

En Bloc Items

A. Approval of the Minutes

The minutes of the [March 2020](#), [April 8, 2020](#), May 6, 2020, and [May 13, 2020](#) meetings of the Church Council has been provided to council members electronically on My.ELCA.org. Minutes for meetings held in executive session were added to the protocol file in the Office of the Secretary.

The minutes of the council's Executive Committee meetings on [March 5, 2020](#), [April 6, 2020](#), [April 14, 2020](#), and [May 21, 2020](#) have been provided electronically on My.ELCA.org to members. Minutes for meetings held in executive session have been added to the protocol file in the Office of the Secretary.

Please provide in writing for the Executive for Office of the Secretary Administration any notations or typographical errors in the distributed text of the minutes. Proper corrections will be entered into the protocol copies of the minutes. Such corrections need not be raised in the plenary session in connection with the approval of the minutes.

CC ACTION [EN BLOC]

Recommended:

To approve the minutes of the March 2020, April 8, 2020, May 6, 2020, and May 13, 2020 meetings of the Church Council; and

To ratify actions of the council's Executive Committee as indicated in the minutes of the March 5, 2020, April 6, 2020, April 14, 2020 and May 21, 2020 meetings.

B. Election to Committee on Appeals

Secretary Sue Rothmeyer has declared a vacancy on the Committee on Appeals. **The vitae for the nominee can be found [here](#).**

CC ACTION [EN BLOC]

Recommended:

To elect to the Committee on Appeals to fill a vacancy with a term ending in 2025: Ms. Lana Obie; and

To authorize the Executive Committee to elect members to fill vacancies in the Committee on Appeals.

C. Synod Constitution Amendments

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, many synods are considering the possibility of holding synod assemblies by means of remote communication. The ability to do so depends to a large extent upon the state law of the state in which the synod is incorporated.

The synods of Region Three are incorporated in Minnesota. Minnesota law allows remote meetings of members where authorized by the corporation's governing documents. MN STAT 317A.450. Unfortunately, the governing documents of the synods of Region Three do not include this authorization.

Pursuant to MN STAT 317A.447, the Eastern North Dakota Synod sought and received written consent from its members (i.e., the voting members from the last synod assembly, who serve until the next synod assembly, see S7.21.01) to authorize its synod council to amend the synod's articles of

incorporation to permit remote meetings of the synod assembly. The actions are [here](#). Pursuant to 10.11 of the ELCA Constitution, that action requires ratification of the Church Council.

Other synods in Region Three, as well as synods in other regions, are considering similar action which will not be complete by June 24. Accordingly, they are requesting the Church Council approve substantially identical revisions to their articles in advance, which would avoid the necessity of multiple Church Council meetings. (Note: many states authorize remote meetings without requiring provisions in the corporation's governing documents, so most synods will not need to go through this process.)

CC ACTION [EN BLOC]

Recommended:

To ratify the following amendments to the Articles of Incorporation of the Eastern North Dakota Synod Constitution:

Article XV As determined by the Synod Council, a meeting of the voting members of this corporation identified in Article VIII may, pursuant to Minnesota Statutes Section 317A.450, be held solely by one or more means of remote communication.

CC ACTION [EN BLOC]

Recommended:

To ratify, in advance, pursuant to 10.11 of the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA*, substantially equivalent amendments to the Articles of Incorporation or constitutions of any other synods to permit remote meetings, that are properly adopted pursuant to applicable law.

D. Committee Chair Elections

The chairs of the Church Council's Budget and Finance, Legal and Constitutional Review, Planning and Evaluation and Program and Services committees serve on the council's Executive Committee. Due to the pending resignations of Pr. Chad Huebner, chair of Planning and Evaluation Committee, and Ms. Emma Wagner, chair of Program and Services Committee, the committees will hold elections to elect new chairs.

CC ACTION [EN BLOC]

Recommended:

To declare that the newly elected chairs of the Planning and Evaluation Committee and the Program and Services Committee shall be members of the Executive Committee of the Church Council.

E. Appointment to ELCA Task Force on Government and Civic Engagement

The 2019 Churchwide Assembly authorized the [development of a social statement](#) on the topic of "government, civic engagement and the relationship of church and state." (CA19.05.29) One of the first steps in the process is to identify a task force. An ELCA task force provides primary leadership for the statement's development, using an established process of widespread participation in theological and moral deliberation. Members of the ELCA are sought who can bring a range and diversity of knowledge, insight, political perspective, and competencies related to civic life in

contemporary church and society. More information about the task force membership can be found [here](#).

In "[Policies and Procedures of the ELCA for Addressing Social Concerns](#)," it states, "A task force is identified to develop a proposed social statement that includes members with specialized knowledge and those directly affected by the issue. Membership in the task force is approved by the Church Council or its Executive Committee." (pg. 15)

At its May 21 meeting, the Executive Committee appointed the following individuals to serve on the ELCA Task Force on Church, State and Civic Participation: Ms. Cate Anderson Duin, Pr. Lamar Bailey, Pr. Douglas Barclay, Pr. Anthony Bateza, Mr. Scott Inglesbe, Ms. Kristi Jasberg Robinson, Ms. Phyllis Johnson, Bp. Laurie Jungling, Deacon Mindy Makant, Mr. Kyle Pasewark, Bp. Matthew Riegel, Pr. Juan Carlos Ruiz, Pr. Niveen Sarras, Mr. Christopher Sellers, Ms. Cheryl Semmel, Mr. Paul Torkelson, and Ms. Susan Wefald. [EC20.05.18]

You can find a brief overview of the selection process and its goals as well as basic information for the previous individuals appointed [here](#). One more person has been identified to serve: Ms. Isabell Retamoza. She is a staff associate with National Women Lawyer's Association. Isabell is a lay woman, person of color, 24 years old, and in the Pacifica Synod.

CC ACTION [EN BLOC]

Recommended:

To appoint the following individual to serve on the ELCA Task Force on Church, State and Civic Participation: Ms. Isabell Retamoza.

1 A social message on...

2 **Government and Civic Engagement in the United States:** 3 **Discipleship in a Democracy**

4 ~~*"It would therefore be fitting if the coat of arms of every upright prince were emblazoned with*~~
5 ~~*a loaf of bread instead of a lion...."*~~¹ (Martin Luther in the Large Catechism, Book of Concord.)

8 **I. Introduction**

9 Lutherans care about government because it is a gift from God intended for the safety and
10 flourishing of human life.² Yet too often and in too
11 many ways, this gift has been abused.

12 There is a spirit of broad dissatisfaction, mistrust,
13 protest,³ and even contempt of government in the
14 United States. According to a Pew survey, the
15 percentage of U.S. citizens who trust the federal
16 government to do what is right all or most of the
17 time fell steadily from 77% in 1964 to 17% in
18 2019.⁴

We Lutherans are grateful when government functions as God's gift we affirm that government is indispensable for safeguarding and improving human life and creation..

- 19 • Government OF the people has come to be seen as distant and oppressive.
- 20 • Government BY the people has come to be seen as increasingly controlled by a small
21 minority of elites.
- 22 • Government FOR the people has come to be seen as unjust in who benefits and who
23 pays.

24 This concern about dysfunctional government at federal, state, and local levels government
25 is widespread. Some experience government as a threat to personal freedoms when laws
26 are enforced selectively or not at all. Some experience government as a danger to the safety
27 and well-being of communities, particularly when law enforcement and the court system
28 distribute justice unequally. Some see government violating moral norms by insufficiently
29 protecting human life, or by giving some people unfair advantage over others.

30 Some experience government as a threat to financial well-being, as when taxes rise or
31 overly burdensome regulations are imposed. Anger and mistrust may follow when
32 governmental structures are used to enrich the few at the expense of everyone else. Some
33 see government as ineffectual, as when it lets infrastructure decay. Some see government
34 as inept when it fails to respond adequately to natural disasters and local, regional, or
35 worldwide crises.

36 Yet government remains God’s gift because it is intended to do what churches, families,
37 individuals, and businesses cannot do on their own: protect and coordinate the well-being
38 of individuals, communities, and creation. Some ELCA members object to the church
39 involving itself in government matters, in ‘politics.’ Taking partisan stances is not the
40 church’s role but ‘politics’ has to do with negotiating how the benefits and burdens of living
41 in a society are shared. Politics is key to self-governance.

42 To understand how important government is, consider life without the safety and services
43 that a just and well-functioning government typically provides:

44 At the local level, consider

- 45 • drinking water... without purification
- 46 • human sewage ... without treatment
- 47 • resources and packaging for consumption ... without garbage removal
- 48 • public safety ... without accountability
- 49 • childhood ... without schools

50 At the state level, consider

- 51 • travel ... without highways or trains
- 52 • health care ... without regulation
- 53 • wildfires ... without firefighters
- 54 • crime ... without recourse to law enforcement, courts, and prisons
- 55 • natural spaces ... without protection
- 56 • education ... without state universities

57 At the federal level, consider

- 58 • old age ... without some form of social support such as Social Security or Medicare
- 59 • food ... without inspection
- 60 • drugs ... without certification of their safety and effectiveness
- 61 • poverty... without some form of income-support, job-training options, etc.
- 62 • immigration ... without any controls or any lawful process and protections for those
63 who seek entry
- 64 • agriculture ... without price supports or subsidies
- 65 • flying ... without air traffic control
- 66 • banking ... without deposit insurance or any regulations
- 67 • national security ... without armed forces or homeland security programs
- 68 • natural disasters ... without aid for rescue and reconstruction
- 69 • technological and medical innovation ... without federal research support
- 70 • civil liberties ... without judicial protection

71 Many people experience these benefits to the point where they are taken for granted.

72 Others experience the harm that results when government fails—as when the residents of

73 Flint, Mich., do not have access to clean water or the residents of New Orleans, coastal New
74 Jersey and Puerto Rico received insufficient government help after natural disasters.
75 Others point to times when government inflicts suffering on asylum-seekers and other
76 immigrants, or when Black women and men die at the hands of law enforcement, or when
77 government violates civil liberties.

78 ELCA social teaching,⁵ consistent with classical Lutheran thought, recognizes the ambiguity
79 that civil government at all levels can be a force for good or for evil—or most accurately,
80 *both* in some combination.

81 This realistic view of government holds in tension the failures of
82 our shared political life with the recognition that God intends for
83 government to protect all people and to enable human societies
84 to flourish. (Romans 13:1-7)⁶ This realistic view establishes a
85 fruitful middle ground between idolatrous endorsement of
86 government or its policies and cynical rejection of the good it
87 provides.

Civil government at all levels is a force for good or evil—or most accurately, *both* in some combination.

88 ELCA social teaching holds that all residents of the United States have a responsibility to
89 make government function well—not to abandon our democracy but to engage it in a spirit
90 of robust civic duty. For Lutherans, this responsibility is lived out as a calling from God,
91 expressed in the discipleship described in our baptismal promises. It is based on our
92 understanding of how God governs human society.

93 ***II. God's Two Ways of Governing***⁷

94 The Christian faith teaches that God rules all of creation. This authority expresses God's
95 single intent to foster human flourishing ~~within intertwined with God's concern for the~~
96 ~~goodness of~~ all creation. Historically, Lutherans have recognized that God's rule is
97 experienced in two distinct but interconnected ways. These two ways, ~~or two differing~~
98 ~~strategies,~~ for governing are necessary because of human sin. They have sometimes been
99 described as the "right" and the "left" hands of God.⁸ (*These terms refer strictly to*
100 *handedness, not political orientation.*)

101 Through the right hand, God instills faith in Jesus Christ to actively redeem those who
102 recognize their sin and trust God's promise. Here God acts upon the "inner," ~~or~~ ~~personal,~~
103 ~~and churchly~~ dimensions of our lives through God's promise given in Word and Sacrament.
104 Here God uses the Scriptures, prayer, sermons, worship, and human conscience to
105 transform our relationship with God and thereby with each other.

106 God's right hand conveys the tangible power of God's love and forgiveness to people of
107 faith, which stirs us to forgive others, to express mutual love and care, and to strive for
108 justice. Earthly government has no role in the work of saving us from sin. Only God can
109 bring about the fundamental change of heart that is true faith.

110 At the same time, God's left hand operates in the "outer" social,
111 political, and economic world. Here God works through human
112 roles, structures, and institutions to foster the well-being of
113 the people and world God creates. Lutheran teaching describes
114 God's work as hidden or "masked" behind these roles,
115 structures, and institutions.

God rules through governmental roles and functions to preserve the safety and enhance the flourishing of earthly life.

116 In this "outer" world, what we see is human activity, but God's
117 intent is to work through this human activity to order and provide earthly justice and
118 enough for all. Earthly or civil government is indispensable here, standing alongside
119 church, family, and the economy as basic institutions that structure human life.

120 Our church teaches that God's two ~~strategies for or~~ ways of governing are both necessary
121 and interrelated.

122 God's left-handed ways of working through human activity are masked. However,
123 ~~Christians those~~ who trust in the forgiveness, love, and mercy they receive through God's
124 right hand are freed to participate in government and civil society as agents of God's
125 purpose for the flourishing of human lives and communities. In this way, "God's reign
126 intersects earthly life, transforming us and how we view the systems of this world."⁹

127 God's two ways of governing are interrelated through at least five vital themes. These
128 themes explain how earthly government *can be* a force for improving as well as
129 safeguarding the lives of its residents and citizens. This is true even though earthly
130 governments are fallible because of both individual actors and institutional structures.
131 While these themes do not provide a description of how our civil institutions and officials
132 always perform, they provide critical insights for Christian understanding of God's work in
133 human society.

134 **First, God's law is God's will for human life.** The law tells us to love God and our
135 neighbors (Matthew 22:37-39). This supreme demand drives Christians to recognize that
136 we are estranged from God and our neighbors. It impels us to seek forgiveness and
137 reconciliation from God's right hand, through Christ. Lutherans call this "the theological use
138 of the law."

139 At the same time Lutherans understand that God's law makes human community possible.
140 Lutherans call this "the civil use of the law." The Ten Commandments, for instance, are
141 widely recognized by many people as an ancient summary for this purpose. (Exodus 20:1-
142 17) The existence of social laws, however imperfect, reflect the activity of God's "left hand."
143 This does not mean we believe God endorses specific legislation, but that government must
144 be founded on the rule of civil law because humans are sinful.

145 The civil use of God’s law includes coercive laws, some of which are meant to deter and
146 protect against criminality. The civil use also employs coordinating laws, which structure
147 the social, economic, and political dimensions of our lives. The civil use of law is intended to
148 give concrete shape to justice and equity, insofar as they aim at the well-being of the
149 neighbor.¹⁰

150 **Second, God’s rule in both hands is marked by equality.** In God’s right-hand work *all*
151 have sinned and *all* are in equal need of redemption (Rom. 2:1-11). None can claim
152 privilege or status over another before God. The Lutheran Confessions also teach that
153 faithful people equally have the capacity to pray for and minister to each other—the
154 “priesthood of all believers.”

155 In God’s left-hand rule there is another kind of equality: *all* people have fundamental
156 dignity and rights. For Christians, as well as countless others,
157 this equality is grounded in the belief that all human beings are
158 created in God’s image.

All residents and
citizens deserve
the protection
and care that
government
provides.

159 It is true that the world is fractured along economic, political,
160 social, cultural, ethnic, racial, and gender lines. However, human
161 dignity means all persons have claim on the protection, care,
162 and concern for equity that government should provide. This is
163 true regardless of residency or citizenship status.¹¹

164 **Third, God’s right-hand rule inspires a powerful impulse of empathy.** (Empathy here
165 means the sympathetic capacity to feel for and with others.) As used in political discourse,
166 empathy includes the capacity to recognize and honor ~~the stranger~~ every human being as a
167 person with dignity and rights.¹² For the Christian empathy is one way in which love and
168 compassion (Matthew 25:31-46) may be embodied in the world of civil authority, in God’s
169 left-hand work.

170 As the gospel message of forgiveness releases individuals from incapacitating anxiety about
171 their own salvation, it opens up space in their worldly lives for a sense of vocation of
172 service to their neighbors. Empathy cannot negate the pervasive and insidious power of
173 sinful self-centeredness or the fear that lies behind it.¹³ Nevertheless, empathy helps us see
174 even strangers as neighbors—to become aware of our biases—as we try to imagine the
175 world from perspectives other than our own and act accordingly.

176 **Fourth, God has concern for justice in both ~~strategies~~ ways of working.** In the left-hand,
177 earthly justice is most fundamentally done when people get what they are due. Minimally it
178 involves fair and proportionate punishment for wrongful deeds.

179 In the left hand there is also another type of justice. Because government’s God-given role
180 is to protect and ensure the welfare of its people, its scope goes beyond individual deeds to
181 the health of the whole society. This involves, to the greatest extent possible, some measure
182 of restoration to individuals and groups who are injured by wrongful deeds.

183 While not a special Christian insight, we recognize an emphasis on this kind of restoration
184 in the earthly ministry of Jesus. Jesus protects the woman found to be committing adultery
185 and reminds those who are judging her that they are sinners just as she is (John 8:7-8).
186 Jesus heals and restores the lepers who have been largely abandoned by their community
187 (Luke 10:27-37).

188 Just as no one stands above the law, no one falls below the reach of restoration. In this
189 sense for Christians, God's right hand of forgiveness and mercy seasons our understanding
190 of justice beyond simply what one deserves and toward a more expansive view of
191 reconciled community.

192 ***Fifth, God imparts purpose to the roles of worldly governance.*** Some government
193 officials and the public they serve see such roles as means primarily for power and gain. It
194 is the proper task of the Church, however, to declare that government, citizenship, and
195 public service are gifts to be exercised with integrity and respect for the wellbeing of
196 human communities. They are not entitlements to be clawed after or obstacles to be
197 avoided or eliminated.

198 ***These interconnections*** between God's left-hand and right-hand governance are vividly
199 foreshadowed by Jesus' encounter with the Roman Centurion at Capernaum (Luke 7:1-
200 10).¹⁴ ~~But~~ Yet even in the midst of the interconnected themes despite the interconnected
201 themes, it is clear that serious tensions mark the two ways in which God governs, due to
202 the enduring power of sin. This church recognizes at least three temptations that must be
203 avoided:

204 1) The belief that God's two ways are entirely unrelated. This happens when faith is
205 privatized and seen as unrelated to God's hidden work in civil life. (This was one of the
206 ways German Christians justified support of the Nazi government.)

207 2) The dismissal of government as unnecessary or wholly evil.

208 3) The temptation to claim for any government, country, political movement, or party a
209 privileged relationship with God or special status in God's plan for redemption.

210 Lutherans adopt a more complex approach, a middle way confessing that government is *of*
211 a fallen people, *by* a fallible people, but nonetheless intended by God *for* blessing all people.

212

213 ***III. Governmental Roles and Functions—Is the Neighbor Being Served?***

214 These interconnections between the two ways in which God governs earthly life bear
215 directly on assessing performance of governmental functions in the United States and on
216 how we may choose to direct civic engagement. To evaluate how well agencies of
217 government are doing their proper work of providing for the safety and well-being of those
218 within the country's borders and/or jurisdiction, Lutherans ask one simple but all-
219 encompassing question: Is the neighbor being served?¹⁵

220 The question has no single or simple answer, given the scope of government in the United
221 States. Government consists of thousands of agencies and millions of employees carrying
222 out particular functions at the federal, state, local,
223 territorial, tribal levels and abroad. While discernment
224 ranges widely on what exactly it means to serve the
225 neighbor, ELCA teaching about the nature of government
226 and public service points to the following 14 guides for
227 assessing the performance of government:

To evaluate how well agencies of government are doing their proper work of providing for the safety and well-being of those within their borders and/or jurisdiction, Lutherans ask one simple but all-encompassing question: Is the neighbor being served?

228 **1. Consent of the governed.**¹⁶ U.S. Lutherans have
229 learned that their neighbors are best served by a
230 government in which supreme earthly power is held
231 publicly by the people (a democracy) and they are
232 governed by representatives chosen in fair elections in which each person is assured of
233 their vote (a republic).¹⁷ Such consent requires government to allow the neighbors it serves
234 to pursue their lives in a spirit of freedom.

235 The importance of this point is illustrated by the shameful history in which so many, such
236 as African Americans, Asian Americans, and women, have been denied the right to vote,
237 and so were governed without consent. Even today many people cannot vote on matters
238 that affect them directly. The situation in each case is complex and varied, but examples
239 include Puerto Rico, the District of Columbia, American Indian reservations, Guam or the
240 Virgin Islands.

241 **2. Unrestricted participation.** The political health of our nation still suffers from the stain
242 of anti-democratic exclusion. Efforts to restrict access to voting should be condemned and
243 resisted. Examples include requiring voters to show identification without issuing
244 identification to all eligible voters, purging voter rolls of those who have not voted recently,
245 denying access to voting by mail, or closing polling places so that voting becomes more
246 difficult for eligible voters. Active suppression ~~of voter rights disenfranchises voters~~
247 voters of a key means of participation.

248 **3. Public service as vocation.** Since the Reformation, Lutherans have recognized public
249 service as a worthy calling—a means by which all individuals may serve the common good.
250 Examples include educators, military, law enforcement, medical providers, and so forth.

251 Public service is not limited to paid government employees. It includes those who run for
252 political office or those who volunteer in political campaigns. Public service includes those
253 who sit on advisory boards, volunteer at national parks, or pursue forms of citizen
254 involvement. For Lutherans, one way Christian vocation finds expression is through
255 dedicated, competent public service.¹⁸

256 **4. Functions and roles for public benefit.** The work of government is carried out through
257 roles designed to serve particular functions. A given role is
258 occupied by a person who has the expectation—and
259 responsibility—to serve the public rather than personal
260 ambition or gain. Government is to “serve the good of
261 society.”¹⁹

For Lutherans,
one way that
Christian vocation
finds expression is
dedicated,
competent service
by public servants.

262 There is a sharp distinction between public service and
263 private gain, a distinction measured by the straightforward
264 question “Whose good is being served?” Laws, regulations,
265 and enforcement are needed to separate officeholders from
266 their personal interest, so that the neighbor is served.²⁰

267 **5. Equity for public servants.** Government employees need to be paid fairly for their work
268 and to enjoy the benefits they seek to obtain and protect for the neighbors they serve.²¹
269 Differences in function and role are to be recognized and rewarded. Sacrifice for public
270 service must not be forced upon government employees; it can be taken on only
271 voluntarily.

272
273 **6. Neighborly service to strangers.** Government service should operate without
274 discrimination in regard to race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity,
275 religion, or other individual characteristics.²² Governmental agencies and employees
276 should encounter the public impartially, as *strangers* to whom law-defined, obligatory
277 performances are due, and from whom law-defined, obligatory performances are expected.

278 Except at the local level, these strangers likely will remain strangers. Strangers are
279 encountered in shared public spaces, rather than in our private lives.²³ Such
280 separation encounters, when respectful, helps ensure fairness and impartiality. But
281 strangers encountered in public spaces are rendered neighbors by Christian love through
282 competent, dedicated, and compassionate service.

283 **7. Respect and dignity.** The way in which government officials treat each other and the
284 public they serve should be governed by a spirit of respect for human dignity. Such respect
285 involves addressing matters of policy through reason and persuasion rather than
286 denigrating attacks or marginalizing other individuals or groups.

287 **8. Adequate regulation.** The proper concern of government is with the safety and well-
288 being of the people within its boundaries, so it must serve as a referee in economic life.
289 Consumers must be protected. The market economy creates abundant goods and services,
290 but when left unchecked, it generates harmful inequalities of wealth and power. When the
291 market economy fails to incorporate all social costs (pollution, exploitation, etc.) into the
292 prices of goods and services, governmental action is needed to contain the harm done to
293 the health and well-being of people and of creation.²⁴

294 **9. Reform of government.** Not only might public officials be personally corrupt, but the
295 functions they carry out, as outlined in policies, statutes, regulations, and laws, may be

296 corrupt by design or corrupted in practice. A government function quickly loses credibility
297 if carried out unfairly or arbitrarily, in a way that discriminates against some in favor of
298 others. Government systems should strive to include the perspectives of those affected by
299 their decisions and to seek fair representation of the communities they serve.

300 Here a distinction must be drawn between structured evil
301 and fallible structure. Government becomes evil when its
302 goals, policies, and programs are designed or transformed
303 into vehicles for harming the neighbor—such as voter
304 suppression laws and gerrymandering. In contrast,
305 government is fallible when its goals, policies, and programs
306 are poorly designed or implemented, and cause waste or
307 hardship. “Red tape” is an ongoing, genuine concern, as is
308 bureaucratic stagnation.

Government becomes
evil when its goals,
policies, and programs
are designed or
transformed into
vehicles for harming
the neighbor.

309 Sometimes, governmental failure involves both evil and fallibility. In either case, public
310 servants have the obligation to seek improvements in the design and function of the roles
311 they take on. Citizens and residents also have an obligation to seek reform through the
312 procedures of democratic self-rule, which may include non-violent protest.

313 **10. Calling attention to abuses of power.** Government must always be held accountable.
314 All public servants have a duty to ensure that government remains true to its purpose of
315 protecting and fostering the common good. No function, organization, policy, or official is
316 beyond reasoned, evidence-based criticism. Abuses of power must be named and
317 challenged. Where reform through normal internal channels does not work, the function of
318 whistleblower is necessary, and whistleblowers should be protected against retaliation.

319 **11. Maintaining the distinction between the role and the person filling it.** Good public
320 servants can be caught in poorly designed, destructive, or corrupt roles. Well-designed and
321 constructive roles can be occupied by inexperienced, incompetent, or corrupt individuals.
322 Public servants are fallible but not immoral or evil unless they use their positions and
323 functions to serve themselves or interests other than the public good. If the role is designed
324 or used to harm people rather than help, it should be resisted and changed.

325 **12. Recognizing neighbors, not just citizens.** “Citizenship” is a status established and
326 recognized by government; “neighbor” is a status God bestows on all people as a gift,
327 regardless of legal status, racial or ethnic background, gender identity or sexual
328 orientation, mental and/or physical ability or disability, religious conviction, or political
329 ideology.²⁵

330 Just as Christians enjoy the “priesthood of all believers” from
331 God’s right hand, all people are to enjoy a “neighborhood of all
332 residents.” from God’s left hand, Official citizenship is to be
333 honored and regulated by law—but not used to justify stripping
334 any individual or group of their dignity or human rights as
335 neighbor.

Official citizenship is to be honored and regulated by law—but not used to justify stripping any individual or group of their dignity or human rights as neighbor.

336 ~~As an example, For this reason,~~ the ELCA has declared that all
337 residents, asylum-seekers, and refugees in the United States are
338 to be protected as neighbors, even as they await determination
339 of immigration status in the courts.²⁶

340 **13. Protecting individual freedom.** Each individual is created
341 in the image of God. Government should serve the neighbor by protecting individual rights
342 and liberties. These rights and liberties are important because they allow individuals to
343 develop and employ God-given gifts without oppression from others or from the
344 government.

345 **14. Accepting limitations on freedom.** Living within a network of governmental
346 structures protects and privileges but *does not* absolutize individual freedoms. Living
347 under government involves limiting certain freedoms and taking on responsibilities in
348 order to foster well-being and other freedoms, both for ourselves and for others.

349 **These guidelines** set a high standard for government. That is evident to most people and
350 sharply painful for ~~but may not seem persuasive to~~ those who have suffered neglectful or
351 abusive treatment by government agencies or officials at all levels in the United States.
352 The problem runs deep, and many Lutherans are among those Americans who distrust
353 government.

354 There are too many examples of how government has betrayed the trust of the people and
355 its mandate to protect. Many people of European descent think that political control has
356 passed to distant elites contemptuous of their well-being. Many of African descent continue
357 to experience the evil legacies, perpetuated by law and government, of slavery, legal
358 discrimination, police brutality, and mass incarceration.

359 Many American Indians and Alaska Natives still suffer from the
360 complex tangle of federal, state, and tribal government. Many
361 Latinx people are often treated as foreigners in this country
362 despite a presence in some areas that predates the founding of
363 the U.S. New citizens from Asia, the Middle East and Africa face
364 intolerant suspicion. Many white Americans living in extreme
365 poverty have felt abandoned by their government. LGBTQ
366 Americans also have experienced legal discrimination.

Government is *of* a fallen people, *by* a fallible people, but nonetheless used by God *for* blessing all people.

367 In response to these deeply troubling examples, Lutherans confess that we are complicit
368 when we do not participate actively enough in the civic arena to strengthen and support

369 the guidelines for government outlined above. We have the responsibility to raise our
370 voices and votes against misuse of government. Despite a few heroic examples of
371 resistance, in our history Lutherans too often have been uncritically obedient and
372 subservient to their governments, even authoritarian ones.²⁷

373 ***IV. Called to Civic Engagement***

374 Over time Lutherans have learned that energetic civic engagement is part of their
375 baptismal vocation, both as individuals and through the church's corporate witness. Such
376 civic participation is not simply voluntary, idealistic, or altruistic. The ELCA holds to the
377 biblical idea that God calls God's people to be active citizens and to ensure that everyone
378 benefits from the good of government (Jeremiah 29:7, Romans 13:1-7).²⁸

379 Civic engagement takes many forms. Examples include:

- 380 • informed and regular voting
- 381 • participation in government efforts such as the census
- 382 • attending public meetings
- 383 • public service as a government employee or in public office
- 384 • involvement with political parties and campaigns
- 385 • advocacy about particular issues
- 386 • volunteering for public-service organizations
- 387 • community organizing for social change
- 388 • nonviolent protest

389 Lutheran civic engagement arises both from a concern about disorder and injustice and
390 from hope about what government can accomplish for the neighbor. God's law in its civic
391 use is intended to contain human sin, and when it fails, all are harmed. Corrupt or fallible
392 structures and individuals generate destructive consequences, sweeping the guilty and
393 innocent alike into disorder or injustice.

394 However, in a democracy, disorder and injustice have the potential to call forth civic
395 engagement toward a constructive purpose. When government consistently acts against
396 the public good or violates fundamental rights, citizens and other residents can raise these
397 issues to the public view. Those who band together may be "strangers" who are not
398 connected by religious, ethnic, economic, or personal ties but they share the urge to make
399 government work. They render themselves trustworthy participants in fostering a just
400 society, following the procedures of democratic self-rule. This includes—when there is no
401 lawful recourse—nonviolent civil disobedience.²⁹

402 This church teaches that civic engagement is a vital aspect of discipleship for baptized
403 Christians.³⁰ We have a responsibility not only to fulfill our
404 private roles and functions in life, and to pray for those in
405 authority (1 Timothy 2:12), but also to be civically engaged.
406 We do so to act *against* destructive consequences but also *for*
407 fair and compassionate governance.

This church also strongly affirms voting, guided by faith-based values, as an exercise in citizenship.

408 In service of fair and compassionate government, this church
409 expresses gratitude for it's members who serve in dedicated and competent pubic service
410 and commends more members to consider work in the public domain. It urges all
411 members to consider forms of non-paid public service. This church also strongly affirms
412 voting, guided by faith-based values, as an exercise in citizenship.

413 Lutheran citizens and residents also have a calling to address the destructive consequences
414 of evil in government. For example, the legacy of race-based slavery and subsequent legal-
415 based discrimination has created and reinforced entrenched habits of thought and action
416 that continue to devastate fellow members of society. The calling to address such failure or
417 structured evil is in line with the Biblical prophetic tradition where God raises ordinary
418 people to speak out against unjust or evil governmental leaders or policies. (Amos 5:24
419 provides an example. Jesus also speaks out against rules that harm people Matthew 12:9-
420 13.)

421 The ELCA is called as a church body to discern nonpartisan means of civic engagement.³¹ As
422 a church we affirm the importance of government, specifically democratic self-governance.
423 In this affirmative role, this church should support public servants and elected officials in
424 their vocation to wield authority for the good of all. In this role our institutional witness is
425 to foster justice, racial and social equity, reconciliation and healing with compassion and
426 imagination.

427 This church affirms the value of civics education to promote equality, justice, and respect
428 for the value of every person, not only in the nation's schools but as a task for all. All
429 people also should have the opportunity to hear the story of this nation from different
430 perspectives, including those often neglected and marginalized.

431 God's church together is called to a critical, even prophetic role.³² We recognize ourselves
432 to be in mission in a multicultural society, committed to build connections between
433 members of our communities and challenge systems of social injustice that build walls
434 between us.

435
436 We should oppose governmental policies and programs that undercut public health,
437 impose economic damage, destroy the environment, or deny neighbors their dignity and
438 rights. This is true even while we recognize some policy choices place these issues in
439 tension with one another. Whenever there is division and oppression, this church should

440 advocate for a more just distribution of both the benefits and the burdens of participating
441 in democracy.

442

443 **V. Conclusion**

444 When confronted with a question about the legitimacy of paying taxes to the Roman
445 authorities, Jesus declared, “Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to
446 God the things that are God’s” (Mark 12:9-13). Jesus’ response does not support a
447 compartmentalized view of religious identity and political responsibility but rather
448 endorses both religious and political responsibilities as legitimate. Lutherans conclude that
449 life in society involves honoring God’s two ways of rule: the right hand, which channels
450 God’s forgiveness and unmerited love, and the left hand, which channels God’s love into
451 just governance on earth.

452 We Lutherans are grateful when government functions as God's gift and critical when it
453 fails. While many have had their trust betrayed by
454 government, this church affirms that government is
455 indispensable for safeguarding and improving
456 human life and creation. At the same time, this
457 church affirms that government’s failures and
458 injustices need to be remedied through robust civic
459 engagement.

Although we may disagree about the best ways to achieve the public good, we do not disagree about our shared responsibility to seek it.

460 As members of the ELCA and as residents of this nation we will have serious disagreements
461 about specific policy choices regarding what government should do or not do.³³ We
462 recognize that our siblings in faith can, in good conscience, reach different conclusions as to
463 how to best serve our neighbor in complex circumstances. ~~That~~ This recognition is healthy
464 for us as a church and as residents of thisa nation, as we enter into conversations around
465 those conclusions—Although we may disagree about the best ways to achieve the public
466 good, we do not disagree about our shared responsibility to seek it.

467 We must also remember that our judgements and participation will always be marked by
468 sin. Still, God’s care for human society calls us to rise again each day, forgiven and nurtured
469 through our baptism to appreciate—and do—the work of self-government.

Endnotes

¹ Robert Kolb and Timothy Wengert, eds. *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), p. 450 (Large Catechism: 4th Petition of the Lord's Prayer).

² The Lutheran view of orderly government as "created and instituted by God" was formalized in the Augsburg Confession, article XVI. Kolb and Wengert, p. 48. Language of government as "gift" has appeared as recently as 2013, in the ELCA social statement *The Church and Criminal Justice*, section II.

³ At the time of this writing, this dissatisfaction has erupted into mass protests throughout the country in response both to how federal and state governments have responded to the global coronavirus pandemic and to the high-profile killings of Black persons at the hands of police.

⁴ <https://www.people-press.org/2019/04/11/public-trust-in-government-1958-2019/>. The federal government appears to be the main issue. A similar sampling found that almost two-thirds approve of state and local government. <https://www.people-press.org/2018/04/26/1-democracy-and-government-the-u-s-political-system-elected-officials-and-governmental-institutions/1-8-10/>

⁵ This social message gathers into one place ELCA teaching but draws most heavily from the following social statements: *Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective*, *Freed in Christ: Race Ethnicity and Culture*, *For Peace in God's World*, and *Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All*. Also important is the social message "Human Rights." www.elca.org/socialstatements

⁶ While this passage has been used to demand uncritical support of tyrannical regimes, it affirms that government is "God's servant for your good" (13: 4)—supplying a standard against which government is to be held accountable.

⁷ For a compact summary of God's two ways of governing, see *Luther's Works*, vol. 13, p. 197. Traditionally known as the "Two Kingdoms" in Lutheran teaching, this doctrine has been widely criticized for fostering political quietism in the face of tyranny and totalitarianism—particularly National Socialism. But Martin Luther developed it as Biblical teaching; see his 1523 treatise "Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed," particularly section 1, in *Luther's Works*, vol. 45 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, and Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1955-1986), pp. 81-104. All subsequent references are to this series. Two Kingdoms thinking avoids quietism when firm links are drawn between the right-hand and left-hand dimensions of God's governance, as in this social message.

⁸ In classic Lutheran teaching, God's right hand governs with the "Word," and God's left hand rules with the "sword."

⁹ From the ELCA's 1999 social statement on economic life, *Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All*.

¹⁰ The marks of a fair judicial system are laid out in the ELCA social statement *The Church and Criminal Justice*, section II:C.

¹¹ ELCA teaching has emphasized care and justice for all people, with particular concern for those who are most vulnerable. For instance, see the ELCA social statement on race, ethnicity, and culture (1993) and economic life (1999) as well as the social messages on immigration (1998) and human rights (2017). All are available for download at ELCA.org/Resources/Faith-And-Society.

¹² Empathy has a problematic side, in that the ability to experience the feelings of others can be used to manipulate or even inflict pain upon them. In the political sense used here, the term assumes a standpoint of sympathy or compassion. While "empathy" in this sense does not seem to have been in Luther's vocabulary, he commends a spirit of forbearing kindness ("Sermon on the Mount" in *Luther's Works*, vol. 21, pp. 29-32).

¹³ "Self-centeredness" here includes the dimensions of sin identified in the ELCA's 2019 social statement *Faith, Sexism, and Justice*: "[Sin] may take the form of pride (being centered on ourselves), idolatry (placing someone or something else other than God at the center of our lives), or self-abasement (not recognizing our value and dignity as a person created by God)."

¹⁴ The Centurion represented the often violent occupying Roman empire. Signs of God's governance are readily visible in Jesus, of course. He expresses God's law as love for human life as he consents to heal the Centurion's servant—an act of empathy with Israel's enemy. Equality is evident as he treats the Centurion no differently than a fellow Israelite, and justice in its broad restorative sense as he restores the servant to life. Perhaps more remarkably, the Centurion also foreshadows the interconnections between God's left and right hands. He

requested rather than commanded help from Jesus, expressing respect. He softened his official role with empathic concern for his servant and generosity towards the Jewish community of Capernaum. Jesus recognizes and admires his faith, a faith framed as humble obedience oriented to care to those under his authority. Such faith illustrates God's left hand interconnected with the right hand which saves and heals.

¹⁵ Luther's main treatise on government emphasizes that the purpose of government is to serve the neighbor, not the self ("Temporal Authority," *Luther's Works*, vol. 45, 93-100, especially 100). "The neighbor here is not simply someone next door, but includes all people regardless of differences in economic status, political ideology, religious affiliation, race, sexual orientation, gender identity, citizenship status, ethnicity, age, etc.

¹⁶ While democracy as a form of government is unfamiliar to the Biblical world, consent is not. God's covenant with the liberated slaves at Mount Sinai came into force only after the people freely bound themselves to it three times (Exodus 19:7-8, 24:3, 24:7-8).

¹⁷ Technically, the United States has a republican form of government—where supreme authority and power are lodged in the people, who consent to be ruled by representatives.

¹⁸ Jesus called his followers to serve rather than lord it over their neighbors (Matthew 20:25-28). In contrast to accounts of government that reduce governmental decision-making and actions to individual self-seeking economic behavior (see James M. Buchanan, "Public Choice: Politics Without Romance," *Policy*, vol. 19:3 [spring 2003]:13-18), Lutherans assert that public servants have not only the obligation but the capacity to carry out their functions in a way that serves the neighbor over self, and thus to fulfill the stated design and purposes of government with dedication and competence.

¹⁹ See the ELCA's 1991 social statement *The Church in Society*, p. 3.

²⁰ Guidelines for honest, responsive, and competent government were revealed from the earliest days of Israel (Exodus 18:19-23; Deuteronomy 16:18-20, 17:8-13). Jesus called his followers to serve rather than lord it over their neighbors (Matthew 20:25-28).

²¹ The New Testament frequently endorses fair pay for labor, whether in the Gospels (Luke 10:7) or the Epistles (Romans 4:4, James 5:4, 1 Timothy 5:18).

²² The ELCA's 1993 social statement *Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture* calls for governmental action that provides equal access to education, housing, public transport, employment, entrepreneurship, and other economic functions. *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* takes a similar stance supporting full civil rights for people of different sexual orientation or gender identity.

²³ Parker J. Palmer's book *The Company of Strangers: Christians and the Renewal of American Public Life* (New York: Crossroad, 1981) presents a strong and nuanced argument for engaging in public life with strangers.

²⁴ In the section titled "Human Dignity," the ELCA's 1999 social statement *Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All* argues that attaining this lofty goal will involve public policies and regulations to curb the damaging effects of the market and reduce poverty.

²⁵ ELCA teaching has emphasized care and justice for all people, with particular concern for those who are most vulnerable. For instance, see the ELCA social statement on race, ethnicity, and culture (1993) and economic life (1999) as well as the social messages on immigration (1998) and human rights (2017). All are available for download at ELCA.org/Resources/Faith-And-Society.

²⁶ By action of the 2019 Churchwide Assembly (CA19.03.11).

²⁷ Noteworthy examples of resistance include Dietrich Bonhoeffer in Nazi Germany and Bishop Medardo Gómez during the civil war in El Salvador.

²⁸ Jeremiah 29:7. The prophet addressed a people who had been forcibly transplanted from Israel to Babylon. How much more does his exhortation apply to those who live in their own land? Romans 13:1-7 commands citizens to respect figures of temporal authority—in the expectation that governing officials act for the general welfare and not in a despotic manner.

²⁹ In Assembly Action (CA87.30.14 (1987) the ELCA's Constituting Convention affirmed the ELCA's fundamental commitment to the rule of law but specified the criteria for cases when civil disobedience may be warranted. (Cf Augsburg Confession, art. XVI)

³⁰ For an example of this teaching, see *Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture*, p. 6: "Through public events such as elections or town meetings, through public bodies such as legislatures or volunteer groups, church

members help to forge political will and consensus. Participation in public life is essential to doing justice and undoing injustice.”

³¹ “This church, therefore, will actively promote a public life worthy of the name.” See *Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture*, p. 6.

³² Church in Society, p. 4.

³³ For example, the pace and scope of stay-at-home orders and economic re-opening policies in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (which began March 2020), involved complex weighing of public health system capacity, individual physical and mental health, and economic interests.

Suggestions offered that were not used

(Note: line numbers mentioned here refer to the June 12 version—lines will have shifted a little in the June 19 text because of additions.)

Comprehensive suggestion

*Amendment: Change the language of right and left hand of God throughout the document to "inner" and "outer" ways or strategies (as noted in lines 97 and 105).

Discussion: When anyone talks of government with the terms of left and right, the immediate thought is that left is liberal (Democrat) while right is conservative (Republican). Many readers of this social statement will have that immediate reaction, no matter how much you explain what you really mean. The left and right terminology is too ingrained in our news and conversations.

Also, throughout the Bible, the right hand of God implies a favored position or place of honor. I don't think there is any intention to imply that the right hand is more favored in this document. But, throughout the Bible, there is that difference. So, the reader may think that the ELCA is implying that the inner or personal dimension is more important or favored while the outer dimension of earthly justice is less important. That leads to the common thought of some that my relationship with God is more important than how I treat others ("I accept Jesus as my personal Lord and Savior" says nothing about justice for others).

I would be fine with any other terminology that avoids the use of right and left. I think "inner" and "outer" is a clearer description of what we are saying in this statement.

Reason: The problem is genuine but using two hands remains the better solution. The social message alternates between the analogy of God's two hands and the term "God's two ways." The analogy to human hands--our hands are coordinated when we work-- brings out how much each way is part of God's single activity for the sake of human society. The 'handed' language also roots the idea in classic Lutheran Reformation thought. Other terms were tried--like "God's two strategies"--but readers stumbled over those. Inner and outer do not solve the problem because there are inner and outer elements in both ways of God's work. Finally, such a change to key wording would require a comprehensive re-editing.

Detailed Suggestions

*Lines 96-104 – This section doesn't come out as clearly as it could in two ways: first, I prefer to use language of directness. In the right-hand way of acting, God works in us directly. We do nothing but receive. I see it in the use of the active voice for God but it could come out more clearly by naming the fact that humans, alone or through our institutions, including government do nothing to redeem themselves from sin or its consequences. God works faith and love into us by which the spirit empowers us to work toward change (though we can't bring in the kingdom.)

Reason: This would require a fair amount of change to get the point just right and as acknowledged, the point is already there.

*Line 107 –add “including the church” following “roles, structures, and institutions.

Reason: While it is correct that the church is an institution in society, the focus of the message is on government and introducing the idea of the church as a mask could be confusing to readers.

*Line 158 – Does the last sentence need to be there? I’m seeing the topic of immigration specifically rise to the surface in this document in ways I’m not convinced it should be. Of course, citizenship and immigration can and should be used as one of the many examples of how church engages government in this day and age. But it shouldn’t jump out as the primary way. This isn’t a message on citizenship or immigration per se; it’s a statement on church and civic engagement.

Reason: Members of the consulting group thought immigration provided a good illustration to be used throughout the message; in this case it serves to illustrate a left-hand equality affirmed by the ELCA.

*Lines 316-330 – This section focuses specifically on the topic of immigration. I’m wondering if it could focus on what it means to be a neighbor and who we name as our neighbors (everyone!) with refugee, immigrant as well as many others listed as examples. Again, it’s not that I disagree with what this is saying, but this is supposed to be a broader document about church and government, not just immigration. And acknowledging neighborliness across the spectrum of people as we are exposing our sin-filled lack of neighborliness so many people seems more appropriate for this document.

Reason: see response to line 158; further, the suggestion would require quite a bit of revision.

*Lines 425 – add “We should support governmental policies and programs that promote the greatest good for all of our neighbors. “

Reason: This point is made similar words at line 414 and this section at 425 is focused on the prophetic aspect of the Christian calling.

*Lines 446-449 --As members of the ELCA and as residents of this nation we will have serious disagreements about specific policy choices regarding what government should do or not do. That is healthy for us as a church and as a nation. For example, the pace and scope of stay-at-home orders and economic re-opening policies in response to the COVID-19 pandemic involved complex weighing of public health system capacity, individual physical and mental health, and economic interests. We recognize that our siblings in faith can, in good conscience, reach different conclusions on how best to serve the neighbor in complex circumstances. Although we may disagree about the best ways to achieve the public good, we do not disagree about our shared responsibility to seek it.

Reason: The example was moved to a footnote because of its length and potential to sound dated in 5 or 10 years. The suggestion for inserting “We recognize...” was accepted. It strengthens the flow of the conclusion to briefly summarize key elements of the message.

May 18, 2020

To: ELCA Church Council, Executive Committee

Fr: Rev. Roger A. Willer, director for theological ethics

Re: Background regarding membership recommendations for the ELCA Task Force on Church, State, and Civic Participation

This ELCA Task Force, as with all social statement task forces is charged with bringing a proposed social statement to the ELCA Church Council (CC) in early Spring of 2025 on matters related to "government, civic engagement and the relationship of church and state." (CA19.05.29). Under the direction of the Director for Theological Ethics, their responsibilities include providing means across the ELCA for listening, study, and member response. Task forces selection by the Theological Discernment Team represent ELCA commitments regarding diversity in their composition as well as attention to synodical representation and seating of those with "specialized knowledge and directly affected by the issues," in accord with "Policy and Procedures of the ELCA for Addressing Social Issues." [see p. 15; www.elca.org/socialstatements (click on left hand tab for Addressing Social Concerns)] The individuals on the second page represent the recommendations brought by the Director for Theological Ethics to the Executive Committee of the ELCA Church Council.

The selection work was done by Pr. Roger Willer and Pr. Carmelo Santos, assisted by Heather Dean, all members of the Theological Discernment Team. Nearly 80 individuals applied or were nominated for the task force and nearly all of those were interviewed or received reference checks. Each individual recommended has been interviewed with an eye toward their knowledge, skillset, collaborative spirit, and commitment to the ELCA. Each one has had at least one reference check. These recommended individuals bring together a rich and diverse array of backgrounds and interests related to government, civic participation, pastoral ministry, church and state, historical theology, scripture, confessions, politics, pastoral ministry, law and other competences. Because of the statement's focus, particular concerns were given to the rural and urban divide as well as representation across the U.S. political spectrum. Each individual has expressed significant openness to serve, but no commitments have been made to or from those recommended here.

One additional recommendation may be brought to the Church Council Executive Committee. Several individuals are under consideration but sufficient vetting has not been possible due to a variety of complications. The work of selection has been unusually difficult because of the pandemic.

Approval of the 17 individuals listed is recommended at this time. Church Council members are asked to maintain confidentiality until late June, providing time for those recommended to be contacted and any necessary additional recommendations made.

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

May 21, 2020

Overview of Social Statement Task Force Selection Process

Page 2 of 2

| <i>First Name</i> | <i>Last Name</i> | <i>Profession/Education/Skill Set</i> | <i>Synod</i> | <i>Age</i> | <i>Sex</i> | <i>Rst/Lay</i> | <i>Dvrsty</i> |
|-------------------|------------------|--|-----------------|------------|------------|----------------|---------------|
| Cate | Anderson Duin | Legislative Aid, City of Minneapolis | St. Paul | 23-30 | F | Lay | YA |
| Lamar | Bailey | Pastor/D.E.M. | Metro D.C | 50-60 | M | Clergy | PoC |
| Douglas | Barclay | Parish Pastor | New Eng | 40-50 | M | Clergy | |
| Anthony | Bateza | PhD Hist theo; prof | St. Paul, MN | 30-40 | M | Clergy | PoC |
| Scott | Inglesbe | National Guard Commnc Officer | Neb | 40-50 | M | Lay | |
| Kristi | Jasberg Robinson | lawyer; exec NJ state court | SEPS | 40-50 | F | Lay | |
| Phyllis | Johnson | University VP; Retired Dept Exec, U.S. Dep Agr | ENDakota | 70-75 | F | Lay | |
| Laurie | Jungling | Bp | Montana | 50-60 | F | Clergy | |
| Mindy | Makant | PhD Theo; teaches poli theo | N. Carolina | 50-60 | F | Deacon | |
| Kyle | Pasewark | busi lawyer; PhD, former prof | Wyoming | 60-70 | M | Lay | |
| Matthew | Riegel | Bp | West VA | 50-60 | M | Clergy | |
| Juan Carlos | Ruiz | Parish Pr; founder Natnl Sanctuary Movement | N.Y. | 50-60 | M | Clergy | PoC |
| Niveen | Sarras | PhD in Scrip; parish pr | EC WIS | 30-40 | F | Clergy | PoC |
| Christopher | Sellers | Public Health Expert; Epidemiologist | Alabama | 40-50 | M | Lay | |
| Cheryl | Semmel | Sr. Partner gov relations firm; WELCA; TEAM | Fla/KS | 40-50 | F | Lay | |
| Paul | Torkelson | Farmer; Minn legislator | SwMinn | 60-70 | M | Lay | |
| Susan | Wefald | ND Public Commissioner, retired | WND | 70-75 | F | Lay | |

June 20, 2020

Mr. William Horne, II

Vice President Church Council

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

8765 Higgins Road

Chicago, IL 60631

Dear Vice President Horne:

The presidents of the ELCA Ethnic Associations have reviewed the proposed social message entitled "Government and Civic Engagement in the United States: Discipleship in a Democracy". We recognize the profound need for the statement and appreciate much of the content as proposed. There are three concerns that ask the Church Council to address as it considers whether to adopt this social message as presented or refer it for further development.

First, the global pandemic disrupted the capacity of our communities, as we all as many others, in the church to undertake any thoughtful discussion on the draft text. While we know that many individual comments were submitted, within our communities there are practices of communal discernment from which emerge a collective understanding. But of the at-home protocols, our communities, especially those that suffered the highest infection rates, were unable to consider the draft document and submit comments. There is a distinction to be understood between collective and representative agency. The collective voices within our several communities were not considered in the drafting of this document. Indeed, the urgency of events from the pandemic to the murder of George Floyd, have captured the nation's attention in our common civic life. We need a social message that the church can provide both its members and society at large.

Second, there are some omissions and other items to be corrected. For instance, in naming voting suppression, the document ignores that Native peoples were not provided a federal guarantee of the right to vote until the late 1920's and that today people living in some reservations are still denied voter registration because the US Postal Service does assign street addresses on their reservation. We would appreciate the opportunity to submit additional items that clarify and enhance the text of the draft.

Third, since the social message is a stepping stone toward a more expansive social statement on civic life, we strongly urge an expanded process that fully welcomes the practices of communal discernment within ethnic communities and organizing circles. ELCA social statements are critically important for our church and the wider faith community. Yet now is the moment to admit that White cultural norms have shaped previous ELCA statements in ways that seem natural and appropriate for the dominant majority but do not resonate or reflect adequately ethnic, racial, and non-conventional experiences. It is incumbent that a social statement on civic life include the wide variety of communities that are found within this church

and the places where it ministers for the fullness of the gospel to be expressed. We look forward to dialogue on what such an expanded process might include.

We honor the work of the drafting team, even as we recognize the limits that shaped the production of the draft statement and its revision. This is a critically important endeavor as the nation heads into a fateful election campaign, and we offer our support in helping to make this social message a powerful and useful document across the whole of the church.

Grace and peace,

ELCA Ethnic Association Presidents

Reverend Joann Conroy, American Indian Alaska Native Lutheran Association, Inc.

Reverend Lamont Wells, African Descent Lutheran Association

Reverend Khader El-Yateem, Association of Lutherans of Arab-Middle Eastern Heritage

Gigie Sijera-Grant, Association of Asians and Pacific-Islanders-ELCA

Jennifer De Leon, Asociacion de Ministerios Lantinos de la ELCA

Reverend Dr. Russell Meyer, European Descent Lutheran Association for Racial Justice

**ACTIONS OF THE SYNOD COUNCIL
OF THE
EASTERN NORTH DAKOTA SYNOD OF THE
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA**

A meeting of the Synod Council (the “Council”) of the Eastern North Dakota Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, a Minnesota nonprofit corporation (the “Synod”), was held on June 17, 2020, at which a quorum was present. Dr. Phyllis Johnson, Vice President to the Synod, chaired and called the meeting to order. Rev. Kristina C. Weber, Secretary to the Synod, recorded the proceedings.

**Amendment of the Synod Articles of Incorporation
to Authorize Meetings of the Synod Assembly by Remote Communication**

WHEREAS, Section 7.11 of the Synod Constitution (“the Constitution”) calls for regular meetings of the Synod Assembly (the “Assembly”);

WHEREAS, the Council is preparing for the next meeting of the Assembly, which has been scheduled for August 14, 15 and 16, 2020, in Fargo, North Dakota, at which the Assembly will elect a bishop (the “2020 Meeting”);

WHEREAS, the Council recognizes that the global COVID-19 pandemic creates a health risk to individuals physically gathering in large numbers and that, as such, the logistics of the 2020 Meeting must be rethought in light of that abnormal reality;

WHEREAS, the Assembly, acting pursuant to the provisions of Minnesota Statutes Section 317A.447, has authorized the Council to amend the Synod Articles of Incorporation (the “Articles”) to expressly allow the Council to call for and conduct a remote regular or special meeting of the Assembly, if the Council deems appropriate under the circumstances;

WHEREAS, Article XIII of the Articles and Section 1.11 of the Constitution require approval of an amendment of the Articles by the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (the “Church Council”);

WHEREAS, the Council has determined that it is in the best interest of the Synod to amend the Articles in order to authorize the holding of meetings of the Assembly, including the 2020 Meeting, by means of remote communication if deemed appropriate by the Council;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that, upon ratification by the ELCA Church Council, the Articles are hereby amended to create a new Article XV that reads as follows:

ARTICLE XV

As determined by the Synod Council, a meeting of the voting members of this corporation identified in Article VIII may, pursuant

to Minnesota Statutes Section 317A.450, be held solely by one or more means of remote communication.

FURTHER RESOLVED, that, upon ratification by the ELCA Church Council of the foregoing resolution amending the Articles, any of the officers of the Synod be and hereby are authorized and directed to make, execute, and acknowledge an amendment of the Articles embracing the foregoing resolution and to cause such amendment to be filed for record with the Minnesota Secretary of State in the manner required by law.

Determination to Hold the 2020 Meeting Solely by Means of Remote Communication

WHEREAS, the global COVID-19 pandemic would present an unusual risk to the health of the members of the Assembly were they to gather for the 2020 Meeting in person;

WHEREAS, the Council nevertheless recognizes the importance of the Assembly's completing the Synod's bishop election process, which had already begun when the state of national emergency prompted by the pandemic was declared;

WHEREAS, once ratified by the Church Council, Article XV of the Articles allows for a meeting of the Assembly to be held solely by means of remote communication, as determined by the Council;

WHEREAS, considering the circumstances of the pandemic, the Council has determined that it is in the best interest of the Synod to hold the 2020 Meeting by means of remote communication;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that upon ratification by the Church Council of the foregoing resolution amending the Articles, the Council hereby calls for the 2020 Meeting to be held solely by means of remote communication, at the date and time announced previously;

FURTHER RESOLVED, that, upon ratification by the Church Council of the foregoing resolution amending the Articles, the officers of the Synod be and hereby are authorized and directed to make and execute such plans to hold the 2020 Meeting via a remote communication technology that fosters Assembly participation in keeping with Minnesota Statutes Section 317A.450, Subdivision 4;

FURTHER RESOLVED, that, upon ratification by the Church Council of the foregoing resolution amending the Articles, the Secretary to the Synod be and hereby is authorized and directed to notify the Assembly of the holding of the 2020 Meeting solely by means of remote communication.

[certification page follows]

Certification of Secretary

The Secretary to the Synod hereby certifies that the foregoing resolutions were adopted by a majority vote of the voting members of the Council at the meeting of the Council on June 17, 2020, at which a quorum was present.



By: _____

Rev. Kristina C. Weber
Secretary to the Synod

**ARTICLES OF AMENDMENT
OF THE
ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION
OF THE
EASTERN NORTH DAKOTA SYNOD OF THE
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA**

Pursuant to the provisions of Minnesota Statutes Section 317A.133, Subdivision 1, the Articles of Incorporation of the Eastern North Dakota Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, a Minnesota nonprofit corporation (the "Corporation"), were amended by action of the Synod Council, acting as the Corporation's board of directors, at a meeting on June 17, 2020, to create a new Article XV that reads as follows:

ARTICLE XV

As determined by the Synod Council, a meeting of the voting members of this corporation identified in Article VIII may, pursuant to Minnesota Statutes Section 317A.450, be held solely by one or more means of remote communication.

The undersigned swears that the foregoing is true and accurate and that the undersigned has the authority to sign this document on behalf of the Corporation.

June 17, 2020

Dated: _____



By: _____
Rev. Kristina C. Weber
Secretary to the Synod

Eastern North Dakota Synod Council
June 17, 2020

The Eastern North Dakota Synod Council met Wednesday, June 17, 2020, by conference call commencing at 12:30 p.m.

Members Present:

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Rev. Larry Wohlrabe, Interim Bishop V | | Dr. Phyllis Johnson, VP V |
| Rev. Kristina Weber, Sec. V | Mr. Joe Askew, Treas. V | Mr. Matuor Alier V |
| Mr. Steve Anderson V | Rev. David Bjorklund V | Ms. Beth Christianson-Melby V |
| Rev. Peter Coen-Tuff V | Ms. Kathy Fick P | Rev. Sherri Frederikson V |
| Rev. Julie Johnson V | Mr. Dan Larson V | Rev. Jessica Merchant P |
| Mr. Leon Philpot V | Dr. Jared Schlenker V | Rev. Chimezie Ukaonu V |

Members Absent:

| | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------|------------------|
| Ms. Dianne Billey | Ms. Rebecca Kjelland | Ms. JaeLyn Lardy |
| Ms. Jan Maurstad*, WELCA | Rev. Tim Stoa | Mr. Erik Thoen |
| Rev. Tom Westcott | | |

*non-voting

Staff Present:

Ms. Jakelle Hoffmann V

V= attended by video call P = attended by telephone call

Dr. Phyllis Johnson called the meeting to order at 12:37 p.m.

SC.20.06.65 Rev. Sherri Frederikson moved and it was seconded by Rev. Chimezie Ukaonu to adopt the resolution as presented below regarding amending the Articles of Incorporation to create a new Article XV that reads as follows:

ARTICLE XV

As determined by the Synod Council, a meeting of the voting members of this corporation identified in Article VIII may, pursuant to Minnesota Statutes Section 317A.450, be held solely by one or more means of remote communication. MOTION CARRIED BY A UNANIMOUS VOTE

**Amendment of the Synod Articles of Incorporation
to Authorize Meetings of the Synod Assembly by Remote Communication**

WHEREAS, Section 7.11 of the Synod Constitution (“the Constitution”) calls for regular meetings of the Synod Assembly (the “Assembly”);

WHEREAS, the Council is preparing for the next meeting of the Assembly, which has been scheduled for August 14, 15 and 16, 2020, in Fargo, North Dakota, at which the Assembly will elect a bishop (the “2020 Meeting”);

WHEREAS, the Council recognizes that the global COVID-19 pandemic creates a health risk to individuals physically gathering in large numbers and that, as such, the logistics of the 2020 Meeting must be rethought in light of that abnormal reality;

WHEREAS, the Assembly, acting pursuant to the provisions of Minnesota Statutes Section 317A.447, has authorized the Council to amend the Synod Articles of Incorporation (the “Articles”) to expressly allow the Council to call for and conduct a remote regular or special meeting of the Assembly, if the Council deems appropriate under the circumstances;

WHEREAS, Article XIII of the Articles and Section 1.11 of the Constitution require approval of an amendment of the Articles by the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (the “Church Council”);

WHEREAS, the Council has determined that it is in the best interest of the Synod to amend the Articles in order to authorize the holding of meetings of the Assembly, including the 2020 Meeting, by means of remote communication if deemed appropriate by the Council;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that, upon ratification by the ELCA Church Council, the Articles are hereby amended to create a new Article XV that reads as follows:

ARTICLE XV

As determined by the Synod Council, a meeting of the voting members of this corporation identified in Article VIII may, pursuant to Minnesota Statutes Section 317A.450, be held solely by one or more means of remote communication.

FURTHER RESOLVED, that, upon ratification by the ELCA Church Council of the foregoing resolution amending the Articles, any of the officers of the Synod be and hereby are authorized and directed to make, execute, and acknowledge an amendment of the Articles embracing the foregoing resolution and to cause such amendment to be filed for record with the Minnesota Secretary of State in the manner required by law.

Determination to Hold the 2020 Meeting Solely by Means of Remote Communication

WHEREAS, the global COVID-19 pandemic would present an unusual risk to the health of the members of the Assembly were they to gather for the 2020 Meeting in person;

WHEREAS, the Council nevertheless recognizes the importance of the Assembly's completing the Synod's bishop election process, which had already begun when the state of national emergency prompted by the pandemic was declared;

WHEREAS, once ratified by the Church Council, Article XV of the Articles allows for a meeting of the Assembly to be held solely by means of remote communication, as determined by the Council;

WHEREAS, considering the circumstances of the pandemic, the Council has determined that it is in the best interest of the Synod to hold the 2020 Meeting by means of remote communication;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that upon ratification by the Church Council of the foregoing resolution amending the Articles, the Council hereby calls for the 2020 Meeting to be held solely by means of remote communication, at the date and time announced previously;

FURTHER RESOLVED, that, upon ratification by the Church Council of the foregoing resolution amending the Articles, the officers of the Synod be and hereby are authorized and directed to make and execute such plans to hold the 2020 Meeting via a remote communication technology that fosters Assembly participation in keeping with Minnesota Statutes Section 317A.450, Subdivision 4;

FURTHER RESOLVED, that, upon ratification by the Church Council of the foregoing resolution amending the Articles, the Secretary to the Synod be and hereby is authorized and directed to notify the Assembly of the holding of the 2020 Meeting solely by means of remote communication.

Related motion from June 16, 2020, Synod Council meeting.

SC.20.06.54 Rev. David Bjorklund moved and it was seconded to certify the ballot for Amending Articles of Incorporation for the Eastern North Dakota Synod. Ballots were mailed to 326 Voting Members of the 2019 Eastern North Dakota Synod Assembly on May 29, 2020. Ballots were to be returned by June 12, 2020. 247 were returned which meets the requirement for a quorum. Results 241- Yes; 6 – No. The ballot passed.
MOTION CARRIED

Meeting was adjourned by Dr. Phyllis Johnson at 12:39 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
EaND Synod Secretary
Rev. Kristina C. Weber

**NOTICE OF PROPOSED AMENDMENT
OF THE
ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION
OF THE
EASTERN NORTH DAKOTA SYNOD OF THE
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA**

Notice is hereby given that, at the meeting of the Synod Council (the “Council”) of the Eastern North Dakota Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, a Minnesota nonprofit corporation (the “Synod”), to be held on June 17, 2020, for which notice was previously provided, the Council will vote on a proposal to amend the Synod Articles of Incorporation (the “Articles”) as set forth below:

**Amendment of the Synod Articles of Incorporation
to Authorize Meetings of the Synod Assembly by Remote Communication**

WHEREAS, Section 7.11 of the Synod Constitution (“the Constitution”) calls for regular meetings of the Synod Assembly (the “Assembly”);

WHEREAS, the Council is preparing for the next meeting of the Assembly, which has been scheduled for August 14, 15 and 16, 2020, in Fargo, North Dakota, at which the Assembly will elect a bishop (the “2020 Meeting”);

WHEREAS, the Council recognizes that the global COVID-19 pandemic creates a health risk to individuals physically gathering in large numbers and that, as such, the logistics of the 2020 Meeting must be rethought in light of that abnormal reality;

WHEREAS, the Assembly, acting pursuant to the provisions of Minnesota Statutes Section 317A.447, has authorized the Council to amend the Synod Articles of Incorporation (the “Articles”) to expressly allow the Council to call for and conduct a remote regular or special meeting of the Assembly, if the Council deems appropriate under the circumstances;

WHEREAS, Article XIII of the Articles and Section 1.11 of the Constitution require approval of an amendment of the Articles by the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (the “Church Council”);

WHEREAS, the Council has determined that it is in the best interest of the Synod to amend the Articles in order to authorize the holding of meetings of the Assembly, including the 2020 Meeting, by means of remote communication if deemed appropriate by the Council;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that, upon ratification by the ELCA Church Council, the Articles are hereby amended to create a new Article XV that reads as follows:

ARTICLE XV

As determined by the Synod Council, a meeting of the voting members of this corporation identified in Article VIII may, pursuant to Minnesota Statutes Section 317A.450, be held solely by one or more means of remote communication.

FURTHER RESOLVED, that, upon ratification by the ELCA Church Council of the foregoing resolution amending the Articles, any of the officers of the Synod be and hereby are authorized and directed to make, execute, and acknowledge an amendment of the Articles embracing the foregoing resolution and to cause such amendment to be filed for record with the Minnesota Secretary of State in the manner required by law.

Dated: June 12, 2020



By: _____
Rev. Kristina C. Weber
Secretary to the Synod