

FARMERS IN CRISIS

Church Council Action

CC98.11.56



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

Adopted by the 1998 Church Council.

Whereas

Foreign economic problems have reduced substantially U.S. farm exports in recent years; and

Severe weather conditions in the Red River Valley of the North during the past five years and a major drought in 1998 in Texas and Oklahoma have adversely affected agricultural income in those regions; and

Depressed market prices for many commodities, some of which are the lowest since the 1940s, have reduced income below the cost of production in many circumstances; and

The costs of crop production have increased at the same time that a declining share of the food dollar is retained by farmers; and

Decreases in the number of family farms have occurred in some areas; and

Lending institutions are unable or are reluctant to provide needed financing for ongoing farm operations; and

Unintended consequences of the 1996 Congressional farm-programs reforms have jeopardized the existence of many communities and their farms; and

A rural desk has been established in the churchwide office to respond to these concerns; therefore, be it

Resolved

RESOLVED, that we call upon all expressions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, in the light of these circumstances, to listen, learn, and pray with and for people and their future in America's rural communities and their farms; and be it further

RESOLVED, the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America call upon the Administration and Congress to:

1. Acknowledge the severity of the plight of farmers;
2. Enact measures to restore some security for those in greatest need;

3. Begin immediately to re-examine policy changes that may have played a role in causing the present crisis; and
4. Take such steps as may be necessary to forestall further critical farm losses; and be it further

RESOLVED, that federal and state governments be encouraged to provide "beginning farmer loans and grants" in response to situations of need; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the appropriate units of the ELCA churchwide organization prepare materials to interpret for members the scope of the farm crisis affecting so many Lutherans and others and to indicate ways in which people may help meet this crisis.