



Report of the Vice President

So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. (2 Corinthians 5:17–20)

How blessed we are to celebrate 25 years of ministry under the assembly theme of “Always being made new,” certainly acknowledging the past but definitely looking toward the future. The old has gone, and the new has come. We are being made new, waking each day to a new life made possible by the love of God through God’s Son, Jesus Christ. We are no longer strangers, competitors, or enemies to each other. We are one in the body of Christ, sharing the rich diversity of our experiences, wisdom, and abilities in order to serve as Christ’s missionaries. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, “So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!” How wonderful to know we have a clean slate to work with each and every day! There is no better hope for the future—our personal futures and the future of the whole church—than to know that we are not held by the past and are free to explore the life ahead of us.

As vice president and chair of the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, I can tell you the council has had its eyes on the future, echoing the assembly theme of “Always being made new.” And, I can also state that these past two years have been the busiest in my time as your vice president. I want to thank you for the opportunity to serve and to thank the council members for their hard work and dedication as well.

I would like to share a few items of business I think are worth special mention. As you already know or will hear during the assembly, we are faced with the challenge of the decrease in Mission Support from congregations and the decrease in the percentage sharing of Mission Support between synods and the churchwide organization. In my time on both Church Council and as vice president, many attempts have been made to address the pattern or set of patterns that allow synods to receive and distribute financial resources to support the whole ministry of this church. It is a challenge that is not going to be easily resolved.

One opportunity to grow current support is the 25th Anniversary Campaign. While this proposal came from the Mission Funding Task Force that met in the summer of 2012, the idea had been discussed and researched in previous years. However, before 2012, keeping in mind the financial crisis that shook the world economy, it was not possible to move a campaign proposal forward.

In November 2012, the Church Council endorsed the campaign in concept and authorized further work to forward a recommendation to the 2013 Churchwide Assembly. Part of this concept was the 25th Anniversary Campaign of \$190 million over a five-year period that will secure funding for ministries of the ELCA. This campaign gives us an opportunity to recognize and honor the 25th anniversary of this church while making a transformational impact on shared ministries. In April of this year, after dialogue with the Conference of Bishops as well as with other partners, leaders, and ELCA members, the Church Council enthusiastically supported this major fundraising effort for this church. I can assure you that all aspects of the campaign were thoroughly discussed including the timing, in the event that other campaigns might possibly be ongoing. An anniversary is a great time to give thanks for the generosity of members over the past 25 years, and we cannot afford to let an opportunity like this pass by. It is also an opportunity to remind members about the impact they are already making and the work that this church does in their local communities and the world. I hope that my fellow Lutherans will join us in supporting this endeavor. Together, we can truly respond to the needs of others at home and abroad.

Also during the time since our last Churchwide Assembly, meetings of the three leadership tables of this church have taken place. The three leadership groups are the Executive Committee of the Church Council, Executive Committee of

the Conference of Bishops, and the Administrative Team of the churchwide organization. These leaders met to discuss and brainstorm how we can better lead together as we discern God's will for the future of the ELCA. Rarely do all three of these leadership groups meet face to face at the same time. It was an ambitious undertaking, given the schedules of all involved, but it was time well spent. I believe the meetings of the three leadership tables give all of us a better understanding of each group's challenges and commitments. We look forward to more open communication between these leaders, cooperating to making the church new everyday.

I was fortunate enough to travel with members of the National Leadership Team for the ELCA Malaria Campaign to Africa last March. My group visited Zambia, while the others traveled into Zimbabwe and Malawi. What I witnessed was indeed a transformational experience for me. Rarely do we get a chance to see for ourselves people living in such basic conditions. Then again, rarely do we see such pure joy and genuine pleasure in worship that involves no special buildings, robes, musical instruments, or furnishings. The people I encountered were amazing in their spirit. Though they had little to share, their hospitality was second to none. It was gratifying to see that all our efforts through the ELCA Malaria Campaign are making a difference in so many lives. Mosquito nets, testing materials, and medication are only part of the success of this campaign. The sharing of resources and the sharing of the love of God goes a very long way for both parties. I came home much richer for the experience.

Finally, the Church Council approved the Churchwide Assembly process for churchwide officer elections. The results of that work can be found in your assembly materials in Part Sixteen of the Rules of Organization and Procedure for the 2013 Churchwide Assembly. (See Section I of the *Pre-Assembly Report*.) However, this action also includes a pre-assembly discernment process titled "A Conversation Regarding the Election of Churchwide Officers." (See Section VI of the *Pre-Assembly Report*.) It is intended for use during orientation meetings with voting members of the Churchwide Assembly. It is also included in your materials with the hope that it will encourage conversation and discernment throughout this church regarding the upcoming officer elections. Again, the council is looking forward to the future and is concentrating on always being made new.

I am very grateful for the opportunity to serve you and the entire church, just as I am grateful for serving with such fine people. I especially want to give thanks to our officers: Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson, Secretary David D. Swartling, and Treasurer Linda O. Norman. They make serving this church a real pleasure.

Every month, every week, every day I am being made new by this experience given to me. God has shown me amazing paths for the future, paths that are faith-building and life renewing. I pledge to continue serving as your vice president to the best of my ability for the next three years. God bless you and grant you joy of spirit and hope for the future, knowing that your life begins anew each and every day.

Thanks be to God!

Mr. Carlos E. Peña, *vice president*