



September 2025

Dear Church Council members,

Grace and peace to you. Following is a brief overview of what you can expect and what you should be prepared for at this upcoming Church Council meeting.

We look forward to welcoming the newly elected Church Council members to your first ELCA Church Council meeting. The installation of the new members will occur during the opening worship service on Thursday, Oct. 2 at 8:30 a.m. in Conrad B/C at the Hilton Minneapolis. Also, at this first meeting of the triennium, the committees will meet one another informally over lunch on Oct. 2. Your committee assignments will be shared soon and committee orientations will occur online.

Many action items will be *en bloc*, in other words acted together in one block. This is to allow time for strategic and generative conversations that are needed for the wellbeing of this church. If there is any action you do wish to discuss that is in *en bloc*, please notify Secretary Sue Rothmeyer during the Church Council meeting on Thursday, Oct. 2 no later than 3 p.m. This is also the deadline for any new business that you wish to add to the Church Council agenda.

Here are a few important items to read and prepare:

- Consideration of the three memorials from Churchwide Assembly. The memorials will be located in a “Memorials” folder.
- Consideration of timelines for certain Churchwide Assembly business. As they are proposed timelines, most will be placed in the “*En Bloc*” folder.
- Debrief of the 2025 Churchwide Assembly. Survey results will be in “Other Documents” folder.
- Last but not least, during the Church Council meeting, we will hold elections for the three remaining positions for the Executive Committee of the Church Council; the process for this will be acted upon during plenary session two on Thursday, Oct. 2.

The agenda will be posted about two weeks prior to the meeting. If you have particular questions about any of the matters above, please let me know at [Jodi.Slaterry@elca.org](mailto:Jodi.Slaterry@elca.org).

The documents for the meeting will be found in the Church Council Microsoft Teams within the Files section of the “Public Current Meeting” channel. The documents will have user-friendly indicators so you can see what is required reading, discussion-based reading, and information sharing. Please contact Joseph Schmidt, [Joseph.Schmidt@elca.org](mailto:Joseph.Schmidt@elca.org), if you have problems accessing the Teams site.

Your servant leadership on Church Council is a blessing for this whole church. I give thanks to God for your partnership and faithful witness to the gospel.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jodi A. Slaterry". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jodi Slaterry  
Executive, Governance

### **Report from the Vice President**

Greetings! I am excited to see everyone in Minneapolis, where we'll have a very compressed meeting followed by the installation of our next presiding bishop. For those of you who are newly elected, welcome! I look forward to getting to know you over the next triennium. I hope you will find your time on Church Council to be rewarding. I know that it can seem overwhelming at first, with all the documents and information you are presented with, but you will get the hang of it soon, I promise. Just know, that you have been called to this work and I am so glad that God has led you to this role.

For those who are continuing, welcome back! We last saw each other on the assembly floor in Phoenix and witnessed a historic (and extremely busy) Churchwide Assembly. It seems like it was yesterday! I know you are all anxious to get to work to make the decisions of the Churchwide Assembly into reality. I am happy and honored to continue to do this work with you.

Since the Churchwide Assembly, I have been able to catch my breath a little bit and reflect a little on where we are as a Church. We welcome a new presiding bishop and new secretary in a pivotal moment for our Church as well as our society. Our country is deeply divided, and the spirit of anger and fear is all over. However, I've always felt the Church has the words of grace and love that can heal the rifts and fault lines in our society. The Church can bring voice to the voiceless and show the humanity of the dehumanized. It is important for us not just to think about how our work affects our Church, but also what it says to the wider world. It's important that our focus not be too narrow as we begin our work this triennium. In everything, we start with the Gospel and boldly move forward from there.

In the last couple months, I have continued to have my open conversation with the Church on social media (well, mostly Facebook). I've also joined a podcast to do a wrap up of the Churchwide Assembly and a Substack live one-on-one (that one was new). I am always amazed by the passion and the variety and depth of ideas of people all around our Church. And a lot of times the people in the pews just want to know that their leaders in synods and the churchwide expression are listening to them. Our expressions can seem so distant and siloed that I think it's essential we try to break those barriers and show a churchwide expression that is in conversation with the members of our congregations. So, I think these virtual questions, discussions, prayers, and such, are a major part of my call to this role. And many times, it can be the most rewarding part of this ministry.

One thing I've gathered from the conversations online is that there is a lot of hope and excitement in the Church. As Bishop Eaton is fond of saying, an installation of a synod bishop is the one day when everyone in the synod is happy. Well, I guess that means the week of our gathering will be the one day when everyone in the ELCA is happy (well, let us be optimistic). Let us remember this sense of unity, oneness, and hope and dedicate ourselves to not let that be a one-day thing.

I am very grateful for all of you and the time and effort that you put into your role and your call as a Church Council member. I am, as always, excited to see each and every one of you. May we boldly do great work and then boldly celebrate our new presiding bishop.

Blessings and grace,

Imran Siddiqui  
Vice President, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

## Appendix A: Statements from ELCA Social Media Groups

### Weekly Question: The ELCA Church Council meets in Minneapolis this week. What would you like the Church Council to know?

#### Vice President Official Facebook Page:

- Many of us favor the end of the use of the word Evangelical.
- That the ELCA Church Council put first and foremost the Great Commission as a top priority for the next six years. Many believe the ELCA lost focus on its mission that should be following Jesus' final instruction to His disciples (Matthew 28:18–20): to go out, make disciples of all peoples, baptize them, and teach them to obey everything He commanded.
- How much it means to Devin and I that our transgender son has a safe and welcoming home in our denomination. He (and his twin sister) grew up going to Lutherock every summer, and Oliver worked as a counselor one summer and even had his wedding there. It fills us with joy that he had those experiences in a place that loves and accepts him.
- To act boldly in service to the Gospel of Jesus. We are in our Luther/Bonhoeffer moment. We don't need another cute saying, phrase, or motivational motto, we need bold action. Actions that say "Here We Stand".
- To remember that "Love God" and "Love one another" is law, and not the Gospel.
- That the Church Council debate the Abortion memorial. And change it to re-edit the Abortion SS (1991). A group of us was trying to get it to the floor of CWA but ran out of time.
- That we sometimes make conversations that are already difficult even more so when we assume we already agree.
- Churches need to take steps to protect against terrorists.
- ELCA Campus Ministries are alive and thriving but need the continuing support of Churchwide, synods and congregations in order to keep bringing in those new, younger, diverse members y'all want! 🍎
- Gotta do something about the cost of Portico health insurance. Congregations can't afford it (and neither can pastors afford the huge deductible before it kicks in).
- We need to declare status confessionis regarding our nonbinary/trans siblings. To wit- ALL HUMAN BEINGS ARE CREATED IMAGIO DEI. No longer allow the spiritual abuse our nonbinary siblings have endured for ages from the church. We no longer will tolerate the abuse/misuse of Scripture to denigrate, demonize, dehumanize human beings created in God's image. We have been speaking out of both sides of our mouth too long. Allowing "bound conscience" to be used as a smokescreen for blatant homophobia, transphobia...

#### ELCA Facebook Group:

- Church progress
- We are pleased with the election of Bishop Curry and look forward to progress and growth within the ELCA.

- Expand Sundays and Season to include minor festivals including Eucharistic Prayers— days like: St. Michael & All Angels, Mary, The Mother of Our Lord, Francis of Assisi, Reformation...
- The ELCA is about 90% White. What initiatives can be initiated or improved to to reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of the nation?
- Most of the Mary Tyler Moore Show was filmed in California.
- Bring back a Christian Education staff person / department to the national office. It was a wonderful asset two decades ago when it existed. Being back the same for Worship. When those two were cut and put with other items under one umbrella, all areas became weaker in the denomination. The Education staff created wonderful resources for congregational use.
- Come up with tools/resources for people in the pews to help find ways to collaborate with other churches and organizations with an outcome of joining resources to be better stewards with what we have. It has to come from there.
- This is going on in our Community. Please pray for us in Southern Delaware (Open Letter of Faith Without Fear)
- When people (including Lutherans, no doubt) are being stopped without cause and/or detained or deported, when free speech is under attack on many fronts, when hatred toward those who disagree is expressed by government leaders, where is the ELCA? Can the bishops give guidance to clergy and offer solid counsel to lay persons who are living in unprecedented times? What lines must be crossed before we stand up much more publicly?
- Emphasis must be made on the church's response to the climate crisis and our charge to be good stewards of God's creation.
- I'd love to hear a definitive statement about ICE raids and justice and the change of "Global Mission" back to Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services. That's where we stand, why cover up our mission?
- We have to address realities: No amount of stewardship communication can undo the economic hollowing of the middle class. We will never get back to the 1950s-60s in terms of money or membership. We need a focus on discipleship not membership. There needs to be structural and institutional support for leadership by pastors, deacons, bishops so that they can speak authoritatively to the issues as the society we have known falls apart and so that our congregations might become centers for repair and rebuilding.
- Bring back Vacation Bible School curriculum to Augsburg Fortress.
- What are we doing to address the very real risk of violence to one of our congregations/pastors?
- We need to be looking at rural ministry and how to inspire a passion in more clergy to serve in these amazing and life giving rural places. Also we need to focus on the joy of maintaining that these small rural congregations are doing. Growth is fine but maintaining and continuing the work that God has called them to is just as important.
- I would like to see some educational recommendations for our pastors and youth ministries on Christian nationalism.
- When I was a teen, my ELCA church was the reason I didn't choose to die. Also people now a days have been told by the same sources that faith is stupid. We need missionaries in America to reason with and make argument for the divine consciousness beyond all things, the proof there ever was a Jesus who was and is the Son of God, and the sustaining and saving power of the Holy



Spirit. These persons need to be trained, passionately compassionate, and tentmakers. For the sake of the ones who don't know any better, we have to do something like this and now is the time.

- Welcome to Minneapolis! Stop talking about and promoting language around the problem of “polarization” or “division.” Focus on addressing Christian Nationalism and prioritize our churches as important witnesses against it; distinguishing the Gospel of Jesus from the idolatry of CN.
- Hello from Arkansas! Stop talking about and promoting language around the problem of “polarization” or “division.” Focus on addressing Christian Nationalism and prioritize our churches as important witnesses against it; distinguishing the Gospel of Jesus from the idolatry of CN.

#### ELCA Clergy Facebook Group:

- I would like for them to know that many of us really appreciate the work of the Commission for the Renewed Lutheran Church. I would also like to hear how they hope to move forward on some of those recommendations.
- Let them know they do good work and God bless them.
- The social safety net our government has provided in the past is in tatters. Church-based ministries do not have the financing or the people power to make up for what has been lost from federal programs, and state programs often depended on federal assistance as well. We need some clear, practical leadership that will help us be the church not only in a democracy being destroyed from the inside, but surrounded by family economies that have already collapsed for too many and are about to collapse for many more. Lead us in multiplying visions and resources showing us how and helping us to love all of our neighbors well in the face of these things.
- What clear and discernable actions will our Presiding Bishop and council take in opposition to the current administration? It's beyond time to actually do something that counters the evil this administration is doing to children, the poor, the elderly and the infirm.
- Realize the church and country is in deep deep danger. Germany 1933 danger. The Reichstag fire has happened. The generals are being gathered and the government is going to be shutdown with huge consequences. I dunno that the Council can do much of anything but please realize that barring big changes. We are in the end days of our country as any type of democracy.
- That we need to emphasize evangelism, or else the ELCA is on a “dying” path.
- If Churchwide wants congregations to know about and support the ministries of Churchwide, Churchwide needs a unit intentionally thinking about how its helping congregations do that. Strategic Communications needs to be releasing at least monthly promo kits with announcement slides, social media graphics, videos, bulletin inserts, and newsletter blurbs. Wouldn't it be amazing if every congregation in this church was given resources like to announcing our new Presiding Bishop? Or to remind us of the amazing work of [name that ELCA ministry]? An announcement slide about MIF, FCU, LDR, YAGM, or any other acronym? And a place where we can get all those recent YouTube videos from Churchwide to share as mission moment in our

congregations without having to find our own functional YouTube downloader? Church Council: Help us help you.

- As this will be the first official meeting with Bishop Curry & Sec Mills in office (we know they have probably been softly easing into things) may they know how we as the body and siblings of the ELCA are praying for them.
- To remember that flashy new ministries or specialized ministries are vitally important and interesting, but that the vast majority of parishes are not flashy or specialized but still doing the work of the kingdom faithfully. It sometimes feels like unless something “hip” is going on in a place or a place is something other than majority European descent, it’s not valued. I don’t mean to say that it isn’t, but it can feel like that. As a pastor in a congregation that isn’t new or really even able to do something that’s currently a major focus of the ELCA’s publicized efforts, our work sometimes feels like it’s of second tier importance. But I know for a fact that the children who will receive the almost 700 books we collected this summer for GWOH will not feel like it’s of second-tier importance even if we’re not featured in The Lutheran.
- That NDAs are still being used by congregations and Synods. We need to do what the Anglican Church did and ban them at every Church expression.
- I and a number of colleagues are either leaving or considering leaving Portico for our health benefits because more and more of the cost is being transferred to plan members. Portico may be trying to thread a needle here, but the system is not sustainable.
- The ELCA's community organizing work is expanding exponentially through our leadership in [Organizing For Mission Network](#). And most weeks I hear from folx that say "I didn't know we did faith-based community organizing."
- Current part time guidelines to be a called Pastor is 15 hours. This is incredibly hard for the small rural church to provide. Bi-vocational ministry is the future of the church in many areas we need to make it more functional.
- DEI is more than a brand (see Target). It is a commitment to long-term leadership development. Rev. Mills and Bishop Curry rose to leadership because the TEEM program prepares leaders for excellence IN CONTEXTS that are often marginalized or overlooked in dominant cultures. I would encourage you and the Church Council to stay nimble, flatten the meritocracy, and keep investing in community development at the grass roots.
- I want to know that the church council and the council of Bishops will take seriously our request to do some deep anti-racist training...more than a one-off lecture. Gift the council with Pastor Yolanda Denson-Beyer's book "See Me. Believe Me". Make certain the Bishops and council spend time together immersed in Pr. Yolanda's requests. We must face our systemic racism now.

## **Report from the Secretary**

With my term ending October 31, I've had a little fun with the notion of that being my date of "re-formation." And I've found myself frequently turning to Luther's familiar quote to put this next chapter of my life in perspective: "This life, therefore, is not righteousness, but growth in righteousness; not health, but healing; not being, but becoming; not rest, but exercise; we are not yet what we shall be, but we are growing toward it; the process is not yet finished, but it is going on; this is not the end, but it is the road; all does not yet gleam with glory, but all is being purified."

The Office of the Secretary continues to be about the work of this church in many and various ways, and what follows is a recap of that work since we met in assembly two months ago.

### **2025 CWA Evaluation**

Speaking of Churchwide Assembly, the Churchwide Assembly Planning Team used three research questions to help evaluate this past assembly:

1. How well-prepared did voting members feel in advance of the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly? What contributed to their feelings of preparedness?
2. How well did voting members connect with and engage in the work of the Churchwide Assembly? What enhanced their experience? What detracted from it?
3. How did voting members experience God's mission and ministry for the wider church? How were they inspired to share the ways the ELCA is making God's love real?

Overall, the survey results indicated that voting members had a very good or excellent experience at the 2025 Churchwide Assembly (86%) and they recognized the important work being carried out across the ELCA (98%).

More than 80% of respondents reported feeling prepared by their synods for the Churchwide Assembly. Meeting at least twice with their synods prior to the assembly seem to have contributed to voting members' feelings of preparedness, although 32% of voting members indicated they wanted to meet more than they did. Most voting members found that the daily schedule moved at the right speed (73%). They were also satisfied with the process of electing members of churchwide boards, Church Council, and committees (72% agreed). They highly valued the variety of worship experiences (92%). Some of the highest numbers were related to how voting members experienced God's mission and ministry:

- They valued being in fellowship with other Lutherans from around the country (97%).
- Through their participation in the assembly, their knowledge of the breadth of the work of the ELCA was deepened (93%).
- They felt inspired to share about how God is working through the ELCA (92%).
- They have a better knowledge of the interconnectedness of the three expressions of the ELCA (congregation, synod, churchwide) (86%).

As we look to future assemblies, the Office of the Secretary hopes to improve upon the experience of voting members so they feel better prepared and continue to leave the assembly with a strong sense of connection and engagement with the mission and ministry of the wider church.

## **Bishop Installations**

As we anticipate gathering in Minneapolis for the installation of the presiding bishop, the following installations of new synod bishops are now complete:

- August 23: New Jersey Synod (Bishop Christa Compton)
- September 7: Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast (Bishop Tracey Breashears Schultz)
- September 13: North/West Lower Michigan (Bishop Julie Schneider-Thomas)
- September 20: Montana Synod (Bishop Ben Quanbeck)
- September 27: Western Iowa Synod (Bishop Scott Dalen)
- September 28: Central States Synod (Bishop Donna Simon)

The following installations of new bishops will occur in October and November:

- October 11: Southwestern Washington Synod (Bishop Keith Marshall)
- October 18: Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod (Bishop Melissa Stoller)
- October 19: Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod (Bishop Kristen Papson)
- October 25: Lower Susquehanna Synod (Bishop Steve Herr)
- November 9: Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod (Bishop Phil Hirsch)
- November 15: North Carolina Synod (Bishop Emily Hartner)
- November 22: Metropolitan New York Synod (Bishop Katrina Foster)

## **Bishop Elections**

The following synods will engage in bishop elections in 2026:

- St. Paul Area Synod
- Western North Dakota Synod
- Eastern North Dakota Synod
- Northeastern Minnesota Synod
- Southeastern Iowa Synod
- East-Central Synod of Wisconsin
- South-Central Synod of Wisconsin
- Northeastern Ohio Synod
- South Carolina Synod
- Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod
- Metropolitan Chicago Synod (Bishop Curry's election as presiding bishop moves this synod into the 2026 election cycle. Former Bishop Wayne Miller will serve as interim bishop in Metro Chicago.)

Allegheny Synod will elect a new bishop at their upcoming assembly, October 31-November

1. Former Bishop Barb Collins is serving as interim bishop until the bishop-elect's term begins on February 1, 2026. The installation service in that synod will be held on Saturday, February 7.

## **Constitutions**

The newly updated *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA* (CBCR) is now available on [www.ELCA.org](http://www.ELCA.org). A few things to note:

- The format has been changed to 8.5" x 11" so that it will fit in a standard binder.
- We are preparing a .pdf cover and spine insert that users can print out and place in their own binder. The churchwide organization will no longer maintain inventory of the print copies and specialized binders, which are costly to produce and have been little requested over the past few years. Users are asked either to use the searchable .pdf or to print the CBCR out on their own printers.
- The *Model Constitution for Congregations* has also been posted as a separate document, along with a listing of all amendments and the rationale that was presented to the Churchwide Assembly.
- The Spanish versions of the *Model Constitution* and the amendments rationale document were prepared by Pr. Pablo Quiñones of the Caribbean Synod, and are available online. We are grateful for his assistance.
- Amendments to the *Constitution for Synods* were sent to bishops and synod secretaries last month.

## **Roster Manual**

The Church Council reviewed the report of the Task Force on Leave and Specialized Ministry at the November and April meetings and then forwarded several of the recommendations to the Churchwide Assembly as constitutional amendments, and also added a new category of Word and Sacrament call to supply ministry in the *Table of Sources of Call*. We are now revising the roster manual to incorporate these constitutional changes and to flesh out the policies surrounding the updates. One of the primary areas pending approval is the policy surrounding calls to supply ministry. The proposed language for the changes will be shared with the bishops for consultation, and the revisions will then be presented to the council at the November meeting for approval.

## **Exchangeability of the Diaconate with ECUSA**

Though the ELCA has now made all necessary constitutional changes required for the exchangeability of deacons with The Episcopal Church, the Episcopalians have not yet completed the necessary steps at their end. We are asking the synods to wait a little while longer before seeking to enter into diaconal exchanges with ECUSA. We are also reminding the synods that the current agreement is only with the Episcopalians. We do not have agreements with our other full communion partners.

## **Annual Congregation Report**

For the 2024 data year, the Annual Congregation Report was delivered on a new platform that:

- Provided Form A and its instructions in English and Spanish;
- Allowed congregations to update their own contact information;
- Included pop-up instructions for each item;
- Displayed each congregation's most recently submitted membership and financial data;

- Gave synod staff real-time access to view and download report submissions; and
- Enabled quicker data processing for more timely statistical reporting.

Although the new platform allowed for significant advancement in the user experience, throughout the spring the Research and Evaluation team collected feedback from bishops and synod staff about the platform and learned that the new system was not without its challenges. In response, for the 2025 data year, planned improvements include:

- Providing additional instructions for multiple users working in the same form;
- Improving programming on the platform to reduce accidental submissions and make data easier to correct; and
- Allowing synod staff to download all reports in a single zipped file.

The Research and Evaluation team is grateful to synod staff who worked with congregations through these challenges. Even with these challenges, the response rate dipped only somewhat—from a 12-year high of 78% in 2023 to 74% in 2024.

The team is also continuing its conversations with bishops and synod staff to evaluate reporting changes and identify further improvements. One enhancement already underway is with the Synod Data Toolkits, which now feature graphical representations of trend data. Additionally, this year's toolkits will also include narrative interpretation of trends.

### **Other Research and Evaluation Activity**

One of the primary goals of Research and Evaluation is providing high-quality data collection, analysis, and interpretation to enable stakeholders across the ELCA to make better-informed decisions around policy and practice.

Working with a diverse set of stakeholders, this spring Research and Evaluation conducted a survey of all active deacons serving in the ELCA. The report, "The Leadership of Ministers of Word and Service," will provide the most comprehensive data on ministries served by deacons. Preliminary insights have been shared with stakeholders, and we anticipate a public report sometime in early 2026. Presentations on these findings will be available beginning in November.

In June, Research and Evaluation launched an evaluation study on synod-authorized ministers (SAMs). This study is a follow-up to the 2024 survey conducted among synod bishops. The purpose of the study is to better understand how these ministries work in context and practice. To accomplish this we have partnered with 20 synods across the ELCA to further explore the perspectives of SAMs, those served by SAMs, and synod perspectives on support and accountability, formation and training, and possible pathways to rostered ministry. The project includes two new surveys and a series of focus groups with synod leaders. We anticipate a public report in the first half of 2026. Presentations on these findings will be available beginning in January 2026.

As you can see from this report, staff in the Office of the Secretary have not experienced much "down time" since the assembly, given the need for immediate follow-up on many assembly-related actions. I continue to be so grateful for the commitment and competence that staff in this office bring to their work. I am especially thankful for Deanna Brend and the OS Leadership Team (Dana Adams, Tom Cunliff,

Adam DeHoek, Keith Fry, MaryAnn Schwabe, and Jodi Slattery) who have carried out their respective responsibilities with such care and good grace. I know that they stand ready to support Secretary-elect Mills as she assumes the role of Secretary on November 1.

It has been a joy to serve on the Church Council with such dedicated leaders from across this church. Thank you for the many and various ways you live out your sense of vocation!

What a gift it has been for me to serve the churchwide organization for these past 30 years and to hold the office of Secretary for these past six years. I look forward to the ways our church will continue to be about God's work in the world as we celebrate both who we are and who we are becoming.

Soli Deo Gloria!

Secretary Sue Rothmeyer

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



## **Report of the ELCA Treasurer**

### **FY25 Operating Results through August 31, 2025 - Unrestricted**

For the seven months ended August 31, 2025, unrestricted expenses exceeded unrestricted revenues generating a loss of \$1.9 million. This compares to a budgeted loss of \$7.9 million and prior year loss of \$140 thousand. The annual budget reflects breakeven (where revenues equal expenses); however, part of the reason for the loss through seven months (both actual and budgeted) relates to the release of designated funds. The full year FY25 budget assumes utilization (release) of \$4.9 million of support from the Budgeted Operations Support designated fund. Without this support, the unrestricted budget would be a \$4.9 million loss for the year. The budget assumes these funds will not be released until the January year-end close, thus creating the seven-month losses in both the budget and actual. Compared to prior year actual, FY25 revenues are \$1.8 million lower and spending is equal.

The favorable variance to budget was created by three factors: 1) favorable investment income of \$2.6 million; 2) favorable mission support of \$555K; and 3) underspending of \$3.2 million. Overall investment performance, while solid, is behind last year at this time, reflecting more volatility in the market; however, income from mineral rights (which is also part of investment income) is over 70% higher in FY25 than FY24.

The FY25 mission support budget was based on the trends over the past three years which averaged a year-to-year decline of 4.6%. In each month of FY25, mission support shared by synods has been stronger than this historical trend. The churchwide organization is grateful that the mission support decrease through August is only 2.0% behind prior year, thus generating favorable results compared to budget.

Trends in unrestricted bequest income continue to be soft in both 2024 and 2025, following a very strong 2023. Should this trend, which is below the 10-year average, continue, future revenue budgets could be negatively impacted.

Overall spending is at 92% of the year-to-date budget with percentages by unit/office ranging from 67% to 98%. Areas of significant underspending include grants (\$922K); travel (\$667K); and office operations (reflecting lower missionary expenses due to vacancies, timing of payments of various international dues, and lower than planned development expense) (\$956K). In FY25 compensation budgets in some areas were reduced to reflect normalized vacancy levels whereas in prior years, all positions were budgeted as fully staffed for the entire year. Because of this, compensation savings for the first seven months were only \$371K vis a vis budget. Based on the mid-year expense reviews with units/offices and historical trends between August and year-end (January 31), a large portion of the underspending to date is due to timing differences between when it was budgeted and when it will be spent. Projections indicate approximate full year spending of 97% of the total spending authorization.

### **ELCA World Hunger**

Each year we raise over \$20 million in support of ELCA World Hunger initiatives. Results through August indicate that we are on track to do so again in FY25 as direct giving from

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA  
BUDGET AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

October 1, 2025

Report of the Treasurer

synods, congregations, and individuals is on plan. In addition, the organization received a significant bequest for ELCA World Hunger in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter, resulting in bequest income over plan for the year. YTD revenues are \$9.4 million compared to spending of \$12.2 million, as planned. World Hunger support is more heavily weighted to the last quarter of the year while spending is more evenly spread throughout the year.

### **Information Technology and Digital Solutions**

Information technology invested in understanding and preparing for responsible, human centered use of artificial intelligence. Governance structure and policies were implemented iteratively, and both continue to evolve as the churchwide organization adopts this new technology. Baseline education has been developed and provided. Additional education is being developed and provided to staff to effectively utilize AI in a human-centered and responsible manner. Internal conversations are planned this Fall to discuss the actions and next steps related to the AI resolution referred to the CWO at this year's churchwide assembly.

In partnership with the Development Team in the Office of the Presiding Bishop, Information Technology completed the move to a robust email and online giving platform to allow for more responsive and flexible communication and digital fundraising. On this platform we also have migrated the Good Gifts catalog to it in time to support year end giving campaigns. In partnership with the Witness in Society Team, we are also using this platform in support of eAdvocacy efforts at both the national and state levels.

A new synod financial portal has been developed in partnership with the Finance and Development teams to improve the flow of information between synods and the churchwide organization. This portal will improve the accuracy and efficiency of reporting and processing mission support, sharing information and collaborating between synod and churchwide financial staff.

A new elca.org website with improved search technologies including searches powered by AI is being worked on collaborative with strategically communications and key stakeholders around the organization. The search technologies will be implemented in preview mode this fall with the new website to follow in early 2026.

Infrastructure investments have been made in several key areas. These investments have improved the technology to support meetings at the Lutheran Center and in hybrid settings with remote participants. Security enhancements have been made to improve the protection of ELCA remote / hybrid staff, systems and data. New laptops are being rolled out to churchwide staff.

It is a pleasure to serve the ELCA. As a team of Office of the Treasurer professionals (Finance, Grants Management, IT and Digital Solutions, and Building Services) look to the future, we do so with a lens of pursuing opportunities to do more with less, remaining focused on our vision of a world experiencing the difference God's grace and love in Christ makes for all people and creation.



**EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH OF AMERICA**  
**SUMMARY OF REVENUE AND EXPENSES**  
**For the Period Ending August 31, 2025**

				Year-to-Date Variance	
				ACTUAL Vs. BUDGET	CURRENT YEAR vs. PRIOR YEAR
	2025 Actual	2025 Budget	2024 ACTUAL	Favorable/(Unfavorable)	Favorable/(Unfavorable)
<b>UNRESTRICTED</b>					
Mission Support	\$ 18,985,757	\$ 18,431,092	\$ 19,363,712	\$ 554,664	\$ (377,956)
Other	14,188,499	11,914,997	15,642,574	2,273,502	(1,454,075)
<b>TOTAL UNRESTRICTED</b>	<b>33,174,256</b>	<b>30,346,090</b>	<b>35,006,287</b>	<b>2,828,166</b>	<b>(1,832,031)</b>
 TOTAL Designated and Restricted Funds Released	 306,883	 325,000	 260,526	 (18,117)	 46,357
 <b>TOTAL OPERATING REVENUE AND SUPPORT</b>	 <b>33,481,139</b>	 <b>30,671,090</b>	 <b>35,266,813</b>	 <b>2,810,049</b>	 <b>(1,785,674)</b>
 <b>LESS TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	 <b>35,393,251</b>	 <b>38,574,352</b>	 <b>35,406,499</b>	 <b>3,181,101</b>	 <b>(13,248)</b>
 <b>NET REVENUE OVER (UNDER) EXPENSES</b>	 <b>\$ (1,912,112)</b>	 <b>\$ (7,903,262)</b>	 <b>\$ (139,687)</b>	 <b>\$ 5,991,150</b>	 <b>\$ (1,772,426)</b>

PRELIMINARY AND UNAUDITED, INTERNAL STATEMENTS ONLY



## REVENUE SUMMARY

### For the Period Ending August 31, 2025

				Year-to-Date Variance	
	2025	2025	2024	ACTUAL vs. BUDGET	CURRENT YEAR vs. PRIOR
	Actual	Budget	ACTUAL	Favorable/(Unfavorable)	YEAR Favorable/(Unfavorable)
<b>UNRESTRICTED</b>					
Mission Support	\$ 18,985,757	\$ 18,431,092	\$ 19,363,712	\$ 554,664	\$ (377,956)
Direct Gifts	3,260,742	3,373,479	3,367,721	(112,738)	(106,980)
Investment Revenue	5,121,997	2,477,557	5,805,343	2,644,440	(683,346)
Bequests and Trusts	1,195,666	1,750,000	1,989,508	(554,334)	(793,842)
Endowment	1,990,238	1,800,000	2,045,975	190,238	(55,737)
Rent	625,968	612,500	602,967	13,468	23,001
Services and Other Revenue	1,118,888	1,026,461	956,060	92,427	162,828
Mission Investment Fund	875,000	875,000	875,000	-	
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$ 33,174,256</b>	<b>\$ 30,346,090</b>	<b>\$ 35,006,287</b>	<b>\$ 2,828,166</b>	<b>\$ (1,832,031)</b>
<b>TOTAL Designated and Restricted Funds Released</b>	<b>306,883</b>	<b>325,000</b>	<b>260,526</b>	<b>(18,117)</b>	<b>46,357</b>
<b>Net Operating Revenue and Support</b>	<b>\$ 33,481,139</b>	<b>\$ 30,671,090</b>	<b>\$ 35,266,813</b>	<b>\$ 2,810,049</b>	<b>\$ (1,785,674)</b>

PRELIMINARY AND UNAUDITED, INTERNAL STATEMENTS ONLY



## ACTUAL EXPENSES VS. SPENDING AUTHORIZATION For the Period Ending August 31, 2025

	Actual Expense	Spending Authorization	Variance Favorable (Unfavorable)	Percent of Budget
<b>Home Areas</b>				
Christian Community and Leadership	\$ 11,989,299	\$ 12,387,125	\$ 397,826	97%
Service and Justice	5,884,074	7,120,316	1,236,243	83%
Innovation	716,070	1,067,511	351,441	67%
Presiding Bishop	4,143,687	4,716,748	573,062	88%
Secretary	3,522,801	3,607,784	84,984	98%
Treasurer	6,700,945	7,030,802	329,857	95%
<b>Other</b>				
General Treasury	1,255,727	1,376,579	120,852	91%
Depreciation	1,180,649	1,267,486	86,837	93%
<b>TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$ 35,393,251</b>	<b>\$ 38,574,352</b>	<b>\$ 3,181,101</b>	<b>92%</b>

PRELIMINARY AND UNAUDITED, INTERNAL STATEMENTS ONLY

### **Report from the Conference of Bishops**

After a large number of bishop elections this spring, June 23-25, thirteen new bishops were welcomed to Chicago to meet each other and for training. Two colleagues from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada joined the group (and will do so again in October 2025 in Minneapolis) for training and in hopes of building a more robust Canadian formation. Topics included: worship and prayer, time with the Secretary's office, life in the Conference of Bishops, hiring a Director for Evangelical Mission, legal information, anti-racism training, and other practical pieces of information that may be helpful in their new role.

The Conference of Bishops gathered during Churchwide Assembly, July 27, 2025, in Phoenix, Ariz., for worship and a joint meeting with the Church Council. Following that meeting, the Conference met briefly to welcome new bishops, build relationships and identified topics for the coming year. That evening we also offered a farewell to outgoing Bishop Laurie Jungling, Montana Synod.

Wednesday, July 30 the Conference of Bishops had lunch with the seminary presidents, and they will report back during the Minneapolis meeting.

One additional bishop will be elected in the Allegheny Synod at their upcoming Fall Synod Assembly (Oct. 31-Nov. 1). That new bishop will begin February 1, 2026.

Bishop Deborah Hutterer  
Acting Chair, ELCA Conference of Bishops



## **Fall 2025**

### **Development Report to the Church Council**

A sense of resilience and shared commitment shines through the collective ministry of our church. Mission Support continues to outpace expectations, which demonstrates the steadfast dedication of congregations, synods and individuals to our work together.

In particular, the impact of ELCA World Hunger and Lutheran Disaster Response has been both significant and inspiring. In the context of declining international aid and a shift in the humanitarian landscape, many organizations have been inviting support to close their budget gaps. The focus for ELCA World Hunger and Lutheran Disaster Response has been a message of hope and resilience — these programs are made possible by the generosity of our church, which has allowed us to maintain, strengthen and, in some cases, expand our commitment to this important work. This is a powerful reminder of our collective impact; these ministries thrive only through the continued support of our church.

Thank you for your partnership, for telling the stories of our church's work and for inviting generosity within your own contexts.

### **Congregation and Synod Support**

- The team equips synod and congregation leaders with resources and tools that lay a strong foundation for all types of generosity. A key focus is on ways to increase the church's financial capacity through regular offerings and Mission Support. Team members have a wide range of skills and resources to share in the areas of effective congregational stewardship, purposeful story engagement, data analysis for strategic planning, and the ways Mission Support connects us across the ELCA as we respond to God's call to love and serve our neighbors.
- One of the resources the team is most excited about is the refreshed "What Does My Offering Do?" video, created in collaboration with Development Communications. The video was completed in time to play at the 2025 Churchwide Assembly and has been shared widely since then. As of Sept. 10, it had been viewed almost a thousand times. It can be accessed at [elca.org/missionsupportvideo](https://elca.org/missionsupportvideo).
- The team continues to accompany synods that hope to increase Mission Support sharing from their congregations to the synod. Using data from Form A, we search for congregations that share between 2% and 5% of their Mission Support with their synod (the ELCA average) and whose regular giving is greater than their expenses. With this information, synods can focus on individualized communications with a small group of congregations that demonstrate the greatest capacity to share more Mission Support with the synod. The team has also helped with messaging and strategy around engaging these congregations.
- The Church Property Resource Hub initiative has been launched. This three-year project, funded through a generous donation, includes two new hires: a program director and a digital communications manager. The team is creating a resource hub for church property challenges and opportunities that will offer practical resources for navigating thorny questions, capture stories of inspiration from congregations that are doing something new and different with their buildings, and curate a forum for peer-to-peer learning about property issues.
- Team members continue to provide both on-site and online workshops and presentations. The team was especially grateful for the opportunity to attend nine synod assemblies earlier this year.



## Annual Giving

- The Annual Giving team is composed of Development Marketing and Communications, Leadership Circle (mid-level), Mission Funding directors (major gifts), Congregational Generosity, Events, and Ministry Engagement and Support. The team is primarily responsible for fundraising for activities of the churchwide organization that are included in the general operating budget, for ELCA World Hunger and Lutheran Disaster Response, and for engaging donors and congregations in support of these programs.
- Direct generosity from synods, congregations and individuals to Where Needed Most, ELCA World Hunger and Lutheran Disaster Response continue to be strong through the second quarter. Unrestricted giving for ELCA World Hunger and Lutheran Disaster Response are ahead on a year-over-year basis, with significant support in response to wildfires in Southern California and flooding in Texas. Special gifts in response to ELCA World Hunger's 50th anniversary continue, with some special initiatives highlighted below. Giving to Where Needed Most is slightly behind on a year-over-year basis but remains on track for the FY25 revenue target.
- Additional updates across the team include:
  - Development Communications — The team upgraded the ELCA Good Gifts store to a more user-friendly platform, integrated digital fundraising with ELCA communications and expanded reach through USPS Informed Delivery.
  - Leadership Circle (mid-level giving) — The team hosted three virtual Fireside Chats focusing on ministry topics, launched newsletters with updated giving tools and reengaged donors at the \$1,000-plus level. They also welcomed Jill Clavet as mission funding specialist to strengthen donor relations.
  - Major Gifts — The team increased in-person donor outreach and solicitations, strengthening relationships and the donor pipeline for future growth.
  - Ministry Engagement and Support — The Rev. Ben Hogue assumed a new role to bridge the Christian Community and Leadership home area and the Service and Justice home area with Development, ensuring regular updates and collaboration across churchwide programs.
  - Congregational Generosity — The team supported synods as they inspired congregations to join in special giving initiatives such as Region 2's Lenten Challenge, the Northern Illinois Synod's fundraising for ELCA World Hunger, and benefit concerts in western Washington.
  - Events — The team supported virtual events and hosted a June donor-immersion trip to Indonesia to deepen understanding of global ministries. Two immersion trips are planned for 2026: one to southern Africa and another to Central Europe; contact [events@elca.org](mailto:events@elca.org) for more details.

## Development Services

- The Development Services team manages the data in the ELCA Constituent Information Service (ECIS), processes over 100,000 gifts per year and manages the ELCA call center and e-store. The team also works closely with Development colleagues, providing lists and analysis to identify the best prospects for giving.
- The Gift Processing team started work to prepare for year-end giving. Close to 50% of the churchwide organization's gifts are received in the last quarter of the year. The team is working closely with its gift-processing vendor (Moore RMG) to review all processing instructions while also working on new processes to streamline gifts processing and eliminate delays and bottlenecks.
- The Development Services team, working with Information Technology (IT) and with Development Marketing and Communications, deployed a new online marketing and donation platform,

Engaging Networks. In September, the team launched the new ELCA Good Gifts catalog on Engaging Networks. Engaging Networks is now the organization's primary tool for sending digital communications to its constituents and receiving online gifts. Online giving is around 30% of all annual gifts on average.

- The Data Analysis and Prospect Development teams just finished developing and executing a major-donor model to identify major-giving prospects. These models are run regularly to help mission funding directors prioritize and manage their prospects by identifying prospects with higher likelihood of making a major gift, based on their history with the ELCA and other publicly available data.
- The Development Services team is working closely with IT and the Office of the Treasurer to develop and test the new synod remittance portal. The new portal is on track to be launched before the end of 2025.

### Transformation and Institutional Giving

- The team collaborated with colleagues in Service and Justice to develop a planning grant aimed at strengthening capacity-building efforts for Lutheran Disaster Response. The subsequent implementation grant could total up to \$5 million. The team continues to actively prepare and submit additional proposals to both current and prospective funders and to steward ongoing relationships.
- To support ministries across the ELCA ecosystem, the team is deploying a range of resources, including consultations, webinars on grant writing, a comprehensive written tool kit, and curated research lists identifying funding opportunities.
- The team also plays a key role in managing several major, grant-funded initiatives at the churchwide organization, each valued at \$1 million or more, including:
  - **Lilly Endowment Inc. Projects:**
    1. *Congregations Lead*: Innovation Denomination.
    2. *Compelling Preaching*: Transformed Listeners.
    3. *Youth Ministry*: The Formation Lab (in collaboration with the ELCA Youth Ministry Network).
    4. *Nurturing Children*: Curious Christian Children.
  - **Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies Project:**
    1. *Total Inclusion* (in collaboration with Lutheran Outdoor Ministries).
  - **Anonymous Donor Project:**
    1. *Vision Project*.

## Unfinished 2025 Churchwide Assembly Business

### 1. Category C2: Update 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 uterus 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.

#### **Background**

This memorial speaks to the existing social statement entitled [\*Abortion\*](#) (1991) as one that has served the ELCA in the past, but also requests some degree of revision, asking “to revise, update, or create a new social statement.” Any of these actions fall under the technical category of a *reconsideration*” that is, this church will *reconsider* teaching adopted in the past. A two-thirds vote of voting members was required for the adoption of the 1991 social statement, and any action for reconsideration requires a similar level of support.

The memorial does not directly question the statement’s central theological convictions, framing, or commitments. It also does not seem to object to the social statement’s portrayal of the personal struggles and pastoral challenges named therein. It does rightly note that some contemporary factors date the message or are not addressed. These include some developments in the field of medicine and some acceptance of varied and broader understandings of family and sexual orientation, though it does not specify concrete developments or how these changes would alter the moral teachings of the 1991 social statement. At the same time, the memorial asks for significant expansion about injustices and extenuating circumstances surrounding parenthood and raising children.

The memorial suggests that the social statement does not address how human life begins, which is incorrect (see pp. 2 and 3). However, the memorial seems to suggest that any ethical analysis ought to address the varied and complicated perspectives about when life begins, as found in the long history of theological perspectives on abortion. It is true that the current social statement does not do this. At the same time, it should be recognized that to address such controversial questions and interpretations would require extensive length and much churchwide discernment.

The memorial’s last WHEREAS clause ask for attention to “recent social conditions,” but it is not clear or specific about which conditions are meant. It could imply conditions since the 2022 U.S. Supreme Court decision to revert laws governing abortion services from the federal level to individual states. It could imply changes since 1991 in levels of social acceptance of abortion, which have fluctuated. It could mean economic social conditions and the impact for availability of legal, safe, and accessible reproductive healthcare. It could imply other social conditions.

The current ELCA social statement on *Abortion* stands out among Christian bodies globally and nationally as a moderating voice in Christian teaching on abortion. It does so in part because it does not

stand exclusively for or against abortion. Said another way, it is a model providing a nuanced teaching on a complex topic.

Instead, the social statement speaks theologically, pastorally, and ethically, while arguing for nuance and contextual discernment. Theologically, what is imperative in the current statement is this church's confession that identity is through the Triune life. All belong to Christ, which is then the statement's grounding to speak pastorally. The statement underscores that God's people will care for each other and all pregnant persons, even when as individuals there is disagreement on something as divisive as questions over abortion. Lastly, the current statement outlines this church's ethical commitments—to support persons who need to have abortion services or who have an unexpected pregnancy; to encourage other options to abortion; to work to mitigate the social and other circumstances that create hardship in having and raising children; and to ensure legal, safe, and accessible abortion and other reproductive healthcare.

The memorial requests the 2025 Churchwide Assembly to authorize a reconsideration (the technical terminology) of the social statement on *Abortion*. "Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns" (2018) provides for such options. It should be noted that any authorization does not determine the outcome but simply initiates a process. Final adoption rests with the subsequent churchwide assembly.

The memorial does not specify which of the three possible kinds of reconsideration it seeks:

- a. Edit, the update of particular wording for the sake of accuracy and relevance to the contemporary social context involving no change in substantive meaning.
- b. Revise, changes to designated paragraphs or sections of a message involving substantive alteration.
- c. Archive, assigning the whole statement to the category of historical documents as an archive of the ELCA." Archive reconsideration may or may not entail development of a new statement.

Presumably, though, the memorial is asking for either b) a substantive revision or c) a new statement, each of which involves a task force providing leadership for an ELCA-wide discernment process of roughly three years.

Three sets of standard questions help assess whether reconsideration is called for. These questions and key observations are given here.

*What is the most appropriate vehicle for addressing the concerns expressed in the memorial?*

The options for response include reconsiderations, but other options also are available. These include addressing the concern through the development of study and discernment materials or fresh emphasis on existing ones. It also is possible to refer the concern to the Church Council as a request for a social message or social policy resolution.

In this case there are significant reasons, as expressed above, to suggest that existing study or discernment resources or the development of new ones would satisfactorily enable discernment on many of the concerns raised. The final whereas clause speaks to unspecified "social conditions" of which many are addressed in other ELCA social statements. For instance, economic matters are the subject of *Sufficient, Sustainable, Livelihood for All* (1999). Elements that are not addressed may well be addressed through a Social Policy Resolution (SPR) process overseen by the ELCA Church Council.

There are two types of SPRs. One type is a standard one and an example of a standard SPR would be:

- <https://resources.elca.org/faith-and-society/suicide-prevention-research-spr16/>

- <https://resources.elca.org/faith-and-society/justice-for-holy-land-through-responsible-investment-spr16/>

The other type is more descriptive and elaborate and an example of a ‘descriptive’ SPR would be:

- <https://resources.elca.org/faith-and-society/organ-tissue-donation-spr03/>
- <https://resources.elca.org/faith-and-society/legal-gambling-sponsorship-spr07/>

*What is the capacity of this church at this time, and what is the level of urgency in light of already existing commitments?*

A reconsideration involves significant staff time by members of Theological Ethics, of course, but also involves others in the churchwide organization who do communications, copy-editing, and the like. In addition, reconsideration significantly relies on the efforts of the ELCA Church Council and the Conference of Bishops, as well as participation across the whole ecology of the ELCA. All of these actors are involved because the ELCA is committed to being a community of moral deliberation. Following the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly, this church will be engaged in the substantive reconsiderations of *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* (2009). Typically, the ELCA as a whole church has the capacity for the development of one social statement between assemblies. This means the initiation of another reconsideration would need to be managed by the Church Council, either through additional funding for staff and process expenses or through a delay until 2028.

The urgencies expressed in the memorial appear to pertain to the “injustices regarding life before and after birth” and to “the extenuating circumstances that may call for an abortion in the light of more recent social conditions.” These needs may be met with means other than a revision or new social statement.

*What precisely would be the costs and budget implications involved?*

The memorial’s request for a reconsideration process has budgetary implications of approximately \$120,000 over a three-year period, plus staff time. The budget dollars would be used for two-and-a-half years of in-person task force meetings, for study resources, design, translation, and printing. The reconsideration process involves at least a draft comment period but usually includes other efforts to allow widespread participation across this church.

#### **Recommendation of the Memorials Committee:**

**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. Category C8: 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.

### ***Background***

As the preamble of this memorial notes, a significant percentage of ELCA congregations are in rural communities. These congregations and communities face significant challenges and present unique learning opportunities for ministry.

Since 2020, rural communities in the US have experienced modest growth in population. However, rural congregations continue to face the challenges identified in this memorial, including maintaining and growing members in remote areas. In addition, the inequities listed in the memorial present significant challenges that should be addressed.

Yet, as the memorial also notes, rural communities and congregations have gifts to offer for theological and ecclesial reflection, including models of innovative and adaptive ministry. The memorial thus calls for development of a social message that addresses both the challenge and promise of the context of rural life and ministry.

The memorial does not indicate awareness of the establishment of a Rural and Small-Town Ministry Desk by the ELCA in 1998. However, it rightly notes a lack of current resources and ELCA social teaching on the topic.

There are few references to rural congregations and communities in current ELCA social teaching. Most often, these references only describe the challenges faced by rural or farming communities, without attention to the gifts rural ministry provides. For example, the social statement *Caring for Health: Our Shared Endeavor* (2003) calls for priority in addressing rural health inequities. Social policy resolutions on “Family Farms” (CA95.05.44) and “Economic Crisis in Rural America” (CA99.03.09) call for prayer, advocacy, and education about family farms. A 2001 social policy resolution on “The Family Farm” (CA01.05.21) echoes these earlier documents and calls for support of rural congregations and ministries.

There are three questions for assessment of a request for a new social message: 1) Is a social message the most appropriate vehicle to address the concerns? 2) What is the capacity of this church for this process? 3) What would be the costs involved?

To the first question, social messages “address the contemporary situation in light of the prophetic and compassionate traditions of the Scriptures,” are “narrower in scope and complexity or of less controversy than social statements,” and “expand theological and pastoral address and analysis” of contemporary issues ([Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns](#) (2018)). Given the nature of the topic of rural and remote ministry, a social message would be the most appropriate resource for addressing the needs identified in this memorial. However, social messages address

social issues. Such a social message, thus, would address the context in which rural ministry happens, rather than congregational ministry more narrowly.

To the second question, the capacity of the church involves significant leadership commitment and effort across the church because of the communal moral deliberation process. This also includes the significant investment of time needed from Theological Discernment staff in the Office of the Presiding Bishop. In general, there is capacity for development of one social message per year. There are already requests for a new social message on White Supremacy and for reconsideration of the social messages on “Homelessness” and “End-of-Life Decisions.”

To the third question, development of a new social message would cost approximately \$10,000-15,000. This would include compensation and potential travel for a contract writer, design, editing, translation, and printing.

### **Recommendation of the Memorials Committee:**

**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. Category D1: 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.

### ***Background***

As the memorial notes, the ELCA has engaged in active and ongoing response to the 2023 Hamas attacks and hostage-taking, Israel's invasion of Gaza, ongoing destruction, war and humanitarian crisis, and the ongoing Israeli military occupation in Palestine. This work has been ongoing for decades, rooted in



accompaniment of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) and furthered through the 2005 Churchwide Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine. In October 2023, following an in-depth review by ELCA staff and leadership from the Palestinian Lutheran church, the ELCA announced a new initiative, Sumud: For Justice in Palestine and Israel, that guides accompaniment, awareness-raising, and advocacy.

Through the work of the ELCA Middle East North Africa (MENA) Desk including ELCA Sumud, the Witness in Society team and the MENA Policy Program, the ELCA has a long history of advocacy for an end to the Israeli occupation in Palestine and an end to unconditional military aid to Israel. This advocacy takes place through [statements from the Presiding Bishop](#), staff advocacy on Capitol Hill and [action alerts from Witness in Society](#) to ELCA networks, with recent alerts affirming the [ELCA's support for a permanent ceasefire](#) in Gaza and [restoration of infrastructure in Gaza](#). It also takes place through ELCA participation in ecumenical coalitions and initiatives, for example, Churches for Middle East Peace.

The ELCA has created awareness-raising opportunities and events to “lament the trauma experienced by Palestinians and Israelis over the course of the past two years...” by holding [online events](#) for prayer and solidarity, producing [educational resources](#) for congregations, and issuing [statements](#) from Presiding Bishop Eaton addressing the trauma experienced by the local communities of the Holy Land. These resources pay special attention to the [role of American Christians](#) in a shared responsibility for current circumstances in Palestine and Israel as targeted by this memorial. The ELCA has also responded through continued accompaniment of Palestinian Lutheran companions and their neighbors on the ground through building leadership and ministry capacity in the church, schools, and community organizations in Jerusalem and the West Bank. As part of this, Lutheran Disaster Response, in consultation with the MENA Desk, provided more than \$800,000 in funding to the partners on the ground in Palestine and Israel in 2024, including funding for psychosocial support.

This memorial affirms both the existing ministry of the ELCA and encourages the urgent need for continued ministry and initiatives of this nature. The adverse conditions and extreme hardships addressed in this memorial have not ended; rather, conditions have worsened on the ground in Gaza and the [West Bank](#). There continues to be a great need for advocacy, awareness, and accompaniment from the ELCA to faithfully pursue justice in the Holy Land.

**Recommendation of the Memorials Committee:**

**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.**

*En Bloc Items*

**I. Budget and Finance Committee**

**II. Executive Committee**

**III. Legal and Constitutional Review Committee**

**A. Synod Constitution Amendments**

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...."

**CC ACTION** [EN BLOC]

**Recommended:**

**To ratify the following amendments to the constitution of the Northwest Intermountain Synod (1D):**

- S9.04** The bishop shall be elected by the Synod Assembly from among those nominated in the following manner:
- Each cluster may submit up to three names of those whom they wish to nominate for the office of bishop and shall submit written vitae for each nominee, said vitae to adhere to a format established by the elections committee; names of said nominees and their vitae shall then be published in the voting members' pre-assembly packet. **Nomination for bishop may be made from the floor if there are fewer than 2 candidates for the first ballot. Candidates nominated from the floor of the Assembly must make their vitae available to the Synod Secretary at a time determined by the Assembly, and before votes are cast for the first ballot.**
  - Three fourths of the votes cast shall be necessary for election on the first ballot.
  - The second ballot shall be limited to the seven persons (plus **any ties in the seventh position**) who received the greatest number of votes on the first ballot, and two thirds of the votes cast shall be necessary for election.
  - The third ballot shall be limited to the three persons (plus **any ties in the third position**) who received the greatest number of votes on the second ballot, and 60 percent of the votes cast shall be necessary for election.
  - Prior to the casting of the third ballot, the three or more persons to appear on the ballot, if they are present, shall be invited to address the Assembly.
  - On subsequent ballots a majority of the votes cast shall be necessary for election. These ballots shall be limited to the two persons (plus **any ties for the second position**) who receive the greatest number of votes on the previous ballot.

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**CC ACTION** [EN BLOC]

**Recommended:**

**To ratify the following amendment to the constitution of the Northeastern Iowa Synod (5F):**

- S14.15.** Each **rostered minister of Word and Sacrament** on the roster of this synod shall submit a report of ministry to the bishop of the synod **by March 1 of each year at least 90 days prior to each regular meeting of the Synod Assembly.**
- S14.34.** Each minister of Word and Service on the roster of this synod shall submit a report of ministry to the bishop of the synod **at least 90 days prior to each regular meeting of the Synod Assembly annually by March 1.**

**CC ACTION [EN BLOC]**

**Recommended:**

**To ratify the following amendment to the constitution of the Northern Great Lakes Synod (5G):**

- S8.42.** The Treasurer shall provide and be accountable for:
- ....
- e. Rendering at each regular meeting of the Synod Assembly a full, detailed, and duly audited report of receipts and disbursements in the several accounts of this synod for the **year prior to the** preceding fiscal year, together with the tabulation, for record and publication in the minutes, of the contributions from the congregations; and
- 

**CC ACTION [EN BLOC]**

**Recommended:**

**To ratify the following amendment to the constitution of the Upstate New York Synod (7D):**

- S10.06.** If a member of the Synod Council ceases to meet the requirements of the position to which **she or he the member** was elected the office filled by such member shall at once become vacant. If a member of the Synod Council resigns or is absent from three successive regular meetings of the Synod Council without cause, the office filled by such a member shall at once become vacant. The person filling such vacancy shall be elected by the Synod Council upon nomination by the conference whose seat is vacant to complete the unexpired term of the predecessor member.
- S10.07.** Conferences shall nominate for election by the Synod Assembly lay members and **rostered** ministers **of Word and Sacrament** to the Synod Council for four (4) year terms in accordance with the bylaws.
- S12.04.** Conferences shall elect for their presiding officer a **rostered** minister **of Word and Sacrament or a Minister of Word and Service** from the conference and in good standing on the ELCA Roster as their dean. The dean represents the synod bishop in the conference. The term of office of the dean shall be four (4) years. The dean shall serve no more than two (2) consecutive terms.
- 

**CC ACTION [EN BLOC]**

**Recommended:**

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

- †S1.21.** The seal of this synod is **a world with a cross segmenting the globe in the center of the seal with the words METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON, D.C. SYNOD ELCA circling the outer edge of the seal a cross with three united flames emanating from the base of the cross and three entwined circles beside the cross. The name of this synod and the year of its constituting convention form the circular outer edge of the seal.**
-

**Notification of the Church Council of Synods Reporting Adoption of  
2022 Churchwide Assembly Amendments to Recommended Provisions in Accord with †S18.12.**

Synod:	Amendments Adopted:*
South-Central Synod of Wisconsin (5K)	All
Upper Susquehanna Synod (8E)	All except S7.14., S7.27., and S8.42.f.
Florida-Bahamas Synod (9E)	All except S7.14., S7.27., and S11.10. [S7.21.1. was adopted prior to 2025]

**\*Amendments to Recommended Provisions of the *Constitution for Synods*  
Approved by the 2022 Churchwide Assembly**

- S7.14.** ~~One half~~ One-third of the members of the Synod Assembly shall constitute a quorum.
- †S7.21.01.** Voting members shall begin serving with the opening of a regular Synod Assembly and shall continue serving until ~~voting members are seated at the opening of~~ the next regular Synod Assembly.
- S7.22.** This synod may establish processes that permit retired rostered ministers, or those granted disability status, or on leave from call, on the roster of the synod to serve as voting members of the Synod Assembly, provided that such processes not result in fewer than 60% of the voting members of the Synod Assembly being laypersons in contravention of consistent with †S7.21.e. If the synod does not establish processes to permit the rostered ministers specified above to serve as voting members, they shall have voice but not vote in the meetings of the Synod Assembly.
- S7.24.** Ministers under call on the rosters of this synod shall remain as members of the Synod Assembly so long as they remain under call and so long as their names appear on the rosters of this synod. Lay members of the Synod Assembly representing congregations shall continue as such until the opening of the next regular synod assembly, or unless replaced by the election of new members for a special synod assembly, or until they have been disqualified by termination of congregation membership. Normally, congregations will hold elections prior to each regular meeting of the Synod Assembly.
- S7.26.** This synod may establish processes through the Synod Council that permit lay representatives of authorized worshiping communities of the synod, which have been authorized under ELCA bylaw 10.01.04., to serve as voting members of the Synod Assembly, consistent with †S7.21.
- S7.27.** This synod may establish processes through the Synod Council to grant a minister of Word and Sacrament from a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by the Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America the privilege of both voice and vote in the Synod Assembly during the period of that minister's service in a congregation of this church.
- S8.42.** The treasurer shall provide and be accountable for:  
[...]  
c. Receipt and acknowledgment of offerings, contributions, and bequests made to this synod, collecting interest and income from its invested funds, and paying regular appropriations and orders on the several accounts as approved and directed by the Synod Council. The treasurer shall transmit each month to the treasurer of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in

America the funds received by this synod for the general work of this church as well as any funds to support restricted programs of this church.

[...]

~~f. Obtaining a fidelity bond in the amount determined by the Synod Council for persons handling synod funds, which bond shall be in the custody of the secretary. The premium for the bond shall be paid by this synod. Fidelity coverage provided by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America shall be deemed a fulfillment of this requirement.~~

#### **S.11.10. General Provisions**

- S14.13.** The pastor (a) shall keep accurate parochial records of all baptisms, confirmations, marriages, burials, communicants, members received, members dismissed, or members excluded from the congregation, (b) shall submit a summary of such statistics annually to this synod, and (c) shall become a member of the congregation upon receipt and acceptance of the letter of call. In a parish of multiple congregations, the pastor shall hold membership in one of the congregations.
- S14.15.** Each minister of Word and Sacrament on the roster of this synod shall submit a report of his or her ministry to the bishop of the synod at least 90 days prior to each regular meeting of the Synod Assembly.
- S14.34.** Each minister of Word and Service on the roster of this synod shall submit a report of his or her ministry to the bishop of the synod at least 90 days prior to each regular meeting of the Synod Assembly.

#### **B. ELCA Churchwide Organization Personnel Policies**

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 14.21.06.

#### **CC ACTION [EN BLOC]**

##### **Recommended**

**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.**

#### **IV. Faith, Society, and Innovation Committee**

#### **V. Service and Justice Committee**

##### **A. Corporate Social Responsibility Documents**

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

#### **CC ACTION [EN BLOC]**

##### **Recommended:**

**To approve the Artificial Intelligence Issue Paper;  
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.

**VI. Christian Community and Leadership Committee**

**VII. Other Items**

**A. Approval of the Minutes**

The minutes of the Church Council meeting on [July 27, 2025](#) have been provided to council members electronically on Church Council Microsoft Teams.

The minutes of the council's Executive Committee meetings on [July 27, 2025](#), [Aug. 19, 2025](#), and [Sept. 16, 2025](#), have been provided electronically to members on Church Council Teams.

Please provide any notations or typographical errors in the distributed text of the minutes in writing to the executive for Office of the Secretary administration ([Keith.Fry@elca.org](mailto:Keith.Fry@elca.org)). Proper corrections will be entered into the protocol copies of the minutes. Such corrections need not be raised in the plenary session in connection with the approval of the minutes.

**CC ACTION [EN BLOC]**

**Recommended:**

To approve the minutes of the 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, August 19, 2025, and September 16, 2025, meetings.

**B. Church Council Nominations and Elections**

Pursuant to 14.22. of the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, the Church Council is to elect nominees to a vacancy on a board or committee of the churchwide organization. Biographical information is provided in [Biographies](#).

**CC ACTION [EN BLOC]**

**Recommended:**

To appoint 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.

**CC ACTION [EN BLOC]**

**Recommended:**

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

**CC ACTION [EN BLOC]**

**Recommended:**

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

**CC ACTION [EN BLOC]**

**Recommended:**

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

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**The Rev. Nicole Raddu Ferry**

**Synod of Congregation:** Rocky Mountain Synod, ELCA (2E)  
**Congregation:** Trinity Lutheran Church (ID: 30111) - Monument, Colorado  
**Birthdate:** 01/03/1964      **Gender:** Woman  
**Primary Language:** English      **Ethnicity:** European Descent/White  
**Synod of Roster:** 2E      **Leader Key:**  
**Willing to serve:** Yes

**Preferred Mailing Address: (Home)**

17714 Brass Buckle Way  
Monument, CO 80312 United States

**Telephone:**

Preferred: 5056950019 (Cell)

Alternate: 7194813072 (Work)

**Email:**

pastornicole@trinitymonument.org (Work)

**Educational Institutions:**

University of Tennessee (1982-1986): Bachelor In Social Work

University of Maryland (1987-1988): Master Of Science In Social Work

The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg (2004-2012): Master Of Divinity

**Employment:**

Pastor (12/01/2024 - Present )

Trinity Lutheran Church

Monument, CO

**Previous Employment:**

Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church Los Alamos, NM (2012-2024)

New Hope Lutheran Church Columbia, MD (2008-2012)

**Congregational, Synod, or Churchwide Service Activities:**

Co- Dean for the North New Mexico Conference in the Rocky Mountain Synod (2016-2022)

Candidacy Committee in the Rocky Mountain Synod (2015-2023)

Trauma Support Team for the Rocky Mountain Synod (2021-2022)

**What are the gifts, skills, experiences and areas of expertise that you would bring to this work?**

I have been very blessed to be part of the Lutheran Church since my baptism in 1964. I attended a Lutheran School through 8th grade and my family was very involved in "all things" church throughout my life. Joining an ELCA Lutheran Church in 1987 allowed me to expand my involvement in serving during worship, serving on the Council, working with youth, and working for three different ELCA churches in various capacities. I was then blessed by the first ELCA church to be asked to discern pastoral ministry. I believe very strongly that our world of church is changing and that God, as God always is, is up to a new thing for the good of the gospel. My many roles in the church and my healthy systems understanding and teamwork in social work has given me an excellent foundation to bring my gifts to this committee. My communication is strong to different groups and systems and yes, I love Jesus and believe our world needs our ELCA presence in times such as this. It would be an honor to serve.

**If you identify as a member of one of the historically underrepresented groups, we invite you to share how you might offer a useful perspective to leadership in this church.**

I am not currently representing these voices and yet my childhood and my work in social work gives me clarity about the challenges that poverty or lower income brings.

**Alternate Committee Nominations:**

1. Church Council
2. Committee on Discipline
3. Committee on Appeals

**Reference:** The Rev. James Gonia      **Phone:**7203087446      **E-mail:**photogoniaco@gmail.com

**Relationship:** Pastor Jim was my previous bishop and has known me for 12 years.

## Gender Justice and Women's Empowerment Consulting Committee

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### Ms. Deborah Maria Nyquist

**Synod:** Alaska Synod, Elca, (1A)  
**Congregation:** Christ Lutheran Church (ID: 13000) - Soldotna, Alaska  
**Birthdate:** 08/08/1963 **Gender:** Woman  
**Primary Language:** English **Ethnicity:** American Indian/Alaska Native  
**Willing to serve:** Yes

### Preferred Mailing Address: (Home)

PO Box 1821  
Kenai, AK 99611 United States

### Residential Mailing Address:

110 Deepwood Court  
Kenai, AK 99611 United States

### Telephone:

Preferred: 9072528059 (Cell)

### Email:

nyquistdeb@gmail.com (Home)

### Educational Institutions:

Univ of MN, Duluth (1990-1994): Bachelor Of Science In Education  
Western Governors Univ (2017-2019): Master Of Arts In Management

### Employment:

Owner / Consultant (07/09/2020 - Present )  
Thrive Consulting LLC  
Kenai, AK

### Previous Employment:

Kenaitze Indian Tribe, Dena'ina Wellness Center (2003-2019)

### Congregational, Synod, or Churchwide Service Activities:

AK Synod ELCA Coach (2024-)  
AK Synod Nominating Committee (2021-2024)  
Christ Lutheran Church, Soldotna bell choir (2000-2024)

### What are the gifts, skills, experiences and areas of expertise that you would bring to this work?

As a lineal descendent of the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa and 30-year resident of Alaska, I bring my connection to the land, people and all of my relatives (plant, animal, water) to every conversation and decision. My husband and I are blessed to have raised our children on Dena'ina land in Kenai, AK. We enjoy hiking, fishing and wild harvesting and are proud grandparents to our 2-year-old granddaughter Babaamaadizi. Baabi fills me with hope when together we identify flowers and pick spruce tips, etc. I am a justice warrior for those whose voice is not heard: the earth; my colonized and dispossessed relatives; the plants, animals and water who are frequently seen as disposable resources. Upon resignation as the Wellness Director for a tribal health organization where I successfully integrated Alaska Native traditional healing and spiritual care into the healthcare system, I started my consulting company whose mission is collaborating to create thriving communities.

### Alternate Committee Nominations:

1. ELCA Foundation Board

**Reference:** Shelley Wickstrom **Phone:**9072728899 **E-mail:**aksynodbishop@gmail.com

**Relationship:** Friend

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Committee on Discipline

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**The Rev. Tracy Maria Williams**

**Synod of Congregation:** Southwest California Synod, ELCA (2B)  
**Congregation:** Holy Redeemer Lutheran Church (ID: 13765) - Bellflower, California  
**Birthdate:** 12/10/1959      **Gender:** Woman  
**Primary Language:** English      **Ethnicity:** Black/African American/African Descent  
**Synod of Roster:** 2B      **Leader Key:** L040192  
**Willing to serve:** Yes

**Preferred Mailing Address: (Home)**

710 E 70th Street  
Long Beach, CA 90805 United States

**Telephone:**

Preferred: 3237027278 (Cell)  
Alternate: 3106293335 (Work)

**Email:**

Pastortracy@socalsynod.org (Work)

**Educational Institutions:**

PLTS (2015-2016): Certificate  
California Baptist University (Date not specified.): Master Of Arts In Psychology  
Azusa Pacific University (Date not specified.): Master Of Divinity

**Employment:**

Pastor (10/08/2015 - Present )  
Holy Redeemer  
Bellflower, CA

**Previous Employment:**

Southwest California Synod (2022-)  
A2B (-)

**Congregational, Synod, or Churchwide Service Activities:**

Women of the ELCA (2022-2026)

**What are the gifts, skills, experiences and areas of expertise that you would bring to this work?**

I have enjoying working in this church, I work as assistant to Bishop in that role I have the pleasure of working with many congregations. I assist in conflict resolution and helping to build good relationships.

**If you identify as a member of one of the historically underrepresented groups, we invite you to share how you might offer a useful perspective to leadership in this church.**

**Reference:** Bishop Brenda Bos

**Relationship:** Colleague

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## Committee on Appeals

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### Mr. James Brian Shockley

**Synod of Congregation:** West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod, ELCA (8H) **Congregation:** St Paul Lutheran Church (ID: 06640) - Morgantown, West Virginia  
**Birthdate:** 06/08/1971 **Gender:** Man  
**Primary Language:** English **Ethnicity:** European Descent/White  
**Willing to serve:** Yes

**Preferred Mailing Address: (Home)**

105 Lampligher Drive  
Morgantown, WV 26508 United States

**Telephone:**

Preferred: 3042764034 (Cell)

**Email:**

kjjbshockley@comcast.net (Home)

**Educational Institutions:**

West Virginia University (1989-1993): Bachelor Of Arts  
West Virginia University (1993-1996): Doctor Of Jurisprudence

**Employment:**

Assistant General Counsel (01/29/2023 - 09/30/2025) Department of Justice -  
Federal Bureau of Investigation Washington, DC

**Previous Employment:**

Assistant Prosecuting Attorney- Harrison County, West Virginia (2017-2023) Attorney, Cranston &  
Edwards, PLLC (2007-2017)

**Congregational, Synod, or Churchwide Service Activities:**

Church Council- St. Paul Lutheran Church, Morgantown, WV Call Committee, St. Paul  
Lutheran Church (-)  
Committee service St. Paul Lutheran Church (-)

**What are the gifts, skills, experiences and areas of expertise that you would bring to this work?**

Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior, and He is the foundation of my life. I am interested in serving on the Committee on Appeals because such service would provide me with an opportunity to utilize my legal skills to serve the ELCA. I have practiced law for approximately thirty (30) years. During my career, I have held several positions which provided unique experiences; however, my work as both an assistant prosecuting attorney and as a criminal defense attorney provided me with an exceptional opportunity to hone my ability to see both sides of a position and develop a heightened sense of fairness. I always strive to make just decisions even in difficult situations and will continue to do so if selected to the Committee on Appeals. As a faithful Christian, I always pray that the Lord provides me with wisdom and discernment when making important decisions.

**If you identify as a member of one of the historically underrepresented groups, we invite you to share how you might offer a useful perspective to leadership in this church.**

**Reference:** Tony Setley **Phone:**6812096192 **E-mail:**pastor@stpaulmorgantown.org **Relationship:** Pastor

9/25/2025 5:03:56 PM

## Synod Constitutions

### CC ACTION [EN BLOC]

#### Recommended:

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

- S9.04** The bishop shall be elected by the Synod Assembly from among those nominated in the following manner:
- Each cluster may submit up to three names of those whom they wish to nominate for the office of bishop and shall submit written vitae for each nominee, said vitae to adhere to a format established by the elections committee; names of said nominees and their vitae shall then be published in the voting members' pre-assembly packet. Nomination for bishop may be made from the floor if there are fewer than 2 candidates for the first ballot. Candidates nominated from the floor of the Assembly must make their vitae available to the Synod Secretary at a time determined by the Assembly, and before votes are cast for the first ballot.
  - Three fourths of the votes cast shall be necessary for election on the first ballot.
  - The second ballot shall be limited to the seven persons (plus any ties in the seventh position) who received the greatest number of votes on the first ballot, and two thirds of the votes cast shall be necessary for election.
  - The third ballot shall be limited to the three persons (plus any ties in the third position) who received the greatest number of votes on the second ballot, and 60 percent of the votes cast shall be necessary for election.
  - Prior to the casting of the third ballot, the three or more persons to appear on the ballot, if they are present, shall be invited to address the Assembly.
  - On subsequent ballots a majority of the votes cast shall be necessary for election. These ballots shall be limited to the two persons (plus any ties for the second position) who receive the greatest number of votes on the previous ballot.
- 

### CC ACTION [EN BLOC]

#### Recommended:

To ratify the following amendment to the constitution of the Northeastern Iowa Synod (5F):

- S14.15.** Each rostered minister of Word and Sacrament on the roster of this synod shall submit a report of ministry to the bishop of the synod by March 1 of each year ~~at least 90 days prior to each regular meeting of the Synod Assembly.~~
- S14.34.** Each minister of Word and Service on the roster of this synod shall submit a report of ministry to the bishop of the synod at least 90 days prior to each regular meeting of the Synod Assembly annually by March 1.
- 

### CC ACTION [EN BLOC]

#### Recommended:

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

- S8.42.** The Treasurer shall provide and be accountable for:
- ....
- Rendering at each regular meeting of the Synod Assembly a full, detailed, and duly audited report of receipts and disbursements in the several accounts of this synod for the year prior to the preceding fiscal year, together with the tabulation, for record and publication in the minutes, of the contributions from the congregations; and
-

**CC ACTION [EN BLOC]**

**Recommended:**

**To ratify the following amendment to the constitution of the Upstate New York Synod (7D):**

- S10.06.** If a member of the Synod Council ceases to meet the requirements of the position to which ~~she or he~~ **he the member** was elected the office filled by such member shall at once become vacant. If a member of the Synod Council resigns or is absent from three successive regular meetings of the Synod Council without cause, the office filled by such a member shall at once become vacant. The person filling such vacancy shall be elected by the Synod Council upon nomination by the conference whose seat is vacant to complete the unexpired term of the predecessor member.
- S10.07.** Conferences shall nominate for election by the Synod Assembly lay members and **rostered** ~~of Word and Sacrament~~ ministers to the Synod Council for four (4) year terms in accordance with the bylaws.
- S12.04.** Conferences shall elect for their presiding officer a **rostered** minister ~~of Word and Sacrament or a Minister of Word and Service~~ from the conference and in good standing on the ELCA Roster as their dean. The dean represents the synod bishop in the conference. The term of office of the dean shall be four (4) years. The dean shall serve no more than two (2) consecutive terms.

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**CC ACTION [EN BLOC]**

**Recommended:**

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

- †S12.1.** The seal of this synod is **a world with a cross segmenting the globe in the center of the seal with the words METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON, D.C. SYNOD ELCA circling the outer edge of the seal a cross with three united flames emanating from the base of the cross and three entwined circles beside the cross. The name of this synod and the year of its constituting convention form the circular outer edge of the seal.**

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**Notification of the Church Council of Synods Reporting Adoption of  
2022 Churchwide Assembly Amendments to Recommended Provisions in Accord with †S18.12.**

<b>Synod:</b>	<b>Amendments Adopted:*</b>
South-Central Synod of Wisconsin (5K)	All
Upper Susquehanna Synod (8E)	All except S7.14., S7.27., and S8.42.f.
Florida-Bahamas Synod (9E)	All except S7.14., S7.27., and S11.10. [S7.21.1. was adopted prior to 2025]

\* Amendments to recommended provisions and bylaw in the *Constitution for Synods* are provided on the following page.

**Amendments to Recommended Provisions of the *Constitution for Synods*  
Approved by the 2022 Churchwide Assembly**

- S7.14. ~~One-half~~ **One-third** of the members of the Synod Assembly shall constitute a quorum.
- †S7.21.01.** Voting members shall begin serving with the opening of a regular Synod Assembly and shall continue serving until ~~voting members are seated at the opening of~~ the next regular Synod Assembly.
- S7.22. This synod may establish processes that permit retired rostered ministers, or those granted disability status, or on leave from call, on the roster of the synod to serve as voting members of the Synod Assembly, **provided that such processes not result in fewer than 60% of the voting members of the Synod Assembly being laypersons in contravention of consistent with** †S7.21.e. If the synod does not establish processes to permit the rostered ministers specified above to serve as voting members, they shall have voice but not vote in the meetings of the Synod Assembly.
- S7.24. Ministers under call on the rosters of this synod shall remain as members of the Synod Assembly so long as they remain under call and so long as their names appear on the rosters of this synod. Lay members of the Synod Assembly representing congregations shall continue as such until **the opening of the next regular synod assembly, or unless** replaced by the election of new members **for a special synod assembly,** or until they have been disqualified by termination of **congregation** membership. **Normally, congregations will hold elections prior to each regular meeting of the Synod Assembly.**
- S7.26. This synod may establish processes through the Synod Council that permit **lay** representatives of authorized worshiping communities of the synod, which have been authorized under ELCA bylaw 10.01.04., to serve as voting members of the Synod Assembly, consistent with †S7.21.
- S7.27. This synod may establish processes through the Synod Council to grant a minister of Word and Sacrament from a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by the Churchwide Assembly **of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America** the privilege of both voice and vote in the Synod Assembly during the period of that minister's service in a congregation of this church.
- S8.42. The treasurer shall provide and be accountable for:  
[...]  
c. Receipt and acknowledgment of offerings, contributions, and bequests made to this synod, collecting interest and income from its invested funds, and paying regular appropriations and orders on the several accounts as approved and directed by the Synod Council. The treasurer shall transmit each month to the treasurer of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America the funds received by this synod for the general work of this church **as well as any funds to support restricted programs of this church.**  
[...]  
f. **Obtaining a fidelity bond in the amount determined by the Synod Council for persons handling synod funds, which bond shall be in the custody of the secretary. The premium for the bond shall be paid by this synod. Fidelity coverage provided by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America shall be deemed a fulfillment of this requirement.**

**S.11.10. — General Provisions**

- S14.13. The pastor (a) shall keep accurate **parochial** records of all baptisms, confirmations, marriages, burials, communicants, members received, members dismissed, or members excluded from the congregation, (b) shall submit a summary of such statistics annually to this synod, and (c) shall become a member of the congregation upon receipt and acceptance of the letter of call. In a parish of multiple congregations, the pastor shall hold membership in one of the congregations.
- S14.15. Each minister of Word and Sacrament on the roster of this synod shall submit a report of **his or her** ministry to the bishop of the synod at least 90 days prior to each regular meeting of the Synod Assembly.
- S14.34. Each minister of Word and Service on the roster of this synod shall submit a report of **his or her** ministry to the bishop of the synod at least 90 days prior to each regular meeting of the Synod Assembly.

## Responses to Churchwide Assembly Actions

### 1. Reconsideration of the Social Message on End-of-Life Decisions

*Churchwide Assembly Action [CA25.01.06y]*

To receive with gratitude the memorial on “Reconsideration of the Social Message on End-of-Life Decisions” from the Saint Paul Area Synod;

To forward this memorial to the ELCA Church Council, acting in consultation with the Theological Discernment staff of the Office of the Presiding Bishop, as the appropriate body to authorize a reconsideration; and

To identify the section titled “Physician-Assisted Death” for a substantive reconsideration in light of legal, medical, and social changes in end-of-life care and medical assistance in dying. While focused on that section, other references connected to that topic in the social message could be reconsidered.

*Response from Office of the Presiding Bishop, Theological Ethics (October 2025)*

The concern for development or reconsideration of a social message (like “End-of-life Decisions”) is expressed by the Churchwide Assembly (CWA) as a request. As the next step, the Director of Theological Ethics will consult with leadership groups, such as a committee of the Conference of Bishops, to assess and provide recommendations to Church Council (CC) about the timing and kind of development process, in consideration of other pending requests and in consultation with stakeholders. CC makes those decisions in their role of oversight of the ELCA.

Due to limited staff capacity (and church capacity), social teaching development is managed carefully. The current practice is to develop or reconsider one social message per year, alongside one social statement development (a five-year process.) Current projects for 2026 include:

- Reconsideration of the social statement on *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*;
- Development of study materials related to a social message on Child Protection;
- Development of study materials related to the new social statement on *Faith and Civic Life: Seeking the Well-being of All* (2025); and
- Follow-up work related to 2025 CWA actions, including Motion J (Resolution on AI in the Church).

There is capacity (both of staff and of the church, which participates through communal discernment) to act on *one* request in 2026. This request for a reconsideration of “End-of-life Decisions” is now to be evaluated along with two other pending requests:

- Development of a new social message on confronting white supremacy; and
- Reconsideration of the social message on “Homelessness.”

There is no financial cost for evaluation of a social message request. Development or reconsideration of a social message generally costs \$10,000-12,000. This includes hiring a contract writer, research-related expenses, data analysis, translation, and printing.

The Director of Theological Ethics will bring to the November 2025 CC meeting a recommendation about which of the pending requests should be authorized for 2026. The request for reconsideration of “End-of-Life Decisions” will either be accepted and authorized for 2026 or will remain in the pool of requests for future evaluation. If this request is left as pending, Theological Discernment will maintain a list of individuals who have expressed interest in aiding the process as consultants and of individuals whose expertise is a significant gift to the church’s discernment of this social teaching.

### **CC ACTION** [EN BLOC]

#### **Recommended:**

**To receive the timeline on “Reconsideration of the Social Message on End-of-Life Decisions” from the Office of the Presiding Bishop;**

**To anticipate a recommendation for which social message will be authorized for 2026 at the November 2025 Church Council meeting; and**

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

## 2. Review of ELCA Investments and Procurement

*Churchwide Assembly Action [CA25.01.06i]*

To reaffirm this church's commitment to using the tools of corporate social responsibility to call corporations to treat people fairly and with dignity and create sustainable communities through the screening of social purpose funds through social criteria investment screen; and

To direct the Service and Justice unit and ELCA Corporate Social Responsibility Review Team to provide guidance in regard to current concerns and advice on best practices to encourage responsible and just corporate behavior and provide to the ELCA Church Council a summary of findings and options for action.

*Response from Service and Justice unit, Corporate Social Responsibility Review Team (October 2025)*

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in the ELCA uses the tools of screening of investments, shareholder advocacy and community investing to work with corporations, calling them to ensure that people are treated fairly and with dignity and to create sustainable communities. The CSR program is guided by staff in the ELCA's Service and Justice unit and a team of advisors with experience in CSR or expertise in the topic at hand. The team meets regularly to discuss drafts of documents and possible topics for CSR work. The ELCA Constitution places CSR oversight with the Church Council, which "may direct the churchwide organization to exercise the corporate social responsibility of this church by filing shareholder resolutions, casting proxy ballots, and taking other actions as it deems appropriate" (14.21.14).

ELCA CSR staff consults the CSR Review Team regularly on the topics of screening, shareholder advocacy and boycotts, with the goal of supporting Portico Benefit Services in its endeavor to encourage responsible corporate behavior.

ELCA CSR does not determine procurement on the part of the ELCA, however, CSR has cooperated with ELCA IT on its AI policies, and IT has consulted with CSR on its buying guides.

At the October 2025 and the January 2026 meetings of the CSR Review Team, the group will consider whether additional resources are needed to fulfill this directive from the Churchwide Assembly and report back to the Church Council in the spring of 2026.

Additional costs, if any, would be related to any resources recommended by the CSR Review Team, or would be related to publicizing of current resources such as the shareholder advocacy issue papers and ELCA consumer purchasing guides.

### **CC ACTION** *[EN BLOC]*

#### **Recommended:**

**To receive the timeline on "Review of ELCA Investments and Procurement" from the Service and Justice unit and to anticipate a response at the Spring 2026 Church Council meeting; and  
To request that the secretary inform the synod of this action.**

## 3. Indian Boarding School Remembrance

*Churchwide Assembly Action [CA25.01.07]*

- Observe the National Day of Remembrance for Indian Boarding Schools annually on or near September 30;
- Urge Augsburg Fortress and the Service and Justice unit, in consultation with other appropriate churchwide organization home areas, to create adult and children/youth educational programs and materials concerning Christian and Lutheran roles in Indian boarding schools to broaden and deepen awareness at congregations, synods, and ministries affiliated with or related to the ELCA; and to consistently publish articles in all of this church's publications;
- Locate all known records related to the ELCA's predecessor bodies' involvement with Indian boarding and day schools and to educate others about Indian boarding schools;

- Encourage ministries affiliated with or related to the ELCA to commit to learning the truth of their involvement with Indian boarding schools, in partnership with the ELCA Truth-Seeking and Truth-Telling Initiative and to responsibly create paths to healing and repair;
- Organize and care for all information in the ELCA's possession that was recorded about Indian boarding and day schools and the students who attended them, forcibly or otherwise; carry out this work in partnership with the ELCA Truth-Seeking and Truth-Telling Initiative and the ELCA Archives;
- Recognize that this information belongs to and is a source of healing for student survivors, their descendants, communities, and Tribal Nations;
- Ensure that the records and research are made accessible to Indian boarding school survivors and their families in a responsible manner;
- Identify the revenue source(s) to sufficiently support research and organizing efforts, and to sufficiently support digitization and labeling of all Indian boarding school records in the Archives.

*Response from Service and Justice unit (October 2025)*

1. *Observe the National Day of Remembrance for Indian Boarding Schools annually on or near September 30;*

- The ELCA churchwide organization has worked to observe the National Day of Remembrance for Indian Boarding Schools every year since 2021. This has been done at the encouragement and guidance of ELCA Indigenous Ministries and Tribal Relations in partnership with ELCA Strategic Communications and has been accomplished through *Living Lutheran*, sharing information with synod communicators for their sharing with their audiences/congregations, and social media posts.
- The communication produced is educational and promotes observing the National Day by wearing orange shirts and encouraging personal social media posting.
- It is the hope of the Truth-Seeking and Truth-Telling Initiative (TSTTI) that all ELCA units, teams, council, committees, and expressions participate in the observance by promoting participation, sharing educational materials, and wearing orange.
- These are continual actions.

2. *Urge Augsburg Fortress and the Service and Justice unit, in consultation with other appropriate churchwide organization home areas, to create adult and children/youth educational programs and materials concerning Christian and Lutheran roles in Indian boarding schools to broaden and deepen awareness at congregations, synods, and ministries affiliated with or related to the ELCA; and to consistently publish articles in all of this church's publications;*

- Deadline for first round of materials will be May 2026 to begin deeper education before the National Day of Remembrance for Indian Boarding Schools in 2026.
- Continued publishing of articles will prayerfully happen leading up to National Day of Remembrance for Indian Boarding Schools in September 2026.

3. *Locate all known records related to the ELCA's predecessor bodies' involvement with Indian boarding and day schools and to educate others about Indian boarding schools;*

- This work has begun by the TSTTI and records from the Bethany Indian Mission/boarding school Wittenberg, Wisconsin, have been catalogued and relocated from Region 3 archives to the ELCA Archives where they are being scanned, cared for, and organized digitally.
- This work is continual and research on additional boarding and day schools is being performed by TSTTI.



4. *Encourage ministries affiliated with or related to the ELCA to commit to learning the truth of their involvement with Indian boarding schools, in partnership with the ELCA Truth-Seeking and Truth-Telling Initiative and to responsibly create paths to healing and repair;*
  - Potential deadline for encouraging affiliate ministries is April 1, 2026.
5. *Organize and care for all information in the ELCA's possession that was recorded about Indian boarding and day schools and the students who attended them, forcibly or otherwise; carry out this work in partnership with the ELCA Truth-Seeking and Truth-Telling Initiative and the ELCA Archives;*
  - The partnership between the TSTTI and ELCA Archives is a strong one. The support offered by ELCA Archives has been tremendous.
  - This work and partnership are continual and long term.
6. *Recognize that this information belongs to and is a source of healing for student survivors, their descendants, communities, and Tribal Nations;*
7. *Ensure that the records and research are made accessible to Indian boarding school survivors and their families in a responsible manner;*
  - The TSTTI and ELCA Archives will work to ensure any records located will be cared for and shared appropriately.
8. *Identify the revenue source(s) to sufficiently support research and organizing efforts, and to sufficiently support digitization and labeling of all Indian boarding school records in the Archives.*
  - BUDGET IMPLICATION – The work of the TSTTI for the past four years has been performed by lay and clergy volunteers. Funding to support the work related to continued organizing, professional research, educational materials and programs, ELCA Archives needs to care for and digitize records. These are only initial needs with further development to be considered. An initial proposed amount is \$25,000 for FY2026.
  - BUDGET IMPLICATION – The ELCA Archives does not have extra funds to complete the digitization of 12 large-sized ledger books, 5 large-sized photographs, and 6 reels of 16mm motion picture film.

Estimated digitization costs:

2,538 pages to digitize with estimated price/page range of \$1.75/page – \$2.75/page = \$4,441.50 -- \$6979.50\*

6 reels (3-inch diameter) of 16mm film, vendor cost estimate = \$1348.50

5 oversized photographs at \$6/photograph = \$30\*

Total estimated cost: \$5820 -- \$8358

Total estimated cost including 10% contingency ≈ \$6402.00 – \$9194.00

\*Cost is an approximation and is not based on official estimates obtained from 3<sup>rd</sup> party vendors. Actual costs may be higher depending on quote from 3<sup>rd</sup> party vendor, the final page count, condition of materials, any special treatment records might need (e.g., special handling or repair).

Timeline:

- April 2026: As work directed is continual and prayerfully lasting, updates related to each resolve can be made to Church Council.
- April 2026: ELCA Archives will be able to provide Church Council an update on the digitization of the records of the Bethany Indian Mission.

- November 2026: As work directed is continual and prayerfully lasting, updates related to each resolved can be made to Church Council.
- November 2026: ELCA Archives will be able to provide Church Council an update on the metadata (labeling) of the digitized Bethany Indian Mission collection.
- November 2026: ELCA Archives will be able to provide Church Council an update on locating any records in the ELCA Archives related to ELCA predecessor church bodies' involvement with Indian boarding and day schools.

**CC ACTION** *[EN BLOC]*

**Recommended:**

**To receive the response and timeline on “Indian Boarding School Remembrance” from the Service and Justice unit;**

**To request progress reports be provided to the Service and Justice Committee and to anticipate a final response at the Spring 2027 Church Council meeting; and**

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

**4. Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW)**

*Churchwide Assembly Action [CA25.01.06c]*

- Direct the churchwide organization to address the MMIW crisis by the following: Encourage congregations, synods and the churchwide organization to observe annually MMIW Awareness Day on May 5 and to promote the wearing of red to raise awareness of MMIW;
- Strengthen education by urging Augsburg Fortress, the ELCA World Hunger Education and Network's team, and ELCA Service and Justice unit staff to work together to develop educational resources about the prevalence and origins of this crisis;
- Increase awareness by requesting the ELCA Strategic Communications team to promote participation in educational opportunities and advocacy opportunities for missing and murdered Indigenous women;
- Lament and repent by urging Augsburg Fortress and the ELCA worship team to work together to provide worship resources to include prayers of repentance and intercession for congregation and synod use;
- Plan a public service at the 2028 CWA of lament and repentance that leads to further actions toward healing people;
- Advance partnership by requesting the ELCA Service and Justice unit staff to collaborate with governmental, ecclesiastical, and non-profit organizations to increase public awareness and provide concrete ways for congregations to support affected families through prayer, search efforts, and appropriate outreach; and
- Advance advocacy by requesting the ELCA Witness in Society team to support legislation at state, local, and national levels addressing MMIW.

*Response from Service and Justice unit (October 2025)*

1. *Direct the churchwide organization to address the MMIW crisis by the following: Encourage congregations, synods and the churchwide organization to observe annually MMIW Awareness Day on May 5 and to promote the wearing of red to raise awareness of MMIW;*
  - Suggested deadline for churchwide organization leadership to encourage observance is Lent 2026. Lent having been the most recent period promotion previously.
2. *Strengthen education by urging Augsburg Fortress, the ELCA World Hunger Education and Network's team, and ELCA Service and Justice unit staff to work together to develop educational resources about the prevalence and origins of this crisis;*

- This work is continual and suggested deadline for gathering the Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery's Sub-Task Force on MMIW with appropriate churchwide organization staff is January 31, 2026.
3. *Increase awareness by requesting the ELCA Strategic Communications team to promote participation in educational opportunities and advocacy opportunities for missing and murdered Indigenous women;*
    - ELCA Strategic Communications has actively worked to increase awareness and participation over the last 3 years, and this work will be continual.
  4. *Lament and repent by urging Augsburg Fortress and the ELCA worship team to work together to provide worship resources to include prayers of repentance and intercession for congregation and synod use;*
    - Suggested deadline for gathering appropriate staff and partners is January 31, 2026.
  5. *Plan a public service at the 2028 CWA of lament and repentance that leads to further actions toward healing people;*
    - Planning for public service will begin in 2026 as the Churchwide Assembly Planning Team begins to plan for the 2028 Churchwide Assembly by the ELCA Worship team and partners.
  6. *Advance partnership by requesting the ELCA Service and Justice unit staff to collaborate with governmental, ecclesiastical, and non-profit organizations to increase public awareness and provide concrete ways for congregations to support affected families through prayer, search efforts, and appropriate outreach;*
    - This work is continual and suggested deadline for gathering the Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery's Sub-Task Force on MMIW with appropriate unit staff is January 31, 2026. The MMIW Sub-Task Force already meets regularly.
  7. *Advance advocacy by requesting the ELCA Witness in Society team to support legislation at state, local, and national levels addressing MMIW.*
    - Work is continual.

Timeline:

- April 2026: Report to Church Council related to promotion of May 5<sup>th</sup> MMIW Awareness Day; initial gathering of MMIW Sub-Task Force and appropriate churchwide staff; promotional and publishing opportunities by Strategic Communications; gathering of ELCA Worship, Augsburg Fortress, and appropriate churchwide staff and their initial discussions on worship resources; MMIW Sub-Task Force and unit staff's related to support of families and appropriate outreach.
- November 2027: Report to Church Council by CWA Planning Team on 2028 Churchwide Assembly and service of lament and repentance.

**CC ACTION** [EN BLOC]

**Recommended:**

**To receive the response and timeline on “Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women” from the Service and Justice unit;**

**To request progress reports be provided to the Service and Justice Committee and to anticipate a final response at the November 2027 Church Council meeting; and**  
**To request that the secretary inform the synods of this action.**

## **5. Youth Gathering DEIA**

*Churchwide Assembly Action [CA25.01.06d]*

To reaffirm the commitment of the ELCA Youth Gathering team to continue and expand DEIA-centered trainings, resources, policies, procedures, and structures for the gathering staff, volunteers, and participant leaders;

To affirm the desire for a Rapid Response team for the 2027 ELCA Youth Gathering in partnership with the Minneapolis Area Synod and led by the ELCA director for racial justice, so that it will be replicated at all ELCA Youth Gatherings beyond 2027; and

To request the ELCA Youth Gathering team explore options to implement a racial equity audit for the Youth Gathering that would address barriers for participation with the goal of increasing and strengthening the leadership of the youth participants with persons of color and intersecting identities.

*Response from Christian Community and Leadership unit, Youth Gathering [October 2025]*

The Youth Gathering team in the Christian Community and Leadership unit provided the following:

### Timeline:

- **Fall 2025** – Gathering Staff and Senior Director for Discipleship and Inclusive Communities will host an initial conversation with churchwide staff, particularly the Director for Racial Justice, Senior Director for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Executive for Theological Discernment, Coordinator for Disability Ministries, Coordinator for Deaf Ministries, and the colleagues and Director of Ministries of Diverse Cultures and Communities to discuss expand *DEIA-centered trainings, resources, policies, procedures, and structures* for the gathering staff, teams, volunteers, participants, and leaders and form a task force. This group will also discuss options to implement, and the costs associated with a *racial equity audit* for the Youth Gathering.
- **Fall 2025** – Gathering Staff, the Worship and Chaplain Team Leader, and the Operations Team Leader will host an initial conversation with Minneapolis Area Synod staff to discuss a *Rapid Response team for the 2027 ELCA Youth Gathering* and create a task force.
- **Spring 2026** – The Youth Gathering DEIA task force will determine and recommend *DEIA-centered trainings, resources, policies, procedures, and structures* for the gathering staff, teams, volunteers, participants, and leaders. This group will also determine next steps regarding a *racial equity audit* for the Youth Gathering.
- **Spring 2026** – The *Rapid Response task force for the 2027 ELCA Youth Gathering* will develop training and recruit chaplains.
- **Summer/Fall 2026** – The Youth Gathering DEIA task force will create and implement *DEIA-centered trainings, resources, policies, procedures, and structures* for the gathering staff, teams, volunteers, participants, and leaders.
- **Summer/Fall 2026** – The *Rapid Response task force for the 2027 ELCA Youth Gathering* in partnership with the Youth Gathering Worship & Chaplain Team Leader will train chaplains.
- **Spring 2027** – The Youth Gathering DEIA task force will launch *DEIA-centered trainings, resources, policies, procedures, and structures* for the gathering staff, volunteers, participants, and leaders to be completed before June 2027.

- **Summer 2027** – The *Rapid Response task force for the 2027 ELCA Youth Gathering* will work with all Youth Gathering teams to provide care and support before, during and after the event.

**DEIA-centered trainings, resources, policies, procedures, and structures**

*\* These prices are an estimate and will be firmed in Spring 2026.*

Item	Estimated Cost
Gathering Staff & Team Leader Training	\$3,000
Spanish Language Translation <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Printed materials</li><li>• Closed captions for videos</li></ul>	\$7,000
Video Production	\$6,000
Resource Design	\$5,000
Content Writers	\$10,000
Participant Onsite DEIA Workshop	\$20,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$51,000</b>

**Rapid Response Task Force**

Item	Estimated Cost
In-Person Meeting	\$3,000
Chaplain–Rapid Response Team Training <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Flights (\$500 per person @ 3 people)</li><li>• Housing (1 nights @ \$215 per room @ 3 rooms)</li><li>• Meals (2 days @ \$75 per person @ 10 people)</li><li>• Misc. Travel Expenses</li></ul>	\$10,000
Rapid Response Team Onsite Expense <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Housing (6 nights @ \$215 per room @ 6 rooms)</li><li>• Meals (7 days @ \$75 per person @ 6 people)</li><li>• Misc. Travel Expenses</li></ul>	\$12,000
Onsite Rapid Response Call Center <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increase Zendesk Users</li><li>• IT equipment</li><li>• Space in Convention Center</li></ul>	\$5,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$25,000</b>

**Racial Equity Audit**

Item	Estimated Cost
Racial Equity Audit	unsure
In-Person Meeting	\$3,000
Implementing Racial Equity Audit	unsure
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$</b>

**CC ACTION** [EN BLOC]

**Recommended:**

**To receive the response and timeline on “Youth Gathering DEIA” from the Christian Community and Leadership unit;**

**To request progress reports be provided to the Christian Community and Leadership Committee and to anticipate a final response at the November 2027 Church Council meeting; and**

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

**6. Interpretation for ELCA Churchwide Assembly and Youth Gathering**

*Churchwide Assembly Action [CA25.01.06]*

To encourage use of local interpreters at Churchwide Assemblies and Youth Gatherings;

To direct the planning teams of the Churchwide Assembly and Youth Gathering to commit to investigating and finding the most responsible means to provide translation and interpretation services.

*Response from Christian Community and Leadership unit, Youth Gathering (October 2025)*

The Youth Gathering team in the Christian Community and Leadership unit provided the following:

Timeline:

- **Spring 2026** – In partnership, the Gathering Staff, Senior Director for Discipleship and Inclusive Communities, Coordinator for Deaf Ministries, the colleagues and Director of Ministries of Diverse Cultures and Communities, the Secretary and their staff will host an initial conversation to discuss investigating and finding the most responsible means to provide translation and interpretation services.
- **Fall 2026** – The Gathering Staff, Senior Director for Discipleship and Inclusive Communities, Coordinator for Deaf Ministries, the colleagues and Director of Ministries of Diverse Cultures and Communities will determine and recommend translation and interpretation services best suited for the Youth Gathering as it relates to print materials and simultaneous interpretation.
- **Spring-Summer 2027** – The Gathering Staff and teams will implement throughout the cycle Spanish translation for printed materials such as core materials, curriculums, logos, and theme design and will strive to provide Spanish translation for on-site materials within the limited deadlines for the printing and production companies. The Gathering Staff and teams will implement a plan to hire simultaneous Spanish and ASL interpreters for core program components such as Mass Gathering, MYLE programs, and worship.

### Translation and Interpretation Services for Youth Gathering

*\* These prices are an estimate and will be firmed in Spring 2026.*

Item	Estimated Cost
Spanish Translation <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 1,000+ pages @ \$20 per page</li><li>• 600+ signs @ \$20 per page</li></ul>	\$32,000
ASL Interpretation – \$500 per day @ 7 days @ 6 people <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Honorarium</li><li>• Meals</li><li>• Travel</li><li>• Hotel</li></ul>	\$21,000
Spanish Interpretation – \$400 per day @ 7 days @ 6 people <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Honorarium</li><li>• Meals</li><li>• Travel</li><li>• Hotel</li></ul>	\$16,800
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$69,800</b>

The Churchwide Assembly Planning Team anticipates beginning the research work of investigating and finding the most responsible means to provide translation and interpretation services in late 2026.

The background information that was shared in the Report of the Memorials Committee for this memorial was, “CWA documents (900+ pages and 30+ event signs) can range from \$20 per hour to upwards of \$5 per minute. The estimate does not include the cost of additional design time and additional production costs if printing is involved, nor does it include any rush fees that might be needed to complete the work in a timely manner. Other factors that will increase costs are additional reviews for highly technical or theological documents. As a point of reference, The Episcopal Church provides reports to its General Convention, also known as the “Blue Book,” that cost approximately \$125,000 for translation....The cost for ASL interpretation services for a week-long event is approximately \$500 per day, per interpreter, plus travel, lodging, and meal expenses. The cost for Spanish interpretation for a week-long event is approximately \$10,000 for four interpreters, plus travel, lodging, and meal expenses.”

### **CC ACTION** [EN BLOC]

#### **Recommended:**

**To receive the response on “Interpretation for ELCA Churchwide Assembly and Youth Gathering” from the Christian Community and Leadership unit and the Office of the Secretary;**

**To commend the planning teams of the Churchwide Assembly and Youth Gathering in their ongoing efforts to provide translation and interpretation services at churchwide assemblies and youth gatherings; and**

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



## 7. Restoration of Funding of USAID

*Churchwide Assembly Action [CA25.01.06f]*

To direct the Witness in Society Advocacy Team to seek and promote occasions for timely and impactful advocacy on restoration of USAID, including opportunities for the presiding bishop to address this issue.

*Response from Service and Justice unit, Witness in Society (October 2025)*

The Trump administration's cuts to U.S. foreign assistance administered through USAID and the State Department has caused significant disruptions to humanitarian and development programs around the world. While USAID as an independent agency was dismantled, it still exists under the law. The remaining programs previously administered by USAID have been transferred to the Department of State, at significantly reduced capacity.

2025 ELCA advocacy priorities include restoration and support for humanitarian aid:

- Ensure that Congress appropriates and the executive branch distributes funds for lifesaving global health programs.
- Protect and strengthen foreign aid programs that reduce extreme poverty and hunger; enhance U.S. international food and nutrition programs authorized in the Farm Bill.
- Provide emergency support to countries facing natural disasters and humanitarian emergencies.

Since January, Witness in Society (WIS) staff have engaged in advocacy to push for restoration of terminated foreign aid programs and robust funding of these programs in the upcoming fiscal year (FY26), including:

- WIS staff engagement in regular meetings with congressional Republican and Democratic offices
- Leadership with interfaith partners to organize a September 2025 fly-in bringing global faith leaders to D.C. to meet with lawmakers to make the case for foreign aid. Witness in Society funded and supported two leaders, a pastor from Indiana and a companion partner from Guatemala, who actively participated in this advocacy opportunity.
- Partnership with an ELCA bishop to write and transmit a letter in support of foreign aid to her senators, one of whom is the Senate Majority Leader.
- Invitation and facilitation of an advocacy visit of a leader from global companion church in who met with key Republican and Democratic congressional offices to push for restoration of an HIV/AIDS program that was terminated.
- Activation of ELCA advocacy network at strategic policy moments through action alerts to ensure members of congress hear of their constituents' support of foreign aid programs.

Advocacy on this issue has led to some level of congressional pushbacks on the Administration, particularly in the Senate. ELCA advocacy efforts will continue, including identifying opportunities for the presiding bishop to speak. Funding for advocacy on foreign aid restoration comes from the Witness in Society budget.

### **CC ACTION** *[EN BLOC]*

#### **Recommended:**

**To receive the response on “Restoration of Funding of USAID” from the Service and Justice unit;**

**To commend the Witness in Society staff for their continued advocacy efforts to seek and promote occasions to restore terminated foreign aid programs and support robust funding for humanitarian aid; and**

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



## 8. Public Discourse about Palestine-Israel

*Churchwide Assembly Action [CA25.01.06cc]*

To commend the recommendation from the 2022-2023 Review Summary and Recommendations on Israel and Palestine document for formal review and update of the “Strategy for Engagement in Palestine and Israel” (2005) and to present a timeline for the consideration of the updated strategy, encouraging continued collaboration between ELCA Sumud and the Office of the Presiding Bishop; and

To direct the Office of the Presiding Bishop, in partnership with ELCA Sumud, to convene a consultation with representatives of the ELCA Conference of Bishops, Church Council, Palestinian partners from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, and other key stakeholders to discuss matters of language for addressing the injustice happening to the Palestinian people on the ground, and to report to the Church Council its findings and any recommendations.

*Response from Service and Justice (October 2025)*

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Team will form a committee to review, assess, and offer recommendations for the “Strategy for Engagement in Palestine and Israel” (2005) timeline.

Timeline:

- Committee formed by March 2026
- Review process completed and presented by end of 2026
- Final report to Church Council by March 2027

**CC ACTION** [EN BLOC]

**Recommended:**

**To receive the response on “Public Discourse about Palestine-Israel” from the Service and Justice unit;**

**To request progress reports be provided to the Service and Justice Committee and to anticipate a final response at the November 2027 Church Council meeting; and**

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

## 9. Stand for Palestinian Rights and End to Occupation of Palestine

*Churchwide Assembly Action [CA25.03.13]*

To direct the Office of the Presiding Bishop, in consultation with the Witness in Society Advocacy Team, to write to the President and Vice President of the United States, the Secretary of State, and the majority and minority leaders of the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives calling on the U.S. government:

- to recognize and work to end the genocide against the Palestinian people, to halt military assistance to Israel used to devastate Gaza, and to investigate the use of U.S. military aid to Israel to ensure compliance with U.S. and international human rights law;
- to redouble its efforts to end human rights violations in Gaza and the West Bank, focusing on the most egregious and ongoing violations, including: indiscriminate and disproportionate bombing of Gaza resulting in the deaths of tens of thousands of children, women and men; deprivation of adequate access to drinking water, food, medical care, and electricity; destruction of buildings—including hospitals, places of worship, homes, and schools—and the destruction of electricity, sewage and water infrastructure essential for survival; and, the detention of hostages and political prisoners;
- to recognize Palestine as a sovereign state, and support Palestine’s full membership in the United Nations, and

- to reject proposals to remove Palestinians from Gaza and the West Bank, to address the catastrophic living conditions that could force Palestinians to leave, and to work to end the rampant settler violence and vandalism against Palestinians in the West Bank;

*Response from Service and Justice unit (October 2025)*

The Witness in Society team will prioritize these focus points for public policy advocacy and action:

1. Write letter from the Presiding Bishop to the White House as instructed (completed, August 2025).
2. Opposing unrestricted military aid to Israel
3. U.N. Security Council Resolutions 242, 338, 1397, 1515, 2334
4. Upholding of Human Rights Law
5. U.S. government recognition of Palestinian Statehood in coordination with Lutheran Office for World Community (LOWC)
6. Protection of 1967 Borders and Territorial Integrity
7. Opposition to Settler Violence
8. Amplification of Palestinian Voices
9. Opposition to displacement/forcible transfer of Palestinians from Gaza and the West Bank
10. Continued support of financial security of Augusta Victoria Hospital
11. Review and consider the ELCA's interfaith advocacy relationships—especially within the Jewish community—that would ensure values alignment of partnerships with the ELCA's updated position on Israel-Palestine

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Team will engage these awareness focus points:

1. Education around U.N. Security Council Resolutions 242, 338, 1397, 1515, 2334
2. History and significance of international definitions of military occupation and genocide
3. Education around displacement and forcible transfer
4. Distinction between Jewish siblings and government of Israel
5. Palestinian sovereignty
6. ELCA partners in Palestine/Israel and what this relationship
7. Building relationship and shared understanding of Palestine-Israel context with WCC statement on Gaza as baseline

The MENA Team will engage these accompaniment focus points:

1. Amplification of Palestinian Voices
2. Meeting with ELCJHL stakeholders and ALAMEH to present resolution and hear feedback
3. Ensuring ongoing financial support to ELCJHL and local partners-March 2026

A final report to Church Council will be brought to its April 2026 meeting. There is no anticipated budgetary impact as the work will be done as part of existing staff portfolios.

**CC ACTION** *[EN BLOC]*

**Recommended:**

**To receive the response on “Stand for Palestinian Rights and End to Occupation of Palestine” from the Service and Justice unit;**

**To request a final response at the April 2026 Church Council meeting; and**

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

## Responses to Synod Actions

### I. ELCA Middle East Strategy Follow-Up

*Executive Committee Action [EC25.05.26b]*

*RESOLVED, that the New England Synod Council urge the Presiding Bishop of the ELCA to require the ELCA's Corporate Social Responsibility review team to provide a public written report to the ELCA on the actions taken to adhere to the intent of the 2016 resolution as it pertains to the ELCA Middle East Strategy.*

*Response from Office of the Presiding Bishop, Theological Ethics [October 2025]*

This action seems to refer to social policy resolution CA16.06.31 ("Justice for Holy Land through Responsible Investment"), adopted by the 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly:

"To direct the ELCA's Corporate Social Responsibility review team to develop a human rights social criteria investment screen based on the social teachings of this church and, in the case of Israel and Palestine, specifically based on the concerns raised in the ELCA Middle East Strategy."

The ELCA's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) develops investment screens and issue papers based on ELCA social teachings. These screens are developed in consultation with Portico, a separately incorporated ministry. The screens and issue papers are implemented by Portico through Social Purpose Funds and shareholder advocacy. This is done in consideration of Portico's legally-binding fiduciary duty to investors.

A public written report on actions related to the 2016 social policy resolution would require consultation with Portico and review of the implementation of the human rights investment screen, shareholder advocacy since 2018 (when the screen and an accompanying issue paper were approved), and corporate dialogues on these issues. This would also necessitate a review of the implementation of the human rights investment screen more recently, since a broadened human rights investment screen was approved in 2024 to include language that focuses on "egregious denials of human rights taking place in occupied or controlled territories."

Such a report could include the number of companies that were screened out of Social Purpose Funds, positive investments made in response to the 2016 social policy resolution and accompanying CSR resources, the number of shareholder resolutions filed by Portico, and the number of corporate dialogues Portico has participated in since 2016. Importantly, the report would be limited to information Portico can legally share about shareholder resolutions and dialogues.

Such a report would require time for information collection, consultation, and review, including review by legal counsel for both Portico and the ELCA. Because Portico is a separately incorporated ministry, collection of information would be a request rather than a directive, dependent on Portico's capacity. This report would require approximately 90-120 days to prepare from the date that the presiding bishop requires CSR to provide the report.

### **CC ACTION** [EN BLOC]

#### **Recommended:**

**To request that the presiding bishop consider directing the Corporate Social Responsibility Review Team to provide a public written report to the ELCA on the actions taken to adhere to the intent of the "Justice for Holy Land through Responsible Investment" social policy resolution [CA16.06.31] as it pertains to the ELCA Middle East Strategy;**

**To recognize that such a report would be limited to the information Portico Benefit Services can legally share about shareholder resolutions and dialogues and would require approximately 90-120 days to prepare from the date the presiding bishop requests such a report; and**

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

## ~~TOBACCO~~

~~AREA:~~ Tobacco

~~DOCUMENT TYPE:~~ Social Criteria Investment Screen

~~Approved~~

~~POINT IN PROCESS:~~ Transmission to Church Council

~~FORMAT DATE:~~ 9/15/2025

### ~~MARKER DATES:~~

~~APPROVED~~ by the ELCA Church Council – April 21-23, 1990

~~Updated~~~~UPDATED~~ by the Advisory Committee ~~on~~~~for~~ Corporate Social Responsibility –  
September 8, 2006

~~Approved~~~~APPROVED~~ by the ELCA Church Council – November 2007

~~Approved~~~~APPROVED~~ by the ELCA Church Council – November 12, 2012

~~Authority:~~ ~~UPDATED~~ by the Corporate Social Responsibility Review Team – September 5, 2019

~~APPROVED~~ by the ELCA Church Council – November 2019

~~UPDATED~~ by the Corporate Social Responsibility Review Team – June 10, 2025

~~APPROVAL PENDING~~ by Church Council, ~~Church PD 2025~~ [anticipated]

## ~~Tobacco~~

### ~~AUTHORITY~~

~~The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has laid out its concern for health in a social statement “Caring for Health: Our Shared Endeavor” [2003], acknowledging that health is central to our wellbeing, and caring for it is a matter of shared stewardship. Historically, predecessor church body statements have spoken specifically to the role of nicotine and tobacco products as some of the most widely used and misused potentially dangerous drugs (Chemical Comforters and Drug Dependency [ALC, 1972]).~~

### ~~Wording of the Screen:~~

#### ~~WORDING OF THE SCREEN~~

~~The ELCA recommends no investment in firms involved in the production or marketing of tobacco and tobacco-related products.~~

### ~~Definition of Problem:~~

#### ~~DEFINITION OF PROBLEM~~

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Tobacco is a product that even when used in moderation is addictive and harmful. As early as 1964 the U.S. Surgeon General reported on its dangers. The American Cancer Society has stated that non-smokers exposed to second-hand smoke absorb nicotine and other components just as smokers do. In addition, certain marketing practices, such as those aimed toward children, are particularly objectionable.

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~~The exponentially increasing popularity marketing of e-cigarettes, particularly among young people, presents new public health challenges. proved to be extraordinarily effective at getting young people to explore vaping, but the FDA's withdrawing authorization from selling flavored vapes and prohibiting their sale to minors has also made a significant difference in the rate of use. Despite these efforts, in 2024 E-cigarettes represented the most commonly used product by far among high school and middle school teens<sup>1</sup> and flavored vapes seem to be easily available.~~

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Although e-cigarettes (both with and without nicotine)<sup>1,2</sup> are presented by manufacturers as benign relative to combustibles, and an aid in smoking cessation, for youth they represent a gateway to ~~combustibles<sup>2</sup> combustibles<sup>3</sup>~~ and a delivery system for cannabinoids and other illicit drugs.<sup>3-4</sup>

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Recognizing that various investors will implement this along a continuum, for the purpose of this screen ~~the scope of tobacco~~ production and marketing might include: tobacco, cigars, e-cigarettes, chewing tobacco or smokeless tobacco as well as companies supplying key component elements to the tobacco industry (cigarette papers, flavorings, adhesives, electronic cigarettes) or the sale and marketing of tobacco-related products.

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#### Social policy and studies:

[Caring for Health: Our Shared Endeavor](#) [ELCA, 2003]

#### Historical Documents:

Health, Life, and Death: A Christian Perspective [ALC, 1977]

<sup>1</sup>~~<https://tobacco.ucsf.edu/even-non-nicotine-e-cigarettes-are-gateway-cigarettes-and-promote-youth-relapse>~~

<sup>2</sup>~~<https://e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov/documents/surgeon-generals-advisory-on-e-cigarette-use-among-youth-2018.pdf>~~

<sup>3</sup>~~[https://e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov/documents/2016\\_SGR\\_Full\\_Report\\_508.pdf](https://e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov/documents/2016_SGR_Full_Report_508.pdf)~~  
~~p 58 Because of their design, e-cigarettes may facilitate drug use among youth and young adults, as these products can be used as a delivery system for cannabinoids and other illicit drugs (Giroud et al. 2015; Morean et al. 2015; Schauer et al. 2016).~~

Chemical Comforters and Drug Dependency [ALC, 1972]

IMPLEMENTATION OF SCREENS

Social criteria investment screens do not constitute binding mandates or provide, for example, specific lists of corporations. It is the responsibility of the ELCA, every ELCA-related organization and individual Lutherans to develop and manage a prudent and responsible investment portfolio. The ELCA social criteria investment screens offer a context for decision-making about socially responsible investments.

SOCIAL POLICY AND STUDIES

*Caring for Health: Our Shared Endeavor* [ELCA, 2003]

HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS

Health, Life, and Death: A Christian Perspective [ALC, 1977]

Chemical Comforters and Drug Dependency [ALC, 1972]

ENDNOTES

1. <https://www.fda.gov/tobacco-products/youth-and-tobacco/results-annual-national-youth-tobacco-survey>
2. <https://tobacco.ucsf.edu/even-non-nicotine-e-cigarettes-are-gateway-cigarettes-and-promote-youth-relapse>
3. <https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/e-cigarettes/youth.html>
4. [https://e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov/documents/2016\\_SGR\\_Full\\_Report\\_508.pdf](https://e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov/documents/2016_SGR_Full_Report_508.pdf) p 58.  
Because of their design, e-cigarettes may facilitate drug use among youth and young

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1 AREA: Tobacco  
2 DOCUMENT TYPE: Social Criteria Investment Screen  
3  
4 POINT IN PROCESS: Transmission to Church Council  
5 FORMAT DATE: 9/15/2025  
6

7 MARKER DATES:

8 APPROVED by the ELCA Church Council – April 21-23, 1990  
9 UPDATED by the Advisory Committee for Corporate Social Responsibility – September 8, 2006  
10 APPROVED by the ELCA Church Council – November 2007  
11 APPROVED by the ELCA Church Council – November 12, 2012  
12 UPDATED by the Corporate Social Responsibility Review Team – September 5, 2019  
13 APPROVED by the ELCA Church Council – November 2019  
14 UPDATED by the Corporate Social Responsibility Review Team – June 10, 2025  
15 APPROVAL PENDING by Church Council, Month DD, 2025 [anticipated]  
16

17 Tobacco  
18

19 AUTHORITY  
20

21 The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has laid out its concern for health in a social  
22 statement “Caring for Health: Our Shared Endeavor” [2003], acknowledging that health is central to our  
23 wellbeing, and caring for it is a matter of shared stewardship. Historically, predecessor church body  
24 statements have spoken specifically to the role of nicotine and tobacco products as some of the most  
25 widely used and misused potentially dangerous drugs (Chemical Comforters and Drug Dependency  
26 [ALC, 1972]).  
27  
28

29 WORDING OF THE SCREEN  
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31 The ELCA recommends no investment in firms involved in the production or marketing of tobacco and  
32 tobacco-related products.  
33  
34

35 DEFINITION OF PROBLEM  
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37 Tobacco is a product that even when used in moderation is addictive and harmful. As early as 1964 the  
38 U.S. Surgeon General reported on its dangers. The American Cancer Society has stated that non-smokers  
39 exposed to second-hand smoke absorb nicotine and other components just as smokers do. In addition,  
40 certain marketing practices, such as those aimed toward children, are particularly objectionable.  
41 The marketing of e-cigarettes using flavors appealing to young people proved to be extraordinarily  
42 effective at getting young people to explore vaping, but the FDA’s withdrawing authorization from  
43 selling flavored vapes and prohibiting their sale to minors has also made a significant difference in the  
44 rate of use. Despite these efforts, in 2024 E-cigarettes represented the most commonly used product by far  
45 among high school and middle school teens<sup>1</sup> and flavored vapes seem to be easily available.  
46

47 Although e-cigarettes (both with and without nicotine)<sup>2</sup> are presented by manufacturers as benign relative  
48 to combustibles, and an aid in smoking cessation, for youth they represent a gateway to combustibles<sup>3</sup> and  
49 a delivery system for cannabinoids and other illicit drugs.<sup>4</sup>



Recognizing that various investors will implement this along a continuum, for the purpose of this screen the scope of tobacco production and marketing might include: tobacco, cigars, e-cigarettes, chewing tobacco or smokeless tobacco as well as companies supplying key component elements to the tobacco industry (cigarette papers, flavorings, adhesives, electronic cigarettes) or the sale and marketing of tobacco-related products.

## IMPLEMENTATION OF SCREENS

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## SOCIAL POLICY AND STUDIES

*[Caring for Health: Our Shared Endeavor](#)* [ELCA, 2003]

## HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS

Health, Life, and Death: A Christian Perspective [ALC, 1977]

Chemical Comforters and Drug Dependency [ALC, 1972]

## ENDNOTES

1. <https://www.fda.gov/tobacco-products/youth-and-tobacco/results-annual-national-youth-tobacco-survey>
2. <https://tobacco.ucsf.edu/even-non-nicotine-e-cigarettes-are-gateway-cigarettes-and-promote-youth-relapse>
3. <https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/e-cigarettes/youth.html>
4. [https://e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov/documents/2016\\_SGR\\_Full\\_Report\\_508.pdf](https://e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov/documents/2016_SGR_Full_Report_508.pdf) p 58  
Because of their design, e-cigarettes may facilitate drug use among youth and young

AREA: Alcohol

DOCUMENT TYPE: Social Criteria Investment Screen

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POINT IN PROCESS: Transmission to Church Council

FORMAT DATE: 9/15/25

#### MARKER DATES:

APPROVED by the ELCA Church Council – April 21-23, 1990

UPDATED by the Advisory Committee for Corporate Social Responsibility – May 24, 2007

APPROVED by the ELCA Church Council – November 2007

UPDATED by the Corporate Social Responsibility Review Team – September 19, 2018

APPROVED by the ELCA Church Council – November 2018

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#### ALCOHOL

##### Social Criteria Investment Screen

**Authority:** UPDATED by the Corporate Social Responsibility Review Team – September 5, 2019

APPROVED by the ELCA Church Council - November 2019

UPDATED by the Corporate Social Responsibility Review Team – June 10, 2025

APPROVAL PENDING by Church Council – ~~March 10, 2024~~ [anticipated]

#### Alcohol

#### AUTHORITY

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has laid out its concern for health in a social statement "Caring for Health: Our Shared Endeavor" [2003], acknowledging that health is central to our wellbeing, caring for it is a matter of shared stewardship and adequate support for public health is a critical advocacy priority. Given its inordinate effect on life expectancy, alcohol abuse represents a public health issue. ~~Thus, historically~~ Historically, the ELCA's predecessors have expressed concern about the widespread misuse of alcohol. In ~~the present, the ELCA's~~ its social statement on criminal justice and ~~the its social~~ messages on ~~gender-based violence, suicide prevention, and~~ commercial sexual exploitation ~~all recognize~~ and suicide prevention, the ELCA recognizes that alcohol abuse and addiction ~~as a catalyst for social ills~~ can threaten the long-term well-being and safety of people.

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#### Wording of screen:

#### WORDING OF SCREEN

The ELCA shall not knowingly make any investment in firms which are involved in ~~(e.g. 10% or more of revenue is derived from)~~ the production or marketing of ~~distilled~~ alcohol products for human consumption.

**Definition of Problem:-**

**DEFINITION OF PROBLEM**

Excessive alcohol use ~~led~~ is estimated to ~~approximately 88~~ have caused about 178,000 deaths and 2.5-  
million years of potential life lost (YPLL) each year in the United States from 2006–2010,  
shortening the lives of those who died by an average of 30 years.<sup>1</sup> 2016-2021.<sup>1</sup> Alcohol  
impairment accounted for nearly 30% of all traffic-related deaths-impaired driving took more than  
12,000 lives in 2016<sup>2</sup> 2023<sup>2</sup> and alcohol use factors into numerous social ills such as violent  
crime<sup>3</sup> crime<sup>3</sup> and domestic violence.<sup>4</sup>

Recognizing that various investors will implement this screen along a continuum, for the purposescope  
of this screen investment might alcohol production and marketing may include companies that  
produce distilled-involved in supplying key components, as well as those engaged in selling and  
promoting within the industry. For implementation purposes, an investor might, for example, choose to  
exclude companies that derive 10% or more of their revenue from the production and/or marketing of  
alcohol for human consumption. It could also include companies selling, promoting and marketing  
in this industry or supplying key component elements to the industry.

**Social Policy and Studies:-**

**IMPLEMENTATION OF SCREENS**

Social criteria investment screens do not constitute binding mandates or provide, for example, specific  
lists of corporations. It is the responsibility of the ELCA, every ELCA-related organization and individual  
Lutherans to develop and manage a prudent and responsible investment portfolio. The ELCA social  
criteria investment screens offer a context for decision-making about socially responsible investments.

**SOCIAL POLICY AND STUDIES**

[Caring for Health: Our Shared Endeavor](#) [ELCA, 2003]

[The Church and Criminal Justice: Hearing the Cries](#) [ELCA, 2013]

[Commercial Sexual Exploitation](#) [ELCA, 2001]

[Gender-based Violence](#) [ELCA, 2015]

[Suicide Prevention](#) [ELCA, 1999]

**Historical Documents**

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/fact-sheets/alcohol-use.htm>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/impaired-driving/impaired-driv-factsheet.html>

<sup>3</sup> Twenty to twenty-five percent of the victims of violent crime said the perpetrator used alcohol.  
[https://www.bjs.gov/content/ncj/210111/crimes\\_by\\_type.cfm](https://www.bjs.gov/content/ncj/210111/crimes_by_type.cfm)

<sup>4</sup> Alcohol increases the duration and severity of domestic violence.

[http://www.who.int/violence\\_injury\\_prevention/violence/world\\_report/factsheets/fs\\_intimate.pdf](http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/world_report/factsheets/fs_intimate.pdf)

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HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS

Health, Life, and Death: A Christian Perspective [ALC, 1977]

-

A Ministry of Healing Health and Health Care Today [ELCA, 2001]

Chemical Comforters and Drug Dependency [ALC, 1972]

Pastoral Counseling and the Alcoholic: A Study Paper of the Lutheran Church in America - A Study Paper of the Lutheran Church in America

America [date unknown]

ENDNOTES

1. Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/about-alcohol-use/index.html> refers to: Esser MB, Sherk A, Liu Y, Naimi TS. Deaths from excessive alcohol use — United States, 2016-2021. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep. 2024;73:154-161. doi: 10.15585/mmwr.mm7308a1
2. <https://www.nhtsa.gov/risky-driving/drunk-driving>
3. Twenty to twenty-five percent of the victims of violent crime said the perpetrator used alcohol [https://www.bjs.gov/content/acf/apt1\\_crimes\\_by\\_type.cfm](https://www.bjs.gov/content/acf/apt1_crimes_by_type.cfm)
4. Alcohol increases the duration and severity of domestic violence. [http://www.who.int/violence\\_injury\\_prevention/violence/world\\_report/factsheets/fs\\_intimate.pdf](http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/world_report/factsheets/fs_intimate.pdf)

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1 AREA: Alcohol  
2 DOCUMENT TYPE: Social Criteria Investment Screen  
3  
4 POINT IN PROCESS: Transmission to Church Council  
5 FORMAT DATE: 9/15/25  
6

7 MARKER DATES:

8 APPROVED by the ELCA Church Council – April 21-23, 1990  
9 UPDATED by the Advisory Committee for Corporate Social Responsibility – May 24, 2007  
10 APPROVED by the ELCA Church Council – November 2007  
11 UPDATED by the Corporate Social Responsibility Review Team – September 19, 2018  
12 APPROVED by the ELCA Church Council – November 2018  
13 UPDATED by the Corporate Social Responsibility Review Team – September 5, 2019  
14 APPROVED by the ELCA Church Council - November 2019  
15 UPDATED by the Corporate Social Responsibility Review Team – June 10, 2025  
16 APPROVAL PENDING by Church Council – Month DD, 2025 [anticipated]  
17

18 **Alcohol**  
19

20 **AUTHORITY**  
21

22 The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has laid out its concern for health in a social  
23 statement “Caring for Health: Our Shared Endeavor” [2003], acknowledging that health is central to our  
24 wellbeing, caring for it is a matter of shared stewardship and adequate support for public health is a  
25 critical advocacy priority. Given its inordinate effect on life expectancy, alcohol abuse represents a public  
26 health issue. Historically, the ELCA’s predecessors have expressed concern about the widespread misuse  
27 of alcohol. In its social statement on criminal justice and its social messages on commercial sexual  
28 exploitation and suicide prevention, the ELCA recognizes that alcohol abuse and addiction can threaten  
29 the long-term well-being and safety of people.  
30

31  
32 **WORDING OF SCREEN**  
33

34 The ELCA shall not knowingly make any investment in firms which are involved in the production or  
35 marketing of alcohol products for human consumption.  
36

37  
38 **DEFINITION OF PROBLEM**  
39

40 Excessive alcohol use is estimated to have caused about 178,000 deaths each year in the United States  
41 from 2016-2021.<sup>1</sup> Alcohol impaired driving took more than 12,000 lives in 2023<sup>2</sup> and alcohol use factors  
42 into numerous social ills such as violent crime<sup>3</sup> and domestic violence.<sup>4</sup>  
43

44 Recognizing that various investors will implement this screen along a continuum, the scope of alcohol  
45 production and marketing may include companies involved in supplying key components, as well as those  
46 engaged in selling and promoting within the industry. For implementation purposes, an investor might,  
47 for example, choose to exclude companies that derive 10% or more of their revenue from the production  
48 and/or marketing of alcohol for human consumption.

IMPLEMENTATION OF SCREENS

Social criteria investment screens do not constitute binding mandates or provide, for example, specific lists of corporations. It is the responsibility of the ELCA, every ELCA-related organization and individual Lutherans to develop and manage a prudent and responsible investment portfolio. The ELCA social criteria investment screens offer a context for decision-making about socially responsible investments.

SOCIAL POLICY AND STUDIES

[Caring for Health: Our Shared Endeavor](#) [ELCA, 2003]

[The Church and Criminal Justice: Hearing the Cries](#) [ELCA, 2013]

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[Suicide Prevention](#) [ELCA, 1999]

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## CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

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### Artificial Intelligence

*We need to ensure and safeguard a space for proper human control over the choices made by artificial intelligence programs: human dignity itself depends on it.*

*Pope Francis<sup>1</sup>*

### BACKGROUND

Artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning have been around for a long time, but in the past five years they have become nearly ubiquitous, thanks to faster computer chips and greater interest in their potential. There are potential benefits of AI, some of which we are already experiencing without even realizing we are being served by AI. There are also many concerns and worrying events that dictate caution and oversight when it comes to AI. Reactive and limited AI, whether through recommendations Netflix and Amazon give us, or through customer service chatbots, mitigate some concerns around privacy and data collection, but the rapidity of growth towards super intelligent AI systems raises the need to address the issue.

While there is no universal definition of AI, the World Intellectual Property Organization offers, via the UN Library: “AI is generally considered to be a discipline of computer science that is aimed at developing machines and systems that can carry out tasks considered to require human intelligence.”<sup>2</sup> The ELCA’s Information Technology department describes AI thus: “*Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to the theory and development of computer systems that can perform tasks that typically require human intelligence, such as speech recognition, decision-making, and pattern identification. AI encompasses a broad spectrum of capabilities, from mimicking human actions and thought processes to acting and thinking rationally.*”<sup>3</sup> It is classified with four descriptions: reactive, limited memory, theory of mind, and self-awareness.<sup>4</sup> AI is developing so rapidly that what it can do and how it is being used as of this writing is bound to change within months, but what is described as AI comes with a range of impacts and capabilities, ranging from correcting grammar to “creating” artwork.

The benefit of AI use is that, once an AI system is trained, it’s able to sort through the onslaught of data we are collectively experiencing. Now that 90% of adults in the U.S. carry a smartphone<sup>5</sup> and nearly every photo we have taken and conversation we have had is stored somewhere in the ether, sifting through too much information, rather than finding scarce information, becomes the challenge. AI’s proponents hope that on a large scale it will do things such as streamline medical service, choose diseases we are most likely to cure, and foster renewable energy. On a small scale, it could potentially increase workplace efficiency without replacing administrative workers.

The recent rapid pace of development and implementation of AI has presented complex ethical challenges





## CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

and questions. The fundamental concerns around uses of AI raise questions of *transparency, responsibility, and scale*.

In terms of transparency, much of the work that goes into AI model learning is invisible, but vitally important. Should a user be notified any time AI is part of a process, no matter how insignificant that involvement might seem? What must be revealed about how a particular model of AI was trained? How can those whose data was used give their consent? Should we be concerned if consent has not been explicitly given?

Responsibility becomes vastly more complex. Who is responsible for the rights violations of citizens unlawfully targeted by law enforcement, or civilians targeted by the military? Are the writers of the initial programming responsible? Are those who oversaw the development of knowledge through AI responsible? Are those in management who made the decision to use AI responsible? Are the people closest to the actual effect responsible? If decisions such as allocating health care resources, or identifying targets for search by law enforcement, or choosing military targets are being informed by AI, or even made by AI, one error in the algorithm has manifold consequences for human rights, and the path to restitution of those rights is unclear.

The scale and pace of AI development, implementation and change make it close to impossible for legislators to formulate regulations that will safeguard human rights and protect vulnerable communities. As AI is put to use in novel situations, without sufficient oversight of its capabilities, unintended consequences arise. Legislators scramble to create boundaries and expectations after the fact. The Biden White House proposed a blueprint for an AI Bill of Rights that included five principles: safe and effective systems, protection from algorithmic discrimination, data privacy, notice and explanation, and availability of a human alternative. The Trump administration promptly rescinded that order, effectively removing roadblocks to AI development and announced that more resources would be developed to generate the power needed to continue to develop AI.

Legislation proposed by the EU details four levels of risk, from the unacceptable use of AI for real-time remote facial recognition, to heavily regulated high-risk uses such as insurance claims or credit-scoring systems, to limited risk such as chatbots. Even with uses such as real-time biometrics outlawed, rights groups such as Human Rights Watch have raised alarms<sup>6</sup> about uses that will limit access to social goods as part of an effort to eliminate identity fraud, about failure to protect rights and about reinforcing of discrimination in the labor market. Many U.S. states have proposed legislation regulating the use of AI, with varying degrees of success on issues from deep fakes and images of child sexual abuse to artistic integrity.

### Benefits of AI

AI can be used to sort through massive amounts of data quickly and (often, but not always) accurately. It can be used to automate tedious tasks that require little thought or creativity. It could potentially lead to significant discoveries in scientific research,<sup>7</sup> greater access to health care and education, and safer roadways. AI advocates promise that it can promote green energy by anticipating energy use and allocating resources more efficiently and can staff nursing homes more attentively and efficiently. AI is also increasingly integrated into our national defense system.

Its potential benefits span a number of fields. In healthcare, generative AI is being used to develop new drugs, personalize treatment plans, and predict disease progression. The hope is to improve patient outcomes and streamline medical research.<sup>8</sup> possibly AI chatbots are commonplace in customer service at



this point, providing even small organizations with customized customer service. AI implemented by manufacturing is expected to increase efficiency and strengthen quality control, while AI in banking can enhance fraud detection.

### Risks of AI

Like any human endeavor, AI can fail to live up to its promises and can be abused and misused. Cigna Healthcare was recently sued<sup>9</sup> when it was found to have used AI to deny more than 300,000 claims in less than two months. Though insurance companies are obliged legally to have doctors view case files and approve claims, doctors never even opened the files, which were handled at an average rate of one every 1.5 seconds. An AI app used by landlords was also implicated<sup>10</sup> in rising rents and subject to a lawsuit from the Department of Justice for collusion.

While any new technology, especially one as ubiquitous as AI, is bound to experience hiccups, there are many factors in the process, training and development of AI that raise concerns.

**Human rights:** AI presents challenges to human rights on many levels. Discrimination based on race, class or gender that already exists can be codified and then magnified by AI,<sup>11</sup> particularly when resources are distributed dependent on judgments made by AI. Issues of privacy abound. As large language models are accumulating and testing knowledge, they have no way of distinguishing what should be considered private and what could be shared, and that information can be used negatively by many bad actors.<sup>12</sup> Copyright and compensation, particularly for images, raise problematics. Artists have raised important questions about copyright laws and the right to privacy violated being by training AI models. The laborers that help compile AI, something most users don't think about, are often poorly compensated and work under less-than-ideal conditions.<sup>13</sup>

**Bias:** The output of AI can be only as good as the data that goes into it. Skewed data produces skewed results. In using AI in its hiring practices, Amazon found that the hiring algorithm [favored](#) males for technical roles based on historical gender imbalances.<sup>14</sup> Thanks to a data set that was faulty, recruitment was skewed based on a history of discrimination, not merit. AI is assembled based on data with little to no discernment about the potential bias of the data, then encoded by a relatively small number of people who also have inherent biases, then potentially accepted as unbiased. As use of AI proliferates, it cannot simply be accepted at face value.

**Environment:** Proponents hope that in the long term, AI will help us become more energy-efficient by sorting through data faster and predicting where resources need to be allocated. In the short term, the training and inference phases of AI use up such a massive amount of data that tech giants refuse to reveal the full extent of that use, lumping data storage and AI model training into the same category. But looking at carbon emissions since 2019/2020, when tech giants began training large language models, is telling. Google, for example, reported that its greenhouse gas emissions had increased 48% from 2019 to 2024.<sup>15</sup> Microsoft reported that its overall admissions increased 29% from 2020 to 2024.<sup>16</sup> Training a model such as Generative Pre-trained Transformer 3 (or GPT-3) is estimated to use just under 1,300 megawatt hours (MWh) of electricity.<sup>17</sup> This is roughly equivalent to the annual power consumption of 130 homes in the US.<sup>18</sup> Training the more advanced GPT-4, meanwhile, is estimated to have used 50 times more electricity.<sup>19</sup> AI requires energy to keep the temperature in computing facilities optimal, and massive amounts of fresh water in dry places to cool the facilities. The energy required to power AI development and data storage have prompted big tech companies to start looking to [nuclear power](#). They simply can't create enough power with our current capacity to generate power. One of the first moves the second Trump administration made was to announce a \$100 billion project to create new data centers to power

## CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

AI. It may be that in the long run, AI will make energy use more efficient, but at the present rate of growth, AI alone could potentially use the amount of energy of a small country such as Ireland.<sup>20</sup>

**Scale:** The scale of AI is both a benefit and a very challenging aspect. In theory, it could allow few people to accomplish much by eliminating the need for humans to perform predictable and repetitive tasks, at the risk of eliminating the need for human workers. But the scale at which it can operate also can cause significant disruption when things go wrong. Real estate corporation Zillow had to close a division and lay off 25% of its employees after its AI algorithm overestimated the price of housing.<sup>21</sup>

**Lack of Transparency:** Perhaps the most concerning part of addressing potential shortcomings in AI is its opacity. Users of AI don't always know they are using AI. Users of AI don't know how their AI was trained or on what data set. Decision-making can be hidden from the user. Programmers not versed in the field where the AI is being used may be effectively making decisions for experts simply because they are writing the logarithms. This is of particular concern when human life is at stake, as when AI is attached to weapons.

Overall, the possible benefits of AI include many potential drawbacks that tech companies are often unwilling to discuss or regulate. Indeed, senior researchers at OpenAI expressed grave concerns in 2023 that have been ignored.<sup>22</sup> There are also questions of meaning and relationship that religious organizations can and should ask, as Pope Francis did early in 2024. What does it mean when Meta creates "friends" out of AI? Should we keep loved ones "alive" by feeding their memories into AI? The fact that we can do something does not mean we *should* do it.

## ELCA SOCIAL TEACHING

ELCA social teaching touches on AI-related issues in different ways. Principally, while social teaching conveys that science and human reason are God-given and should be used to further human flourishing, it does not lead us to think of human knowledge as neutral or perfect. The ELCA social statement *Genetics, Faith and Responsibility* (2011) sets out some parameters as to how to assess scientific breakthroughs from a theological perspective. The [statement](#) notes "Knowledge and technology have never developed in a social vacuum, and genetic research and technology and their delivery are not socially neutral" When it comes to AI, that same social teaching calls us to careful moral scrutiny of technological developments.

Certain uses of AI, wherein a mistaken result might threaten human life (such as use in defense), would fall under the "precautionary principle" described in the statement. "Precaution comes into play when existing tools for risk assessment are overwhelmed by a high level of uncertainty and proposed actions may dramatically affect the integrity and limits of the earth or the existence of future generations. In such cases, the burden to demonstrate safety rests upon those who promote the novel action." It would be incumbent upon proponents of AI to demonstrate safety when AI is used in defense.

Further sounding a note of caution, the ELCA social statement *For Peace in God's World* (1995) focuses on humility in the face of decisions about war, acknowledging that "even our best intentions can produce harmful results. Our efforts must take account of the human tendency to dominate and destroy, and must recognize those 'principalities' and 'powers' (Ephesians 6:12, RSV) that cause strife in our world" (p. 7). The statement recognizes that human advancement implies both good and evil (p. 8) in "tension-filled interplay." Decisions about war (inherently considered to be "mournful") require "political wisdom and historical knowledge of the situation" (p. 12). We believe that rational and moral discernment are critical responsibilities of both political decision-makers, and individual combatants and machines are not capable of this discernment.



## CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Concern for the vulnerable is also a significant thread in ELCA social teaching. The ELCA social message “Human Rights” (2017) expresses concern throughout that the rights and needs of vulnerable people be given particular attention. It lays out six categories of human rights. AI could be used to hamper or violate any number of these categories, for example, restricting freedom of thought and religious expression through virtual policing; inhibiting political, civil and economic participation through facial recognition technology; and denying people’s right to physical goods through inequitable algorithms. The message also specifically directs the ELCA to address human rights violations through corporate social responsibility and commits the ELCA to upholding human rights

The healthcare social statement prioritizes equitable access and calls for services to those who need it most. Any use of AI that results in diversion of resources away from equitable access in health care is one that the ELCA is obligated by its social teaching to question.

### ELCA SOCIAL INVESTMENT SCREENS

The military weapons and human rights social criteria investment screens both apply to this issue.

### CORPORATE RESPONSE

Corporations have been quick to adopt new advances in AI. Sometimes the results are salutary, but some of the challenges in AI have led to negative impacts on public opinion. Rite Aid pharmacies, for example, were banned by the Federal Trade Commission from using facial recognition technology after their electronic surveillance repeatedly misidentified customers as shoplifters.<sup>23</sup>

Corporations have begun to see the virtue of adopting codes of conduct, with the encouragement of the shareholder community. This is a good first step, but implementation of those codes of conduct across a large organization with fast-moving development is a significant challenge.

Big data users such as Microsoft and Google remain reluctant to reveal publicly the full data of the energy use of training AI. Microsoft quietly walked back predictions that were made about going carbon-neutral. Big tech aggregate AI and data storage together and are reluctant to disaggregate and reveal the full impact of their business activities.

### RESOLUTION GUIDELINES FOR THE ELCA – GENERAL

1. Requests for transparency reports that explain the company’s use of AI in its business operations and the board’s role in overseeing AI usage, and that set forth any ethical guidelines the company has adopted regarding its use of AI.
2. Human rights impact assessments examining the actual and potential human rights impacts of a company’s AI-driven targeted advertising policies and practices.
3. Independent third-party reports on customer due diligence process to determine whether customers’ use of its products or services with surveillance technology and AI capability or of its components that support autonomous military and police vehicles, contributes to human rights harms.
4. Independent studies and reports to shareholders regarding:
  - i. The extent to which such technology may endanger, threaten or violate privacy and/or civil rights, and unfairly or disproportionately target or surveil people of color,

## CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

- immigrants and activists in the United States.
- ii. The extent to which such technologies may be marketed and sold to authoritarian or repressive governments, including those identified by the U.S. Department of State Country Reports on Human Rights Practices.
- iii. The potential loss of good will and other financial risks associated with these human rights issues.
5. Audits of driver health and safety, evaluating the effects of performance metrics, policies, and procedures on driver health and safety across markets.
6. Calls for more quantitative and qualitative information on algorithmic systems. Exact disclosures are within management's discretion, but suggestions include: how a company uses algorithmic systems to target and deliver ads, error rates, and the impact these systems had on user speech and experiences. Management also has the discretion to consider using the recommendations and technical standards for algorithm and ad transparency put forward by the Mozilla Foundation and researchers at New York University.
7. Reports assessing the siting of data centers in countries of significant human rights concern, and the company's strategies for mitigating the related impacts.
8. Reports on customer due diligence process to determine whether customers' use of its products or services with surveillance technology and AI capability or of its components that support autonomous military and police vehicles, contributes to human rights harms.
9. Disclosing transition plans that result in new renewable energy capacity, or other actions that achieve actual emissions reductions at least equivalent to the energy demand associated with its expanded data center operations.
10. Reports, at a reasonable cost and omitting proprietary information, on the public health related costs and macroeconomic risks created by practices that limit or delay access to healthcare, particularly with regard to the use of AI.
11. Reports about quantitative water use reduction targets by data center location and report on practices implemented to secure social license to operate and reduce climate-related water risk. The report should be prepared at reasonable expense and omit proprietary information.
12. Data protection impact assessments on the company's health care service offerings that describe how the company is ensuring appropriate use of, and informed consent for collection of, patient data.

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ENDNOTES

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## CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



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## CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
God's work. Our hands.

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### International Access to Health Care

#### BACKGROUND

"God creates human beings as whole persons — each one a dynamic unity of body, mind, and spirit. Health concerns the proper functioning and well-being of the whole person."<sup>1</sup> "We of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America have an enduring commitment to work for and support health care for all people as a shared endeavor."<sup>2</sup> The ELCA recognizes that an individual's and community's health is made up of a complex set of social determinants, with *affordable* health care being part of that.

The global impact of the recent COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced and enlarged already-existing weaknesses and inequities in health care delivery, prompting a call by world religious leaders for both equitable vaccine distribution and access to health care for all people "regardless of where they live or who they are." For example, the Global South has long experienced oxygen shortages and pneumonia deaths because of these shortages, but with oxygen necessary for COVID-19 treatment, those shortages become much more visible. Data for COVID-19 vaccinations illustrate the sharp divide between, on the one hand, the United States and its territories and, on the other, nations with less access to capital when it comes to access to health care. As COVID-19 vaccines have been developed and become widely available, only the wealthiest nations on the globe were able to purchase them, even though everyone stands to benefit from a global vaccination campaign. Personal protective equipment was also in universally very short supply at the beginning of the pandemic. Addressing these global inequities will require coordination, investment and cooperation between the public and private sectors. Pharmaceutical companies have joined together with the governmental actors to secure and allocate 2 billion doses of

<sup>1</sup> *Caring for Health: Our Shared Endeavor* (ELCA social statement, 2003), p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Caring for Health*, p. 2. <http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/HealthSS.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> *Caring for Health*, p. 2. <http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/HealthSS.pdf>.

## CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
God's work. Our hands.

COVID-19 vaccine before the end of 2021, targeted to health care workers and at risk populations. The issue is that projects such as COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX) do not address the underlying deficiencies of the vaccine distribution system.

While the world struggles to address COVID-19 globally and equitably, access to basic health care remains a considerable challenge. The global impact of the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of international cooperation around health, as well as throwing into sharp relief inequities in access to care. Despite that clarity, in 2025 the presidential administration indicated it intended to limit the contribution of the United States to international cooperation around health. The administration revoked funding for and dismantled the U.S. Agency for International Development and withdrew from the World Health Organization. It withdrew funding for the public/private partnership Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization, known as Gavi. Funding to AIDS/HIV prevention was decimated in the hollowing out of USAID. The overall effect on global disease prevention, and on the development of treatments and vaccines, is likely to be vast. One statistician estimated that 25 million people will die by 2040 if the funding is withdrawn as threatened.<sup>3</sup>

The areas in which global cooperation is vital are many. Primary care, maternal care and childcare are in need of support around the globe. HIV and AIDS (and their comorbidities), malaria, tuberculosis, and neglected tropical diseases and noncommunicable diseases continue to affect people, especially in middle-income and low-income countries. The World Health Organization estimated that about 40 million people around the globe were living with HIV at the end of 2023.<sup>4</sup> Malaria estimates in 2023 indicate 263 million cases that year, with children the most vulnerable group.<sup>5</sup> About 1.25 million people worldwide died in 2023 from tuberculosis, and it is the leading cause of death from a single infectious agent.<sup>6</sup> Infectious diseases threaten to reverse development gains, reduce life expectancy and cut productivity and income.

According to the World Health Organization, by the end of 2019, 38 million people around the globe were living with HIV.<sup>3</sup> Malaria estimates in 2019 indicate 229 million cases that year, with children the most vulnerable group.<sup>4</sup> More than 1.4 million people worldwide died in 2019 from tuberculosis, and it is the leading cause of death from a single infectious agent.<sup>5</sup> Difficulty in accessing pharmaceuticals can lead patients to miss or skip doses, worsening their diseases and fueling the rise of antimicrobial resistance.

Access to diagnostics, treatments, pharmaceuticals and preventive care are challenges to global health when the for-profit world has a role to play. Access is affected by production cost and sale price, availability, logistics of transportation and storage, and availability of supplies used in manufacturing (often shipped from less wealthy to wealthier countries). All these factors are influenced by global inequities.

Partnerships between government and for-profit companies can be vitally important in providing life-saving medication and preventative care. However, the drive to maximize profit can also exacerbate global inequities. High retail prices, limited distribution, and manufacturing costs impact low-income countries' access to diagnostics, treatments, pharmaceuticals, and preventative care. Efforts to distribute the COVID-19 vaccine were hindered by all of these factors.<sup>7</sup>

The ELCA supports health projects/programs at national or local community levels that are implemented

<sup>3</sup> World Health Organization, "HIV/AIDS," <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/hiv-aids>.

<sup>4</sup> World Health Organization, "Malaria," <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/malaria>.

<sup>5</sup> World Health Organization, "Tuberculosis," <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/tuberculosis>.

## CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



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by companion churches and organizations. The World Council of Churches coordinates advocacy and participates in efforts that seek to increase collaboration and commitment between the for-profit and nonprofit sectors. ~~Among the projects in which the World Council of Churches participates is including the Rome Action Plan, which, for example, convenes high level dialogues~~ a rights-based partnership between governmental, faith-based and for-profit global partners ~~aimed at generating higher-quality services for children living with HIV globally.~~

## ELCA SOCIAL POLICY

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The ELCA social statement ~~Caring for Health: Our Shared Endeavor~~ *Caring for Health: Our Shared Endeavor* (2003) develops the church's vision of health, illness and healing. It calls for equitable access as a matter of both love and justice and for international cooperation in public health efforts, including preventing and combating infectious diseases. The social statement calls upon society to give priority to groups that, for reasons of race, class or gender, have not had access to adequate health care. ~~The message on human rights~~ The ELCA Human Rights message states: "Humans are physical beings and have the right to sufficient and sustainable levels of physical goods such as water, food, shelter and health care" (p. 6). The ELCA committed in its social statement ~~on faith, sexism and justice~~ *Faith, Sexism and Justice* to advocate for "equitable and affordable health care services, including reproductive health care, that honor how bodies differ and eliminate discrimination due to sex (biological), gender, or sexual orientation" (p. 10).<sup>6,8</sup>

In 2009 the Church Council (CC09.03.23) adopted "The ELCA Strategy on HIV and AIDS."<sup>79</sup> The strategy sought to halt the spread of HIV, reduce stigma and discrimination, and reduce the conditions of poverty and the marginalization that contribute to the spread of HIV. This strategy calls for the Corporate Social Responsibility program to advocate with corporations on these goals as well as for achieving universal ~~accesses~~ *access to HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, and care*. The ten-year time frame of the strategy has ended, but the commitment to reducing stigma and discrimination and supporting access to treatment, among other principles, remains.

In 2002, the ELCA Church Council (CC02.11.59) approved a shareholder resolution requesting that pharmaceutical companies in which the ELCA holds corporate shares support national and international efforts to make generic antiretroviral drugs accessible to people living with HIV and AIDS in countries in need.

The statement "Faith, Sexism and Justice" committed the ELCA to: "Advocate for and support medical research, health care delivery, and access to equitable and affordable health care services, including reproductive health care, that honor how bodies differ and eliminate discrimination due to sex (biological), gender, or sexual orientation." (page 10)

Through ELCA World Hunger, the ELCA supports access to health care around the world. Support goes to providing clinical care and to community-based health programs. Other projects focus on education and advocacy, pressuring governments to provide the health services and/or medications they have promised (especially for tuberculosis, malaria, and HIV and AIDS).

<sup>6</sup> *Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Call to Action* (ELCA social statement, 2019), p. 10, <https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Faith-Sexism-Justice-Social-Statement-Adopted.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> ELCA, "HIV and AIDS Ministry," <http://www.elca.org/Our-Work/Relief-and-Development/HIV-AIDS-Ministry>.



## CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



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While the 10-year strategy on HIV and AIDS of the ELCA has finished, World Hunger continues to provide funding to programs that work on eliminating stigma and discrimination, advocate for continued health care access and treatment for all, and provide education around prevention and treatment, psychosocial care training for pastors and the importance of good nutrition.<sup>8,10</sup>

## RESPONSES

It makes good business sense for companies to respond to pandemic disease because of its direct impacts on business. These impacts include increased costs, loss of productivity and overall threats to the foundations of the economies in which they operate. The current and future workforce is placed at increasingly high risk because the HIV and AIDS pandemic disproportionately affects people during their most productive years.<sup>9,11</sup>

The global corporate community, including the pharmaceutical sector, must become part of the solution to global health challenges, especially in developing countries. Though pharmaceutical companies do make donations of their products, some argue that these donations are ultimately not beneficial: corporations collect tax breaks from donations and still leave many without access, because product prices are not lowered for everyone. Other options for lowering prices, such as waiving intellectual property rights, may become more popular. One such proposal was floated by the World Trade Organization during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The scientific community was able to produce COVID-19 vaccines in record time. In the United States, the federal government poured billions into some pharmaceutical companies to speed development of COVID-19 vaccines and therapeutics and gave the vaccines emergency authorization. The development of Messenger RNA (mRNA) vaccines was also greatly facilitated by a decade of government-funded research. Given the urgent global need for COVID-19 vaccines, therapeutics and treatment, several governments proposed a temporary pause of the intellectual property rights protections in the 2001 World Trade Organization agreement to allow low- and middle-income countries to produce these vaccines and therapeutics locally, so that more people can have access to them. The U.S. government supports this proposal. Nine United Nations human rights experts have welcomed the proposal for pharmaceutical companies to waive intellectual property rights for the COVID-19 response based on the right to health care. Pharmaceutical companies are likely to encounter increasing pressure to waive intellectual property rights during public health emergencies in order to increase global access to their products. All of the funding that produced these results is now in question. Worse, the very need for and efficacy of vaccines has also been called into question.

We watch with concern as federal government undermines and attempts to eliminate Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility initiatives particularly given the possible impact it could have on access to pharmaceuticals, and equitable distribution and access. This is contrary to the understanding of justice in health care imbued in our social teaching.

## SOCIAL CRITERIA INVESTMENT SCREENS

A screen is a framework of principles, specific to an issue, by which a company's activities are evaluated.

<sup>8</sup> Efforts addressing access to health care have been mandated by the ELCA churchwide assembly as a core principle of work supported by ELCA World Hunger.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/hiv/impact/chap4.pdf>

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## CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



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None currently apply to this paper.

### RESOLUTION GUIDELINES FOR ELCA - ISSUE ~~SPECIFIC~~<sup>10</sup>~~SPECIFIC12~~

1. We support reports about the health pandemic and its economic impact on a company's operations and business strategy.
2. We support resolutions asking for the establishment and implementation of standards for responding to health pandemics.
3. We support the development, in consultation with appropriate United Nations and related intergovernmental agencies, of ways to offer accessible drug treatments, diagnostics and vaccines to people in developing countries.
4. We support reports on the affordability and accessibility of vaccines, medical devices and testing equipment. We support strengthening board oversight of drug-pricing risk.
5. We support reports on community and occupational health-hazard impacts of products internationally.
6. We support reports on policies for safe disposition of prescription drugs, both domestically and internationally.
7. We support reports on strengthening board diversity.
8. We support reports assessing the reputational and financial risks from rising pressure to reduce high prescription drug prices by removing barriers to generic competition.
9. We support reports on whether executive compensation reflects pricing strategies and access.
10. We support reports on whether and how receipt of public financial support for development and manufacture of a vaccine or ~~COVID-19~~ therapeutic will be taken into account when making decisions that affect access, such as pricing.
11. We support the adoption of human rights policies that that commit corporations to respect internationally recognized human rights, including the right to health, and to conducting human rights due diligence ("HRDD") to identify, prevent, mitigate, and remedy the most salient adverse human rights impacts caused by a corporation's or a supplier's activities.
12. We support human rights due diligence and human rights impact assessments.
13. We support reports assessing the gap between a corporation's current global nutrition reporting and reporting based on other internationally recognized Nutrient Profiling Models (NPMs) conducted by independent third parties.
14. We support reports on (1) the public health costs created by the limited sharing of a company's vaccine technologies and any consequent reduced availability in poorer nations and (2) the manner in which such costs may affect the market returns available to its diversified shareholders.
15. We support reports to shareholders on how the board oversees risks related to anticompetitive practices, including whether the full board or board committee has oversight responsibility, whether and how consideration of such risks is incorporated into board deliberations regarding strategy, and the board's role in the corporation's public policy activities related to such risks.

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### RESOLUTION GUIDELINES FOR ELCA – GENERAL

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<sup>10</sup> These guidelines may be used in proxy voting as well as to help determine resolutions to file and dialogues to support. Each resolution guideline should be looked at within the context of the entire resolution language and specific company situation.

## CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



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We support practices of good governance, specifically:

- A company having an independent chair or independent lead director.
- Reports on policies and procedures for political contributions and expenditures (both direct and indirect) made with corporate funds.
- Reports on any portion of any dues or similar payments made to any tax-exempt organization that is used for an expenditure or contribution that might be deemed political.
- Guidelines or policies governing the company's political contributions and expenditures.
- Reports on diversity for corporate boards and upper-level management.<sup>11,13</sup>
- Policies around conflict of interests for executives

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### ENDNOTES

1. *Caring for Health: Our Shared Endeavor* (ELCA social statement, 2003), p. 3.  
<http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/HealthSS.pdf>
2. *Caring for Health*, p. 2.  
<http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/HealthSS.pdf>
3. <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-025-01191-z>
4. <https://www.who.int/teams/global-hiv-hepatitis-and-stis-programmes/hiv/strategic-information/hiv-data-and-statistics>
5. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/malaria>
6. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/tuberculosis>
7. <https://journals.law.harvard.edu/ilj/2023/11/intellectual-property-and-the-lost-year-of-covid-19-deaths/>
8. *Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Call to Action* (ELCA social statement, 2019), p. 10.  
[https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Faith\\_Sexism\\_Justice\\_Social\\_Statement\\_Adopted.pdf](https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Faith_Sexism_Justice_Social_Statement_Adopted.pdf)
9. ELCA, "HIV and AIDS Ministry," <http://www.elca.org/Our-Work/Relief-and-Development/HIV-AIDS-Ministry>
10. Efforts addressing access to health care have been mandated by the ELCA churchwide assembly as a core principle of work supported by ELCA World Hunger.
11. <https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/hiv/impact/chap4.pdf>
12. These guidelines may be used in proxy voting as well as to help determine resolutions to file and dialogues to support. Each resolution guideline should be looked at within the context of the entire resolution language and specific company situation.
13. See "Non-discrimination in Business Activities" issue paper.

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<sup>11</sup> See "Non-discrimination in Business Activities" issue paper.

## CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

AREA: Health  
DOCUMENT TYPE: Issue Paper  
POINT IN PROCESS: Transmission to Church Council  
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UPDATED by Advisory Committee on Corporate Social Responsibility, September 27, 2007  
APPROVED by Church Council, November 2007  
UPDATED by Advisory Committee on Corporate Social Responsibility, September 10, 2010  
APPROVED by Church Council, November 2010  
APPROVED by Church Council, November 2016 [CC16.11.46n]  
APPROVED by Church Council, November 2021 [CC21.11.25l]  
UPDATED by Advisory Committee on Corporate Social Responsibility, June 10, 2025  
APPROVAL PENDING by Church Council, Month DD, 2025 [anticipated]

### International Access to Health Care

#### BACKGROUND

“God creates human beings as whole persons — each one a dynamic unity of body, mind, and spirit. Health concerns the proper functioning and well-being of the whole person.”<sup>1</sup> “We of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America have an enduring commitment to work for and support health care for all people as a shared endeavor.”<sup>2</sup> The ELCA recognizes that an individual’s and community’s health is made up of a complex set of social determinants, with *affordable* health care being part of that.

The global impact of the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of international cooperation around health, as well as throwing into sharp relief inequities in access to care. Despite that clarity, in 2025 the presidential administration indicated it intended to limit the contribution of the United States to international cooperation around health. The administration revoked funding for and dismantled the U.S. Agency for International Development and withdrew from the World Health Organization. It withdrew funding for the public/private partnership Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization, known as Gavi. Funding to AIDS/HIV prevention was decimated in the hollowing out of USAID. The overall effect on global disease prevention, and on the development of treatments and vaccines, is likely to be vast. One statistician estimated that 25 million people will die by 2040 if the funding is withdrawn as threatened.<sup>3</sup>

The areas in which global cooperation is vital are many. Primary care, maternal care and childcare are in need of support around the globe. HIV and AIDS (and their comorbidities), malaria, tuberculosis, and neglected tropical diseases and noncommunicable diseases continue to affect people, especially in middle-income and low-income countries. The World Health Organization estimated that about 40 million people around the globe were living with HIV at the end of 2023.<sup>4</sup> Malaria estimates in 2023 indicate 263 million cases that year, with children the most vulnerable group.<sup>5</sup> About 1.25 million people worldwide died in 2023 from tuberculosis, and it is the leading cause of death from a single infectious agent.<sup>6</sup> Infectious diseases threaten to reverse development gains, reduce life expectancy and cut



## CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

productivity and income.

Partnerships between government and for-profit companies can be vitally important in providing life-saving medication and preventative care. However, the drive to maximize profit can also exacerbate global inequities. High retail prices, limited distribution, and manufacturing costs impact low-income countries' access to diagnostics, treatments, pharmaceuticals, and preventative care. Efforts to distribute the COVID-19 vaccine were hindered by all of these factors.<sup>7</sup>

The ELCA supports health programs at national or local community levels that are implemented by companion churches and organizations. The World Council of Churches coordinates advocacy and participates in efforts that seek to increase collaboration and commitment between the for-profit and nonprofit sectors including the [Rome Action Plan](#), a rights-based partnership between governmental, faith-based and for-profit global partners aimed at generating higher-quality services for children living with HIV globally.

### ELCA SOCIAL POLICY

The ELCA social statement [Caring for Health: Our Shared Endeavor](#) (2003) develops the church's vision of health, illness and healing. It calls for equitable access as a matter of both love and justice and for international cooperation in public health efforts, including preventing and combating infectious diseases. The social statement calls upon society to give priority to groups that, for reasons of race, class or gender, have not had access to adequate health care. The ELCA Human Rights [message](#) states: "Humans are physical beings and have the right to sufficient and sustainable levels of physical goods such as water, food, shelter and health care" (p. 6). The ELCA committed in its social statement [Faith, Sexism and Justice](#) to advocate for "equitable and affordable health care services, including reproductive health care, that honor how bodies differ and eliminate discrimination due to sex (biological), gender, or sexual orientation" (p. 10).<sup>8</sup>

In 2009 the Church Council (CC09.03.23) adopted "The ELCA Strategy on HIV and AIDS."<sup>9</sup> The strategy sought to halt the spread of HIV, reduce stigma and discrimination, and reduce the conditions of poverty and the marginalization that contribute to the spread of HIV. This strategy calls for the Corporate Social Responsibility program to advocate with corporations on these goals as well as for achieving universal access to HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, and care. The ten-year time frame of the strategy has ended, but the commitment to reducing stigma and discrimination and supporting access to treatment, among other principles, remains.

In 2002, the ELCA Church Council (CC02.11.59) approved a shareholder resolution requesting that pharmaceutical companies in which the ELCA holds corporate shares support national and international efforts to make generic antiretroviral drugs accessible to people living with HIV and AIDS in countries in need.

The statement "Faith, Sexism and Justice" committed the ELCA to: "Advocate for and support medical research, health care delivery, and access to equitable and affordable health care services, including reproductive health care, that honor how bodies differ and eliminate discrimination due to sex (biological), gender, or sexual orientation." (page 10)

Through ELCA World Hunger, the ELCA supports access to health care around the world. Support goes to providing clinical care and to community-based health programs. Other projects focus on education and advocacy, pressuring governments to provide the health services and/or medications they have



## CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

promised (especially for tuberculosis, malaria, and HIV and AIDS).

While the 10-year strategy on HIV and AIDS of the ELCA has finished, World Hunger continues to provide funding to programs that work on eliminating stigma and discrimination, advocate for continued health care access and treatment for all, and provide education around prevention and treatment, psychosocial care training for pastors and the importance of good nutrition.<sup>10</sup>

### RESPONSES

It makes good business sense for companies to respond to pandemic disease because of its direct impacts on business. These impacts include increased costs, loss of productivity and overall threats to the foundations of the economies in which they operate. The current and future workforce is placed at increasingly high risk because the HIV and AIDS pandemic disproportionately affects people during their most productive years.<sup>11</sup>

The global corporate community, including the pharmaceutical sector, must become part of the solution to global health challenges, especially in developing countries. Though pharmaceutical companies do make donations of their products, some argue that these donations are ultimately not beneficial: corporations collect tax breaks from donations and still leave many without access, because product prices are not lowered for everyone. Other options for lowering prices, such as waiving intellectual property rights, may become more popular. One such proposal was floated by the World Trade Organization during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The scientific community was able to produce COVID-19 vaccines in record time. In the United States, the federal government poured billions into some pharmaceutical companies to speed development of COVID-19 vaccines and therapeutics and gave the vaccines emergency authorization. The development of Messenger RNA (mRNA) vaccines was also greatly facilitated by a decade of government-funded research. All of the funding that produced these results is now in question. Worse, the very need for and efficacy of vaccines has also been called into question.

We watch with concern as federal government undermines and attempts to eliminate Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility initiatives particularly given the possible impact it could have on access to pharmaceuticals, and equitable distribution and access. This is contrary to the understanding of justice in health care imbued in our social teaching.

### SOCIAL CRITERIA INVESTMENT SCREENS

A screen is a framework of principles, specific to an issue, by which a company's activities are evaluated. None currently apply to this paper.

### RESOLUTION GUIDELINES FOR ELCA - ISSUE SPECIFIC<sup>12</sup>

1. We support reports about the health pandemic and its economic impact on a company's operations and business strategy.
2. We support resolutions asking for the establishment and implementation of standards for responding to health pandemics.
3. We support the development, in consultation with appropriate United Nations and related





## CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

- intergovernmental agencies, of ways to offer accessible drug treatments, diagnostics and vaccines to people in developing countries.
4. We support reports on the affordability and accessibility of vaccines, medical devices and testing equipment. We support strengthening board oversight of drug-pricing risk.
  5. We support reports on community and occupational health-hazard impacts of products internationally.
  6. We support reports on policies for safe disposition of prescription drugs, both domestically and internationally.
  7. We support reports on strengthening board diversity.
  8. We support reports assessing the reputational and financial risks from rising pressure to reduce high prescription drug prices by removing barriers to generic competition.
  9. We support reports on whether executive compensation reflects pricing strategies and access.
  10. We support reports on whether and how receipt of public financial support for development and manufacture of a vaccine or therapeutic will be taken into account when making decisions that affect access, such as pricing
  11. We support the adoption of human rights policies that that commit corporations to respect internationally recognized human rights, including the right to health, and to conducting human rights due diligence (“HRDD”) to identify, prevent, mitigate, and remedy the most salient adverse human rights impacts caused by a corporation’s or a supplier’s activities.
  12. We support human rights due diligence and human rights impact assessments.
  13. We support reports assessing the gap between a corporation’s current global nutrition reporting and reporting based on other internationally recognized Nutrient Profiling Models (NPMs) conducted by independent third parties.
  14. We support reports on (1) the public health costs created by the limited sharing of a company’s vaccine technologies and any consequent reduced availability in poorer nations and (2) the manner in which such costs may affect the market returns available to its diversified shareholders.
  15. We support reports to shareholders on how the board oversees risks related to anticompetitive practices, including whether the full board or board committee has oversight responsibility, whether and how consideration of such risks is incorporated into board deliberations regarding strategy, and the board’s role in the corporation’s public policy activities related to such risks.

### RESOLUTION GUIDELINES FOR ELCA – GENERAL

We support practices of good governance, specifically:

- A company having an independent chair or independent lead director.
- Reports on policies and procedures for political contributions and expenditures (both direct and indirect) made with corporate funds.
- Reports on any portion of any dues or similar payments made to any tax-exempt organization that is used for an expenditure or contribution that might be deemed political.
- Guidelines or policies governing the company’s political contributions and expenditures.
- Reports on diversity for corporate boards and upper-level management.<sup>13</sup>
- Policies around conflict of interests for executives

### ENDNOTES



## CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

1. *Caring for Health: Our Shared Endeavor* (ELCA social statement, 2003), p. 3,  
<http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/HealthSS.pdf>
2. *Caring for Health*, p. 2,  
<http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/HealthSS.pdf>
3. <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-025-01191-z>
4. <https://www.who.int/teams/global-hiv-hepatitis-and-stis-programmes/hiv/strategic-information/hiv-data-and-statistics>
5. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/malaria>
6. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/tuberculosis>
7. <https://journals.law.harvard.edu/ilj/2023/11/intellectual-property-and-the-lost-year-of-covid-19-deaths/>
8. *Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Call to Action* (ELCA social statement, 2019), p. 10,  
[https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Faith Sexism Justice Social Statement Adopted.pdf](https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Faith_Sexism_Justice_Social_Statement_Adopted.pdf)
9. ELCA, “HIV and AIDS Ministry,” <http://www.elca.org/Our-Work/Relief-and-Development/HIV-AIDS-Ministry>
10. Efforts addressing access to health care have been mandated by the ELCA churchwide assembly as a core principle of work supported by ELCA World Hunger.
11. <https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/hiv/impact/chap4.pdf>
12. These guidelines may be used in proxy voting as well as to help determine resolutions to file and dialogues to support. Each resolution guideline should be looked at within the context of the entire resolution language and specific company situation.
13. See “Non-discrimination in Business Activities” [issue paper](#).



## CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



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AREA: Climate Change  
DOCUMENT TYPE: Issue Paper

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UPDATED by Advisory Committee on Corporate Social Responsibility, September 10, 2010-  
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APPROVED by Church Council, November 2015 [CC15.11.52]  
APPROVED by Church Council, November 2021 [CC21.11.25]  
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APPROVAL PENDING by Church Council, November 2021 [CC21.11.25] 2025 [anticipated]-

### Caring for Creation Climate ChangeRisk

### BACKGROUND

From a standpoint of faith, it is reasonable to conclude that the climate crisis is, indeed, a kairos moment. (Earth's Climate Crisis p 7)

"Scripture witnesses to God as creator of the earth and all that dwells therein (Psalm 24:1). The creeds, which guide our reading of Scripture, proclaim God the Father of Jesus Christ as 'maker of heaven and earth,' Jesus Christ as the one 'through [whom] all things were made,' and the Holy Spirit as 'the Lord, the giver of life' (Nicene Creed)... The earth is a planet of beauty and abundance; the earth system is wonderfully intricate and incredibly complex. But today living creatures, and the air, soil and water that support them, face unprecedented threats. Many threats are global; most stem directly from human activity" ("Caring for Creation," 2.B.1, 2018 Fourth National Climate Assessment<sup>2</sup> p 2, 4).

As Christians, we understand human beings as fundamentally responsible before God. With the reach of our contemporary human knowledge and the power we employ in new technologies, this responsibility in terms of caring for creation now includes the global future itself. Central to that question is the threat posed by climate change. In 2015 the member states of the United Nations issued Agenda 2030, a shared blueprint for "peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future." Central to the

<sup>1</sup> Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice (ELCA social statement, 1993), p. 4, <http://www.elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Statements/Caring-for-Creation>.

<sup>2</sup> See USGCRP, 2018: Impacts, Risks, and Adaptation in the United States: Fourth National Climate Assessment, Volume II, Reidmiller, D.R., and C.W. Avery, D.R. Easterling, K.E. Kunkel, K.L.M. Lewis, T.K. Maycock and B.C. Stewart (eds.), U.S. Global Change Research Program, Washington, D.C., USA, pp. 33–71. doi: 10.7930/NCA4.2018.CH1, <https://nca2018.globalchange.gov/chapter/1>.

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## CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



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blueprint are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)<sup>3</sup>, which include SDG 13, calling for urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.<sup>4</sup>

Also in 2015 Over a decade ago, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change members adopted a global agreement that went into force in November 2016 — the Paris Agreement.<sup>5</sup> The countries agreed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and agreed to a just transition of the workforce and the creation of decent work and quality jobs.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)<sup>6,7,8,2,3,4</sup> and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration<sup>9</sup> scientists documented the realities of climate change. Climate change results in the earth experiencing more frequent severe and intensified weather patterns and temperature extremes. These extreme weather patterns result in floods, droughts, wildfires and rising sea levels that lead to the degradation of the earth. All of this negatively impacts the earth's inhabitants at unprecedented rates. Some global consequences include forced migration, exacerbation of poverty, national security concerns, negative impacts on agriculture resulting in food insecurity, and threats to ecosystems that could lead to the extinction of some species.

The marginalized and vulnerable are most affected by climate change impacts. This failure to protect God's creation ultimately mirrors and deepens existing racial, gender and economic inequalities. The ELCA message on climate change focuses on justice that distributes fairly among current and future generations. Caring for creation means respecting environmental limits while pursuing economic growth that provides sufficient and sustainable lifestyles for all people. The ELCA social statement *Genesis, Faith and Responsibility* (2011) describes the importance of understanding the need for participation and the interconnectedness of all living beings (p. 16). The well-being of future generations depends on our ecosystem to support it.

Investors have a significant role and responsibility in addressing climate change. For example, Ceres — a network of investors, environmental organizations and other public-interest groups working with companies to integrate sustainability into capital markets for the health of the planet and its people — publishes reports calling for the corporate world to address issues of climate change and sustainability.<sup>10</sup> “Investor strategies to tackle the growing threat of climate change must include a just transition by incorporating the full range of environmental, social and governance (ESG) dimensions of responsible investment.”<sup>11</sup> Global climate investors such as Climate Action 100+ are driving business transition via such mechanisms as the Net Zero Benchmark.

The first few months of 2025 have been extraordinarily challenging in every way to combating climate change. As promised, the current presidential administration exited (https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/putting-america-first-in-international-environmental-agreements/) the Paris Accord, refusing to engage in the reporting of the mandated

<sup>3</sup> Sustainable Development Goals, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>.

<sup>4</sup> SDG 13 Climate Action, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal13>.

<sup>5</sup> Paris Agreement, <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement>.

<sup>6</sup> IPCC, “Special Report: Global Warming of 1.5°C,” <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>.

<sup>7</sup> IPCC, “Special Report: Climate Change and Land,” <https://www.ipcc.ch/srccel/download/>.

<sup>8</sup> IPCC, “Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate,” <https://www.ipcc.ch/srocc/>.

<sup>9</sup> “Climate Change: How Do We Know?” <https://climate.nasa.gov/evidence/>.

<sup>10</sup> See <http://www.ceres.org/resources/reports>.

<sup>11</sup> “Climate Change and the Just Transition: A Guide for Investor Action,” <https://www.unpri.org/download?ac=9452>.

## CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



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probationary period. The administration has radically scaled back staff on NOAA, which tracks climate change and forecasts extreme weather, as well as any research relating to climate change (<https://www.npr.org/2025/04/25/nx-s1-5361474/noaa-cuts-hurricane-forecast-improvements-trump>). Environmental protections have also been targeted by the current administration, which has been working on minimizing the influence of the EPA and sunseting environmental regulations (<https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/epa-launches-biggest-deregulatory-action-us-history>) which relate to air quality and carbon emissions, among other actions. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which aggregates research has found its US funding withdrawn and the US refusing to participate.

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The social message “Earth’s Climate Crisis” calls for immediate action to address climate change through intergenerational, intragenerational, and intersectional justice. It makes specific requests of corporations, that they not deny the scientific evidence of climate change, and that they work towards a just transition away from fossil fuels. Principles of participation, solidarity, sufficiency and sustainability drawn from *Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice* (1993). The social statement develops this church’s vision of creation while showing us the gift of hope. It calls us to justice through principles of participation, solidarity, sufficiency and sustainability. Specifically, this offer the means of discernment. The social statement calls the church to gather information and engage in dialogue with corporations on how to promote justice for creation (5.E.1-1). Dialogues include implementing comprehensive environmental principles, promoting healthy environments, and cooperation between the public and private sector regarding sustainability. Per ELCA social teaching, all people have a right to equal access and participation in decisions that affect them. In both of ELCA’s social teaching on the environment is enshrined the principle that all life is entitled to be heard and to have their interests considered when decisions are made. The role of the church is to urge decision makers to consider the interests of non-human creation and the most vulnerable humans.

The 1995 Churchwide Assembly passed the resolution “Environment — Energy Audits” (CA95.05.26b). The 1999 Churchwide Assembly (CA99.06.30) expressed great concern about the destructive practice of mountaintop-removal coal mining and urged our church to advocate ending it. The 2001 Churchwide Assembly (CA01.07.57) reaffirmed the commitment of this church to the care of creation, including climate change, as part of the web of complex, interwoven environmental concerns.

In 2005 the Churchwide Assembly passed the resolution “Caring for Creation” (CA05.07.39), encouraging our church to renew the commitment to caring for creation. This was followed in 2007 by the churchwide assembly memorial “Energy Efficiency” (CA07.06.33g) and in 2009 by the Genesis Covenant (CA09.03.09).

In 2013 the Churchwide Assembly passed a resolution on hydraulic fracking and fossil fuels,<sup>128</sup> encouraging all ELCA synods, congregations and members to inform and educate themselves through the lens of the social statements — *Caring for Creation* (1993), *Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All* (1999) and *Genetics, Faith and Responsibility* (2011) — about the issues pertaining to hydraulic fracturing by engaging in 1) grassroots conversation, 2) the sharing of pertinent stories, and 3) workshops and study. The Corporate Social Responsibility team was asked to evaluate the feasibility of developing revised or additional investment screens. The team determined that no additional investment screens were needed but

<sup>128</sup> “Section VII: Report of the Memorials Committee,” <https://www.elca.org/Resources/Churchwide-Assembly#2013>.

## CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
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recommended revision to the ~~Environment Social Criteria Investment Screen~~ [Environment Social Criteria Investment Screen](#). The environment screen was revised and approved by the ELCA Church Council in November 2017 (CC17.11.33k).<sup>13,9</sup>

In 2016, the Churchwide Assembly passed the resolution “[Toward a Responsible Energy Future](#),” calling upon the ELCA churchwide organization to review ELCA social teachings and applicable Corporate Social Responsibility policies and procedures with the goal of not investing in, and removing from its portfolio, the largest fossil fuel companies, as identified by Carbon Tracker, and investing in corporations that are taking a positive step toward a sustainable environment.

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In 2019 the Churchwide Assembly endorsed the [Earth Charter](#).

## RESPONSES

It has become accepted practice for a company to begin this work by evaluating and reporting on greenhouse gas emissions and its total “footprint.” Corporate reporting includes the amount of greenhouse gases from production and use of the corporation’s products, the delivery process for its products, and their suppliers’ emissions. Setting targets for decreasing their emissions and moving toward renewable technologies is often included in reports. In addition, the company can review its probable risk exposure to the financial and competitive consequences of climate change, ensure that it has sufficient expertise to make informed and responsible decisions, and set benchmarks. Climate change strategies and strategic alliances can be built into an overall business plan.

[Recent actions by the federal government that are meant to remove environmental restrictions are antithetical to ELCA social teaching and concurrently present a complex and unwelcome environment for corporations. Immediately after 2024 election the chair of Exxon publicly requested not to withdraw from the Paris Accords. For an oil company executive to make this request so publicly reveals the difficulty posed by the chaos of withdrawing so many environmental guidelines at once. The environment of policy uncertainty, combined with the need on the part of fossil fuel-based corporations to transition to renewable energy, means that fossil fuel companies are not entirely on board with the changes,<sup>11</sup> which hinder long term planning and transition options.](#)

[Corporations know that climate change and extreme weather present risks to employees and resources. By reducing information about climate change, the current administration makes climate risk more difficult to assess. Insurance companies find it more difficult to set premiums without data.<sup>12</sup> Financial institutions who had previously been very willing to publicly commit to net zero emissions in their investing plan<sup>13</sup> withdrew after being the target of legal inquiries from public officials.<sup>14</sup>](#)

<sup>13</sup> 2019 ELCA Churchwide Assembly, [https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Section\\_VII-Report\\_of\\_Memorials\\_Committee.pdf](https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Section_VII-Report_of_Memorials_Committee.pdf).

<sup>14</sup> ELCA Churchwide Assembly, [https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Section\\_VII-Report\\_of\\_Memorials\\_Committee.pdf](https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Section_VII-Report_of_Memorials_Committee.pdf).

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## CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



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### SOCIAL CRITERIA INVESTMENT SCREENS

A screen is a framework of principles, specific to an issue, by which a company's activities are evaluated. The [Environment Social Criteria Investment Screen](#), approved by the ELCA in 1990 and updated in 2007, 2014, [2017](#), and [2017/2024](#), responds to this issue.

### RESOLUTION GUIDELINES FOR ELCA - ISSUE [SPECIFIC](#)<sup>14</sup>[SPECIFIC](#)<sup>15</sup>

1. We support reports on greenhouse gas footprints, as well as the establishment of targets (such as science-based targets) for their reduction, including requests that a company complete the [CDP](#)<sup>16</sup>[CDP](#)<sup>16</sup> reporting process and adhere to the [Global Reporting Initiatives](#) [Global Reporting Initiatives](#) standards.
2. We support disclosure of the economic risks associated with past, present and future emissions and/or impacts on climate change.
3. We support reports on the economic benefits of committing to a substantial reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and a reduction of product emissions.
4. We support reports on public policies that enable and assist with the achievement of emission targets, including policies and procedures for political contributions and expenditures. We support adoption of public policy principles on climate change and reports on how these principles are implemented. Principles may include reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, promoting energy efficiency, investing in clean energy and supporting international action on the issue. We support reports on the plan for just transition, [which may include potential risks and opportunities related to the social impacts of a corporation's transition finance efforts](#).
5. We support reports on economic risks associated with a company's exposure to the myriad of pending and adopted legislation from state, regional and international bodies as it relates to reduction of greenhouse gases, attainment of net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, and the adequacy of such legislation to protect human health, the environment and the company's reputation.
6. We support reports on goals and benchmarks achieved to increase usage of renewable energy and adopt other measures in order to take practical steps to reduce its contribution to climate change, including increasing energy efficiency and conservation.
7. We support requests to adopt quantitative goals to reduce future emissions of carbon dioxide, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxide and heavy metals such as mercury.
8. We support reports and assessments of steps a company is taking to meet new fuel economy and greenhouse gas emissions standards for its transportation fleet.
9. We support adoption of policies for safe, low-carbon energy research, development and production.
10. We support reports on strategic plans reviewing the scenario of demand for significantly lowering fossil fuel use in the future. Scenarios might include pricing of carbon, preparation for physical impacts of climate change and strategies for reducing the risk of unburnable carbon or stranded assets.<sup>17</sup>
11. We support amendments to a company's greenhouse gas emissions policies to observe a moratorium on and/or cease all financing, investment and further involvement in activities

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<sup>15</sup> These guidelines may be used in proxy voting as well as to help determine resolutions to file and dialogues to support. Each resolution guideline should be looked at within the context of the entire resolution language and specific company situation.

<sup>16</sup> Formerly the Carbon Disclosure Project, now known as CDP, <https://www.cdp.net/en>.

<sup>17</sup> See <https://carbontracker.org/resources/>.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



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- that support mountaintop-removal coal mining or the construction of new coal-burning power plants that emit carbon dioxide.
12. We support reports on a company's exposure to climate-change-related costs and risks from the use and or production of coal, and steps taken to reduce those risks.
13. We support reports that publicly disclose a company's current and projected water withdrawals at each thermoelectric power plant.
14. We support requests to measure, mitigate, disclose and adopt quantitative goals to reduce methane emissions and flaring, and reports on such efforts. [We support reports on the reliability of its methane emission disclosures.](#)
15. We support requests to reduce all forms of pollution in operations, productions and use of its primary product, including reducing refrigerant-related emissions from its operations.
16. We support resolutions calling for board candidates with environmental expertise relevant to hydrocarbon exploration and production to be recommended by the nominations committee.
17. We support requests that the board's compensation committee include metrics for reduction of carbon emissions as part of the company's incentive plan for senior executives.
18. We support reports assessing a financial institution's programs to address greenhouse gas emissions from its lending portfolio, which includes how it intends to reduce the GHG emissions associated with its financing activities in alignment with the Paris Agreement and goal of limiting temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Centigrade goal, requiring net-zero emissions, and its exposure to climate-change risk in its lending, investing and financing activities.
19. We support requests to financial institutions to adopt company-wide, quantitative, time-bound targets for reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions associated with the company's underwriting and lending activities, and to issue annual reports discussing its plans and progress toward achieving these targets. The report will include how the company will measure and disclose, across its banking and investment portfolios, the greenhouse gas footprint of its financing activities, as well as its efforts to reduce negative impacts and enhance positive impacts on natural ecosystems and biodiversity.
20. We support reports on lobbying activities (direct and through trade and other associations) regarding alignment with the goal of limiting average global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius per the Paris Climate Agreement and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports, and other expressed goals in stockholders' best interests.
21. We support requests for corporations to adopt corporate-wide targets to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions associated with its lending and investment activities, as defined by best-practice carbon-accounting standards, by 2050.
22. We support reports exploring options as to whether and how the company could reduce its total contribution to climate change by encouraging electrification in its operations.
23. We support reports assessing the public health risks of expanding petrochemical operations and investments in areas increasingly prone to climate-change-induced storms, flooding and sea level rise.
24. [We support reports disclosing if and how the Company is protecting retirement plan beneficiaries—especially those with a longer investment time horizon—from increased future portfolio risk created by present-day investments in high-carbon companies.](#)
25. [We support reporting on the expected impact of climate-related pricing and coverage decisions on the sustainability of its homeowners' insurance customer base under a range of climate scenarios in the near, medium, and long-term.](#)
26. [We support reports assessing a range of climate transition scenarios on the assumptions, costs, estimates, and valuations underlying its financial statements, including those related to long-term commodity and carbon prices, remaining asset lives, future asset retirement obligations, capital expenditures, and impairments.](#)
27. [We support reports assessing the risks and opportunity costs of continued capital investment](#)



## CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



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into high-carbon energy products as compared to renewable energy products.

### RESOLUTION GUIDELINES FOR ELCA – GENERAL

We support practices of good governance, specifically:

- A company having an independent chair or independent lead director.
- Reports on policies and procedures for political contributions and expenditures (both direct and indirect) made with corporate funds.
- Reports on any portion of any dues or similar payments made to any tax-exempt organization that is used for an expenditure or contribution that might be deemed political.
- Guidelines or policies governing the company's political contributions and expenditures.
- Reports on diversity for corporate boards and upper-level management.<sup>18</sup>
- Policies around conflict of interest for executives.<sup>18</sup>

### ENDNOTES

1. Paris Agreement, <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement>
2. IPCC, "Special Report: Global Warming of 1.5°C," <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>
3. IPCC, "Special Report: Climate Change and Land," <https://www.ipcc.ch/srccl/download/>
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5. "Climate Change: How Do We Know?," <https://climate.nasa.gov/evidence/>
6. See <http://www.ceres.org/resources/reports>
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8. "Section VII: Report of the Memorials Committee," <https://www.elca.org/Resources/Churchwide-Assembly#2013>
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11. <https://business.edf.org/insights/exxonmobil-and-shell-lead-an-industry-divide-on-trump-climate-rollback/>
12. <https://www.insurancejournal.com/news/national/2025/05/09/823177.htm>
13. <https://www.blackrock.com/corporate/sustainability/2030-net-zero-statement>
14. <https://earth.org/blackrock-quits-major-net-zero-alliance-ahead-of-trump-inauguration-as-number-of-wall-street-lenders-shying-away-from-sustainability-efforts-grows/>
15. These guidelines may be used in proxy voting as well as to help determine resolutions to file and dialogues to support. Each resolution guideline should be looked at within the context of the entire resolution language and specific company situation.
16. Formerly the Carbon Disclosure Project, now known as CDP, <https://www.cdp.net/en>
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<sup>18</sup> See "Non-discrimination in Business Activities" issue paper.

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314 18. See “Non-discrimination in Business Activities” issue paper.

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**CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

AREA: Climate Change

DOCUMENT TYPE: Issue Paper

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APPROVAL PENDING by Church Council, Month DD, 2025 [anticipated]

**Caring for Creation Climate Risk****BACKGROUND**

From a standpoint of faith, it is reasonable to conclude that the climate crisis is, indeed, a kairos moment. (Earth's Climate Crisis p 7)

“Scripture witnesses to God as creator of the earth and all that dwells therein (Psalm 24:1). The creeds, which guide our reading of Scripture, proclaim God the Father of Jesus Christ as ‘maker of heaven and earth,’ Jesus Christ as the one ‘through [whom] all things were made,’ and the Holy Spirit as ‘the Lord, the giver of life’ (Nicene Creed)... The earth is a planet of beauty and abundance; the earth system is wonderfully intricate and incredibly complex. But today living creatures, and the air, soil and water that support them, face unprecedented threats. Many threats are global; most stem directly from human activity” (“Caring for Creation,” p 2, 4).

As Christians, we understand human beings as fundamentally responsible before God. With the reach of our contemporary human knowledge and the power we employ in new technologies, this responsibility in terms of caring for creation now includes the global future itself. Over a decade ago, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change members adopted a global agreement that went into force in November 2016 — the Paris Agreement.<sup>1</sup> The countries agreed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and agreed to a just transition of the workforce and the creation of decent work and quality jobs.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)<sup>2,3,4</sup> and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration<sup>5</sup> scientists documented the realities of climate change. Climate change results in the earth experiencing more frequent severe and intensified weather patterns and temperature extremes. These extreme weather patterns result in floods, droughts, wildfires and rising sea levels that lead to the degradation of the earth. All of this negatively impacts the earth's inhabitants at unprecedented rates. Some global consequences include forced migration, exacerbation of poverty, national security concerns,

## CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

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## CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

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7. We support requests to adopt quantitative goals to reduce future emissions of carbon dioxide, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxide and heavy metals such as mercury.
8. We support reports and assessments of steps a company is taking to meet new fuel economy and greenhouse gas emissions standards for its transportation fleet.
9. We support adoption of policies for safe, low-carbon energy research, development and production.
10. We support reports on strategic plans reviewing the scenario of demand for significantly lowering fossil fuel use in the future. Scenarios might include pricing of carbon, preparation for physical impacts of climate change and strategies for reducing the risk of unburnable carbon or stranded assets.<sup>17</sup>
11. We support amendments to a company's greenhouse gas emissions policies to observe a moratorium on and/or cease all financing, investment and further involvement in activities that support mountaintop-removal coal mining or the construction of new coal-burning power



## CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

- plants that emit carbon dioxide.
12. We support reports on a company's exposure to climate-change-related costs and risks from the use and or production of coal, and steps taken to reduce those risks.
  13. We support reports that publicly disclose a company's current and projected water withdrawals at each thermoelectric power plant.
  14. We support requests to measure, mitigate, disclose and adopt quantitative goals to reduce methane emissions and flaring, and reports on such efforts. We support reports on the reliability of its methane emission disclosures.
  15. We support requests to reduce all forms of pollution in operations, productions and use of its primary product, including reducing refrigerant-related emissions from its operations.
  16. We support resolutions calling for board candidates with environmental expertise relevant to hydrocarbon exploration and production to be recommended by the nominations committee.
  17. We support requests that the board's compensation committee include metrics for reduction of carbon emissions as part of the company's incentive plan for senior executives.
  18. We support reports assessing a financial institution's programs to address greenhouse gas emissions from its lending portfolio, which includes how it intends to reduce the GHG emissions associated with its financing activities in alignment with the Paris Agreement and goal of limiting temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Centigrade goal, requiring net-zero emissions, and its exposure to climate-change risk in its lending, investing and financing activities.
  19. We support requests to financial institutions to adopt company-wide, quantitative, time-bound targets for reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions associated with the company's underwriting and lending activities, and to issue annual reports discussing its plans and progress toward achieving these targets. The report will include how the company will measure and disclose, across its banking and investment portfolios, the greenhouse gas footprint of its financing activities, as well as its efforts to reduce negative impacts and enhance positive impacts on natural ecosystems and biodiversity.
  20. We support reports on lobbying activities (direct and through trade and other associations) regarding alignment with the goal of limiting average global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius per the Paris Climate Agreement and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports, and other expressed goals in stockholders' best interests.
  21. We support requests for corporations to adopt corporate-wide targets to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions associated with its lending and investment activities, as defined by best-practice carbon-accounting standards, by 2050.
  22. We support reports exploring options as to whether and how the company could reduce its total contribution to climate change by encouraging electrification in its operations.
  23. We support reports assessing the public health risks of expanding petrochemical operations and investments in areas increasingly prone to climate-change-induced storms, flooding and sea level rise.
  24. We support reports disclosing if and how the Company is protecting retirement plan beneficiaries—especially those with a longer investment time horizon—from increased future portfolio risk created by present-day investments in high-carbon companies.
  25. We support reporting on the expected impact of climate-related pricing and coverage decisions on the sustainability of its homeowners' insurance customer base under a range of climate scenarios in the near, medium, and long-term.
  26. We support reports assessing a range of climate transition scenarios on the assumptions, costs, estimates, and valuations underlying its financial statements, including those related to long-term commodity and carbon prices, remaining asset lives, future asset retirement obligations, capital expenditures, and impairments.
  27. We support reports assessing the risks and opportunity costs of continued capital investment into high-carbon energy products as compared to renewable energy products.

## CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

## RESOLUTION GUIDELINES FOR ELCA – GENERAL

We support practices of good governance, specifically:

- A company having an independent chair or independent lead director.
- Reports on policies and procedures for political contributions and expenditures (both direct and indirect) made with corporate funds.
- Reports on any portion of any dues or similar payments made to any tax-exempt organization that is used for an expenditure or contribution that might be deemed political.
- Guidelines or policies governing the company's political contributions and expenditures.
- Reports on diversity for corporate boards and upper-level management.
- Policies around conflict of interest for executives.<sup>18</sup>

## ENDNOTES

1. Paris Agreement, <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement>
2. IPCC, "Special Report: Global Warming of 1.5oC," <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>
3. IPCC, "Special Report: Climate Change and Land," <https://www.ipcc.ch/srccl/download/>
4. IPCC, "Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate," <https://www.ipcc.ch/srocc/>
5. "Climate Change: How Do We Know?," <https://climate.nasa.gov/evidence/>
6. See <http://www.ceres.org/resources/reports>
7. "Climate Change and the Just Transition: A Guide for Investor Action," <https://www.unpri.org/download?ac=9452>
8. "Section VII: Report of the Memorials Committee," <https://www.elca.org/Resources/Churchwide-Assembly#2013>
9. 2019 ELCA Churchwide Assembly, [https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Section\\_VII-Report\\_of\\_Memorials\\_Committee.pdf](https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Section_VII-Report_of_Memorials_Committee.pdf)
10. ELCA Churchwide Assembly, [https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Section\\_VII-Report\\_of\\_Memorials\\_Committee.pdf](https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Section_VII-Report_of_Memorials_Committee.pdf)
11. <https://business.edf.org/insights/exxonmobil-and-shell-lead-an-industry-divide-on-trump-climate-rollback/>
12. <https://www.insurancejournal.com/news/national/2025/05/09/823177.htm>
13. <https://www.blackrock.com/corporate/sustainability/2030-net-zero-statement>
14. <https://earth.org/blackrock-quits-major-net-zero-alliance-ahead-of-trump-inauguration-as-number-of-wall-street-lenders-shying-away-from-sustainability-efforts-grows/>
15. These guidelines may be used in proxy voting as well as to help determine resolutions to file and dialogues to support. Each resolution guideline should be looked at within the context of the entire resolution language and specific company situation.
16. Formerly the Carbon Disclosure Project, now known as CDP, <https://www.cdp.net/en>
17. See <https://carbontracker.org/resources/>
18. See "Non-discrimination in Business Activities" [issue paper](#).

## 7.12. Social Media

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America understands that social media can be helpful and rewarding ways to share one's life and opinions with family, friends, and co-workers around the world. Nonetheless, the use of social media also presents certain risks and carries with it certain responsibilities. This policy, which applies to all ELCA employees, is intended to assist employees in making responsible decisions about use of social media. The churchwide organization has additional requirements for people who are employed to create and use social media communications as part of their employment responsibilities.

For purposes of this policy, "social media" is defined as all means of communicating or posting information or content of any sort on the Internet, whether or not associated with the ELCA, including postings to one's own or someone else's blog, journal, diary, personal website, social networking or affinity website, web bulletin board, or chat room.

The same principles and guidelines found in these Personnel Policies apply to activities online. Ultimately, each employee is solely responsible for what they post online.

**Maintain confidentiality.** Never divulge information that would be considered confidential.

**Observe all other policies of the ELCA.** Refrain from postings that contain discriminatory remarks, harassment (sexual or any other type), or threats of violence, or that constitute inappropriate or unlawful conduct.

**Be respectful.** Always be fair and courteous to fellow employees, members, suppliers, and other people who work with the churchwide organization, synods, or congregations. Keep in mind that resolving work-related complaints by speaking directly with co-workers or supervisors is more effective than by posting to a social media outlet. Nevertheless, an employee who decides to post complaints or criticism must avoid posting anything that reasonably could be viewed as malicious, obscene, threatening, or intimidating; that disparages fellow employees or synods or congregations within the ELCA; or that might constitute harassment or bullying. Examples of such conduct might include offensive posts meant to intentionally harm someone's reputation and posts that could contribute to a hostile work environment on the basis of race, sex, disability, religion, or any other legally protected status.

**Be honest and accurate.** Make sure that posted information or news is honest and accurate, and if a mistake is made, make sure that it is corrected quickly. Be open about any previous posts that have been altered. Remember that the Internet archives almost everything; therefore, even deleted postings can be searched. Never post any rumors or information known to be false about the churchwide organization, any synod or congregation, or other employees.

**Represent yourself accurately.** When participating in an online community and commenting on topics related to the ELCA, employees must make clear that they are speaking for themselves and not on behalf of the church. Do not create a link from any blog, website, or other social media site to an ELCA website without identifying yourself as an ELCA employee.

**Do not post at work.** Refrain from using social media while on work time or on ELCA equipment unless such activities are related to your duties or have been specifically authorized by a supervisor. Employees may not use their ELCA email address to register on social networks or other sites for personal use without approval.

**Check comments by others.** Any photos or messages that are linked or “tagged” from “friends” and attached to employee site(s) or profile(s) that violate these guidelines are not permitted and, if not promptly removed from the employee’s own page or site, will be attributed to the employee.

**No Retaliation.** The ELCA prohibits taking negative action against any employee for reporting possible deviation from this policy or for cooperating in an investigation of a possible deviation.

Employees who violate this policy may be subject to corrective action up to and including termination of employment.



Proposed Church Council Committee Membership				
Budget and Finance	Christian Community and Leadership	Faith, Society, and Innovation	Legal and Constitutional Review	Service and Justice
Pr. Lisa Ahlness ( <i>chair</i> )	Ms. Sheena Foster ( <i>chair</i> )	Ms. Jamie Bruesehoff ( <i>chair</i> )	Mr. Mitch McCartney ( <i>chair</i> )	Mr. Iván Perez ( <i>chair</i> )
Pr. Heather Brown	Mr. Hans Giller	Pr. Gwendolyn King	Pr. Leroy Cannon	Ms. Kristy Henriksen
Mr. Rindra Josoa	Mr. Joel Miller	Ms. Olivia Martin-Call	Ms. Jennifer Trom	Pr. Daniel Collins
Deacon Kari Olsen	Ms. Linda Rivera	Mr. Ben Caseley	Pr. Ryan Anderson	Ms. Deidre Hayes
Ms. Patricia "Pat" Harper	Pr. Chad Huebner	Mr. Tim Hiller	Ms. Spencer Sanders	Pr. Alvaro Nova
Ms. Jessi Grieser	Pr. Moses Penumaka	Pr. Barbara Rossing	Mr. Andrew Stevens	Ms. Deborah "Deb" Nyquist
Mr. Moses Kavishe	Ms. Terri Robertson	Ms. Jillian Stierwalt	Secretary Sue Rothmeyer	Mr. Matt Schur
Treasurer Lori Fedyk	Ms. Emma Witt	Mr. Christopher Vergara		
	CWO Staff: Sara Cutter (interim ED)	CWO Staff: Wyvetta Bullock CWO Staff: Rahel Williams (interim ED)	Secretary-elect Lucille "CeCee" Mills	CWO Staff: Khader El-Yateem
Bishop Brenda Bos	Bishop Christopher deForest	Bishop Scott Johnson	Bishop Suzanne Dillahunt	Bishop Amy Current
Bishop Bill Gohl	Bishop Kevin Strickland	Bishop Meggan Manlove		Bishop Craig Schweitzer



Preliminary Report

# 2025 CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY EVALUATION

Office of the Secretary  
Research & Evaluation

Adam DeHoek, Ph.D.









































































































































































































































































































































































































# Service & Justice Committee

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# Service and Justice Committee

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Mr. Iván A Pérez '28 (chair)

Ms. Kristy Henriksen '28

Pr. Alvaro Nova '31

Ms. Deidre Hayes '31

Ms. Deborah “Deb” Nyquist '31

Mr. Matt Schur '31

Liaison Bishop Amy Current

Liaison Bishop Craig Schweitzer

Pr. Khader El-Yateem, Executive Director

Pr. Barbara Lund, Senior Director, Operations

# What is Service and Justice?

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The Service and Justice Committee advocates for, supports, evaluates and acts upon policies and strategies recommended by the Service and Justice unit. This unit fosters and facilitates the ELCA's engagement in service and promotes efforts to call and act for justice. The unit does this through five (5) leadership teams:

1. Administration
2. Building Resilient Communities
  - World Hunger
  - AMMPARO
  - Education & Networks
  - Lutheran Disaster Response
3. Global Mission
4. Ministries of Diverse Cultures & Communities
5. Witness in Society

# Corporate Social Responsibility Documents

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*“We believe God calls the church, both corporately and individually, to use everything committed to its care to steward God’s creation, pursue justice, care for people in need and seek peace.”*

[ELCA](#) | [Corporate Social Responsibility](#) | Dec 5, 2019

# Service and Justice Action

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Recommended: That the Church Council takes the following action:

- To approve the Artificial Intelligence Issue Paper;

Recommended: That the Church Council approves the following *en bloc* 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.