



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

April 14, 2015

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

FROM: The Rev. Wm Chris Boerger, secretary

SUBJECT: Report of Actions of the Church Council (April 9-12, 2015)

The Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) met at the Lutheran Center, Chicago, Ill., April 9-12, 2015. Here is a summary of particular actions along with background information.

1. BISHOP JAMES R. CRUMLEY.....	PAGE 1
2. WORD AND SERVICE TASK FORCE.	PAGE 2
3. BISHOP'S THINK TANK ON MISSION FUNDING.	PAGE 3
4. PILOT PROJECT FOR A FINANCIAL SERVICE ORGANIZATION..	PAGE 6
5. 2014 CHURCHWIDE ORGANIZATION OPERATIONAL PLAN REPORT.....	PAGE 7
6. SOCIAL MESSAGE ON GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE.	PAGE 7
7. DECLARATION ON THE WAY.	PAGE 8
8. IMMIGRATION REFORM-WELCOMING MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES.....	PAGE 8
9. CONFIRMATION (MOTION O).	PAGE 9
10. VOTING RIGHTS.	PAGE 10
11. FULL INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR HEARING AIDS.	PAGE 10
12. ELECTIONS OF CHURCHWIDE UNIT EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS.	PAGE 11
13. SPENDING AUTHORIZATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2015.	PAGE 11
14. AUDIT COMMITTEE REPORT..	PAGE 12
15. TRINITY LUTHERAN SEMINARY BYLAWS.....	PAGE 12
16. ELECTIONS TO COMMITTEES AND BOARDS.	PAGE 12

1. BISHOP JAMES R. CRUMLEY

From an ELCA news release:

The Rev. James Robert Crumley Jr., bishop of the former Lutheran Church in America, died April 7 of complications from a fall. He was 90.

Crumley was bishop of the Lutheran Church in America from 1980 to 1987, president from 1978 to 1980, and secretary of the former denomination from 1974 to 1978. He was a member of the Commission for a New Lutheran Church, which planned the merger of three churches — Lutheran Church in America, American Lutheran Church and the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches — to form the ELCA in January 1988. Prior to serving as secretary, Crumley served as a parish pastor from 1951 to 1974.

Church Council action:

To adopt the following resolution:

The ELCA Church Council gives thanks to Almighty God for the life and faithful service of Bishop James R. Crumley. As it meets for its biannual meeting during this Easter Octave the council offers its condolences and sympathy to Bishop Crumley's family and friends upon his death. The council

gives thanks for his role in helping form the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, his service as bishop of the Lutheran Church in America, and his commitment to global Lutheranism and ecumenism.

[Note: Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton attended the funeral of Bishop James R. Crumley held Saturday, April 11, 2015, at Bethel Lutheran Church, White Rock, S.C.]

2. WORD AND SERVICE TASK FORCE

In November 2012, the Church Council voted [CC12.11.38]:

To receive with gratitude and thanks the interim report of the Word and Service Task Force, convened in response to Church Council action [CC10.11.64] taken in November 2010;

To offer profound appreciation and thanks to persons who serve as associates in ministry, deaconesses, and diaconal ministers on the lay rosters of this church;

To affirm the preliminary conclusion of the Word and Service Task Force that this church should move toward creation of a single, unified lay roster of Word and Service ministry, subject to further review and recommendation by the Conference of Bishops and the Church Council and approval by the Churchwide Assembly;

To authorize the Word and Service Task Force to continue its work in order to facilitate the creation of such a unified roster, to develop a process outlining how the existing lay rosters would be closed, and to provide a process for transition of existing associates in ministry, diaconal ministers, and deaconesses into such a new roster, and, in collaboration with the Office of the Secretary, to consider and propose possible amendments to the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* to accomplish its recommendations;

To authorize the Executive Committee of the Church Council to expand the membership of the Word and Service Task Force;

To acknowledge the recommendation to form a task force to review the study “Together in Ministry” and to recognize that the subject of this request will be addressed by the Office of the Presiding Bishop in conjunction with the report and recommendations on theological education that respond to the report of the Mission Funding Task Force; and

To authorize the Executive Committee of the Church Council to act as necessary to facilitate the work of the Word and Service Task Force, including the authority to authorize additional expenditures.

During deliberations of the Word and Service Task Force, the question of whether those on the unified roster should be ordained arose. The task force determined that the question was beyond the scope of its responsibilities and asked the Church Council to appoint a working group that would deal specifically with the matter of ordination and its implications and bring recommendations to the 2016 Churchwide Assembly. The task force recommended that the working group include representatives of the Church Council, Office of the Presiding Bishop, Conference of Bishops, Word and Service Task Force, and Association of Teaching Theologians.

In November 2013, the Church Council voted [CC13.11.65]:

To thank the Word and Service Task Force for its ongoing work to manage the transition from three lay rosters to one unified Word and Service roster;

To receive the request of the task force to appoint a separate working group to consider the question of ordination for this roster;

To request the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit, in consultation with the Conference of Bishops and Office of the Presiding Bishop, to identify possible individuals, including bishops, to serve on a working group and to provide those names to the Executive Committee;

To authorize the Executive Committee to appoint a working group to consider the question of ordination of the unified Word and Service roster; and

To request that the working group bring progress reports to Conference of Bishops and Church Council beginning in fall 2014.

In 2014, the Executive Committee appointed members of the working group, which became known as the Entrance Rite Discernment Working Group.

At its March 2015 meeting, the Conference of Bishops reviewed the Word and Service Task Force report as well as a report and update from the Entrance Rite Discernment Working Group. The conference forwarded its recommendations to the Church Council.

Church Council action:

To receive with gratitude the recommendation from the Conference of Bishops regarding the Word and Service roster;

To recommend continuing the work of developing a proposal to unify the three existing lay rosters into one Word and Service roster and to bring this proposal to the November 2015 meeting of the Church Council;

To affirm the recommendation to delay a proposal on the appropriate entrance rite and related issues until the November 2018 meeting of the Church Council;

To ask the Entrance Rite Discernment Working Group to continue its work and to develop for use beginning at the 2016 Churchwide Assembly a process to engage conversation around the appropriate entrance rite for the unified word and service roster and to address the related issues;

To work together as a church to define issues of leadership and refine recommendations about rosters and entrance rites through a process of intentional, open conversation seeking God's guidance for the sake of the world; and

To continue to seek ways to facilitate broad-based discussion and discernment around leadership within this church.

3. BISHOP'S THINK TANK ON MISSION FUNDING

Since 1988, mission support shared by congregations for the work of synods and the churchwide organization has declined both as a percentage of total giving, designated and undesignated, and in actual dollars. In 1990, total mission support was \$119 million. In 2011, mission support was \$50.4 million. Adjusted for inflation, from 1990 to 2011, mission support has declined 43 percent for synods and 56 percent for the churchwide organization.

The Church Council authorized the appointment of a study design group in March 2009 and established the Living into the Future Together: Renewing the Ecology of the ELCA (LIFT) Task Force in November 2009. The purpose of the study was stated in the task force's charter:

... to recognize the evolving societal and economic changes of the twenty years since the formation of this church and to evaluate the organization, governance and interrelationships among this church's expressions in the light of those changes. The intended result of the Ecology Study Task Force's work is a report and recommendations that will position this church for the future and explore new possibilities for participating in God's mission.

The task force prepared a report and recommendations for the 2011 Churchwide Assembly, which adopted a series of resolutions to implement certain task force recommendations.

The 2011 Churchwide Assembly voted [CA11.03.07]:

To request the Conference of Bishops, in consultation with synod leaders and the churchwide organization, to prepare a report and recommendations for the November 2012 meeting of the Church Council for consideration by the 2013 Churchwide Assembly that:

- Describes patterns of synodical life in the ELCA that effectively support vital congregations, mission growth and outreach;
- Proposes a pattern or set of patterns that will allow synods to receive and distribute financial resources to support the whole ministry of this church;
- Builds on the Blue Ribbon Committee report of 2007 and includes recommendations for renewed, sustainable financial support for the mission and ministries of this church, including funding for theological education;
- Includes strategies for increased mission vitality that may include consideration for redrawing synod boundaries; and

- Recommends revision of the constitutional responsibilities of bishops and synods to emphasize synods as catalysts for mission in the changing context and culture.

In response to the above resolution, the Executive Committee of the Conference of Bishops appointed nine bishops, one from each region of the ELCA, to meet on behalf of the conference and to bring recommendations to the March 2012 meeting of the Conference of Bishops. While the Group of Nine was successful in identifying important issues critical to the future of this church, it did not make a specific proposal with regard to a pattern or set of patterns that will allow synods to receive and distribute financial resources to support the whole ministry of this church. In 2012, the group proposed the appointment of a small group including the officers of the ELCA and representatives of the Conference of Bishops for further discussion of the issue.

In April 2012, the Church Council voted [CC12.04.08]:

To thank the Conference of Bishops and its Group of Nine for the work it has accomplished in response to the 2011 Churchwide Assembly action [CA11.03.07] related to the report and recommendations of the task force on Living into the Future Together: Renewing the Ecology of the ELCA;

To appoint Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson and Vice President Carlos E. Peña to a task force on funding the mission of the ELCA;

To authorize Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson, in consultation with Bishop Jessica R. Crist, chair of the Conference of Bishops, to appoint the following people to the task force: a synodical bishop, a synodical vice president, a parish pastor, a Church Council member, and a churchwide organization Administrative Team member;

To affirm the Churchwide Assembly's request that the task force address the following issues:

1. propose a pattern or a set of patterns that will allow synods to receive and share financial resources to support the whole ministry of this church; and
2. build on the Blue Ribbon Committee report of 2007 and include recommendations for renewed, sustainable financial support for the mission and ministries of this church, including funding for theological education.

To request that a report and recommendations be brought to the October 2012 meeting of the Conference of Bishops to facilitate the conference's fulfilling of the request of the 2011 Churchwide Assembly to bring a report and recommendations to the November 2012 meeting of the Church Council.

The Mission Funding Task Force prepared a report and proposal for the October 2012 meeting of the Conference of Bishops. Members of the conference found significant concerns with the proposal and declined to endorse it. The task force decided not to forward the proposal to the Church Council. The task force noted, in its report to the November 2012 meeting of the Church Council, that the current mission support system remained in effect and that "the issue of renewed, sustainable financial support for theological education in the ELCA . . . deserved consideration beyond the scope of the current task force."

The Church Council asked [CC12.11.33] that "the churchwide organization, in consultation with the Conference of Bishops, continue to build the case for the support of a church that shares a living, daring confidence in God's grace, including creating a comprehensive strategy for growing stewardship and increasing awareness of all the ministries of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America" and encouraged "this church in all its expressions to identify and leverage all networks within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to assist in the interpretation of and financial support for its ministries, and to endorse the proposal to develop a major comprehensive campaign on the 25th anniversary of the ELCA, focused on giving to mission and ministry."

Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton assembled one bishop from each of the nine regions of this church in a "mission funding think tank," convened in 2014 by the Rev. H. Julian Gordy, bishop of the Southeastern Synod.

The Conference of Bishops reviewed a draft of the task force's report at its March 2015 meeting and offered feedback to inform the task force's final report and proposal to the Church Council in April 2015.

Church Council actions:

To thank Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton for initiating the Bishop's Think Tank on Mission Funding;

To receive with gratitude the Bishop's Think Tank on Mission Funding report and recommendations and thank the think tank for its work;

To affirm the intention of Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton to convene a team to generate recommendations to sharpen our priorities as a church and bring greater clarity to what this church will do and will not do in order to serve God's mission more faithfully and effectively in the years to come; and

To affirm the need for and encourage ongoing leadership, discussion and analysis among congregations, synods, institutions and agencies of the church, the churchwide organization and the Church Council on the urgency of the need to explore new methods of mission support for the benefit of the whole church.

To replace the present reporting form of synodical mission support with a format that expresses thanksgiving for all gifts when reporting to the Church Council;

To acknowledge that uniform percentage guidelines (i.e., 55/45) for mission support are no longer appropriate across all synods;

To approve the development, in consultation with the Conference of Bishops and the Office of the Presiding Bishop, of a contextually sensitive, substantive and collaborative process which will result in synod-specific percentage goals for each of the 65 synods by no later than the April 2018 meeting of the Church Council;

To request that the Budget and Finance Committee monitor the consultation process with a goal of recommending benchmarks and guidelines to be used in establishing the synod-specific goals no later than the April 2018 meeting of the Church Council;

To recommend the hiring of the equivalent of a full-time director for mission support to construct and oversee this process in collaboration with the Conference of Bishops, the Mission Advancement unit and the Office of the Presiding Bishop; and

To request that the Office of the Presiding Bishop provide more information about staffing needs and budget impact to support that position with the necessary funding and staffing to accomplish its goals to the November 2015 meeting of the Church Council.

To endorse the principle that appropriate multiple streams of income may be used to provide funding for the mission of any expression of this church;

To instruct the Mission Advancement unit, in consultation with the Office of the Secretary, to draft a revised bylaw change to expand the definition of synodical mission support to reflect the use of multiple sources of income to fulfill the stated dollar amount of a synod's mission support commitment; and

To request that the Office of the Secretary consider this bylaw amendment as it reviews possible amendments to the Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for the 2016 Churchwide Assembly.

To instruct the director for mission support, in collaboration with synodical bishops and relevant churchwide units, to take necessary steps to:

- Assess current and prospective resources to assist congregations and synods to assist them in the development of multiple streams of income;
- Develop a plan to equip rostered leaders to advocate for a renewed commitment to mission support;
- Assess current and prospective resources for synod and congregational consultation processes and materials; and

To request that the director for mission support provide at least an annual progress report to the Budget and Finance Committee.

To affirm a three-year experiment, beginning in 2016 and involving five synods (New England Synod, Nebraska Synod, Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod, Lower Susquehanna Synod and Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod) to form a “learning community” to explore whether retaining the new and renewing ELCA grants for ministries and the total compensation for directors for evangelical mission will produce an increase in mission support and more effective management and oversight for the sake of mission;

To request that the five synods in the experiment continue to remit the balance of their mission support percentage goal to the churchwide organization during the duration of the experiment;

To ask the director for mission support to consult with the five synods and to provide updates to the Church Council throughout the duration of the experiment;

To request that the Office of the Treasurer provide financial analysis related to the experiment to the November 2015 meeting of the Church Council; and

To ask the five synods in the experiment, in consultation with the relevant churchwide units, to provide additional details regarding the structure of the synod experiments to the November 2015 meeting of the Church Council.

To affirm and acknowledge the efforts of various synods in deepening and strengthening relationships among the expressions of this church;

To encourage every synodical bishop and synod council to seek regular opportunities to build relationships and engage in discussions with congregations about the financial implications of how we are church together; and

To invite the Conference of Bishops, the Budget and Finance Committee and the Church Council to continued consideration of mission support experiments, especially those that are intentionally geared to support synods that are the most financially vulnerable.

4. PILOT PROJECT FOR A FINANCIAL SERVICE ORGANIZATION

In its November 2012 report to the Church Council, the Mission Funding Task Force advised:

1. to encourage and invite synods to partner on a regional basis or in groupings of synods to pilot ways to strengthen and build mission support, including development of approaches that emphasize stewardship, promote lateral accountability among synods and their leaders, and enhance collaboration with the churchwide organization;
2. to request that the Mission Investment Fund explore the development of a remittance process system involving synod accounts in order to improve financial controls, accountability and reporting, to strengthen the mission funding system of this church, and to invite synods to participate in such a system; and
3. to develop, with the Conference of Bishops and the churchwide organization, a system for monitoring the pilot programs established by synods and the remittance process system involving synod accounts developed by the Mission Investment Fund for the purpose of making a report and possible recommendations to the 2016 Churchwide Assembly.

Church Council action (CC12.11.32)

...

To request that the Mission Investment Fund explore the development of a remittance process system that would improve the process for transmitting mission support and other funds designated for synod and churchwide ministries, strengthen financial controls, enhance financial reporting and access to timely information, and to invite and encourage synods to explore the possibility of participating in such a system; and

To request that the Conference of Bishops and the Church Council monitor the pilot programs established by synods and the development of a remittance process system for synods by the Mission Investment Fund for the purpose of making a report and possible recommendations to the 2016 Churchwide Assembly.

Response from the Mission Investment Fund (April 2015)

At the request of Church Council at its fall 2012 meeting, the Mission Investment Fund (MIF) began exploring an administrative process for handling payments from congregations to synods. Last spring, MIF informed the Church Council that handling only those payments would not be a feasible business model.

However, MIF believes that a full-service Financial Services Organization (FSO) could be beneficial to the synods. A full-service FSO could handle all accounting-related activities for each of the synods—including cash management, accounts receivable, accounts payable, payroll, and accounting and reporting. Benefits would include the reduction of overall costs or reallocation of resources to program activities; improved internal financial controls; reduction in the cost of synod audits; consistent individual synod data; and aggregate data for comparison and trend analysis.

As such, MIF has proposed an FSO pilot implementation of six to eight synods to begin in 2016. MIF invited a small group of bishops to discuss a potential pilot FSO during the Conference of Bishops meeting in Chicago in early March 2015, and MIF has scheduled additional detailed discussions with six synods for the upcoming weeks.

We look forward to these discussions with the synods and hope to sign on the appropriate number to begin the pilot.

Church Council action:

- To receive the response from the Mission Investment Fund regarding a remittance process system;**
- To affirm the experiment of a full-service Financial Services Organization pilot program with certain synods; and**
- To thank the Mission Investment Fund for its ongoing work to improve and strengthen this church's financial capacity to serve God's mission.**

5. 2014 CHURCHWIDE ORGANIZATION OPERATIONAL PLAN REPORT

Under the direction of the Rev. M. Wyvetta Bullock, executive for administration in the Office of the Presiding Bishop, the churchwide organization has prepared Churchwide Organization Operational Plans for 2011–2013 and for 2014–2016.

At its November 2013 meeting, the Church Council voted [CC13.11.59] “to affirm the strategic intent of Part A of the 2014–2016 Churchwide Operational Plan.” And at its April 2014 meeting, the council approved [CC14.04.09] “the Planning and Reporting Framework of the Churchwide Organization Operational Plan.”

The three-year operational plan is the basis of annual plans. The Church Council's Planning and Evaluation Committee uses the plans to conduct ongoing reviews of the work of the churchwide units. The council receives regular reports on planning and evaluating the work of the churchwide organization.

Church Council action:

- To receive the ELCA Churchwide Organization Operational Plan Report for 2014; and**
- To thank the staff of the churchwide organization for their ongoing work.**

6. SOCIAL MESSAGE ON GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

In November 2013, the Task Force on Women and Justice: One in Christ, which was developing a social statement on justice for women, asked the Church Council that a social message be developed to address violence correlated with gender. The council voted [CC13.11.63]:

To thank the ELCA Task Force on Women and Justice: One in Christ for directing the attention of this church to the levels of gender-based violence in U.S. society and globally; and

To authorize staff of the theological discernment team, in accordance with “Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns” (2011), to initiate an ELCA social message development process on gender-based violence with council action to be taken at the November 2014 Church Council meeting.

At its April 2014 meeting, the Church Council voted [CC14.04.05]:

To reaffirm the commitment of the Church Council to the completion of a social message on gender-based violence that speaks carefully and comprehensively to the issues;

To extend the time for the development of the social message until the April 2015 Church Council meeting; and

To ask staff to provide progress reports to the fall 2014 meetings of the Conference of Bishops and the Church Council.

The Conference of Bishops and Church Council received progress reports on the development of the social message at their Fall 2014 meetings.

At its April 2015 meeting, the Church Council received a draft “Basic Sketch” and a draft “Social message on gender-based violence” from the theological discernment team of the Office of the Presiding Bishop. The council’s Program and Services Committee reviewed the drafts and, in consultation with members of the team, recommended the action taken by the Church Council.

Church Council action:

To acknowledge the complexities of responding comprehensively to the social issue of gender-based violence and to thank the theological discernment team for its diligent work on the issue; and

To extend the time for the development of the social message on gender-based violence until the November 2015 meeting of the Church Council.

7. DECLARATION ON THE WAY

In response to an international invitation, the Rev. Donald J. McCoid, director for ecumenical and inter-religious relations, worked with the Bishops Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops to assemble a team of Lutheran and Roman Catholic theologians. The team is compiling the agreements amassed by 50 years of national and international Lutheran-Catholic dialogues. The compilation, known as a “Declaration on the Way” to Unity, may be submitted to an international commission in the summer of 2015. The team’s goal is to have the ecumenical document ready for presentation to the churches in commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

Church Council action:

To affirm the continued work on the ecumenical document, “Declaration (in Via) on the Way.”

8. IMMIGRATION REFORM-WELCOMING MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

Churchwide Assembly action (CA13.03.09)

To receive with gratitude the memorial from the Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod related to 75 years of welcoming immigrants and refugees through Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS);

To declare Sunday, June 22, 2014, as Refugee Sunday; and

To request the presiding bishop to:

- invite congregations to tell the stories of their acts of welcome to refugees and immigrants—signs of witness, mercy, and life together;
- utilize ELCA communications mechanisms to share these stories and inspire action throughout 2014; and
- encourage congregations and organizations to engage with and support the LIRS mission of welcoming the stranger through gifts of time, talent, and treasure.

Background:

The Church Council asked the Office of the Presiding Bishop, in consultation with the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit and the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, to bring a report on its activities related to welcoming migrants and refugees by the April 2015 meeting of the Church Council.

The full response from the Office of the Presiding Bishop is provided in the “Report of Church Council Responses to Synod Resolutions and Churchwide Assembly Actions (April 9-12, 2015).”

Church Council action:

To receive the report of the Office of the Presiding Bishop regarding Refugee Sunday and activities related to welcoming migrants and refugees; and

To give thanks to the Office of the Presiding Bishop, the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit and the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service for their ongoing work in engaging and supporting congregations and organizations to be places of welcome for refugees and migrants.

9. CONFIRMATION (MOTION O)

RESOLVED, that the ELCA discontinue published use of the term “confirmation” as it relates to the education tradition of the ELCA from all future publications (curricula, model constitutions, hymnals, etc.); and be it further

RESOLVED, that the congregations of the ELCA discontinue practice of “confirmation” as it relates to the ritual of passage for youth or young adults into voting membership in congregations; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA fully implement Luther’s doctrine of vocation as the rationale and basis for preparation for lifelong discipleship; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA encourage congregations to develop and establish rituals of passage into adult discipleship and ministry, such that those congregations’ baptized members who recognize and who are able to articulate God’s call to practice their various vocations and Spiritual gifts as disciples of Christ in the world also receive the public recognition and affirmation of those gifts and vocations by the congregations into which and among whom those individuals live out their vocations and Spiritual gifts; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the congregations of the ELCA become centers of lifelong and intergenerational study of Scripture and catechesis, worship and service, prayer and giving; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the congregations of the ELCA end “confirmation” as ritualized right of youth who have completed required steps and requirements.

Background:

The 2013 Churchwide Assembly referred the above motion to the Church Council in consultation with the Conference of Bishops. In November 2013, the council referred the motion to the Office of the Presiding Bishop, in consultation with the Conference of Bishops and the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit, with the request that a report and possible recommendations be presented to the April 2015 meeting of the Church Council.

Response from the Office of the Presiding Bishop (April 2015)

Motion O from the 2013 Churchwide Assembly was referred to the Office of the Presiding Bishop for a report and possible recommendations to the April 2015 meeting of the Church Council.

In the third, fourth and fifth resolved clauses, the resolution requests actions that many ELCA congregations have already undertaken and that the ELCA churchwide organization and synods through directors for evangelical mission are actively encouraging. The first, second and sixth resolved clauses ask for the ELCA as a corporate body to act in a way that does not honor the principle of interdependence, specifically congregational decision-making about effective ministry in local contexts.

For these reasons the Office of the Presiding Bishop, after consulting with the Conference of Bishops and the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit, recommends no additional action.

Church Council action:

To receive the response from the Office of the Presiding Bishop regarding confirmation;

To acknowledge the continued work undertaken by ELCA congregations and synods in equipping people for lifelong discipleship and ministry;

To decline to discontinue the use of the term “confirmation” in ELCA publications;

To decline to discontinue the practice of confirmation as it relates to the ritual of passage for youth or young adults into voting membership in congregations; and

To decline to ask congregations of the ELCA to end “confirmation” as a ritualized right of youth who have completed required steps and requirements.

10. VOTING RIGHTS

Churchwide Assembly action (CA13.06.29)

RESOLVED, that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America call upon local, state, and federal governments to guarantee the right to vote to all citizens and to discourage or eliminate all laws, ordinances or regulations that would have the effect of racial and ethnic discrimination in the exercise of that right; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Presiding Bishop and synodical bishops of this church be urged to support publically and stand as an advocate to proposed local, state, or federal legislation and regulations that, consistent with this church's social teaching, seek to guarantee to all citizens the right to vote; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Conference of Bishops be requested to include, as part of one of its 2014 meetings, an educational session on voting rights; and be it further

RESOLVED, that members, congregations, and synods of this church be encouraged to "promote public life worthy of the name" by speaking out as an advocate and engaging in local efforts such as voter registration and supporting legislation to guarantee the right to vote to all citizens; and be it further

RESOLVED, that appropriate churchwide staff be requested to identify and publicize resources for members, congregations, and synods of this church to advocate for voting rights for all citizens.

Background:

The Church Council referred [CC13.11.69i] Motion H: A Social Policy Resolution Concerning the Guarantee of Voting Rights to All Citizens to the Office of the Presiding Bishop, in consultation with the Conference of Bishops and the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit, with the request that a report be presented by the April 2015 Church Council meeting.

The full response from the Office of the Presiding Bishop is provided in the "Report of Church Council Responses to Synod Resolutions and Churchwide Assembly Actions (April 9-12, 2015)." The response described an educational session that the Conference of Bishops held in October 2014 with the author of the motion and experts in voting rights and reform. The response also detailed advocacy efforts of the churchwide organization in civil rights.

Church Council action:

**To receive the report from the Office of the Presiding Bishop regarding voting rights;
To thank the Conference of Bishops for its active engagement on the issue of voting rights; and
To affirm the resolve by the 2013 Churchwide Assembly that the members, congregations, and synods of this church be encouraged to speak out as advocates, engage in local efforts such as voter registration, and support legislation to guarantee the right to vote for all citizens.**

11. FULL INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR HEARING AIDS

The 2014 Delaware-Maryland Synod Assembly referred the following resolution to the Delaware-Maryland Synod Council, which forwarded the resolution to the Church Council's Executive Committee for proper referral and disposition under the bylaws and continuing resolutions of this church.

RESOLVED, that the Delaware-Maryland Synod memorialize the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in assembly to instruct Portico Benefits Services to provide full insurance coverage for hearing aids for the rostered professionals and its members.

The Church Council's Executive Committee referred the resolution to Portico Benefit Services "for a report, or for a timeline on when this resolution will receive further attention, to be presented to the April 2015 Church Council meeting."

The full response from Portico Benefit Services is provided in the "Report of Church Council Responses to Synod Resolutions and Churchwide Assembly Actions (April 9-12, 2015)." The response outlined current ELCA-Primary health benefits and Portico's efforts to discern available options and potential costs for fully covering hearing aids. The response concluded that, as a self-insured community health plan, all members and sponsors share in Portico's collective health care costs.

Adding full hearing aid coverage would necessitate a higher increase to health contributions in 2016, especially if coverage were added without a benefit maximum. If coverage were added with a benefit maximum, members would still be responsible for some of their costs and could have fewer

choices than today, given the Blue Cross requirement to purchase from a network provider. In our ministry role as stewards of the ELCA's shared health plan dollars, Portico believes our community is best served by continuing to offer free preventive screenings via Blue Cross, our hearing discount program via HearPO, and opportunities for members to reduce their out-of-pocket costs by earning wellness dollars and using tax-advantaged accounts.

Church Council action:

To receive with gratitude the response from Portico Benefit Services concerning the insurance coverage of hearing aids;

To decline to initiate or propose amendments to the ELCA Pension and Other Benefits Program concerning full insurance coverage for hearing aids for rostered professionals and other members; and

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

12. ELECTIONS OF CHURCHWIDE UNIT EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

ELCA bylaw 14.21.21. states:

Unless otherwise specified in the constitution, bylaws, and continuing resolutions, the Church Council shall elect the executive director for each churchwide unit to a four-year term in consultation with and with the approval of the presiding bishop. Nomination of a candidate for election shall be made by the presiding bishop. The presiding bishop, as chief executive officer, shall arrange within the personnel policies of the churchwide organization for an annual review of each executive director. A unit executive director shall be eligible for re-election. The employment of the executive director may be terminated jointly by the presiding bishop and the Executive Committee of the Church Council.

Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton nominated the Rev. Rafael Malpica Padilla [Global Mission], the Rev. Stephen P. Bouman [Congregational and Synodical Mission] and Ms. Christina Jackson-Skelton [Mission Advancement] for re-election to four-year terms as executive directors of their respective units.

Church Council actions:

To re-elect the Rev. Rafael Malpica Padilla to a four-year renewable term as executive director of the Global Mission unit, beginning February 1, 2015.

To re-elect the Rev. Stephen P. Bouman to a four-year renewable term as executive director of the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit, beginning February 1, 2015.

To re-elect Ms. Christina Jackson-Skelton to a four-year renewable term as executive director of the Mission Advancement unit, beginning September 1, 2015.

13. SPENDING AUTHORIZATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2015

As part of its ongoing fiduciary responsibility, the Budget and Finance Committee of the Church Council reviews the income estimates and the spending authorizations that may have been revised for current fund and ELCA World Hunger. Compared to the previously approved spending authorizations, the committee recommended a \$327,000 decrease in the current fund spending and an increase of \$600,000 in ELCA World Hunger spending for the current fiscal year.

Church Council action:

To approve a revised 2015 fiscal year current fund spending authorization of \$69,323,020; and

To approve a revised 2015 fiscal year World Hunger spending authorization of \$20,600,000.

14. AUDIT COMMITTEE REPORT

Church Council action:

To approve the report of the ELCA Audit Committee describing their review of the audited financial statements, management letter, and response of management for the Endowment Fund Pooled Trust's year ending December 31, 2014.

15. TRINITY LUTHERAN SEMINARY BYLAWS

Church Council action:

To approve the amended bylaws of Trinity Lutheran Seminary, Columbus, Ohio.

16. ELECTIONS TO COMMITTEES AND BOARDS

The Church Council has an Executive Committee composed of the four churchwide officers, the chair of the Conference of Bishops, and seven members of the Church Council elected by the council. Members of the council's Budget and Finance Committee, Legal and Constitutional Review Committee, Planning and Evaluation Committee, and Program and Services Committee elect chairs that serve as four of the seven elected Executive Committee members. The other three members are elected "at large" in accordance with representational principles of this church.

On Friday, April 10, 2015, the committees met and elected the following members as their chairs.

Mr. Paul G. Archer — Program and Services Committee

Ms. Christine P. Connell — Planning and Evaluation Committee

The Rev. Stephen R. Herr — Legal and Constitutional Review Committee

The Rev. Vicki T. Garber — Budget and Finance Committee

Church Council action:

To declare that the newly elected chairs of the Budget and Finance Committee, the Legal and Constitutional Review Committee, the Planning and Evaluation Committee, and the Program and Services Committee shall be members of the Executive Committee of the Church Council for a two-year term beginning on September 1, 2015.

[Note: Mr. Archer currently serves as an "at large" member of the Executive Committee. The Church Council will elect an additional member to the Executive Committee at its November 2015 meeting.]

Church Council action:

To elect to the board of directors of Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg to a four-year term expiring in 2019: Mr. Tommie L. Robinson Jr. and Ms. Cheryl H. Williams.

To elect to the board of directors of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, to a three-year term expiring in September 2018: Ms. Rebecca R. Pallmeyer.

To elect to the board of directors of Trinity Lutheran Seminary, to a one-year term expiring in 2016: Mr. Aaron Schmalzle;

To elect to the board of directors of Trinity Lutheran Seminary, to a two-year term expiring in 2017: The Rev. Gus Vinajeras and Ms. Danette Miller; and

To elect to the board of directors of Trinity Lutheran Seminary, to a three-year term expiring in 2018: Ms. Judy K. Leidy, Ms. Barbara J. Burgie, and Mr. Roderick G.W. Chu.

Background:

The Churchwide Assembly elects trustees to the boards of the ELCA Board of Pensions, Publishing House of the ELCA and Mission Investment Fund of the ELCA. As this church transitions from biennial to triennial assemblies, these separately incorporated ministries requested that the Church Council elect new trustees to a one-year term or authorize current trustees to serve an extended term until the 2016 Churchwide Assembly conducts elections.

Church Council action:

To elect Mr. John R. Hoffman to the Board of Pensions (Portico Benefit Services) Board of Trustees to a one-year term expiring in 2016; and

To authorize the following members of the Board of Pensions (Portico Benefit Services) Board of Trustees to continue serving for 2015-2016: Ms. Janette E. Drew, Ms. Lisa A. Kro, Ms. Kathleen K. Mooney and Ms. Jill A. Schumann.

To elect Mr. Daniel G. Currell to the Publishing House of the ELCA (Augsburg Fortress, Publishers) Board of Trustees to a one-year term expiring August 2016; and

To authorize the following members of the Publishing House of the ELCA (Augsburg Fortress, Publishers) Board of Trustees to continue serving from August 2015 to August 2016: Mr. Robert D. Hahn, Ms. Rosemary R. Ohles and the Rev. Winston D. Persaud.

To elect the Rev. John E. Mack Jr., Ms. Heather Miller and Mr. Fernando Mercado to the Mission Investment Fund Board of Trustees to a one-year term expiring in 2016; and

To authorize the following member of the Mission Investment Fund Board of Trustees to continue serving for 2015-2016: Mr. Warren Hanson.