters
 - ▶ National VOAD and other national disaster response organizational offices
 - ▶ Other regional and local disaster organizations like VOADS, Red Cross, The Salvation Army, FEMA, HHS, HUD, local-level organizations, long-term recovery committees
 - ▶ LSA
 - ▶ Ecumenical partners - such as in the Church World Service partnership
 - ▶ LIRS
 - ▶ Media organizations
 - ▶ Education institutions

Educating Others

- Teach preparedness for individuals, families, congregations, SMOs, and judicatories
- Train volunteers
- Improve the Web site to develop capacity for members of the LDR network to update portions of content themselves
- Utilize new social networking opportunities
- Provide briefings/initial training on disaster preparedness to synod bishops and provide follow-up support to bishops and staff during disaster response
- Engage congregations in preparedness training and responding to disasters
- Engage Thrivent at the national and local level in preparing and responding to disasters as part of the network
- Create an education program for school-age young

people to build awareness and action

Developing Funding Resources

- Provide a transparent LDR national fiscal strategy for undesignated and designated funds that includes:
 - ▶ A pool of readiness-response funds available for immediate disaster response needs that is replenished by undesignated contributions
 - ▶ A pool of funds to support targeted strategic affiliate capacity
 - ▶ A pool of funds to support the national LDR capacity
 - ▶ Funds designated by donors for specific disasters and needs
- Develop a coordinated national/affiliate fund development strategy:
 - ▶ Explore ELCA sources who may contribute as part of mission
 - ▶ Identify philanthropic sources to support the network
 - ▶ Build relationships with private sector for in-kind services/products or sponsorship opportunities
 - ▶ Engage affiliates' leadership to get on board with the direction and invest in preparedness and capacity building
 - ▶ Create coordinated national/affiliate fundraising plans following the new branding and marketing directions
 - ▶ Organize pursuit of government funding opportunities, especially for federal contracts that can be leveraged to benefit one, some, or all affiliates most directly

PURPOSE OF LDR ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Lutheran Disaster Response is a collaborative ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod (LCMS) that seeks to demonstrate Christ's compassion for people by promoting hope, healing, and wholeness for disaster survivors. Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR) seeks to join with LDR network organization leaders and associated judicatories to advance the mission of Lutheran Disaster Response.

In 2009, LDR formed a Strategic Planning Task Force to look at where LDR has been, assess where LDR currently is, and envision where LDR wants to be in the future. The task force believes that bringing together a diverse group of LDR advisors into an LDR Advisory Committee will bring wisdom, knowledge, history, and great experience to accomplish even more in God's service to those affected by disaster.

The committee will be a place for two-way communication and information exchange between social ministry organization (SMO) leaders, judicatory leaders, and LDR leadership. This includes information about the needs and opportunities to serve in local communities/congregations affected by disasters and the resources LDR has for preparedness, education, and service. The LDR Advisory Committee can identify needs which LDR can help meet and enhance the understanding of support for people affected by disaster. The interaction with the LDR Advisory Committee will help set the strategic direction for LDR as well as inform SMOs about opportunities and resources available to aid disaster-affected areas.

Purposes of an LDR Advisory Committee

- Serve as a resource to LDR staff
- Add value to LDR direction, thinking, and decision making
- Information exchange between SMOs, judicatories, and LDR about the needs of people and surrounding communities affected by disaster
- Discussion and planning of services to prepare for and meet those needs
- Provide focus on services and resources that directly impact people or communities
- Assist in the development of resources to meet local and broader LDR network needs
- Subcommittees can investigate new and emerging issues in a timely and more in-depth way
- Assist in strategic planning and program evaluation
- Promote volunteer activities to aid in disaster preparedness and in directly responding to disasters
- Shared sense of mission and accomplishment to help bind the LDR Network together

Responsibilities of LDR national office

LDR staff will have the following responsibilities:

- Host meetings and establish meeting schedules for the LDR Advisory Committee
- Coordinate agendas, prepare meeting materials, and distribute in a timely manner
- Help identify potential committee members
- Ensure meeting minutes are taken, prepared, and distributed in a timely manner
- Prepare and distribute LDR financial reports to the committee
- Consult advisory committee on strategic directions, important decisions, challenging situations, and best practices
- Implement strategic directions and plans
- Facilitate relationships and communications between the committee, network SMOs, judicatories, and

other disaster relief bodies

- Be a resource for information and resources concerning support for people and communities affected by disaster
- Respond to community inquiries regarding the network

Responsibilities of LDR Advisory Committee Members

Committee members will have the following responsibilities:

- Accept, support, and embrace the mission of Lutheran Disaster Response
- Identify strengths and needs in the LDR network
- Guide LDR in accomplishing its mission by thinking strategically, with an eye to the future, and by participating in strategic planning
- Help identify potential committee members
- Evaluate and measure the work of the committee
- Regularly review LDR budget performance and financial goals in the LDR plan
- Communicate with peer organizations about LDR and its services and resources
- Attend and participate in scheduled meetings
- Use LDR as a resource to educate community and congregational members on issues concerning disaster response
- Encourage the use of LDR services and resources by synods, districts, congregations, and community members
- Generate ideas and identify potential sources for resource development

LDR Advisory Committee attributes

- The committee will have co-leaders from LDR staff and the committee
- Quarterly meetings by conference call
- Meet in person at least once per year
- Ideal size is 8–10 members, representative of geographic distribution, LDR affiliate level, judicatories, and varied member skills and backgrounds
- Committee Membership goals: 4 chief executive officers (or senior leadership staff) from different geographic areas and different affiliate level organizations; 2 coordinators (or recently retired coordinators); 2 judicatory representatives (1 bishop and 1 district president); executive director, ELCA Church in Society program unit; executive director, LCMS World Relief and Human Care
- Staggered terms of members (2 or 3 years long)
- Includes an LDR purpose statement, easy to understand and communicate with others in the

- network
- Advisory committee member recruitment procedures offer stable yet renewing leadership
- The LDR network receives regular communication from the advisory committee
- Subcommittees take on specific tasks
- Advisory committee work is guided by a long-range plan

**B. ADVOCACY FOR LEGAL PROTECTION AND FAIRNESS
Minneapolis Area Synod (3G)**

[Memorials Category E1] [CA.09.03.09i]

WHEREAS, the Lutheran church has a tradition of opposing discrimination codified in law, even during times of social dislocation; and

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has written social statements to guide efforts to advocate for the protection of legal rights and has developed an advocacy arm to carry out the pragmatic efforts at legislative change; and

WHEREAS, the social statement on human sexuality notes that “laws have a direct impact on patterns of social trust within households and networks of kinship” and that “victims of sexual violation must be able to rely on public institutions for intervention”; and

WHEREAS, the proposed social statement on human sexuality notes that “certain laws and economic realities . . . may create extreme economic hardship for some, including older adults, who desire to be legally married” and asks that the ELCA advocate for “altering laws and the factors that create a significant impediment for such people to be married”; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Minneapolis Area Synod, meeting in assembly, memorialize the 2009 Churchwide Assembly to call on bishops, ministries, and members of this church to advocate for laws that prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity and for laws that define violence on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity as a hate crime; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Minneapolis Area Synod, meeting in assembly, memorialize the 2009 Churchwide Assembly to direct appropriate churchwide units and to encourage synods, congregations, and members of this church to advocate for laws and regulations that permit widows and widowers to marry without losing retirement benefits.

Churchwide Assembly Action

The 2009 Churchwide Assembly voted [CA.09.03.09i]:

To thank the Minneapolis Area Synod for connecting faith to issues in public life;

To acknowledge the importance of the issues raised and to note background information provided related to the current and recent work done on hate-crime sentencing and employment non-discrimination;

To affirm the historical concern of ELCA social policy for advocacy related to human and civil rights and equal protection under the law and to encourage the members of this church to advocate in keeping with this tradition;

To request that, as financial and staff resources permit, the Church in Society unit study the issue of the potential loss of retirement and related benefits for older adults who desire to marry; and

To acknowledge that the Church in Society unit advocates on these issues based on this church's social policy statements related to human and civil rights.

Church Council Referral

At its November 2009 meeting, the Church Council voted [CC09.11.87] to refer the memorial to the Church in Society unit.

Response from the Church in Society unit

The Church in Society unit has not been able to date to “study the issue of the potential loss of retirement and related benefits for older adults who desire to marry” as requested in the 2009 Churchwide Assembly recommendation to the Minneapolis Area Synod memorial (Advocacy for Legal Protection and Fairness [CA.09.03.09i]) due to limited staff resources.

Church Council Action:

[En Bloc]

To authorize a delay in the response of the Church in Society unit to the memorial of the Minneapolis Area Synod related to legal protection and fairness regarding the potential loss of retirement and related benefits for older adults who desire to marry;

To request that a report and possible recommendations be brought to the November 2010 meeting of the ELCA Church Council; and

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

C. WILLS AND LIVING TRUSTS

[Motion E] [CA09.06.39b]

WHEREAS, all of our possessions have been provided to us through our Heavenly Father and appropriate stewardship of those financial resources is a Biblical call; and

WHEREAS, it has been estimated that about 70% of Americans have not prepared a will or living trust; and

WHEREAS, ELCA members have accumulated substantial financial resources available for “end of life” disposition through beneficiary designation and traditional bequest methods; and

WHEREAS, appropriate stewardship of these assets includes consideration of charitable disposition; and

WHEREAS, the missions of various ELCA ministries can be greatly enhanced by the receipt of “end of life stewardship” gifts for either annual needs or endowment support; be it therefore

RESOLVED, that this assembly request that the ELCA develop a focused, long-term churchwide program to include publicity, education, survey response forms and any such other means to encourage all members to prepare an updated will, along with updated beneficiary designations and furthermore to encourage all members to consider including one or more ELCA-affiliated ministries in their estate plan; and be it further

RESOLVED, that each member of this and subsequent assemblies, all rostered pastors, staff members and leaders of the ELCA be encouraged to undertake such planning and be leaders by example in this effort.

Churchwide Assembly Action

The 2009 Churchwide Assembly voted [CA09.06.39b]:

To refer Motion E to the Development Services unit with a report to be brought to the Church Council.

Church Council Referral

At its November 2009 meeting, the Church Council voted [CC09.11.87] to refer the memorial to the Development Services unit.

Response from the ELCA Foundation and Development Services unit

Every year, ELCA congregations and ministries are blessed with bequests through wills and trusts. Since 2006, the ELCA churchwide organization has received an average of \$11 million annually in bequest income to support ELCA and related ministries, both directly and through endowments. The potential for increasing bequest income for all the ministries of the ELCA is significant. Research indicates that the ELCA should be able to generate \$20 million to \$25 million annually once a comprehensive bequest program is solidly in place.

Planning for a churchwide wills and bequests

campaign was initiated through the ELCA Foundation and Development Services unit in 2008. For the purpose of increasing support of ELCA churchwide ministries and as a service to every ELCA congregation and member, the ELCA Foundation will introduce a national wills and bequests campaign, beginning with the launch of Kalos—the ELCA Legacy Society in 2010.

The purpose of the legacy society is to recognize and celebrate the commitments of those who have remembered the churchwide ministries in their will or estate plan. Inspiration for Kalos—the ELCA Legacy Society is found in Mark 14:3-9, the story of the anointing of Jesus at Bethany: “She has performed a good service—a beautiful thing—for me . . . what she has done will be told in remembrance of her.”

The campaign will begin with invitations for charter membership through Easter 2011. Invitations will be extended to the ELCA Church Council, the churchwide leadership staff, the Conference of Bishops and synod staff, the ELCA Foundation Trustees, and known bequest donors.

In 2011, the ELCA Foundation hopes to introduce the wills and bequests campaign across this church. The campaign will do the following:

- Encourage ELCA members to provide for loved ones through a valid estate plan;
- Motivate and assist ELCA members to remember this church in their wills or trusts;
- Create a greater awareness of the importance of legacy gifts to ELCA congregations, synods, the churchwide organization, and other ministries;
- Assist every congregation to develop its own bequest program.

Elements of the campaign will include the following:

- Encouraging and developing resources for a bequest program in every ELCA congregation, linked to the ELCA Foundation services;
- Providing a basic Web site template for congregations concerning wills and bequests;
- Creating an online bequest manual available through the ELCA Foundation Web site;
- Assisting congregations in planning an annual Bequest Sunday to educate, motivate, and invite members to remember this church in their estate plans.

The ELCA Foundation will fund the 2010 costs for the launch of the Kalos Society from its operating reserve. The introduction of the comprehensive Wills and Bequest Campaign beginning in 2011 will require approximately \$150,000–\$200,000 annually. The source of these funds is currently undetermined.

Church Council Action: [En Bloc]

To receive with gratitude the response of the ELCA Foundation and Development Services unit to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly motion related to wills and living trusts;

To anticipate the launching of Kalos—the ELCA Legacy Society in 2010 and a wills and bequests campaign in 2011;

To encourage strongly members of the Church Council, Conference of Bishops, synodical leaders, and other leaders of this church to become charter members of Kalos—the ELCA Legacy Society; and

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

D. PROPOSED STUDY ON “BOUND CONSCIENCE”

[Motion F] [CA09.06.39c]

RESOLVED, that the 2009 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America direct the Church Council to request the Office of Studies in the Church in Society program unit, in collaboration with the Lutheran Teaching Theologians of the ELCA, to undertake a study of the concept of “bound conscience,” focusing specifically on the historical understanding, the present meaning, and the institutional significance of “bound conscience,” and to disseminate widely through appropriate mechanisms the results of this study throughout the ELCA.

Churchwide Assembly Action

In accordance with its Rules of Organization and Procedure concerning proposed studies, the 2009 Churchwide Assembly voted [CA09.06.39c]:

To refer Motion F to the Church Council to receive the evaluation of the Research and Evaluation section and to determine whether the requested study should be initiated.

Church Council Action [November 2009]

In response to Motion F and a letter from the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod Council, the Church Council voted at its November 2009 meeting [CC09.11.82]:

To receive with deep gratitude the letter from the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod Council;

To acknowledge the painful theological, moral, and institutional struggle of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod Council, congregations, and members as a result of the decisions of the 2009 Churchwide Assembly on the social statement on human sexuality and the

recommendation on ministry policies;

To honor the Synod Council’s efforts to communicate this struggle and practice leadership in the face of disagreement and to encourage its “effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3);

To note that many of the concerns of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod Council are shared by others in this church and are acknowledged in the work of the Task Force for the ELCA Studies on Sexuality;

To emphasize this church’s commitment to recognize the conviction of members who believe that this church should not call or roster people in a publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationship as it implements the decisions of the 2009 Churchwide Assembly on the social statement on human sexuality and the recommendation on ministry policies;

To affirm that Scripture, the Confessions, and theology are foundational in this church’s decision-making;

To acknowledge that the scriptural, theological, and confessional foundations that underlie the decisions of the assembly, as well as the concept of “bound conscience,” continue to require explanation, theological exploration, and deeper and broader conversation, and more extensive communication;

To respond, therefore, to the request of Motion F of the 2009 Churchwide Assembly “to undertake a study of the concept of ‘bound conscience’” and “to disseminate widely through appropriate mechanisms the results of this study” with a commitment to a theological conversation on the foundations of this church’s decision-making, the results of that conversation to be disseminated to this church;

To refer the conversation to the Office of the Presiding Bishop, in collaboration with the Church in Society program unit, the Vocation and Education program unit, and Lutheran teaching theologians of the ELCA;

To anticipate the active involvement of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod and the rest of this church in the conversation; and

To request that the secretary of this church inform the synod of this action, providing the background information above as part of the response of the Church Council to the Synod Council’s letter.

Response of the Office of the Presiding Bishop

Significant questions and concerns exist within the ELCA around respect for people whose consciences are bound to different understandings of the meaning of Scripture and the Confessions (i.e., “bound conscience”), particularly with regard to lifelong same-gender relationships.

These questions and concerns require sustained attention as the ELCA deepens its conversations related to the idea of respect for consciences as used in *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* and in resolutions related to ministry policies as approved by the 2009 Churchwide Assembly.

Related actions underscore the need for sustained attention: a resolution at the Churchwide Assembly requested a “study of bound conscience” and a post-Churchwide Assembly letter from the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod to the Church Council sought clarity about this concept. A portion of the Church Council’s response provides direction for the future:

To respond, therefore, to the request of Motion F of the 2009 Churchwide Assembly “to undertake a study of the concept of ‘bound conscience’” and “to disseminate widely through appropriate mechanisms the results of this study” with a commitment to a theological conversation on the foundations of this church’s decision-making, the results of that conversation to be disseminated to this church.

The Church Council requested that the Office of the Presiding Bishop develop a report in response to the actions. A working group brought a proposal for this commitment to conversation for consideration by the ELCA Church Council in April 2010 based on two objectives:

1. Develop a proposal for review by the ELCA Church Council (April 2010) in response to Motion F of the 2009 Churchwide Assembly related to “respect for people whose consciences are bound to different understandings of Scripture” and “with a commitment to a theological conversation on the foundations of this church’s decision-making, the results of that conversation to be disseminated to this church”; and
2. Invite helpful and constructive engagement with the issue.

Church Council Action:

To receive with gratitude the report of the working group in response to Motion F of the 2009 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church;

To acknowledge the objectives of its recommendations:

- **Respect for people whose consciences are bound to different understandings of Scripture;**
- **Commitment to a theological conversation on the foundations of this church’s decision-making, the results of that conversation to be disseminated to this church;**
- **An invitation to helpful and constructive engagement with the issue of respect for people whose consciences are bound to different understandings of Scripture;**

To anticipate deeper and broader sustained attention to these matters through:

- **Conversation of key leadership groups throughout this church, including the Conference of Bishops, the Convocation of Teaching Theologians, the Convocation of Lutheran Ethicists, and the gathering of synodical vice presidents, as well as in gatherings of rostered people in synods and conferences, text studies, synod assemblies, campus ministries, congregational studies, and colleges and universities.**
- **Publications, such as the *Journal of Lutheran Ethics*, and possible resource books focused on presentations from the events cited above.**
- **A bibliography or resource listing on the ELCA Web site, including documents written from a range of perspectives.**
- **Encouragement for helpful and constructive dialogue in a variety of settings (e.g., “sponsored conversations,” town hall forums, seminars, workshops, online conversations).**

THEOLOGICAL CONVERSATION PROPOSAL

April 2010

Significant questions and concerns exist within the ELCA around respect for people whose consciences are bound to different understandings of the meaning of Scripture and the Confessions (i.e., “bound conscience”), particularly—but not exclusively—with regard to lifelong same-gender relationships.

These questions and concerns require sustained attention as the ELCA deepens its conversations related to the idea of respect for consciences as used in *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* and in the four resolutions related to ministry policies as approved by the 2009 Churchwide Assembly.

Related actions underscore the need for sustained attention: a resolution at the Churchwide Assembly requested a “study of bound conscience” and a post-Churchwide Assembly letter from the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod to the Church Council sought clarity

about this concept. A portion of the Church Council's response provides direction for the future:

To respond, therefore, to the request of Motion F of the 2009 Churchwide Assembly "to undertake a study of the concept of 'bound conscience'" and "to disseminate widely through appropriate mechanisms the results of this study" with a commitment to a theological conversation on the foundations of this church's decision-making, the results of that conversation to be disseminated to this church.

The Church Council requested that the Office of the Presiding Bishop develop a report in response to the actions. A working group¹ brought a proposal for this commitment to conversation for consideration by the Church Council in April 2010 based on two objectives:

- Develop a proposal for review by the ELCA Church Council (April 2010) in response to Motion F of the 2009 Churchwide Assembly related to "respect for people whose consciences are bound to different understandings of Scripture" and "with a commitment to a theological conversation on the foundations of this church's decision-making, the results of that conversation to be disseminated to this church"; and
- Invite helpful and constructive engagement with the issue.

Sustained attention

The working group anticipates that sustained attention through theological exploration, conceptual clarification, extensive communication, and deeper and broader conversation about the meaning of "respect for people whose consciences are bound to different understandings of Scripture and Confessions" and "theological conversation on the foundations of this church's decision-making" will suggest topics for further discussion.

Means

The working group has suggested several means to provide deeper and broader sustained attention within the ELCA, including sustained attention through both existing events and new initiatives:

1. Gatherings of key leadership groups

Goal: to encourage discussion throughout the ELCA by building on already-existing events.

- *Convocation of Teaching Theologians* (2010 &

2011): The topic for 2010 is already set but those who want to gather (and/or prepare papers) on this topic will be invited to do so. The steering committee is open both to having this topic fit into a sequence and to eliciting conversation among members. Bishop Ralph Jones will attend the August 2010 meeting on behalf of the Conference of Bishops. The topic for the 2011 convocation will be determined in August 2010.

- *Conference of Bishops Academy* (January 2011): Two committees of the Conference of Bishops, which met March 4-9, 2010, discussed plans for the Academy in 2011. The Synodical-Churchwide Relations Committee sent its suggestions to the Academy and Bishops' Formation Committee, which recommended to the full Conference of Bishops that the topic for the 2011 Academy be the role of the authority of Scripture in the decision-making processes of the ELCA, especially as it relates to tradition, experience, and reason. Although there is not funding for all of the members of the teaching theologians to be present, a way is being sought so that some of them can attend. As the committee seeks the names of people to make presentations at the Academy, it is hoped that some of the presentations will address, at least in part, the topic of "bound conscience," as requested by Motion F from the 2009 Churchwide Assembly.
- *Convocation of Lutheran Ethicists* (January 2012): The topic for the 2011 convocation has been selected, but the topic—or some aspect of it—will be suggested for 2012.
- *Gathering of Synodical Vice Presidents* (2011): Time will be requested on the agenda for discussion of the concept of "people whose consciences are bound" as well as a workshop on this topic.

Other possibilities include the gathering of synodical assistants to bishops (2011), the Women of the ELCA Triennial (2011), the Youth Gathering (2012), and gatherings of Lutheran Women Theologians and Graduate Students (annual).

2. Publications

Goal: To provide access to both new and existing print and electronic resources.

- *Journal of Lutheran Ethics*: the November 2010 issue will be devoted to "respect for consciences." It was noted that the events

¹ Bp. Michael Burk; Mr. John Emery; Pr. Ruth Hamilton; Pr. Marcus Kunz; Pr. Rebecca Larson; Pr. Heather Lubold; Bp. Jerry Mansholt; Dr. Susan McArver; Ms. Myrna Sheie (convener); Dr. Robin Steinke; Pr. Jonathan Strandjord; Pr. Roger Willer.

described above may give direction for the essays to be included. The Theological and Ethical Concerns Committee also discussed conversations “on the ground” in synods and possible topics for the November 2010 issue of the *Journal of Lutheran Ethics* related to “respect for bound conscience” and the commitment to theological conversation on this church’s decision-making.

- The Association of Teaching Theologians often publishes a book of essays based on convocation lectures.
- Publication of other documents and resources online on the ELCA Web site.

3. Other venues for helpful and constructive engagement

Goal: To draw on the work of theologians, both lay and clergy, and invite broad and deep engagement by ELCA congregations and individual members.

- Town Hall Forum(s) with panel of presenters and opportunity for dialogue
- Bibliography and resources, including helpful and constructive materials, presentations, and processes from a variety of perspectives
- Brief document on “how the ELCA makes decisions” (Office of the Secretary)
- Possible Web site (i.e., JLE Web site or separate): include presentations, bibliography, and resources.
- Presentations (online) through ELCA Communications and/or seminaries, colleges, or universities.
- “Sponsored conversations,” including seminars, forums, online conversations
- Ongoing events: gatherings of rostered people in synods and conferences; text studies; synod assemblies; campus ministries; First Call Theological Education; text studies; colleges and universities.

4. Budget

Goal: To bring a specific proposal to the Executive for Administration for grant support from the churchwide strategic initiatives fund.

- **Summer intern** (summer 2010) to research and develop bibliography and resource listings (both print and electronic) representing the divergence of opinion and to work with ELCA Web staff to develop a Website on elca.org
- **Funding for Town Hall Forum** (or other venue for discussion)
- **Travel costs** for bishops to attend Convocation

of Teaching Theologians (one in 2010; 5-6 in 2011) and for teaching theologians to attend 2011 Conference of Bishops Academy, pending review by related committees (agenda, academy, theological and ethical concerns), approval, and invitation by the conference.