




Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

April 7, 2017

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 leaders

FROM: 
 The Rev. Wm Chris Boerger, secretary

SUBJECT: Report of Church Council Responses to a Synod Resolution
 and Churchwide Assembly Actions (March 31, 2017)

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Thrivent Choice Neutrality Policy Page 1

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I. RESPONSE TO SYNOD RESOLUTION
Thrivent Choice Neutrality Policy
Southeast Michigan Synod (6A) [2016]

RESOLVED, that the Southeast Michigan Synod meeting in assembly ask Bishop Donald P. Kreiss to contact Thrivent Financial for Lutherans on the behalf of this synod and urge Thrivent to allow for individual freedom and choice in supporting charitable giving without restriction; and be it further

RESOLVED, that this assembly ask the bishop and its Synod Council to communicate with the ELCA Church Council and presiding bishop, expressing the disappointment of this synod with Thrivent's current practice regarding Choice Dollars and requesting that the ELCA Church Council and presiding bishop advocate to have the current practice regarding Choice Dollars discontinued and allow for individual freedom and choice.

Executive Committee action [EC16.06.19d]

To receive the resolution from the Southeast Michigan Synod concerning Thrivent Financial for Lutherans Choice Dollars;

To refer the resolution to the Office of the Presiding Bishop for a report or for a timeline on when this resolution will receive further attention; and

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

Response from the Office of the Presiding Bishop (November 2016)

Thrivent is an independent corporation with its own governing board and has all but dropped its church body relationships. It has changed the former Church Relations Church and Community Engagement unit, including a new name and adding a new director. The Office of the Presiding Bishop Synodical Relations team is trying to establish communication with the new director and new unit. We will report results in Spring 2017.

Church Council action [CC16.11.46mm]

To receive the response from the Office of the Presiding Bishop and to request a report be received by the April 2017 Church Council meeting; and

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

Response from the Office of the Presiding Bishop (Spring 2017)

On December 1, 2016, the Rev. Walter S. May, assistant to the presiding bishop and executive for synodical relations, met with Mr. Jan Engkasser, director for member engagement strategies at Thrivent Financial, at the Lutheran Center in Chicago, Ill. Pastor May informed Mr. Engkasser of the resolution brought to the Church Council and received feedback on the resolution. There was no further action taken. Mr. Engkasser agreed to share this information with Thrivent, and time for further discussion would be scheduled if needed. No date has been determined.

Church Council action:

To receive the response from the Office of the Presiding Bishop regarding Thrivent Choice Neutrality Policy;

To acknowledge that the intent of the resolution was shared with Thrivent Financial; and

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

II. RESPONSES TO CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY ACTIONS

A. EXAMINING THE OPPORTUNITIES AND IMPLICATIONS OF CAMPAIGN ZERO, A POLICY PLATFORM IN AFFIRMATION OF BLACK LIVES MATTER

The Report of the Memorials Committee of the 2016 Churchwide Assembly includes the full text of the synod memorials to that assembly under category A6: Examining the Opportunities and Implications of Campaign Zero, a policy platform in affirmation of Black Lives Matter.

Churchwide Assembly action [CA16.02.03d]

To receive with gratitude the memorials of the Greater Milwaukee and Northwest Washington synods in affirmation of Black Lives Matter; and

To refer to the Domestic Mission unit through the African Descent Ministries Desk, in partnership with the African Descent Lutheran Association, consideration of the request to examine the opportunities and implications of Campaign Zero's initiatives and actions and request a report and possible recommendations be provided to the Church Council.

Response from the Domestic Mission unit (November 2016)

Over the next six months, the African Descent Ministries, program director for racial justice, director for advocacy, program director for domestic policy and the African Descent Lutheran Association will consider the opportunities for engagement, education and encouragement of advocacy in alignment with the 10-point policy solutions outlined in Campaign Zero. A full report will be prepared for the April 2017 Church Council meeting.

Church Council action [CC16.11.46bb]

To receive the response from the Domestic Mission unit and to anticipate a report by the April 2017 Church Council meeting.

Response from the Domestic Mission Unit (Spring 2017)

The ELCA social statement, "The Church and Criminal Justice: Hearing the Cries" (2013), affirms the fundamental principles of the U.S. criminal justice system such as due process of law and the presumption of legal innocence. Yet, this church hears people's cries that reflect the current system's serious deficiencies. This church has long recognized that racism pervasively infects and affects all aspects of U.S. society. The social statement acknowledges that racism is central to the deep abiding problems of the current criminal justice system in the racial disparities, and the implicit and explicit racism that persists within.

In response to systemic racism, violence and the extrajudicial killings of black and brown people at the hands of law enforcement; #BlackLivesMatter originated from the African American community as a social media campaign in 2013. Black Lives Matter is an international community-based led movement of networks. The ELCA across its three expressions (churchwide organization, synods and congregations) has expressed support and participated in the Black

Lives Matter movement in a variety of ways. Campaign Zero is a policy platform created by the Black Lives Matter movement to address and improve relationships between local law enforcement and the communities in which they serve.

The churchwide organization currently does not have resources to support an educational and/or organizing campaign primarily in support of Campaign Zero. However, Campaign Zero's policy platform is in alignment with the social statement, "The Church and Criminal Justice: Hearing the Cries." The social statement encourages "members, congregations, synods, social ministry organizations and churchwide ministries to advocate intentionally and creatively for system reform consistent with the principles and recommendations set forth in this social statement." A link to Campaign Zero has been added to the www.elca.org/blacklivesmatter webpage.

Church Council action:

To receive the response from the Domestic Mission unit on "Examining the Opportunities and Implications of Campaign Zero, a policy platform in affirmation of Black Lives Matter;" and

To acknowledge the Campaign Zero policy platform is in alignment with this church's criminal justice social statement, but to recognize the insufficient resources for the churchwide organization to provide an educational or organizing campaign in support of Campaign Zero.

B. CALL TO DISCERNMENT ON U.S. FOREIGN AND MILITARY POLICY

The Report of the Memorials Committee of the 2016 Churchwide Assembly includes the full text of the synod memorial to that assembly under category B1: Call to Discernment on U.S. Foreign and Military Policy.

Churchwide Assembly action [CA16.06.32]

To receive with gratitude the memorial of the Minneapolis Area Synod regarding its call for the ELCA to study, reflect, search and act in light of ongoing and widening war efforts;

To recognize with gratitude the efforts of the current and previous presiding bishops, the Church Council, synod bishops, clergy and the laity to engage as responsible citizens living out the baptismal calling;

To issue a call for congregations to engage in prayer, Scripture-study and communal reading of the teaching resources of this church, particularly "Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective," "For Peace in God's World" and "Talking Together as Christians about Tough Social Issues";

To invite this church to a particular time of prayer and communal discernment over the next three years to promote robust examination of the consequences of expanded US war efforts since 1990. To refer to the Church Council to formulate the next steps, including any budgetary implications. To encourage the Office of the Presiding Bishop to consider dialogue with Called Forward Together in Christ, Declaration on the Way and other ecumenical partners in planning this initiative, including inviting, scholars whose work focuses in these areas, activists, seminaries, colleges/universities, synods, VA and other federal chaplains. We especially hope to include those whose lives are most impacted by these developments in the United States and world.

Topics of inquiry could include:

The impact on well-being of all military personnel and veterans: active, reserve, retired, and national guard, contractors, affiliates, and their families:

- Chronic disabilities and loss (including chemical dependencies and brain injury),
- Collateral involvement with criminal justice system,
- Diminished lives and early deaths of veterans and their families from toxins, PTSD symptoms, and violence,
- Moral injury,
- Character and skill development, and

Broader societal impacts, such as:

- Climate change and global pollution load,
- Changes in policing practices,
- Engagement with and prejudice against neighbor Muslims,
- Policy decisions due to commercial motivations for the proliferation of arms,
- Social needs met and unmet due to prioritizing public spending on expanding war efforts;

with Church Council to recommend next steps by April 2017; and

To direct the presiding bishop to communicate this church's time of prayer and discernment to the U.S. President and members of Congress and to encourage ELCA members in this election season of 2016 to communicate the same to candidates for federal office.

Response from the Office of the Presiding Bishop (November 2016)

The Office of the Presiding Bishop, with the assistant to the presiding bishop for federal chaplaincy, is taking the lead. The Office of the Presiding Bishop will continue its work in consultation with Domestic Mission, Office of the Treasurer and other colleagues in the Office of the Presiding Bishop.

ELCA Advocacy issued an Advocacy Alert calling the ELCA to prayer and action regarding broadening war efforts. Below are the recommended next steps:

- Church Council identifies two members of the council to serve as advisors on behalf of the Church Council to Federal Chaplaincy in developing recommended next steps before the April 2017 meeting.
- Federal Chaplaincy requests input for possible ELCA colleagues, ecumenical partners and interfaith representatives, synod leaders, scholars, academics, government service providers and non-government social service representatives who may be interested in participating in a day-long convening to address selected issues from the memorial.
- Budget planning develop costs for a temporary staff position for one day per week administrative support from January through June 2018 to initiate contact with potential participants, arrange details at the Lutheran Center for a one-day "round table" with up to 40 participants (including facilitating lodging, local transportation, meals and support services).
- Federal Chaplaincy, along with two members of the Church Council, plan and present recommended next steps at the April 2017 meeting of the Church Council.

Proposed Outcome: ELCA serves as a convener for faith communities, academics, government and faith-based social service agencies to advance reflection on war and its consequences. ELCA Federal Chaplaincy synchronizes a one-day "round table" with interested participants to be held at the Lutheran Center in conjunction with the 2018 ELCA Federal Chaplains Education and Training event (likely June 18 or July 16 or 23, 2018). The result and outcome will be a "Report on a Day of Discernment." The purpose of the report is to provide a concrete outcome to be read and shared with others as well as a potential guide for underpinning further action.

NOTE: Participants will be invited to attend and join in the "round table" at their own expense. In addition to the estimated 40 participants for the "round table," the program will be open to ELCA federal chaplains (military, VA and Bureau of Prisons) attending the annual chaplains education and training event.

Church Council action [CC16.11.46dd]

To receive the response from the Office of the Presiding Bishop on a proposed timeline and outcome for the initiative;

To authorize the Executive Committee to identify two people from the Church Council to serve as advisors with Federal Chaplaincy on developing next steps; and

To anticipate a progress report with possible recommendations by the April 2017 Church Council meeting.

Response from Office of the Presiding Bishop (Spring 2017)

The Office of the Presiding Bishop continues its work on convening up to 40 faith leaders, scholars and academics, ethicists, government and faith-based social service personnel with ecumenical and interfaith observers to reflect on expanding war efforts and their consequences. ELCA Federal Chaplaincy will synchronize a one-day "round table" with specialists and others at the Lutheran Center in conjunction with the 2018 ELCA Federal Chaplains Education and Training event (Thursday, July 26, 2018). Results will be a "Report on a Day of Discernment." The report provides a resource that will be shared with others and used as a guide for underpinning further action. Participants invited to attend the "round table" will travel at their own expense. Presenters will be provided travel.

The basic framework for the "Day of Discernment" will structure sessions around major questions using teachings of social statements to provide an approach to the questions:

- 1) Context: "What's going on? What are the facts?" (focused by questions and topics in the social policy resolution)
 - a) What does this expansion mean? For example:
 - i) Increased security and protecting the homeland vs. non-military use of power
 - ii) Government budget priorities and economic trade-offs: effects on social services
 - iii) Moral injury and care of vets

- iv) Stand-off systems and use of drones
 - v) Militarization of domestic law enforcement
 - vi) Cybersystem warfare
- b) Are there other elements from the memorial?
- 2) “What are theological perspectives (from statement) used for viewing such issues?”
 - 3) “What are key discernment issues?”
 - 4) “What Can/Should Be Done? A practical discernment (Results will be a report on content, experience and process)
 - 5) “How do we turn this into a churchwide discernment?” — Lessons that may be central to aid churchwide discernment – provide resources (e.g., Study guide for elective use: adult forum, college classrooms, seminary classrooms, Bible studies, women’s studies (Women of the ELCA)

Budget planning continues to define costs for a temporary staff position one day per week for administrative support from January through June 2018. Estimated staff cost plus program costs provide an initial rough estimate between \$15,000 and \$20,000. The Office of the Presiding Bishop will work with the Office of the Treasurer to identify a possible source of funds for this event.

Church Council action:

To receive with gratitude the progress report from the Office of the Presiding Bishop on the round table “Day of Discernment” event; and

To request that a final report be provided by the November 2018 Church Council meeting.

C. AFRICAN DESCENT LUTHERANS

The Report of the Memorials Committee of the 2016 Churchwide Assembly includes the full text of the synod memorials to that assembly under category A4: African Descent Lutherans.

Churchwide Assembly action [CA16.05.17]

To receive with gratitude the memorials of the Arkansas-Oklahoma, Metropolitan Chicago, Southeast Michigan, New Jersey, Metropolitan New York, Southeastern Pennsylvania, North Carolina and Southeastern synods regarding African Descent Lutheran Lives Matter;

To direct the Office of the Presiding Bishop, the Domestic Mission unit and the Global Mission unit to assist in connecting, supporting and involving ELCA representation (particularly though not exclusively) of the people of African descent with the observance of the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation and the initiatives of the U.N. International Decade for People of African Descent; to be intentional in the inclusion of the contributions of African descent Lutherans as part of these observances;

To confess and repent of the Lutheran church’s complicity in 400 years of enslavement, oppression and marginalization of African descent people and other marginalized populations;

To acknowledge with regret that the ELCA as an institution has and continues to contribute to racial harassment and discrimination against people of African descent through corporate action, policy and practices and to request the Office of the Secretary, in consultation with appropriate churchwide organization units, to review and report on current governing documents in light of these concerns;

To encourage synods and ELCA related institutions to do the same in its review and report of current governing documents related to setting policy and procedures on workplace harassment and discrimination, including racial harassment and discrimination;

To request the Domestic Mission unit through its African Descent Ministries desk, in consultation with the African Descent Lutheran Association, to create a “Declaration of the ELCA to the African Descent Community” and to bring this declaration with recommendations of how to include the declaration in this church’s governing documents by the April 2018 meeting of the Church Council;

To urge the seminaries, colleges, universities and other academic institutions of this church to work with the Conference of International Black Lutherans (CIBL) to recognize and dismantle white hegemony by lifting up, encouraging and incorporating the academic exploration of Black Liberation Theology and Womanist Theologians;

To urge the seminaries, colleges, universities and other academic institutions of this church to develop anti-racism resources;

To reaffirm the Church Council action to call upon the seminaries, in collaboration with churchwide organization units and partners, to develop networked theological education programs, resources and opportunities for ethnic-specific communities;

To reaffirm the commitment of this church to create, sustain and reinvest in African descent communities, congregations and ministries including an update of the African Descent Ministry Strategy;

To request the Domestic Mission unit, in partnership with the African Descent Lutheran Association, to find ways to increase the number of African descent leaders, congregations and communities served by at least 10 percent; and

To recommit this church to growing its ethnic and racial diversity.

Response from the Domestic Mission unit (November 2016)

There are numerous resolves within this assembly action. The initial response from the Domestic Mission unit is to address the ones that directly impact the churchwide organization.

Part of this action of the assembly represents two separate though intersecting initiatives: the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation and the United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent 2015 – 2024. Other parts are related to a review of governing documents, creation of a ‘Declaration of the ELCA to the African Descent Community,’ and an increase in the numbers of African descent leaders, congregations and communities served.

Regarding the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation

The 500th Anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation will be observed by gatherings and conversations of a global Lutheran community. Lutheran churches from across the African continent will take part and be fully represented members of this worldwide Lutheran family. Unless there is particular attention as the ELCA shapes delegations and teams representing this church, African American, African Caribbean and other ELCA members of African ancestry will not be afforded equitable access and involvement in this historic chapter of the continuing reformation of the church.

The director of ethnic specific, multicultural and racial justice ministries in consultation with the executive director of the Domestic Mission unit, the African Descent Strategy Team, the African National Steering Committee, the African Descent Ministries desk, Global Mission unit, the African Descent Lutheran Association and the director for racial justice ministries, will formulate a plan and approach for implementing the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation and report to Church Council at the April 2017 meeting.

Within the next three months, the director of ethnic specific, multicultural and racial justice ministries will discuss the incorporation of the presence and participation of the African descent diaspora and other people of color in the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation with the Office of the Presiding Bishop (to include specifically the executive for theological discernment and executive for ecumenical and inter-religious relations) and report to Church Council at the April 2017 meeting.

Regarding U.N. International Decade for People of African Descent

The U.N. General Assembly proclaimed 2015-2024 as the International Decade for People of African Descent (resolution 68/237) citing the need to strengthen national, regional and international cooperation in relation to the full enjoyment of economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights by people of African descent, and their full and equal participation in all aspects of society.

The Domestic Mission unit will convene a consultation inclusive of African Descent Lutheran Association, African Descent Ministries staff, Global Mission and Domestic Mission executive directors, executive for theological discernment, director for Lutheran Office for World Community, and additional advisors as needed. This team will formulate a plan for intentional representative engagement of ELCA persons of African descent in the U.N. initiative to be presented to Church Council at the April 2017 meeting.

Regarding the “Declaration of the ELCA to the African Descent Community”

The African Descent Ministries desk and the director for racial justice ministries will consult with the African Descent Lutheran Association (the resolution originated at the 2015 biennial assembly of the African Descent Lutheran Association) regarding the work to create a “Declaration of the ELCA to the African Descent Community.” A progress report on the development of the declaration will be presented to the Church Council at the November 2017 meeting.

Regarding a review and report on current governing documents

The assembly action requested that this church’s governing documents be reviewed regarding its contribution to racial harassment and discrimination against people of African descent. Within the next six months, the director for ethnic specific, multicultural and racial justice ministries will schedule a conversation with a representative from the Church

Council, the Office of the Secretary, the Office of the Presiding Bishop, the African Descent Lutheran Association, the director for racial justice ministries, and the African Descent Ministries desk. A report will come to Church Council at the November 2017 meeting.

Regarding ways to increase the number of African descent leaders, congregations and communities served

In consultation with the Conference of Bishops, Domestic Mission unit leadership team, the African Descent Lutheran Association, executive for administration, director for leadership and candidacy and Mission Advancement unit, the Domestic Mission unit will create a plan to assess current and proposed work as first steps toward implementation. A report will come to Church Council by its November 2017 meeting.

Church Council action [CC16.11.46gg]

To receive the response from the Domestic Mission unit on a proposed timeline to address the implementation of the African Descent Lutherans assembly action;

To anticipate a report on actions related to the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation and the U.N. International Decade for People of African Descent by the April 2017 Church Council meeting; and

To anticipate a report on actions related to the “Declaration of the ELCA to the African Descent Community,” review on current governing documents and ways to increase the number of African Descent leaders, congregations and communities served at the November 2017 Church Council meeting.

Response from the Domestic Mission unit (Spring 2017)

Update on African descent observance of the 500th anniversary

The historical relevance of the 500th observance of the Reformation is not important to many of the ELCA’s African descent congregations. The financial demands in maintaining buildings in need of repair, declining worship attendance and the long-term effects of concentrated poverty have left these congregations in survival mode. Many also have had extended rostered pastoral vacancies and therefore do not have leadership to provide the educational background of the Reformation or news and information about Reformation observances. Many ELCA African descent worshipping communities hold in common a focus on culturally relevant worship as a communal practice with less of an emphasis on a culturally Euro-centric Lutheran identity. The language of the people is the language through which the gospel is to be heard, proclaimed, sung, danced and sacramentally embodied during worship and lived experiences (as referenced in the ELCA African Descent Strategic Plan, “Many Voices, Tell the Story, Create the Vision: Build Our Future”).

Staff members have met to discuss the incorporation of the presence and participation of the African descent diaspora and other people of color in the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation. To ensure that the African American experience within the ELCA is represented in communication projects and storytelling, the African descent focus will weave into several projects in partnership with the Office of the Presiding Bishop. The ELCA Reformation Anniversary Grant Program, drawn from the Thrivent Financial Foundation Reformation Anniversary Grant, awarded grants to assist with 500th anniversary observances. Support has gone to those who seek to promote a wider understanding of the Reformation message and its significance for faith and life in the 21st century. In addition, the Office of the Presiding Bishop has promoted and/or recognized the following initiatives:

- **Storytelling Pilot Projects** – By using three known formal storytelling projects (Her-Stories, Rostered Women of Color, and Our Lutheran Life), the African descent focus will be elevated via individual stories and small group experiences. Using the communication channels in place, African descent leaders can share story posts (e.g., blogs) and encourage submissions to build and sustain the storytelling effort.
- **Grant Program Participation** – Several African descent congregations have already applied for grant funding to create culturally relevant programs within their communities.
- **Speakers Bureau** – African descent leadership can carve out a niche within this church to educate and raise awareness of the experiences of Lutheran identity from an African descent perspective.
- **The African Descent Catechism (ADC)** – This project is currently being developed by the Conference of International Black Lutherans. The ADC will be posted on elca500.org/WithNewVoices. There are also plans to share the ADC at the African Descent Lutheran Association (ADLA) biennial gathering in July 2017. Members attending will gain an understanding of the ADC, its intent and purposes. Following the ADLA biennial, a formal communication will be shared with congregations to lift up the ADC and encourage invitations to the Speaker’s Bureau. Doing so opens dialogue about the ADC and creates an opportunity for a

broader discussion about race relations along with opportunities for congregations to experience their faith in action. With intentional effort given to expanding the conversation, this discussion can live on past 2017.

- **African Descent Lutheran Association Biennial assembly** - The ADLA's 16th biennial gathering theme is, "Like a Rolling Stream, Let Justice Roll... Absalom, Jehu, and Beyond." In the spirit of ecumenical activities, this gathering will be a partnership between the ADLA and the Union of Black Episcopalians (UBE). In observance of the U.N. International Decade for People of African Descent, both organizations share a vital commitment to vigilance and action aimed at achieving justice for all people. A joint worship service will be held in honor of the 500th observance of the Reformation.
- **The Twelfth Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation** will commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation at a global level. The Domestic Mission unit's African Descent, African National & Latino ministries through consultation with executive director of the Global Mission unit, executive director of Domestic Mission unit and the executive for ecumenical and inter-religious relations will participate in the assembly.

Update on the U.N. International Decade of People of African Descent

The International Decade for People of African Descent (2015 to 2024) was proclaimed in 2013 by U.N. General Assembly resolution 68/237. The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action acknowledged that people of African descent were victims of slavery, the slave trade and colonialism, and continue to be victims of these actions. Two hundred million people who identify themselves as being of African descent live in the Americas. Many millions more live in other parts of the world, outside of the African continent. The International Decade provides "a solid framework for the United Nations, member states, civil society and all other relevant actors to join together with people of African descent and take effective measures for the implementation of the program of activities in the spirit of recognition, justice and development."¹ The decade: 1) promotes respect, protection and fulfilment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms; 2) promotes a greater knowledge of and respect for the diverse heritage, culture and contribution; 3) adopts and strengthens national, regional and international legal frameworks and ensures their full and effective implementation.

Domestic Mission staff consulted with others and note that the ELCA has connected and will continue to connect with the Decade in the following ways:

- Members of the ADLA attended the launch of the Decade.
- Members of ADLA and the Ethnic Specific, Multicultural Ministries and Racial Justice staff will continue attending events related to the Decade (when possible).
- ELCA assembly action CA16.05.15 affirms African Descent Lutheran Lives matter as well supports observing the Decade.
- Close collaboration with the Lutheran Office for World Community, Lutheran World Federation and ELCA's advocacy office at the U.N.
- A preaching workshop in Liberia; At the request of the Rev. D. Jensen Seyenkulo, bishop of the Lutheran Church in Liberia (LCL), a preaching workshop was held in November 2016. This workshop, sponsored by Global Mission, was part of a pilot project to enhance leadership and capacity building of church companions. At the same time, it gave ELCA pastors of color a glimpse of mission in Africa. The workshop was facilitated by members of the Madagascar West and Central Africa team along with two congregationally called African American pastors of the ELCA. There were 82 participants from the LCL, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sierra Leone and the Lutheran Church in Guinea (LCG). The LCG is a young and growing church being nurtured by the leadership of the LCL. The workshop consisted of three days of instruction emphasizing preaching law and gospel and practicing the art of "Celebration," an element of the Black (American) preaching style. Along with plenary sessions the participants worked in six small groups. On the fourth day, two participants from each small group preached a twelve-minute sermon. The workshop was well received and facilitators from the ELCA who had never visited West Africa grew in their understanding of mission and their capacity to engage cross culturally.

Church Council action:

To receive the report from the Domestic Mission unit on actions related to the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation and the U.N. International Decade for People of African Descent; and

¹ From <http://www.un.org/en/events/africandescentdecade/background.shtml>.

To thank the churchwide staff and the ethnic associations for their intentional efforts to educate and raise awareness of the contributions of African descent Lutherans as part of these observances.

D. STRATEGY TOWARD AUTHENTIC DIVERSITY WITHIN THE ELCA (MOTION B)

Churchwide Assembly action [CA16.05.25]

To refer Motion B to the Church Council.

Motion B: Resolution for a Strategy Toward Authentic Diversity within the ELCA

WHEREAS, the ELCA Church Council voted [CC15.11.55] to recognize and affirm the extensive efforts of the presiding bishop to call the entire church to confront racism and to add our voice to that call, and to invite the presiding bishop to include the current efforts in a broader, comprehensive strategy toward becoming a racially and ethnically diverse church committed to dismantling racism; and

WHEREAS, Women of the ELCA has developed a wealth of resources and curriculum for racial justice from a biblical and historical perspective and the ethnic specific ministry associations along with the ethnic specific, multicultural and racial justice team have developed strategies for engaging and involving people of color in every aspect of the life of our church; and

WHEREAS, this church is blessed with a breadth and depth of people of color and people with a first language other than English whose voices need to be amplified in order to guide this church in moving forward towards becoming a more inclusive and diverse church; and

WHEREAS, even with these resources and supports, synods and congregations have had difficulty achieving this church's commitment to diversity as reflected in the continuing resolutions under section 5.01. of the *Constitution, Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, the Churchwide Assembly direct the ELCA Church Council to form a task force for the purpose of developing a comprehensive set of strategies to equip congregations and synods to work towards becoming a more authentically diverse church. The work of the task force shall include but is not limited to:

- consulting with Women of the ELCA, the ethnic specific ministry associations, the multicultural and racial justice team, the Conference of Bishops and ecumenical partners
- collecting existing resources such as those available from Women of the ELCA and the ethnic specific ministry associations and beyond the ELCA
- identifying needs for additional resources
- supporting synods in identifying their specific opportunities for growth
- assessing the effectiveness of diversity strategies across the three expressions church in order to identify strategies that have yielded authentic diversity; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the task force be composed of one person from each of the nine regions and one bishop who will serve as co-chair. The composition of the task force shall conform with the representational principles in section 5.01.f. of the ELCA constitution except that persons of color and/or persons whose primary language is other than English shall comprise 100 percent of the task force, and the task force shall be ethnically diverse. The members of the task force shall be appointed by the Church Council in consultation with the ELCA director of ethnic specific and multicultural ministries; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Church Council designate funds to support the work of the task force as soon as funds become available, no later than April 2017. The work of the task force shall begin no later than August 2017 and conclude at the 2019 Churchwide Assembly; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the task force submit a report and recommendations to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly that includes:

1. a summary of the information gathered by the task force, and
2. a proposal of recommendations for metrics and supports to provide mutual accountability for our commitment to diversity across the three expressions of the church and a proposal for funding these efforts.

Response from the Domestic Mission unit (November 2016)

Work toward becoming a more authentically diverse church is currently being carried out through the ethnic specific ministry associations and the Ethnic Specific, Multicultural Ministries and Racial Justice team. In addition, Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton was asked by Church Council at its November 2015 meeting "to include the current efforts in a broader, comprehensive strategy toward becoming a racially and ethnically diverse church committed to dismantling racism" [CC15.11.55]. It is worth noting that the Called Forward Together in Christ process identified a goal that this church

becomes “an inviting, inclusive church that reflects the diversity of our communities and embraces the gifts and opportunities that diversity brings.” More time is needed for consultations and further reflection before advising on a proposed task force and the scope of work prescribed. A full report will be prepared for the April 2017 Church Council meeting.

Church Council action [CC16.11.46hh]

To receive the response from the Domestic Mission unit and to anticipate a report by the April 2017 Church Council meeting.

Response from Domestic Mission unit (Spring 2017)

The director for ethnic specific multicultural ministries and the racial justice program director convened a video conference (February 2017) with the presidents of the six ELCA ethnic associations to continue visioning relative to CA16.05.25 and current initiatives that intersect the action called for by the resolution. The current leadership/representation of the ethnic associations is comprised of active leaders from six different synods and five different regions. The broad relational reach of the ethnic associations is more than sufficient to produce a team representative of all nine regions as called for by CA16.05.25.

Currently, the ethnic associations with support of the Ethnic Specific Multicultural Ministries and Racial Justice (ESMMRJ) team are engaged in updating and/or developing new strategic plans for mission and ministry relative to our ELCA community with and among people of color. All previously adopted strategic plans will be ready for review by Church Council at its November 2018 meeting and, if needed, submitted for adoption at the 2019 Churchwide Assembly.

The racial justice program director convened a webinar, “Transforming White Privilege” <https://vimeo.com/200713450> (January 2017), to offer resources to assist synods in furthering work of cross cultural and racial justice engagement within synods and congregations. The link for the resource site for “Transforming White Privilege: A 21st Century Leadership Capacity” is: <https://www.racialequitytools.org/module/overview/transforming-white-privilege>.

The racial justice program director represented the ESMMRJ team at the March 2017 Conference of Bishops to introduce the work of the team and the ethnic associations as a resource to bishops, synods and congregations for deepening capacity for racial/cross cultural engagement. At that Conference of Bishops meeting, the racial justice program director and the executive for research and evaluation made a presentation to further the work of equipping synods and congregations towards becoming a more authentically diverse church.

Following are the recommendations to Church Council from the Domestic Mission unit:

- In lieu of creating a task force, the Domestic Mission unit recommends that Church Council authorize the collaborative efforts of the ethnic associations in concert with the Domestic Mission unit Ethnic Specific Multicultural Ministries and Racial Justice Team as designated agency to develop a plan for implementation of action called for by CA16.05.25.
- The Church Council will receive a full report and further recommendations at its November 2017 meeting, including an analysis of the scope of work called for by the resolution, configuration of implementation team (pending consultation with Women of the ELCA and ecumenical partners) and projections of funds/support for implementation.

Church Council action:

To authorize the Domestic Mission unit and representatives of the ethnic specific ministry associations, in consultation with Conference of Bishops, Women of the ELCA, and ecumenical partners, to provide recommendations of names of persons to be appointed to the task force for implementation of action CA16.05.25;

That the task force be convened by the Domestic Mission unit comprised of both association and non-association participants with attention to regional representation, lay/clergy and gender balance; and

To receive a progress report and further recommendations including analysis of scope of work called for by Motion B, names of recommended members to the task force, and a projection of funds to support implementation at the November 2017 Church Council meeting.