



# 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 Church Council Responses to Churchwide Assembly Actions, Synod Resolutions, and Previous Church Council Actions (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 responses to previous actions along with background information.

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## I. CHURCH COUNCIL RESPONSES TO CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY ACTIONS

### A. CHILD ABUSE AND PROTECTION

*Churchwide Assembly action [CA22.01.05r]*

To receive with gratitude the memorials from the Saint Paul Area Synod, Central States Synod, and Northeastern Iowa Synod concerning development of a social statement on child abuse and protection; and

To request that the Church Council consider authorizing development of a social message on child abuse and protection.

*Response from the Theological Ethics Desk (April 2024)*

ELCA social teaching and policy result from an extensive, inclusive, and accepted process of deliberation throughout this church. The development, adoption, application, and interpretation of social teaching entails a shared responsibility across all three expressions of our church in which various actors carry out specific roles as spelled out in “Policies and Procedures for Addressing Social Concerns.”

The ELCA Church Council’s role in the development of social messages includes oversight and is proactive since the Church Council serves as the ELCA’s interim legislative body. Social messages may be requested by several

leadership bodies but are adopted by council action and the council's responsibility includes determination both of whether and when requests will be authorized.

The general capacity of the Theological Ethics desk, in terms of human and financial resources, for writing projects during any given year is that of work on one social statement, one social message, and one study resource. Recommendations for social message development also consider the capacity of review bodies such as the Conference of Bishops and the Church Council.

The Theological Ethics team currently is leading the development of a new social statement on "Civic Life and Faith" and will lead another task force in reconsiderations of *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* (2009) beginning in late Spring 2024. Given this, the Theological Ethics team envisions that the next proposed social message or social message reconsideration be anticipated for consideration at the Fall 2025 Church Council meeting. That timing would mean no overlap for comment periods or review processes with the work of the two social statement task forces.

There are currently three requests for social message development:

- Development of a new social message on child protection and maltreatment;
- Reconsideration of "Message on Homelessness: A Renewal of Commitment" (1990); and
- Reconsideration of one element of "Message on End-of-Life Decisions" (1992)

The recommendation of the director for theological ethics, as spelled out below in actionable language, is to authorize a social message on child protection and maltreatment. This recommendation follows extensive conversations with various stakeholders, including other churchwide organization staff, the Theological Ethics Advisory Working Group, and the Theological and Ethical Concerns Committee of the Conference of Bishops.

The primary factors that support this recommendation include:

- The capacity level indicated above, which means only one social message can be initiated in 2024;
- The extent of the problem of child maltreatment and abuse in society and the church, largely hidden to general awareness;
- The overwhelming urgency expressed by stakeholders for the development of this social message; and
- The absence ELCA has in social teaching and policy on this topic.

***Church Council action:***

**To authorize the development of a social message on child protection and maltreatment as requested by the 2022 Churchwide Assembly [CA22.01.05r], 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).**

**B. MISSION DEVELOPMENT PROCESS**

*Churchwide Assembly Action [CA22.01.10]*

To receive with gratitude the memorial on "Equity and Clarity in the Mission Development Process" from the Delaware-Maryland Synod;

To refer this memorial to the Congregational Vitality Training and Development team in the Christian Community and Leadership home area to establish a working group in partnership with the appropriate leaders in the Delaware-Maryland Synod to study and refine current ELCA guidelines and systems for appointments, calls, funds, and support mechanisms for mission developers and new ministries; and

To request that the working group consult with and provide regular reports to the Church Council beginning by Fall 2023 to ensure that the purposes and objectives of this memorial are being fulfilled.

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

The ELCA Christian Community and Leadership home area Congregational Vitality Training and Development Team leaders have contacted Delaware-Maryland Synod staff to create a working group in partnership with Delaware-Maryland Synod leaders who composed this memorial. The Rev. Sandra Chrostowski, senior director, Congregational Vitality, and New Ministry Training and Development, and the Rev. Ruben Duran, senior advisor for New Ministry Development, have been appointed as conveners of this working group which will identify partners across this church for consultation and collaboration with the goal of scheduling an online meeting during the first quarter of 2023.

This working group will study and refine current ELCA guidelines and systems in place for appointments, calls, funding, and support mechanisms for mission developers and new ministries. The working group will also provide regular reports, beginning at the Fall 2023 Church Council meeting, to ensure that the purposes and objectives of this memorial are being fulfilled.

*Church Council Action [CC22.11.34q]*

To receive the progress report on “Equity and Clarity in the Mission Development Process” from the Christian Community and Leadership home area;

To request a progress report on the work by the Fall 2023 Church Council meeting; and

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

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

In the beginning of 2023, there was a leadership transition and team realignment. Late in June the new senior director was hired. With a new senior director came new priorities, one of which was to gain understanding of the grants and grants processes. An audit of the New Starts grants began in July and is nearing completion, after which a team will evaluate and redesign the granting process. This team will be made of current directors for evangelical mission, including the Rev. Alejandro Mejía of the Delaware-Maryland Synod. The new grants process is scheduled to start next fiscal year. More will be reported by the next spring Church Council meeting.

*Church Council action [CC23.11.20o]*

To receive the response on “Equity and Clarity in the Mission Development Process” from the Christian Community and Leadership home area;

To request a progress report on the work by the Spring 2024 Church Council meeting; and

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

*Response from the Christian Community and Leadership home area (April 2024)*

An audit of New Starts grants was finished at the beginning of November 2023. On Nov. 10, the audit results were presented to the Christian Community and Leadership (CCL) Committee of the Church Council. Recruitment of team members was delayed due to the rolling out of the information so it could be shared with the Conference of Bishops (COB). On Feb. 8, 2024, the CCL Committee of the COB was briefed about the audit results and then they were shared with the whole COB.

On Feb. 22, 2024, the audit results were shared with the directors for evangelical mission (DEMs). Once that was complete DEMs were identified who would be invited to be a part of the Grants Restructure Team. Those who accepted the invitation were the Rev. Alejandro Mejía (Delaware-Maryland Synod), Mr. Joey Ager (Southwestern Washington Synod), the Rev. Herb Shao (Northwest Washington Synod), Mr. Branden Dupree (Metropolitan New York Synod), the Rev. Rebel Hurd (Northwestern Minnesota Synod), the Rev. Matthew Short (Greater Milwaukee Synod), and the Rev. Miguel F. Gomez-Acosta (CCL). Two bishops will be invited into the conversations but have yet to be identified. All team members have agreed to meet in fiscal year 2024 to have final results for fiscal year 2025.

***Church Council action:***

**To receive the response on “Equity and Clarity in the Mission Development Process” from the Christian Community and Leadership home area;**

**To request a final report by the Spring 2026 Church Council meeting; and**

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

**C. FORTIFYING URBAN MINISTRIES**

*Churchwide Assembly Action [CA22.01.08]*

To receive with gratitude the memorial on “Fortifying Ministries in Underserved Urban Areas” from the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod;

To affirm the strategic direction of the ELCA Fund for Leaders ministry to enhance the capacity of people of color through its disbursement of scholarships to Theological Education for Emerging Ministries candidates;

To refer this memorial to the Congregational Vitality Training and Development Team in the Christian Community and Leadership home area to create a churchwide Urban Ministry group, in partnership with the appropriate leaders in the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, to accompany ELCA synods in their urban strategies that lead to the enhancement of congregational vitality and ministry sustainability in the urban context. The group will 1) collaborate with other studies already underway, 2) resource synods by gathering best practices in urban ministry and emerging ideas in the care and creative use of church facilities, 3) identify supportive networks within this church and among ecumenical partners, and 4) encourage piloting innovative ways to address the realities and complexities of urban ministry, including enhancing urban internship opportunities. The group may consider additional topics as needed;

To request that the churchwide Urban Ministry group consult with and provide regular reports to the Church Council to ensure that the purposes and objectives of this memorial are being fulfilled; and

To provide a final report to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly on the results of its study, new urban initiatives, and ways for this church to fortify the witness and service among people and communities in underserved urban areas.

*Executive Committee Action [EC22.09.23b3]*

To refer the 2022 Churchwide Assembly action on “Fortifying Urban Ministries in Underserved Urban Areas” 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)*

The responsibility for the implementation of this memorial has been assigned to the Christian Community and Leadership (CCL) home area. The Rev. Sandra Chrostowski, senior director, Congregational Vitality, and New Ministry Training and Development, and the Rev. Ruben Duran, senior advisor for New Ministry Development, have been appointed as conveners of a churchwide organization group to address this memorial on Urban Ministry, in partnership with leaders in the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod who sent this memorial forward and who also passed a similar resolution on urban ministry for their synod.

Two initial action steps have been taken:

1. An initial consultation with the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod staff has taken place. The synod has appointed the Rev. Regina Goodrich, pastor of Mediator Lutheran Church, Philadelphia, Penn., and dean of the synod’s Central Conference, and the Rev. Brian Penman, the synod’s director for evangelical mission, as *ad hoc* members of the Synod Task Force for Urban Ministry. They are identifying members for this task force and are planning to meet for the first time in early November.
2. Pastors Chrostowski and Duran have begun to develop criteria for the selection of participants for the churchwide group on Urban Ministry including representation from the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod leadership. The intention is to have group membership finalized in December and to begin convening in early 2023.

*Church Council action [CC22.11.34p.]*

To receive the response on “Fortifying Urban Ministries in Underserved Urban Areas” from the Christian Community and Leadership home area;

To request a progress report on the work by the Spring 2024 Church Council meeting; and

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

*Response from the Christian Community and Leadership Home Area (April 2024)*

In the beginning of 2023, Christian Community and Leadership (CCL) experienced a leadership transition and team realignment. Late in June the new senior director, the Rev. Miguel F. Gómez-Acosta, was hired. Pastor Gómez-Acosta was able to touch base with the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Bishop Patricia Davenport at the November 2023 Conference of Bishops meeting to identify who on her staff was the contact person for the Fortifying Urban Communities synod task force. However, due to other priorities having to do with budget cuts and responding to requests for ministry reviews, he was not able to connect with the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod’s director for evangelical mission (DEM) the Rev. Bryan Penman until February 2024.

At that meeting, staff were notified that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod’s task force has been meeting since 2022. As part of their work, they partnered with Innovation Lab to conduct surveys of their urban congregations. Pastor Penman agreed to serve on a churchwide organization team to discuss the issue and agreed to invite two other members from the task force to be a part of the national conversation.

Pastor Gómez-Acosta also followed up with the executive director for Innovation, Mr. Iain Chester. Mr. Chester reported that surveys and visitations were conducted in 2023. His team has a list of learnings that was shared with the local task force and has agreed to share those findings at the first meeting of the churchwide organization’s Fortifying Urban Ministries team. Currently staff are in the process of identifying other DEMs to serve on this team.

***Church Council action:***

**To receive the response on “Fortifying Urban Ministries in the Underserved Urban Areas” from the Christian Community and Leadership home area;**

**To request a final report on the work by the Spring 2025 Church Council meeting; and**

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

## **D. RIGHT TO BOYCOTT**

### *Churchwide Assembly Action [CA22.01.05e]*

To receive with gratitude the memorials from the Metropolitan Chicago Synod and the New England Synod in relation to Palestinian human rights; and

To urge Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton and ELCA members to call on the president of the United States and the U.S. Congress to oppose legislation penalizing or criminalizing support for nonviolent boycotts, divestment, and/or sanctions on behalf of Palestinian human rights.

### *Executive Committee Action [EC22.09.23b5]*

To refer the 2022 Churchwide Assembly action on “Right to Boycott” to the Office of the Presiding Bishop and the Service and Justice 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 synods of this action.

### *Response from the Office of the Presiding Bishop and Service and Justice home area (November 2022)*

The Public Messages Working Group, an internal churchwide organization working group, reviewed the request for the presiding bishop and ELCA members to call on the U.S. President and Congress to oppose legislation penalizing or criminalizing support for nonviolent boycotts, divestment, and/or sanctions on behalf of Palestinian human rights.

Given the current election cycle, staff recommend the request be postponed until the new Congress is in session. The intention would be to link an ELCA letter with ecumenical efforts or with a calendar event like a United Nations day or discussion. In preparation, a template and initial draft will be undertaken so the letter may be quickly edited and released when the timing is appropriate. The Church Council can expect a report on the outcomes by the April 2024 meeting.

### *Church Council Action [CC22.11.34t.]*

To refer the 2022 Churchwide Assembly action on “Right to Boycott” to the Office of the Presiding Bishop and the Service and Justice 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 synods of this action.

### *Response from the Office of the Presiding Bishop and Service and Justice home area (April 2024)*

The Public Messages Working Group has crafted a template and initial draft of an ELCA statement that would request the U.S. President and the U.S. Congress to oppose legislation penalizing or criminalizing support for nonviolent boycotts, divestment, and/or sanctions on behalf of Palestinian human rights. The intention would be to release the letter later this year, at a time when it will best benefit public conversation on this matter.

### **Church Council action:**

**To receive the response on “Right to Boycott” from the Office of the Presiding Bishop and Service and Justice home area;**

**To commend the staff with releasing an ELCA letter to the U.S. President and the U.S. Congress to oppose legislation penalizing or criminalizing support for nonviolent boycotts, divestment, and/or sanctions on behalf of Palestinian human rights at a time when it will best benefit public conversation on this matter; and**

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

## **E. BLACK MIGRANT STRATEGY**

### *Churchwide Assembly Action [CA22.01.09]*

To receive with gratitude the memorial on “ELCA Strategy Regarding Black Migrants” from the Delaware-Maryland Synod;

To direct the Service and Justice home area, in consultation with the program directors for African Descent Ministries, African Nationals, and Latino Ministries; African Descent Strategy Team; African Descent Lutheran Association; Association of Latino Ministries of the ELCA; and Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation, and Opportunities (AMMPARO), to prepare a proposal for the strengthening of advocacy, protection, and accompaniment of Black migrants, that includes cost estimates, for Church Council consideration by its Spring 2024 meeting;

To strengthen the current protection and accompaniment of Black migrants through AMMPARO in partnership with ecumenical and interfaith partners both domestically and internationally;

To recommit this church to advocating for Temporary Protected Status and just and humane immigration policy through the Witness in Society team within the Service and Justice home area; and

To encourage congregations to affirm the aims of the African Descent Strategy Implementation Plan for 2020–2025 and the United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent.

*Response from the Service and Justice home area (April 2024)*

The Service and Justice (S&J) home area received the 2022 Churchwide Assembly action requesting the preparation of a proposal for the strengthening of advocacy, protection, and accompaniment of Black migrants, including cost estimates, for Church Council consideration by its Spring 2024 meeting. However, upon further review of the strategy’s scope, it was determined that S&J would benefit from more input from stakeholders. It was clear that more time would be needed to prepare a well-rounded proposal. The program director for migration policy, in consultation with the Service and Justice interim executive director, and program director for African Descent Ministries, initiated a process to obtain more input from stakeholders with direct relationships with people and communities of African descent. In November, S&J formally invited stakeholders from across the ELCA to form part of a task force dedicated to “advising, developing, and implementing” the Black Migrant Strategy.

As stated in the assembly action, representatives from these groups were invited to form part of the Black Migrant Strategy Task Force: African Descent Ministries, Latino Ministries, Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation, and Opportunities (AMMPARO), African National, African Descent Strategy Team, African Descent Lutheran Association, and the Association of Latino Ministries of the ELCA. The task force met for the first time on Jan. 8, 2024. The first task force meeting set expectations for the work, provided an opportunity for participants to share why they were motivated to work on this proposal, and laid out the next steps.

The proposal will receive further attention at the next meeting of the task force this spring. The program director for migration policy, in consultation with the task force, aims to provide a proposal for the strengthening of advocacy, protection, and accompaniment of Black migrants, that includes cost estimates, for Church Council consideration by its Fall 2024 meeting. In the meantime, a report summarizing projects and programs, through AMMPARO, that address migrants of African descent from 2021-2023 is being developed to share with the task force to aid the development of the proposal.

Proposal Timeline:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Status</u>
Nov. 10, 2023	Initiate task force	Completed
Jan. 8, 2024	Task force meeting	Completed
March 18, 2024	Deadline for Church Council response	Completed
April-May 2024	Task force meeting	
Summer 2024	Draft Proposal	
Fall 2024	Finalize Proposal	

***Church Council action:***

**To receive the response on “ELCA Strategy Regarding Black Migrants” from the Service and Justice home area;**

**To request a final proposal for the strengthening of advocacy, protection, and accompaniment of Black migrants, including cost estimates, for Church Council consideration by its November 2024 meeting; and**

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

## II. CHURCH COUNCIL RESPONSES TO SYNOD RESOLUTIONS

### A. ADDRESSING ANTI-SEMITISM IN LECTIONARY READINGS

*Northern Illinois Synod (5B) [2021]*

WHEREAS, anti-Semitic words, deeds, and attitudes do real harm to our Jewish neighbors; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has repudiated anti-Semitism and expressed its desire to live in “love and respect for the Jewish people” (“Declaration to the Jewish Community,” 1994); and

WHEREAS, passages of the New Testament which can be interpreted as anti-Jewish or supercessionist (i.e. supporting the idea that God has rejected the Jews) are included in our lectionary; and

WHEREAS, in the time in which the New Testament was written, the word Ἰουδαῖοι (ee-oo-DIE-oy), was used as a marker of geographic and ethnic identity (that is, it denoted people from Judaea as distinct from Galilee, Samaria, or other parts of the world) and “Israelite” was used to identify the people who worshiped the God of Israel wherever they lived, that is the people whom we today would identify as “Jewish;” and

WHEREAS, the word “Jews” in the New Testament is usually an inaccurate translation of the Greek Ἰουδαῖοι, and

WHEREAS, the preferred translation used by Augsburg Fortress is the NRSV, which uses the inaccurate and potentially harmful translation “Jews” in almost every instance; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the preachers and teachers of the Northern Illinois Synod be encouraged to address the issues of anti-Semitism and anti-Jewish theology (such as the teaching that the Jewish people are responsible for the death of Jesus and/or the idea that God has rejected the Jews); and, be it further

RESOLVED, that preachers, teachers, and lectors of the Northern Illinois Synod be encouraged, when reading in public, to substitute a more appropriate translation of Ἰουδαῖοι where the English translation uses the word “Jews.” Examples include “Judaeans,” “Religious Leaders,” and “locals;” and, be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northern Illinois Synod Assembly direct the Synod Council to forward this resolution to the Church Council’s Executive Committee for referral and disposition to the appropriate unit or office of the churchwide organization in accordance with the bylaws and continuing resolutions of this church in order to address the issues of anti-Jewish language in this church’s lectionary and teaching materials.

*Executive Committee Action [EC22.06.19c5]*

To refer the “Addressing Anti-Semitism in Lectionary Readings” resolution from the Northern Illinois Synod to the Worship Team in the Christian Community and Leadership home area, in consultation with the Office of the Presiding Bishop, 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)*

The concern about anti-Jewish interpretations of biblical texts is not new and remains an important challenge for this church to address. Two issues are often at play. One is interpretation of translations of biblical texts (as this resolution identifies) and the other is how the readings are grouped together for public worship, for example in the Revised Common Lectionary.

Several resources are already available to help guide worship planners and preachers in navigating these important concerns. “Preaching and Teaching with Love and Respect for the Jewish People” is recently available from the ELCA Consultative Panel on Lutheran-Jewish Relations. This resource explores challenging topics, lectionary selections, and Bible passages to inform Christian preaching and teaching so that they respect the integrity of the Jewish tradition and avoid anti-Jewish interpretations of New Testament texts. Another key resource developed by the panel is “Talking Points: Topics in Christian-Jewish Relations,” especially #5 on “Difficult Texts.”

An essay titled, “‘The Jews’ in John’s Passion,” was published in the 2020 edition of the *Sundays and Seasons* worship planning resource from Augsburg Fortress. This essay includes an emended translation of the passion according to John for use on Good Friday. This essay and emended text are now available both on [SundaysAndSeasons.com](http://SundaysAndSeasons.com) and on [ELCA.org](http://ELCA.org).

Similar emendation principles were used in *Readings for the Assembly*, a three-year lectionary resource published in 1995–1997. An emended edition of *Readings for the Assembly* is being made available on [SundaysAndSeasons.com](http://SundaysAndSeasons.com) for provisional use beginning this Advent. The Principles for Emendation note alignment with guidance on “Language and the Christian Assembly” in the 2002 ELCA document *Principles for Worship*, the updated edition of the NRSV (NRSVue) published in 2021, and follow the encouragement of *Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Call to Action* (2019).

Ecumenical and full communion partners are having similar conversations regarding anti-Jewish interpretations of biblical readings. The Episcopal Church, at its general convention in July 2022, adopted a resolution that calls for a task force “to address both the anti-Semitic, anti-Jewish or supercessionist impact of lectionary readings, especially for Holy Week, and to develop proposals to mitigate that impact.” The ELCA is a member of the Consultation on Common Texts (CCT), which is an ecumenical consultation of liturgical scholars and denominational representatives

from the United States and Canada. The CCT was instrumental in the development of the Revised Common Lectionary. Ongoing conversation with these groups, and others, will be important as the ELCA considers future recommendations. The ELCA Consultative Panel on Lutheran-Jewish Relations is prepared to support ELCA Worship team's participation in these efforts.

The ELCA Worship team will continue conversation with key stakeholders, such as the Worship Resource Development Working Group (the combined worship teams of the churchwide organization and 1517 Media/Augsburg Fortress), the Consultation on Common Texts; ecumenical partners such as The Episcopal Church, the Conference of Bishops; and, in consultation with the executive for Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations and Theological Discernment and the ELCA Consultative Panel on Lutheran-Jewish Relations. In addition, the ELCA Worship team and the Worship Development staff at 1517 Media/Augsburg Fortress will ensure these topics are addressed when considering future resources such as preaching helps and worship formation.

*Church Council Action [CC22.11.34z.]*

To receive the progress report on “Addressing Anti-Semitism in Lectionary Readings” from the Christian Community and Leadership home area;

To request an update be provided by the Spring 2024 Church Council meeting; and

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

*Response from the Office of the Presiding Bishop, Worship Team (April 2024)*

*[The Worship Team moved from the Christian Community and Leadership home area to the Office of the Presiding Bishop]*

In response to this resolution in the ELCA and a similar resolution in The Episcopal Church, the Consultation on Common Texts (CCT) met in May 2023 and voted to establish a working group on anti-Semitism and the Lectionary. The working group, which is expected to bring an interim report to the April 2024 meeting of the CCT, will investigate three possible courses of action: offering alternative readings during Holy Week and certain other parts of the liturgical year, creating a statement about Jewish-Christian relations for use with the lectionary, and recommending specific translations for particular passages or words. The CCT is an ecumenical collaboration of liturgical scholars and denominational representatives from the United States and Canada who produce liturgical texts and curate a three-year lectionary for common use by Christian churches worldwide.

As the CCT continues its work and anticipates future recommendations in collaboration with the ELCA and other denominations, the ELCA Worship team will seek to educate within the ELCA on appropriate resources to address anti-Jewish interpretations in the lectionary. Future posts on the ELCA Worship blog are planned as more consensus is made on appropriate next steps.

A review and evaluation of the provisional emended edition of *Readings for the Assembly* is planned in the next year. Although anti-Jewish interpretation is only one principle being addressed in this work, the feedback gained in the review process will help inform future work in the ELCA and ecumenically.

Ongoing worship resource development in the ELCA, by both the ELCA Worship team and by Augsburg Fortress/1517 Media, will continue to address this topic as appropriate, such as in preaching essays or ideas for relevant days in the lectionary.

***Church Council action:***

**To receive the update on “Addressing Anti-Semitism in Lectionary Readings” resolution from the Office of the Presiding Bishop;**

**To commend the Worship team in its ongoing efforts to address this topic in collaboration with ELCA and ecumenical partners, and by distributing and contextualizing future resources from The Consultation on Common Texts and other sources; and**

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

**B. SUPPORT OF JUBILEE USA NETWORK**

*Upstate New York Synod (7D) [2023]*

*[Originally submitted as a memorial to the Office of the Secretary, but the resolution did not memorialize the Churchwide Assembly. The secretary has determined that the action should be reclassified as a resolution.]*

RESOLVED, that the Synod Council of the Upstate New York Synod memorialize the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to reaffirm its support of the Jubilee USA Network in an updated social policy resolution.



*Executive Committee action [EC23.11.53c2]*

To refer the “Support of Jubilee USA Network” resolution from the Upstate New York Synod to the Witness and Society team in the Service and Justice home area for a report or 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 Service and Justice, Witness and Society Team (April 2024)*

The ELCA is a founding member of the Jubilee USA Network, a coalition of interreligious partners who work together to tackle the structural causes of poverty and toward canceling the debt of poor countries around the world so that resources may be redirected to reduce poverty and provide healthcare and education for those most in need.

In recent years, Jubilee USA won debt relief in Haiti and the three Ebola-impacted West African countries, bankruptcy legislation for Puerto Rico, three international agreements to promote responsible lending and stop predatory lending, two victories to keep student loan interest rates low, G7 and G20 agreements to curb tax evasion and corruption and promoted trade agreements that help end poverty. The work of Jubilee USA Network deepens and extends the advocacy work of the ELCA by providing expertise and capacity and targeted work on debt, tax, trade, and transparency policies that help end poverty.

Witness in Society (WIS) staff and Jubilee USA Network’s staff are in regular conversation and engage in joint advocacy efforts. In recent years, they have held joint advocacy meetings with various entities of the federal government and multilateral organizations, including with staff at the U.S. Department of the Treasury, the International Monetary Fund, and the U.S. Federal Reserve. During the COVID-19 pandemic, WIS and Jubilee USA Network’s staff collaborated on advocacy efforts to ensure low-income countries had access to COVID-19 vaccines. This included facilitation of Bishop Eaton’s participation in a high-level meeting on global vaccine access with the U.S. Secretary of Treasury, Janet Yellen. Other advocacy activities have included joining together on targeted sign-on letters to policymakers to highlight concerns related to structural causes of poverty and high levels of debt in low-income countries and Puerto Rico. In addition, WIS staff represent the ELCA on the Board of Directors for Jubilee USA Network. Jubilee USA Network receives an annual ELCA Advocacy Partnership Grant to support its advocacy activities.

The 1999 Churchwide Assembly adopted a resolution in support of the Jubilee 2000: USA Campaign.

The Witness in Society team recommends that the Church Council reaffirm the ELCA’s support of the Jubilee USA Network in a new social policy resolution (SPR), in the spirit of the resolution by the Upstate New York Synod Council. All SPRs that are 25 years old are reviewed and often archived and the Jubilee 2000: USA Campaign (CA99.03.06) SPR will automatically be reviewed because of its age. The Church Council would need to authorize the development of a new SPR. In consultation with Theological Ethics in the Office of the Presiding Bishop, it has been determined that an April authorization could likely mean a resolution for consideration at the November 2024 Church Council meeting.

*Church Council action:*

**Resolved, that a social policy resolution on affirming Jubilee USA Network be presented to the November 2024 Church Council meeting in accordance with “Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns” (2018); 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. GUN-RELATED VIOLENCE AND TRAUMA SOCIAL MESSAGE**

*Church Council Action [CC23.04.08g]*

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).

*Response from the Theological Ethics Desk (April 2024)*

Social messages are topical documents adopted by the ELCA Church Council to focus attention and action on timely, pressing matters of social concern to the church and society. They are used to address pressing contemporary concerns in light of the prophetic and compassionate traditions of the scriptures. They may elaborate and focus ELCA teaching and policy but must be consistent with previously adopted teaching and policy positions, especially from social statements. (In this case see “For Peace in God’s World” and the message on “Community Violence” at

[www.elca.org/socialstatements](http://www.elca.org/socialstatements).) Social messages draw attention to specific topics, and they encourage moral discernment and action.

The draft comment period lasted from Oct. 15, 2023, to Feb. 1, 2024, and included feedback from three major participants groups.

- Approximately 250 ELCA members filled out the online survey.
- An unusually large number of non-ELCA individuals used the public occasion of the survey for comment. A complete report on survey results is available in a full, public report at <https://www.elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Current-Social-Writing-Projects/Gun-Trauma>.
- 40+ individuals provided extended comments by email.

The director for theological ethics worked with a writing contractor, Dr. Per Anderson, retired professor from Concordia College, Moorhead, Minn. They were assisted throughout the entire process by members of a consultant group who provided initial insights and then critiqued text until a final draft text was published online, Oct. 15, 2023.

The first circle consultants included: Mr. Colter McCarty (Montana), Bishop William Tesch (Minnesota), Dr. David Yamane (North Carolina), the Rev. Ron Letnes (Minnesota), the Rev. Angela Smith (Pennsylvania), the Rev. Gwendolyn King (Church Council), the Rev. Michael Vinson (Colorado), Mr. Joel Miller (Church Council), Ms. Sara Lilja (New Jersey), and Ms. Lashonda Hicks Curry (Illinois).

After the close of the draft public comment period, and with attention to all sources of feedback, including emails and other communications, the director developed a revised text working with the lead writer. A revised text was shared in early February for review and suggestion by the consultant group and the Theological and Ethical Concerns Committee of the Conference of Bishops. In late February, the proposed text was shared with all bishops. This proposed social message represents the result of these careful efforts to hear public comment and work with reviewers and bishops to craft a text for Church Council consideration.

***Church Council action:***

**To adopt “Gun-related Violence and Trauma” as a social message of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.**