



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

April 20, 2023

To: Bishops of synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
 Vice presidents of synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
 Secretaries of synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
 Members of the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
 Administrative Team of the churchwide organization
 Chief executive officers of separately incorporated ministries
 Seminary leaders

From: Deacon Sue E. Rothmeyer, secretary

Subject: Report of Church Council Responses to Churchwide Assembly Actions, Synod Resolutions, and Previous Church Council Actions (April 20, 2023)

I.	CHURCH COUNCIL RESPONSES TO CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY ACTIONS	1
A.	APPOINTMENTS TO THE COMMISSION FOR A RENEWED LUTHERAN CHURCH.....	1
B.	ASSESSMENT AND FEASIBILITY OF SOCIAL MESSAGE PROCESSES	2
C.	GUN VIOLENCE ADVOCACY	2
D.	SALARY EQUITY IN THE ELCA.....	4
II.	CHURCH COUNCIL RESPONSES TO SYNOD RESOLUTIONS.....	5
A.	LGBTQ+ PROGRAMMING FOR EVENTS	5
B.	COUNCIL OF NICAIA 1700TH ANNIVERSARY.....	6
C.	LGBTQIA+ PRESENCE AMONG ELCA GOVERNING BODIES	7
D.	AMEND CONTINUING RESOLUTION 7.74.A21	8
III.	CHURCH COUNCIL RESPONSES TO PREVIOUS CHURCH COUNCIL ACTIONS.....	8
A.	REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TASK FORCE ON THE ELCA DISCIPLINE PROCESS FOR ROSTERED MINISTERS OF COLOR.....	8
B.	SOCIAL MESSAGE ON EARTH'S CLIMATE CRISIS	9
C.	REVIEW OF ELCA RESPONSE TEAM.....	9

I. CHURCH COUNCIL RESPONSES TO CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY ACTIONS

A. APPOINTMENTS TO THE COMMISSION FOR A RENEWED LUTHERAN CHURCH

At its November 2022 meeting, in response to an action of the 2022 Churchwide Assembly, the Church Council established parameters for the nomination process of the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church (CRLC) and authorized the Executive Committee of the Church Council to initiate the process of forming the commission. [CC22.11.38]

The Executive Committee launched a two-month nomination process beginning Jan. 9 and ending March 9, 2023. A total of 402 nominations were received through both the synod nomination process and the open nomination process. The Executive Committee was supported by the Office of the Secretary staff in the committee's nominating role to initiate the nomination process and determine the slate of nominees to present to Church Council for this April 20 online meeting. In addition, a webpage within ELCA.org (www.ELCA.org/CRLC) provides background information about the commission and the timeline for the work, and it will be updated as the commission's work progresses.

The first in-person CRLC meeting is scheduled for July 13-15, 2023, with an anticipation of 14-15 additional meetings in total. Generally, there will be two in-person meetings per year and the other meetings will be held online. CRLC will be responsible for determining the actual dates for its future meetings. The Office of the Secretary will cover travel expenses for members of the CRLC to attend all in-person meetings.

The Executive Committee is presenting a slate of nominees for the council's consideration. All nominees have been contacted to discern their willingness to serve if appointed. The Office of the Secretary will notify the nominees of their appointment. If a vacancy occurs on the commission, the Executive Committee is prepared to fill those vacancies as deemed appropriate and necessary for the commission's work.

Church Council Action:

To appoint the following members to the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church:

Mr. Roberto Lara Aranda, the Rev. Sean Avery, Ms. Felecia Boone, Mr. Michael J. Chan, the Rev. Tiffany Chaney, Mr. Don Corson, Mr. Antoine Cummins, the Rev. Elizabeth Friedman, the Rev. Charlene Guiliani, the Rev. Gail Hagerty, Bishop Regina Hassanally (*at-large*), the Rev. Douglas A. Hill*, Mx. Ruth Ellen Howard, Ms. Thelma Pruitt Jacks, Mr. Ryan Johnson (*at-large*), Ms. Stacy D. Kitahata, the Rev. Kristin Johnston Largen, Mr. David M. Lenz (*at-large*), Ms. Alexandra Mack, Mr. Thomas Madden (*at-large*), Ms. Susan Wilds McArver, Ms. Candy McCorkle, Mr. Evan Moilan (*at-large*), Ms. Sarah E. Morris, Ms. Laurel Muhly-Alexander, Mr. Anthony Ormsbee-Hale, Bishop Matthew Riegel (*at-large*), Mr. Leon Schwartz, Deacon Dallas Shealy (*at-large*), the Rev. Adam Sornchai, Ms. Melody Stachour, Ms. Cheryl Stuart, Ms. Loni Taylor (*at-large*), Ms. Linda M. Timmons, and the Rev. Carla Christopher Wilson; and

To authorize the Executive Committee to appoint members as necessary if a vacancy occurs.

[*Following the appointment, the Executive Committee learned that Pastor Hill is unavailable to attend the first in-person commission meeting, which was an expectation of membership. The Executive Committee appointed Mr. Ralston Deffenbaugh to fill the vacated position.]

B. ASSESSMENT AND FEASIBILITY OF SOCIAL MESSAGE PROCESSES

At this time, there are three pending requests for social messages, two of which come from the 2022 Churchwide Assembly. It is the recommendation of the director for theological ethics to move forward with authorizing the development of one of the social message requests and to delay action on the other two requests until after the 2023-24 social message development cycle.

Church Council action:

To authorize the development of a social message on the epidemic of gun-related trauma in the U.S. with attention to the cluster of issues underlying it, such as national gun policy, personal security, growing community violence, public health, and social perplexity in light of existing social teaching and in accordance with "Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns" (2018).

Church Council action:

To maintain as pending the request for consideration of developing a social message on child abuse and child protection and the request of a substantive revision of the "Message on Homelessness" (1990) to be assessed by the Theological Discernment team in the Office of the Presiding Bishop for possible recommendation to the Church Council following the 2023-24 social message development cycle.

C. GUN VIOLENCE ADVOCACY

Churchwide Assembly action [CA22.01.05e]

To receive with gratitude the memorials from the Oregon Synod, Northwestern Ohio Synod, and Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod concerning gun violence;

To reaffirm this church's social teaching to address the broad issues of violence in society as called for in "Message on Community Violence" (1994);

To reaffirm this church's sense of urgency for advocacy for the renewal or replacement of the Federal Assault Weapons Ban (expired in 2004), including a definition of assault weapons comparable to that in the renewal attempt of the Assault Weapons Ban bill of 2013 and expanded background checks and other measures to increase gun safety;

To reaffirm that ELCA social policy does not reject gun ownership or the recreational activities associated with guns as morally wrong; and

To refer to the Witness in Society team in the Service and Justice home area for implementation and a report of the continuing advocacy efforts related to gun violence and universal background checks to the Church Council at its Spring 2023 meeting.

Response from the Service and Justice Home Area (April 2023)

The Service and Justice home area addresses gun violence in a manner consistent with ELCA social teaching through the education and advocacy work of the Witness in Society team in the Washington, D.C., office, state advocacy ministries, and through the Corporate Social Responsibility program.

Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton works with the ELCA Public Messages Working Group to determine opportunities for timely communication with members of Congress regarding “this church’s sense of urgency for the renewal or replacement of the Federal Assault Weapons Ban, including a definition of assault weapons comparable to that in the renewal attempt of the Assault Weapons Ban bill of 2013” and “this church’s long-standing support for managing gun purchases, such as background checks for all gun sales including private sales.” Messages of the Presiding Bishop are often released alongside an advocacy action alert to the ELCA advocacy network to encourage Lutherans and others to write their own letters to members of Congress. While difficult in a state of “divided government” our hope is that there will be political will to address these concerns before the end of the 2023-2025 legislative session.

On May 26, 2022, Presiding Bishop Eaton issued a pastoral message in support of the March for Our Lives march in Washington, D.C., and similar marches across the country, providing a teaching moment for the ELCA about responding to community violence.

On June 25, 2022, Congress passed and the US President signed into law the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (P.L. 117-159), the first major gun reform legislation in nearly three decades. The new law makes changes to the acquisition of firearms. It includes funding directed to identifying and addressing mental health as well as school safety provisions. The ELCA supported this legislation. The National Association of Counties produced a blog that included a synopsis of provisions included in the new law.

Equally as important as this church’s federal advocacy efforts, the ELCA’s robust State Public Policy Network works on state-based legislative opportunities. Following are just a few examples of those important efforts.

Pennsylvania

Lutheran Advocacy Ministry-PA (LAMPa) will work to advance Extreme Risk Protection Orders (ERPO) legislation, also known as “red flag” laws, that allow family and police to petition judges to temporarily confiscate firearms from persons at risk of harming themselves or others. Such a person would get an expedited hearing before a judge and could have their firearms seized for three months to a year. The legislation would grant police a search warrant to take a person’s guns if there is probable cause to suspect that they have not been relinquished. LAMPa will also share within its network any federal advocacy alerts created by the Washington, D.C., advocacy office regarding gun violence.

Colorado

The Rocky Mountain Synod has partnered with The Episcopal Diocese of Colorado to support the March for Our Lives movement. Lutheran Advocacy has equipped advocates in ELCA congregations with theological and moral formation resources around gun violence prevention, particularly for the sake of engaging Colorado Faith Communities United to End Gun Violence. Advocacy staff continue to monitor the progress of various bills addressing gun violence, extreme risk protection policies, and other public safety-oriented issues in the Colorado General Assembly each year.

Washington

Faith Action Network in Washington state has been working in coalition on legislation to prevent gun violence for more than a decade. With the leadership of the statewide Alliance for Gun Responsibility, the Faith Action Network has been supporting the passage of bills through the state legislature. In 2022, there was a successful advocacy effort on bills restricting high-capacity magazines, banning weapons in public locations such as school board meetings and election-related facilities, and closing the ghost guns loophole. In the 2023 legislative session, the Faith Action Network is working on three bills that have some momentum:

- prohibiting the sale, manufacture, transport, and import (but not possession) of assault weapons in Washington, while allowing reasonable exemptions for law enforcement and the military;
- requiring the firearms industry to establish, implement, and enforce reasonable controls; and
- requiring a comprehensive background check, safety training, and waiting period to purchase a firearm in the state of Washington.

With multi-faith communities, the Faith Action Network gathers in vigil when mass shootings occur, and pledges to work harder for comprehensive reforms at the state and national level.

Church Council action:

To receive the response on “Gun Violence Advocacy” from the Witness in Society team in the Service and Justice home area;

To commend the continued advocacy efforts being implemented across this church related to gun violence and universal background checks; and

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

D. SALARY EQUITY IN THE ELCA

Churchwide Assembly Action [CA22.01.11]

To receive with gratitude the memorial on “Salary Equity in the ELCA” from the Delaware-Maryland Synod;

To refer the memorial to the Church Council to consider commissioning a study of pay gaps for rostered ministers in the ELCA, particularly as they relate to women, people of color, minority ethnic groups, people with disabilities, and the LGBTQIA+ community, and to consider using such a study not only for the purposes described in this memorial but also for the study of inequitable compensation of clergy of color previously called for by the Church Council (CC19.06.23.), for the Quality of Call Initiative for Women in Ministry, for the study of educational debt, and for such other purposes as might serve the needs of this church;

To encourage Portico Benefit Services and the Churchwide organization to make appropriate changes to their bylaws and data privacy policies in order to facilitate a deeper understanding of compensation patterns for rostered ministers;

To replace the “Current gross compensation” question from the Rostered Minister Profile with “Minimum Compensation for Next Call;”

To amend the “Current Health Benefits” question to read “Needed Health Benefits;” and

To remove the “Current Retirement Contribution” question from the Rostered Minister Profile.

Executive Committee Action [EC22.09.23b4]

To refer the 2022 Churchwide Assembly action on “Salary Equity in the ELCA” to the Office of the Secretary, in consultation with the Office of the Presiding Bishop and Christian Community and Leadership home area, for a report or for a timeline on when this will receive further attention; and

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

Response from Christian Community and Leadership and the Office of the Secretary (November 2022)

As the memorial from the Delaware-Maryland Synod pointed out, there is evidence that across society and in churches there exist pay gaps that affect equity for women, people of color, minority ethnic groups, people with disabilities, people who are marginalized or living in poverty, and the LGBTQIA+ community. One serious difficulty the ELCA faces in determining the extent to which inequity exists in compensation for rostered ministers, however, is that data on compensation has been extremely difficult to come by. The churchwide organization holds no data on compensation for rostered ministers. While Portico Benefit Services has salary and retirement contribution data for those rostered ministers who are sponsored in its plans, there are challenges that have hindered sharing of data, including the fact that Portico is bound by federal privacy laws as a fiduciary agent, as well as the reality that it has been bound by its own bylaws and policies that protect the privacy of plan participants. There is the additional complication that, while a large majority of rostered ministers are sponsored through Portico, it is likely that a number of those who serve smaller congregations or those with fewer financial resources are not sponsored, and thus would not be included in any information that Portico might be able to share. Furthermore, Portico does not maintain ethnicity data on its members, and the data in the churchwide database of rostered ministers is often incomplete concerning ethnicity. Neither Portico nor the churchwide organization maintain information on rostered ministers’ identification as LGBTQIA+, gender is recorded primarily on the binary with the possibility of a rostered minister to report gender only as “other,” and no information on disabilities is tracked by the churchwide organization for ministers on the active rosters.

Conversation has begun about the study called for by the 2022 Churchwide Assembly and how the churchwide organization can most efficiently and effectively gather information that will serve the needs of the various studies already underway or about to get underway (as listed in the assembly’s action) that intersect with questions of compensation and equity. Adam DeHoek, ELCA congregation statistics analyst, will serve as a liaison to help ensure that there are efficiencies in data collection and reporting and that the various groups are sharing information across the studies. A timeline for the study will be reported at the Spring 2023 Church Council meeting.

Portico has asked for bylaw changes that the Church Council is being asked to approve at this meeting that would allow it to share compensation data for sponsored rostered ministers, which has been a challenge for such research in the past. The churchwide organization is working on data sharing policy revisions, and, working with Information

Technology (IT), is completing a new quarterly report that will give Portico more of the information they need and that will allow for data matching to enable the churchwide organization to pull useful conclusions from compensation data provided by Portico.

The various changes to the Rostered Minister Profile (RMP) compensation questions that the assembly called for have been addressed and are currently in production for release in the very near future.

Church Council action [CC22.11.34.v.]

To receive the progress report on “Salary Equity in the ELCA” from the Office of the Secretary;

To request a report on the consideration of a study identified in the memorial by the Spring 2023 Church Council meeting; and

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

Response from the Office of the Secretary (April 2023)

In 2020, compensation information was collected from participants in the study on the 50th Anniversary of the Ordination of Women in the ELCA which provided some data for a pay gap analysis. This fall, the ELCA Task Force to Study Educational Debt plans to collect updated compensation information as part of a quantitative survey of ELCA rostered ministers. Collecting the most relevant and actionable information will require the collaboration of several existing and forming task forces and study committees, including Urban Ministry, Justice for Women, Quality of Call Initiative, and the Candidacy Working Group. The hope is to realize efficiencies by gathering information in a single survey that will intersect with the work of these and other groups whose perspectives will inform the research questions about gaps in compensation and what information will be most beneficial to collect. Adam DeHoek, program director for Resourceful Servants and congregation statistics analyst, will coordinate this effort.

Enhanced data sharing with Portico Benefit Services from the churchwide organization has begun, with a preliminary quarterly report having been sent to Portico in recent days that will allow them to improve the accuracy of data matching and analysis and that sets the stage for enhanced mutual sharing of data in the future, subject still to any legal limitations within which Portico must operate.

All of the other items specified in the Churchwide Assembly action have been implemented.

Church Council Action:

To receive the response from the Office of the Secretary on “Salary Equity in the ELCA” to consider a study;

To affirm the timeline and commissioning of a single survey about inequitable gaps in compensation for rostered ministers in the ELCA; and

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

II. CHURCH COUNCIL RESPONSES TO SYNOD RESOLUTIONS

A. LGBTQ+ PROGRAMMING FOR EVENTS

Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod (8G) [2022]

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) adopted the social statement *Human Sexuality: A Gift and Trust* in 2009, providing guidance on how to live with our LGBTQ+ neighbors; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA adopted in 1995 a social policy resolution that “gay and lesbian people, as individuals created by God, are welcome to participate fully in the life of the congregations” of the ELCA; and

WHEREAS, the gatherings of the church (including, but not limited to, the National Youth Gathering) often include pre-gathering events or in-gathering sessions focused on specific communities; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod in assembly direct the Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod Council to request the ELCA Church Council direct the appropriate churchwide offices to develop LGBTQ-focused and LGBTQ-specific programming for use as pre-gathering events and in-gathering sessions whenever the gatherings of the church include such sessions for other communities.

Executive Committee Action [EC22.06.19c6]

To refer the “LGBTQ+ Programming for Events” resolution from the Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod to the Christian Community and Leadership home area for a report or for a timeline on when this will receive further attention; and

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

Response from the Christian Community and Leadership home area (November 2022)

Tammy Jones-West, interim program director for the ELCA Youth Gathering, has been apprised of this request for a pre-gathering of LGBTQIA2S youth. A response can be expected in the first quarter of 2023 for the 2024 ELCA Youth Gathering.

Church Council action [CC22.11.34.aa]

To receive the timeline on “LGBTQ+ Programming for Events” from the Christian Community and Leadership home area;

To request a response by the Spring 2023 Church Council meeting on LGBTQ-specific programming for pre-gathering events and in-gathering sessions for other communities; and

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

Response from the Christian Community and Leadership home area (April 2023)

The Youth Gathering Leadership Team (in consultation with some youth leaders in the LGBTQIA+ community) reviewed the memorial and decided on having space for LGBTQIA+ Youth and their allies during the Interactive Learning time of the 2024 ELCA Youth Gathering in New Orleans.

A pre-gathering for LGBTQIA+ youth was considered but was not implemented because it would be too risky for youth who have not come out to everyone and would force a choice between MYLE, TABLE, and a third event that would have overlapping identities.

The Rostered Ministers Gathering has no capacity this year for any pre-event gatherings. Workshops with a LGBTQ-focus are welcome.

The Christian Community and Leadership home area will continue to review events going forward to meet the memorial's intent.

CC ACTION [EN BLOC]

To receive the response on “LGBTQ+ Programming for Events” from the Christian Community and Leadership home area and to encourage consideration of the development of LGBT-focused sessions for churchwide events as appropriate whenever the churchwide organization gatherings include such sessions for other communities; and

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

B. COUNCIL OF NICAIA 1700TH ANNIVERSARY

Slovak Zion Synod (7G) [2023]

WHEREAS, the year 2025 will mark the 1700th anniversary of the first ecumenical council of the Church, commonly known as the Council of Nicaea; and

WHEREAS, the sainted members of this council produced certain pronouncements of the faith that, being faithful expositions of the Holy Scriptures and of Christian truth, became the rule and norm of the entire Christian Church, foremost among them the Nicene Creed; and

WHEREAS, the Lutheran Confessions declare that we “unanimously hold and teach, in accordance with the decree of the council of Nicaea” (AC 1), and that we “pledge ourselves to [the ecumenical symbols]” which were “accepted as the unanimous, catholic, Christian faith and confessions of the orthodox and true church” (Formula of Concord, Epitome, Rule and Norm, 3), etc.; and

WHEREAS, the constitution of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America likewise states that this church accepts, teaches, and confesses the Apostles’, Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds as true declarations of the faith of this church (2.04); and

WHEREAS, we believe the teaching of the ancient church has much to teach us about the meaning of Holy Scripture and the apostolic faith, and aids the increase in the unity of the Church; and

WHEREAS, the Nicene Creed is the norm and rule of faith for the many Eastern, Oriental, and Western Christian Churches; and

WHEREAS, this anniversary will be the first such centenary of the council since the wider reception of the modern ecumenical movement that has occurred in the last century; and

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has committed to “manifest the unity given to the people of God by living together in the love of Christ and by joining with other Christians in prayer and action to express and preserve the unity which the Spirit gives” (4.02.f) and “fostering Christian unity by participating in ecumenical activities, contributing its witness and work and cooperating with other churches which confess God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” (4.03.e); therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Slovak Zion Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to acknowledge and celebrate this anniversary with thanksgiving to Almighty God who gives the Church its unity; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Synod Council communicate to the Church Council the request that, in the interim, the Office of the Presiding Bishop arrange for the development of resources to assist congregations and synods in observing this anniversary, especially in ecumenical settings, and encourage study of the Nicene Creed and canons as

an opportunity for deepening Lutheran identity and as an impetus to nourish ecumenical relationships between churches and congregations.

(Note: Discussion regarding this resolution included a willingness and consensus in the Slovak Zion Synod to facilitate the compilation of such a resource, in consultation with the presiding bishop's office, to be made available to the whole church. Discussion also recognized a desire that full-communion partner churches and ELCA companion churches be made aware of these efforts and be invited to do similar work.)

Executive Committee action [EC23.02.05]

To refer the “Council of Nicaea 1700th Anniversary” resolution from the Slovak Zion Synod to the Office of the Presiding Bishop for a report or timeline on when this will receive further attention; and

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

Response from the Office of the Presiding Bishop (April 2023)

This resolution is received by the Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations team in the Office of the Presiding Bishop (OPB) with gratitude to the Slovak Zion Synod for its faithful recognition of this historic and forward-looking opportunity to reaffirm this church's Lutheran self-understanding and ecumenical commitments.

The intention of the OPB is to lift up and invite the people of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to connect with the global initiatives being planned by the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). Both bodies are in the process of developing resources (for local and global contexts), scholarship (books and articles), events (online and in person), and initiatives through which the member churches will engage together. In due time, staff will be able to roll out a clear plan for how the ELCA might utilize these compiled resources in this church's context and with ecumenical partners. Proceeding in this way allows for the ELCA to embody the ecumenical commitments of Christians going back to the ancient ecumenical councils and lived out today through the one ecumenical movement.

The WCC has publicly posted its initial planning toward “a year of reflection and renewal,” which will include a worldwide Faith & Order conference, worship resources, study group resources, a study program, public webinars, books, creative opportunities for online and local engagement, and links with other commemorations. The LWF is currently working with its Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) partners, which includes the Catholics, but also the three global communions that affirmed the JDDJ in 2017: Methodist, Anglican, and Reformed – as well as Orthodox partners, on common ecumenical commemorations that will include resources for member church and local engagement.

As staff awaits these developments from the WCC and LWF and engages in further conversation with this church's ecumenical partners in the United States and North America, the offer of the Slovak Zion Synod to contribute to the ELCA's engagement is noted. The initiators of the resolution are welcome to connect directly with Kathryn M. Lohre, executive for ecumenical and inter-religious relations and theological discernment in the Office of the Presiding Bishop.

Church Council Action:

To receive the response on “Council of Nicaea 1700th Anniversary” resolution from the Office of the Presiding Bishop;

To commend the Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations team in its efforts to lift up and engage ELCA congregations and synods in observing this anniversary by distributing and contextualizing resources from World Council of Churches and Lutheran World Federation as encouragement to study the Nicene Creed and canons, and as an opportunity for deepening Lutheran identity and ecumenical witness;

To welcome the Slovak Zion Synod to connect with Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations in the Office of the Presiding Bishop; and

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

C. LGBTQIA+ PRESENCE AMONG ELCA GOVERNING BODIES

Upstate New York Synod (7D) [2022]

RESOLVED, that the Upstate New York Synod Council respectfully requests that the Church Council of the ELCA adopt a continuing resolution setting a goal of having an intentional and dedicated LGBTQIA+ presence among the voting members of the Churchwide Assembly, the Church Council, and churchwide boards and committees.

Executive Committee action [EC22.12.34b]

To refer the “LGBTQIA+ Presence among ELCA Governing Bodies” resolution from the Upstate New York Synod to the Office of the Secretary for a report or for a timeline on when this will receive further attention; and

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

Response from the Office of the Secretary (April 2023)

The Office of the Secretary is in ongoing conversation with colleagues in Theological Discernment concerning this request and will present an update to the Church Council at the November 2023 meeting.

Church Council Action:

To receive the timeline on “LGBTQIA+ Presence among ELCA Governing Bodies” resolution from the Office of the Secretary and to anticipate a response at the November 2023 Church Council meeting; and

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

D. AMEND CONTINUING RESOLUTION 7.74.A21.

Saint Paul Area Synod (3H) [2023]

WHEREAS, the Saint Paul Area Synod has need to appoint interim ministers of Word and Service to fill congregational ministry vacancies where the particular gifts of a minister of Word and Service are appropriate and needed; and

WHEREAS, Continuing Resolution 7.44.A19.b. 1.5 grants authority to synod councils to appoint interim ministers of Word and Sacrament; and

WHEREAS, Continuing Resolution 7.74.A21. does not currently grant authority to synod councils to appoint interim ministers of Word and Service; and

WHEREAS, the Saint Paul Area Synod deeply appreciates and learns from the gifts and talents of ministers of Word and Service; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Saint Paul Area Synod Council requests that the Church Council amend Continuing Resolution 7.74.A21. by inserting the following into b. Table of Sources of Calls for Ministers of Word and Service:

1.5 *Interim deacon* *Synod Council*

Executive Committee action [EC23.03.10]

To refer the “Amend Continuing Resolution 7.74.A21.” resolution from the Saint Paul Area Synod to the Office of the Secretary for a report or for a timeline on when this will receive further attention; and

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

Response from the Office of the Secretary (April 2023)

The Office of the Secretary will bring this question of amending continuing resolution 7.74.A21. before the Roster Committee and the Leadership Committee of the Conference of Bishops for discernment. As the amendment might require a bylaw change, a report and recommendations will be provided to the Church Council at the November 2024 meeting.

Church Council Action:

To receive the timeline on “Amend Continuing Resolution 7.74.A21.” resolution from the Office of the Secretary and to anticipate a response at the November 2024 Church Council meeting; and

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

III. CHURCH COUNCIL RESPONSES TO PREVIOUS CHURCH COUNCIL ACTIONS

A. REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TASK FORCE ON THE ELCA DISCIPLINE PROCESS FOR ROSTERED MINISTERS OF COLOR

At the spring 2022 Church Council meeting, the Church Council authorized the creation of a task force “charged with reviewing the current process for discipline and its impact on persons of color and other historically marginalized groups, considering recommendations for staffing, community healing and restoration, and learning best practices from full communion partners” and requested a report with possible recommendations be provided by the Spring 2023 meeting. [CC22.04.04]

At its April 20 meeting, the Executive Committee discussed the report and recommendations from the task force. The report and recommendations were provided to the Church Council electronically prior to the meeting.

Church Council Action:

To receive the report and recommendations from the Task Force on the ELCA Discipline Process for Rostered Ministers of Color and thank the members of the task force for their care and due diligence to the work;

To refer the recommendations regarding the current discipline process to the Office of the Secretary, in consultation with the Conference of Bishops, with a report to be made to the Church Council at its November 2023 meeting;

To refer the recommendations regarding the creation of an ombudsperson position/office to the Administrative Team, in consultation with the Conference of Bishops, with a report to be made to the Church Council at its November 2023 meeting; and

To refer the recommendations regarding revisions to the *Manual of Policies and Procedures for Management of the Rosters of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* to the Task Force on Specialized Ministry and On-Leave-From-Call Status.

B. SOCIAL MESSAGE ON EARTH'S CLIMATE CRISIS

In November 2021, the ELCA Church Council acted to: “authorize the development of a social message on climate change in light of existing social teaching and in accordance with ‘Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns’ (2018).” (Social message development typically happens within a year; this process was delayed due to staff capacity factors.)

A revised draft text was shared in February with the Conference of Bishops. The Conference of Bishops Theological and Ethical Concerns Committee gave the text a final close review. In early April, the Faith, Society, and Innovation Committee (FSIC) reviewed the Final Proposed text. This recommended social message represents the result of these careful efforts to hear public comment and work with reviewers, bishops, and FSIC to craft the final text for Church Council consideration.

The Recommended Proposed Social Message on Earth's Climate Change and a FAQ sheet were distributed to Church Council members electronically prior to the meeting.

Church Council Action [Two-thirds approval required]:

To adopt “Earth’s Climate Crisis” as a social message of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

C. REVIEW OF ELCA RESPONSE TEAM

Church Council action [CC22.06.20]

....

To review the role and membership of the ELCA Response Team.

Response from the Office of the Presiding Bishop (April 2023)

The Administrative Team reviewed the role and current membership of the ELCA Response Team.

The team’s purpose is as follows:

- 1) Maintain integrity and effectiveness of ELCA programs;
- 2) Minimize negative publicity and, whenever possible, use the situation to the best public relations advantage for the ELCA;
- 3) Ensure the flow of accurate and helpful information within and outside the ELCA; and
- 4) Provide support and guidance to synod staff when a synod is managing a crisis.

These people comprise the core membership of the ELCA Response Team:

- Executive, Governance (co-convener)
- Senior Director, Strategic Communications (co-convener)
- General Counsel
- Executive, Synod Relations

Additional people are included in the team as needed to respond to a crisis. The team’s work is to discuss and determine a strategy for an ELCA response that has looked at the issue from a variety of perspectives and to inform the audience(s) who need to know.

Following the review of the role and membership of the ELCA Response Team, the Administrative Team decided not to make any changes.

Church Council Action:

To receive the report from the Office of the Presiding Bishop and affirm the decision of the Administrative Team of the churchwide organization concerning the review of the ELCA Response Team.