



# Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Oct. 15, 2025

**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  
Chief executive officers of separately incorporated ministries  
Seminary leaders

**From:** Deacon Sue E. Rothmeyer, secretary

**Subject:** Report of Actions of the Church Council (Oct. 2–3, 2025)

The Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) met in the Symphony III Room of the Hilton Minneapolis Hotel in Minneapolis, Minn., on Oct. 2–3, 2025. The following is a summary of Church Council actions along with background information.

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## **1. RESPONSE TO MEMORIAL CATEGORIZED AS C2: UPDATE SOCIAL STATEMENT ON ABORTION**

### *Background:*

The 2025 Churchwide Assembly ended before the assembly had time to consider three memorials received from synod assemblies. In accordance with the “Rules of Organization and Procedure” adopted by the 2025 Churchwide Assembly, unfinished business of the assembly was referred to the Church Council for disposition. Proposed actions were received from the Memorials Committee. The first of these memorials related to updating the social statement on abortion.

### *Northern Illinois Synod (5B) [2023]*

WHEREAS, the 1991 Social Statement on Abortion (SSoA) may have been adequate for its time allowing for and addressing diversity of perspectives; and

WHEREAS, SSoA does not directly address more current medical perspectives; and

WHEREAS, SSoA does not address the historical ecclesiastical understanding of when human life begins; and

WHEREAS, SSoA does not address the broader understanding of ‘family’—regarding sexual orientation and 21st century family units; and

WHEREAS, SSoA might consider expanding on how to right the injustices regarding life before and after birth—namely such things as pre-natal care, a living wage, family leave, social networks to support children and their families; and

WHEREAS, SSoA might consider expanding the extenuating circumstances that may call for an abortion in the light of more recent social conditions; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Northern Illinois Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America memorializes the 2025 Churchwide Assembly to revise, update, or create a new Social Statement on Abortion; and be it further

RESOLVED, this process should include the partnership of clergy, deacons, and lay people who have or have had uteruses as well as medical professionals, including genetic counselors, perinatologist/maternal fetal medicine doctors, NICU providers, fetal palliative care providers, and OBGYNs of our synods and congregations.

***Church Council action:***

**To receive with gratitude the memorial from the Northern Illinois Synod on updating the social statement on *Abortion* (1991) or to create a new social statement on this issue;**

**To re-affirm the theological and ethical teachings of the social statement on *Abortion* and its study guide because of its attention to complexity and nuance and its continued use in discernment and conversation;**

**To encourage study of recent resources such as the book *ReEngaging ELCA Social Teaching on Abortion* by Caryn D. Riswold (Augsburg Fortress, 2024) that analyzes the foundations and contemporary applications of this social statement;**

**To refer the memorial to churchwide organization staff members of Theological Ethics and Gender Justice and Women's Empowerment to develop additional study resources to address the concerns expressed in this memorial;**

**To decline at this time the request to update, revise, or create a new social statement on *Abortion*; and**

**To direct that the ELCA Church Council authorize the development of a social policy resolution that applies the ELCA statement on *Abortion* to the challenging personal struggles and pastoral issues brought about because some social conditions have changed since 1991.**

**2. RESPONSE TO MEMORIAL CATEGORIZED AS C8: SOCIAL MESSAGE ON RURAL LIFE AND MINISTRY**

***Background:***

The second memorial referred to the Church Council from the 2025 Churchwide Assembly related to creation of a social message on rural life and ministry.

***Montana Synod (1F) [2025]***

WHEREAS, nearly one-third of ELCA congregations minister in rural and remote communities; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Census marks a significant population movement from rural to urban communities indicating challenges for rural congregations to maintain membership and giving; and

WHEREAS, rural communities face significant inequities in health, education, and economic opportunity when compared to urban communities; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has not produced materials for theological reflection on the challenges facing and gifts provided by rural communities since its inception; and

WHEREAS, rural and remote congregations offer models of innovation and adaptation to economic and sociological constraints for ministry; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Montana Synod memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly to commission a study and the production of a social message on the challenges facing rural and remote communities and gifts provided by ministry in rural and remote contexts; furthermore, be it

RESOLVED, that Montana Synod memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly to encourage and equip synods and member congregations to dedicate a time of study on rural and remote issues and rural ministry; and be it further

RESOLVED that this message reflect the diversity of rural communities across geographic regions to include consideration of remote communities and sovereign tribal nations.

***Church Council action:***

**To receive with gratitude the memorial from the Montana Synod for development of a new social message on the challenges facing rural, remote communities, and sovereign Tribal Nations, and gifts provided by ministry in rural and remote contexts;**

**To direct Theological Discernment staff in the ELCA churchwide organization to review the request for a new social message on rural, remote communities, and sovereign Tribal Nations and bring a recommendation to the ELCA Church Council no later than the Spring 2026 meeting on what means should be authorized to address the questions involved; and**

**To direct Christian Community and Leadership staff in the ELCA churchwide organization to assess available resources on rural congregations and communities and to provide a report and recommendation for resource development to the ELCA Church Council no later than Fall 2026.**

### **3. RESPONSE TO MEMORIAL CATEGORIZED AS D1: JUSTICE FOR PALESTINIANS AND ISRAELIS**

#### *Background:*

The third memorial referred to the Church Council from the 2025 Churchwide Assembly related to justice for Palestinians and Israelis.

#### *Metropolitan Chicago Synod (5A) [2024]*

WHEREAS, the ELCA in its Social Statement *For Peace in God's World* has committed to serve as "a reconciling presence" and to promote respect for human rights, particularly for "groups most susceptible to violations, especially all minorities, women, and children"; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has denounced the attacks and hostage-taking on October 7, 2023, by Hamas and has denounced the subsequent disproportionate death toll among Palestinian civilians; and

WHEREAS, we deplore the illegal settlements and the Israeli military occupation in Palestine and the killing of more than 34,000 civilians in Gaza since October 7, 2023; and we lament both the destruction of Gaza's infrastructure, housing, schools and universities, hospitals, and places of worship—and the reality that 2.2 million people are experiencing displacement and facing malnutrition and starvation, as a result primarily of Israel's continuing air strikes and blocking entry of humanitarian aid trucks; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA Presiding Bishop and Conference of Bishops have expressed sorrow over the loss of innocent lives on both sides and have called for a ceasefire and for resumption of negotiations toward an overall political resolution; therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**, that the Metropolitan Chicago Synod memorialize the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in assembly to lament the trauma experienced by Palestinians and Israelis over the course of the past two years, as well as the resurrected historic traumas experienced by both peoples; and to confess that as Americans we share responsibility for what has taken place; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, that the Metropolitan Chicago Synod memorialize the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in assembly to urge the United States Administration and Congress to work to end the Israeli occupation in Palestine; to stop the unconditional supply of weapons and military aid to Israel; and to support and participate fully in the restoration of infrastructure in the Gaza Strip.

#### *Church Council action:*

**To receive with gratitude the memorial on "Justice for Palestinians and Israelis" from the Metropolitan Chicago Synod;**

**To reaffirm this church's commitment, set forth in the social statement *For Peace in God's World* (1995), to serve as a reconciling presence, including through promoting respect for human rights, particularly for "groups most susceptible to violations, especially all minorities, women, and children":**

**To lament the trauma experienced by Palestinians and Israelis and encourage congregations to recognize and respond to the need to confess shared responsibility for the suffering;**

**To reaffirm this church's sense of urgency for ongoing advocacy, awareness, and accompaniment through the Sumud initiative;**

**To request that the Service and Justice unit, in consultation with the Office of the Presiding Bishop, implement the recommendations in the memorial for continuing accompaniment, awareness-raising, and advocacy efforts to end the Israeli occupation in Palestine, to stop the unconditional supply of weapons and military aid to Israel, and to support and participate fully in the restoration of infrastructure in the Gaza Strip; and**

**To request that the Service and Justice unit provide a report to the Church Council at its Spring 2026 meeting.**

### **4. APPOINTMENT OF INTERIM EXECUTIVE FOR ADMINISTRATION**

#### *Background:*

The executive for administration is the chief administrator of the churchwide organization. Continuing resolution 15.12.A22. of the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* states: "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." Presiding Bishop Curry requested that the Rev. M. Wyvetta Bullock be named as interim executive for administration while a search is conducted for a person to fill the position on a permanent basis.

***Church Council action:***

**To appoint the Rev. M. Wyetta Bullock as interim executive for administration, beginning Oct. 1, 2025.**

**5. RATIFICATION OF APPOINTMENTS TO CHURCH COUNCIL COMMITTEES**

***Background:***

Following the elections at the Churchwide Assembly, newly elected Church Council members indicated their committee preferences. At its September 2025 meeting, the Executive Committee of the Church Council completed its review of the requests and proposed committee assignments that were shared with council members electronically prior to the meeting.

***Church Council action:***

**To ratify the appointments recommended by the Executive Committee of the Church Council to the Church Council standing committees for the 2025–2028 triennium.**

**6. CHURCH COUNCIL MEMBER INTERACTION WITH SYNODS**

***Background:***

Since its November 2005 meeting, the Church Council has committed itself to building relationships between the churchwide organization and synods, congregations, and related institutions, organizations, and ministries at the beginning of the triennium. Church Council members are encouraged to engage with synods whenever possible and commit to doing so.

***Church Council action:***

**To acknowledge the commitment of the Church Council to have greater interaction of members of the Church Council with synod councils and synod assemblies in their respective areas; and**

**To encourage members of the Church Council to accept this responsibility and interact with their own synods in various ways.**

**7. ELECTION PROCESS FOR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AT-LARGE POSITIONS**

***Background:***

At the first meeting after the Churchwide Assembly, the Church Council elects members to at-large positions on the Executive Committee.

To facilitate its work between regular meetings by ensuring input and perspective from each of its standing committees, the chairs of those committees are elected to the Executive Committee. This was acted upon at the April 2025 Church Council meeting [CC25.04.24d2].

The Executive Committee proposed that the remaining three members of the Executive Committee be selected through the following process.

- a. The first ballot shall be a nominating ballot for each of the following identified categories:
  - 1). Rostered Man from Class of 2031 (one position). Vote for only one eligible nominee.
  - 2). Lay Man from Class of 2031 (one position). Vote for only one eligible nominee.
  - 3). Lay Person (one position). Vote for only one eligible nominee.
- b. Anyone wishing to withdraw may do so prior to the established deadline.
- c. The second ballot for the first two categories shall be conducted first. Each ticket shall be limited to the two people (plus ties in the second position) receiving the greatest number of nominations on the ballot who have not withdrawn. The one candidate on each ticket receiving the highest number of votes cast shall be elected.
- d. The second ballot for the third category shall list all remaining eligible laypersons who have not withdrawn. The candidate receiving the highest number of votes shall be elected.
- e. Upon completion of the balloting, the Executive Committee shall be deemed constituted.

***Church Council action:***

**To affirm the process for the election of the Executive Committee for the 2025–2028 triennium.**

**8. CONFERRING OF HONORARY TITLE**

***Background:***

At the November 2014 Church Council meeting, the honorary title “Presiding Bishop Emeritus” was conferred upon each of the three former presiding bishops: the Rev. Herbert W. Chilstrom, the Rev. H. George Anderson, and

the Rev. Mark S. Hanson [CC14.11.30]. Within the ELCA, there is an understanding that when the title is conferred, the use of the title does not continue the person's service or function within the churchwide organization. The Executive Committee recommended that this honorific title be bestowed on the Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton as well.

***Church Council action:***

To confer on the Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton the honorary title of "presiding bishop emerita."

**9. ELECTION OF AT-LARGE MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE CHURCH COUNCIL**

***Church Council action:***

To elect to the Executive Committee of the Church Council the nominee receiving the greatest number of votes in each identified category:

- The Rev. Moses Penumaka (rostered man from class of 2031)
- Mr. Christopher Vergara (lay man from class of 2031)
- Mr. Hans W. Giller (lay person)

**10. RATIFICATION OF SYNOD CONSTITUTION AMENDMENTS**

***Background:***

Provision 10.12 of the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* stipulates: "Each synod shall have a constitution, which shall become effective upon ratification by the Church Council. Amendments thereto shall be subject to like ratification...." Several synods submitted constitutional amendments for ratification.

***Church Council action:***

To ratify the amendments to the constitution of the Northwest Intermountain Synod (1D).

***Church Council action:***

To ratify the amendments to the constitution of the Northeastern Iowa Synod (5F).

***Church Council action:***

To ratify the amendment to the constitution of the Northern Great Lakes Synod (5G).

***Church Council action:***

To ratify the amendments to the constitution of the Upstate New York Synod (7D).

***Church Council action:***

To ratify the amendment to the constitution of the Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod (8G).

**11. ELCA CHURCHWIDE ORGANIZATION PERSONNEL POLICIES**

***Background:***

A revision to Section 7.12 (Social Media) is being proposed for the Personnel Policies of the Churchwide Organization to add the sentence, "Employees who violate this policy may be subject to corrective action up to and including termination of employment."

Employees of the churchwide organization of the ELCA, including contracted employees, are expected to read, understand, and comply with the Personnel Policies of the Churchwide Organization, which are adopted by the Church Council in accordance with bylaw 14.21.06. of the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*.

***Church Council action:***

To approve the amended Churchwide Organization Personnel Policies; and

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

**12. REVIEW OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY DOCUMENTS**

***Background:***

The Church Council is responsible for reviewing this church's ongoing work in corporate social responsibility. The council reviewed one new issue paper, two revised issue papers, and two social criteria investment screens.

***Church Council action:***

To approve the proposed Issue Paper on Artificial Intelligence as presented.

***Church Council action:***

To approve the amendments to the following corporate social responsibility documents to serve as the basis for ongoing corporate social responsibility work in this church:

- Health Issue Paper
- Climate Change Issue Paper
- Tobacco Social Criteria Investment Screen
- Alcohol Social Criteria Investment Screen; and

To request that the original issue papers be archived for historical and research purposes.

### **13. APPROVAL OF CHURCH COUNCIL MINUTES AND RATIFICATION OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ACTIONS**

*Background:*

The minutes of the Church Council meeting of July 27, 2025, were provided to council members electronically.

The minutes of the council's Executive Committee meetings on July 27, 2025, Aug. 19, 2025, and Sept. 16, 2025, were provided to council members electronically.

Council members provided notations or typographical errors in the distributed text of the minutes in writing to the executive for Office of the Secretary administration and corrections were entered into the protocol copies of the minutes.

***Church Council action:***

To approve the minutes of the July 27, 2025, meeting of the Church Council; and

To ratify actions of the council's Executive Committee as indicated in the minutes of the July 27, 2025, Aug. 19, 2025, and Sept. 16, 2025, meetings.

### **14. CHURCH COUNCIL ELECTIONS**

*Background:*

Pursuant to provision 14.22. of the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, the Church Council is to elect nominees to vacancies on boards and committees of the churchwide organization.

***Church Council action:***

To elect Ms. Deborah Nyquist to serve as Church Council liaison to the Gender Justice and Women's Empowerment Consulting Committee for a term ending August 2031.

***Church Council action:***

To elect the Rev. Tracy M. Williams to serve on the Committee on Discipline for a term ending in 2031.

***Church Council action:***

To elect the Rev. Nicole R. Ferry to serve on the Nominating Committee for a term ending in 2031.

***Church Council action:***

To elect Mr. James Brian Shockley to fill a vacancy on the Committee on Appeals with a term expiring in 2028.