



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

Sierra Pacific Synod Bishop's Report to the Church

After listening to the concerns of this church, careful review of the report of the Listening Team and other accompanying documents, consultation with outside legal counsel, and prayerful reflection and discernment, I have decided not to bring disciplinary charges against Bishop Rohrer. While I am not inaugurating formal disciplinary processes at this time, there remain enough serious concerns that influence Bishop Rohrer's ability to remain impactful in their role that I have asked Bishop Rohrer for their resignation, which I believe to be in the best interest of all parties involved.

There are profound issues regarding the circumstances surrounding the end of Nelson Rabell-González' call to the Misión Latina Luterana community on the Feast Day of Our Lady of Guadalupe, a day of such importance to that congregation and community. My decision was not made hastily nor without much deep consideration but is necessitated by a careful analysis of both the totality of information available and the disciplinary criteria and processes as described in the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA*. Unwise decisions—while they may be insensitive or in hindsight seen as misguided—are not automatically grounds for discipline. A high burden of proof exists to translate allegations into substantive findings that can be presented to a disciplinary body. In this situation that high burden was not able to be met. Moreover, disciplinary proceedings that would be likely to arrive at a similar conclusion as my review are time-consuming and risk delay in the necessary healing processes that must occur.

I do not believe that the circumstances of these unfortunate events and Bishop Rohrer's involvement in them rise to the level of formal discipline against Bishop Rohrer. However, I believe that Bishop Rohrer has lost the trust and confidence of many constituents, both within and without the Sierra Pacific Synod. I have asked Bishop Rohrer to attend their assembly, speak and listen to their constituents, and give this the prayerful consideration it deserves after which I will expect their response. I hope Bishop Rohrer will conclude, as I have, that they can no longer effectively serve in their role as bishop.

There are issues of broken trust at all levels, from individual members and communities to the broader church, that will need work to repair. I know this decision will not bring closure to individuals on either side, but I believe this is a necessary step so that we can move forward and focus now on additional ways to facilitate healing.



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While the report of the Listening Team was a confidential report to me, they, along with many others, make suggestions which I intend to act upon and/or explore.

1. I plan to make a visit to the Sierra Pacific Synod within the next month and will request time with the people of Iglesia Luterana Sta. María Peregrina (formerly known as Misión Latina Luterana), the Synod Council, and synod staff to consider steps toward healing.
2. Support the work of the newly formed task force charged with reviewing the current process for discipline and its impact on historically marginalized groups.
3. Plan ongoing anti-racism training for the churchwide staff and the Conference of Bishops, as well as all rostered ministers within this church.
4. Launch a similar program focused on cultural sensitivity training.
5. Promote the work of the churchwide organization related to racial justice, diversity and inclusion—including that of our Executive for People and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

This church is better because of the diversity of voices who unite as a community of faith. We respect and honor the diversity among us and we seek full participation of all in the life and work of this church. We strive to address the ways that all forms of injustice limit participation and harm people, communities, and the whole body of Christ. That work will never be done, but together, we must continue to do and be better.

In Christ,

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America