



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God’s work. Our hands.

April 17, 2024

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 and advisory members of the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Administrative Team and advisors of the churchwide organization
Chief executive officers of separately incorporated ministries
Seminary leaders
From: Deacon Sue E. Rothmeyer, secretary
Subject: Report of Actions of the Church Council (April 11-14, 2024)

The Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) met at the Lutheran Center in Chicago, Ill., April 11-14, 2024. The following is a summary of Church Council actions along with background information.

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1. RECEPTION OF U.S. LUTHERAN–CATHOLIC DIALOGUE 12TH ROUND

Background

Next year will mark 60 years of dialogue between Lutherans and Catholics in the United States. During these decades, significant strides have been made in uncovering the unity we share, detailed in what are now twelve Common Statements. In late 2023, Fortress Press published *Faithful Teaching: Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue XII*.

The common statement of the twelfth round of the U.S. Lutheran–Catholic dialogue is presented as an ecumenical resource by the Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations section in the ELCA Office of the Presiding Bishop in cooperation with the Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).

In a time of significant social and ecclesial change, Round XII was born out of the mutual recognition that *how* the church discerns what to teach is crucial. Thus, the common statement explores the different processes by which Lutherans and Catholics discern and declare the truth of the gospel. This includes “different approaches to consulting the faithful, differing theologies of episcopal office and church governance, [and] differing structures of deliberation and decision-making” (*Preface, xiii-xiv*). In offering this assessment, significant areas of agreement are also identified,

and implications for unity are posited. With a shared sense of urgency, these implications support Lutherans and Catholics in teaching the gospel *together* today.

The twelfth round was co-chaired by the Rev. Lowell G. Almen (ELCA) and Bishop Denis. J. Madden (USCCB). Representatives from both churches formed the dialogue team, along with co-staff. The Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations Committee of the ELCA Conference of Bishops recommends the Church Council receive the Common Statement.

Church Council action:

To receive “Faithful Teaching,” the Common Statement of the Twelfth Round of the U.S. Lutheran–Catholic Dialogue.

2. ELECTION OF EXECUTIVE FOR ADMINISTRATION

Background

The Executive for Administration is the chief administrator of the churchwide organization. According to ELCA Constitution continuing resolution 15.12.A22., “The executive for administration shall be elected by the Church Council upon nomination of the presiding bishop and shall serve coterminous with the term of the presiding bishop.”

Previously, the Rev. Dr. M. Wyvetta Bullock served as the executive for administration from 2007 to 2021. More recently, she began serving as the interim executive for administration in January [EC(ES)23.12.59] when the Rev. Louise N. Johnson moved into the executive for vision position. Pastor Bullock has served the ELCA since 1987, and prior to that, served the LCA beginning in 1981.

Church Council action:

To elect the Rev. Dr. M. Wyvetta Bullock as the executive for administration for a term coterminous with the term of the presiding bishop, as provided in churchwide continuing resolution 15.12.A22.

3. AMENDMENT OF A CONTINUING RESOLUTION IN THE CONSTITUTIONS, BYLAWS, AND CONTINUING RESOLUTIONS OF THE ELCA

The Legal and Constitutional Review Committee recommended an amendment to the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA* to avoid potential complications that could arise if the names of persons identified during the pre-assembly identification process for the election of the presiding bishop or secretary were distributed before the completion of synod assemblies.

Church Council action:

To adopt the following amendment to the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*:

19.01.A234. *In a year when the presiding bishop, vice president, or secretary shall be elected, those who will serve as voting members of the upcoming Churchwide Assembly shall be invited to identify the names of up to three persons who might be considered for election as presiding bishop, vice president, or secretary. Names shall be submitted to the Office of the Secretary at least four months prior to the assembly. The Office of the Secretary shall contact those persons identified and request biographical information. At least 6030 days prior to the Churchwide Assembly, the biographical information received from those persons open to consideration shall be distributed to the voting members.*

4. FY24 ELCA WORLD HUNGER SPENDING AUTHORIZATION

Background information on Budget and Finance Committee recommendations was distributed to Church Council members electronically prior to the meeting.

Church Council action:

To request the Office of the Treasurer, in consultation with the appropriate churchwide organization home areas, to review the FY24 revenue and expense performance of ELCA World Hunger through May 2024 and to share any recommendations with the Budget and Finance Committee; and

To authorize the Executive Committee to approve any necessary revisions to the FY24 Spending Authorization in ELCA World Hunger if recommended by the Budget and Finance Committee.

5. ROTH OPTION FOR ELCA RETIREMENT PLAN

Background

In accordance with ELCA Constitution bylaw 17.20.02., the ELCA Church Council shall approve plan amendments involving a significant change in policy or a significant change in cost or benefits and shall approve trust amendments initiated by Portico Benefit Services.

The significant amendment proposed is to add Roth as an option for member elective contributions for the plan year beginning January 1, 2025. Roth contributions to a 403(b) plan are made with income that's already been taxed, and upon meeting certain requirements, may be withdrawn upon retirement without additional federal income tax. This may be advantageous to certain members in the retirement plans and, beginning next year, members would have the option to make Roth elective contributions. Members may make this election during annual enrollment in the 4th quarter of 2024 to begin contributions January 1, 2025.

Portico Benefit Services' proposed changes received the approval of its Board of Trustees at its meeting on February 23, 2024.

Church Council action:

To approve adding Roth as an option for member elective contributions for the plan year beginning January 1, 2025; and

To approve the proposed amendments by the Portico Benefit Services, as outlined in the "Proposed Portico Plan Amendments" document.

6. AMENDMENTS TO PERSONNEL POLICIES OF THE CHURCHWIDE ORGANIZATION

Background

The Personnel Policies of the Churchwide Organization are adopted by the Church Council in accordance with ELCA Constitution bylaw 14.21.06. Several revisions were proposed for the Personnel Policies of the Churchwide Organization. They included 1) minor editorial changes and corrections; 2) updates to clarify and reflect current practices; and 3) additions and changes recommended by legal counsel to ensure compliance with preexistent, new, and forthcoming labor laws. Any formatting inconsistencies will be addressed prior to publication.

Church Council action:

To approve the amended Churchwide Organization Personnel Policies; and

To authorize the Office of the Secretary, in consultation with People Solutions in the Office of the Presiding Bishop, to make any necessary editorial corrections for accuracy.

7. CHURCH COUNCIL NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS

Background:

The Church Council has the responsibility to elect people to fill terms on boards of separately incorporated ministries (SIMs), certain social ministry organizations, and seminaries. ELCA Constitution bylaws 8.21.03. and 8.21.04. outline basic parameters for the election of members to the boards of ELCA seminaries.

Biographical information for nominees was provided to Church Council members electronically prior to the meeting.

A. ELECTION TO THE ADVISORY BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF LUTHERAN THEOLOGICAL SOUTHERN SEMINARY AT LENOIR-RHYNE UNIVERSITY

Church Council action:

To elect to the advisory board of directors of Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary at Lenoir-Rhyne University to a first term beginning June 1, 2024, and expiring May 31, 2028: The Rev. Kenneth Charles Blyth, the Rev. Jennifer Goodwin Roberts, Deacon Tammy Jones West, and the Rev. Michael Lonny Rhyne;

To re-elect to the advisory board of directors of Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary at Lenoir-Rhyne University to a term beginning June 1, 2024, and expiring May 31, 2026: The Rev. Richard Goeres; and

To re-elect to the advisory board of directors of Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary at Lenoir-Rhyne University to a second term beginning June 1, 2024, and expiring May 31, 2028: The Rev. Angela Ford Nelson.

B. ELECTION TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF TRINITY LUTHERAN SEMINARY AT CAPITAL UNIVERSITY

Church Council action:

To re-elect to the board of directors of Trinity Lutheran Seminary at Capital University to a second term beginning July 1, 2024, and expiring June 30, 2027: The Rev. Niklaus Christian Schillack and the Rev. Abraham D. Allende.

C. ELECTION TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS UNITED LUTHERAN SEMINARY

Church Council action:

To elect to the board of directors of United Lutheran Seminary to a first term beginning May 2024, and expiring May 2027: Ms. Elizabeth Baran Wagner.

D. ELECTION TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE PUBLISHING HOUSE OF THE ELCA – 1517 MEDIA

Church Council action:

To elect to the board of trustees of the Publishing House of the ELCA – 1517 Media – to fill a vacancy with a term expiring in August 2025: Mr. Kurt Barneson Galvez.

E. APPOINTMENT TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF MOSAIC, INC.

Church Council action:

To appoint to the board of directors of Mosaic, Inc. with a three-year term expiring in 2027: Mr. Peter J. Enko.

8. REVISIONS TO RESOLUTIONS REGARDING AUTHORITY TO ACT IN FINANCIAL MATTERS

Background

In April 2021, the Church Council adopted CC21.04.06a regarding the Appointment of Assistant Officers. A revision was necessitated by personnel changes.

Church Council action:

RESOLVED, that for the sole purpose of executing, when necessary, documents approved and authorized in accordance with actions of the Church Council, the following are hereby appointed as assistant treasurers of this corporation: ~~Cecilia Favela, Santiago Padilla, and Annette Roman,~~ **and Stephanie Ulba** to serve until replaced or removed by subsequent appointments, with such subsequent appointments to be based upon the nomination and recommendation of the treasurer;

RESOLVED, that for the sole purpose of executing or attesting, when necessary, documents approved and authorized in accordance with actions of the Church Council, the following are hereby appointed as assistant secretaries of this corporation: Thomas A. Cunniff, ~~Aja M. Favors, and~~ Norman K. Fry, **and Paul K. Irwin** to serve until replaced or removed by subsequent appointments, with such subsequent appointments to be based upon the nomination and recommendation of the secretary.

RESOLVED, that prior resolutions adopted by this Council, including CC21.04.06a and the prior actions identified in CC15.04.31b, are hereby rescinded and replaced by this action.

9. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Background:

The minutes of the Church Council meeting on Nov. 9-12, 2023, were provided to Church Council members electronically prior to the meeting.

The minutes of the council's Executive Committee meetings on Nov. 9, 2023, Dec. 12, 2023, Jan. 17, 2023, Feb. 20, 2023, and March 19, 2023, were provided to members of the Church Council electronically prior to the meeting. Minutes for the Jan. 10, 2024, meeting held in executive session were added to the protocol file in the Office of the Secretary.

Council members were invited to provide notations or typographical errors in the distributed text of the minutes to the Office of the Secretary prior to the meeting.

Church Council action:

To approve the minutes of the Nov. 9-12, 2023, meeting of the Church Council; and

To ratify actions of the council's Executive Committee as indicated in the minutes of the Nov. 9, 2023, Dec. 12, 2023, Jan. 10, 2024, Jan. 17, 2024, Feb. 20, 2024, and March 19, 2024, meetings.