




Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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April 10, 2018

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 Synod Resolutions
 and Churchwide Assembly Actions (April 5-8, 2018)

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I. RESPONSES TO SYNOD RESOLUTIONS

A. The role of the church in combating antimicrobial resistance

Southeastern Synod (9D) [2017]

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod Council request that the ELCA Church Council work to engage with its ecumenical partners, particularly the Roman Catholic Church, to identify areas of mutual interest and future collaboration on this issue [combating antimicrobial resistance]; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod Council request that the ELCA Church Council include information regarding the fight against antimicrobial resistance in existing churchwide efforts to eliminate health disparities (e.g., clean water initiatives, malaria prevention, etc.); and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod Council request that the synod’s Health Ministry Task Force work through the bishop’s office to engage its partner synods, domestically and internationally, to promote awareness and share ideas concerning best practices to combat antimicrobial resistance.

Executive Committee action [EC17.08.19e]

To receive the resolution from the Southeastern Synod on Combating Antimicrobial Resistance;

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 action; and

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

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

The staff in the Office of the Presiding Bishop consulted with colleagues in the Global Mission unit as that unit’s staff has more expertise on antimicrobial resistance. The churchwide organization does not have specific programs addressing antimicrobial resistance. The program director for diakonia and the program director for health and sustainable development in Global Mission will look at other support that the churchwide organization provides more broadly for testing and capacity-building. Global Mission will take the lead on this response. Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations in the Office of the Presiding Bishop will offer consultation as needed with respect to engaging

ecumenical partners on the issue. A further response to the Southeastern Synod resolution will be submitted by the April 2018 Church Council meeting.

Church Council action [CC17.11.33p]

To thank the Southeastern Synod for its resolution regarding “The Role of the Church in Combating Antimicrobial Resistance”;

To receive the report from the Office of the Presiding Bishop and to request a further response from the Global Mission unit by the April 2018 Church Council meeting; and

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

Response from the Global Mission unit (April 2018)

Global Mission staff strongly agree with the Southeastern Synod that antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is a threat facing the public health of many today, that it will increasingly be a concern into the future, and that it is the vulnerable populations around the world who are and will continue to be disproportionately affected. Through the methodology of accompaniment, AMR is a topic of conversation that already arises with our companions and partners who work in health care at all levels (i.e., from community to hospital); Global Mission can continue to explore possibilities to be more intentional in bringing this to the agenda where appropriate, encouraging companions and ecumenical partners to work with their own health systems, institutions, and patients and communities toward following the best practice recommendations by the World Health Organization. In work currently supported by Global Mission, community-based primary healthcare programs frequently include promotion of infection prevention measures including sanitation and food safety. Health education programs and continuing education programs for doctors and other care providers often include educational components on the importance of avoiding over-prescription, the need for testing prior to prescribing medication, finishing the full course of treatment, and not sharing among family members or selling prescriptions. Support for health systems strengthening in some areas includes reinforcing quality assurance and accountability mechanisms to ensure that procedures are in place at the health facility/institutional level. Many ELCA companions engage in advocacy at local and national governmental levels to gain appropriate access to the tools needed to help prevent antimicrobial resistance (even though it may not be articulated specifically in those terms). Finally, the topic of AMR is also embedded within many programs focused on malaria and on HIV and AIDS.

Within the activities of the ELCA churchwide organization, we will explore opportunities to include the topic of antibiotic resistance in future publications and/or conversations around the health care work of ELCA World Hunger-supported projects as part of the context around eliminating health disparities. During the World Antibiotic Awareness Week in November, we will consider possibilities for engaging via social media (ELCA World Hunger social media account and/or blog) around the reasons for concern about antibiotic resistance.

Global Mission staff will work with the ELCA Advocacy offices in Washington, D.C., and New York to identify advocacy possibilities around or connected to this topic. The Lutheran Office for World Community, at the Headquarters of the United Nations, provided information on a U.N. General Assembly resolution adopted in 2016 to share with the Southeastern Synod that may be useful for future work and/or conversations around this topic. The Lutheran Office for World Community also mentioned this resolution in one of its monthly advocacy reports through the Washington Office. Global Mission staff will also consider opportunities to pursue the topic of AMR within the context of care for creation and climate justice through broader ecumenical coalitions.

Church Council action:

To receive the report from the Global Mission unit on “The role of the church in combating antimicrobial resistance”;

To commend the efforts of the Global Mission unit to engage our companions and partners on the topic of antimicrobial resistance and to explore the best practices for combating it;

To encourage the churchwide organization to promote awareness around the reasons for concern about antibiotic resistance;

To encourage the Global Mission and the Domestic Mission units to identify advocacy possibilities connected to this topic; and

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

B. “Find a Congregation” feature on the ELCA website

Addition background was provided in the memorandum regarding the November 2016 meeting of the Church Council:

In November 2016, the Church Council voted [CC16.11.4600]:

To receive the response from the Mission Advancement unit and to anticipate a report no later than the April 2018 Church Council meeting; and

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

Response from the Mission Advancement unit (April 2018)

The recent launch of <http://directory.elca.org> includes detailed information about ELCA congregations as well as parochial reports currently found on the “Find a Congregation” feature of ELCA.org.

We are actively working with Information Technology staff of the churchwide organization to remove the link to the parochial report (Form A) in the current “Find a Congregation” feature on ELCA.org. This update should satisfy the request made by the Lower Susquehanna Synod and is expected to be completed by the Church Council’s April 2018 meeting.

An audit is being done by Mission Advancement to determine the information already being collected from congregations compared to the information being made available online. Once the audit is complete, we will create next steps to generate more information about congregations through “Find a Congregation” on ELCA.org.

Church Council action:

To receive the response from the Mission Advancement unit regarding the “Find a Congregation” feature on the ELCA website;

To commend the Mission Advancement unit for its efforts to revise and update the information about congregations available through “Find a Congregation” on the ELCA website; and

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

II. RESPONSES TO CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY ACTIONS

The reports of the Memorials Committees include the full texts of the synod memorials to the respective assemblies.

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

Addition background was provided in the memorandum regarding the November 2017 meeting of the Church Council:

In November 2017, the Church Council voted [CC17.11.27]:

To receive the progress report from the Domestic Mission unit regarding the implementation of the Strategy Toward Authentic Diversity within the ELCA (Motion B);

To appoint Bishop Abraham D. Allende [Northeastern Ohio Synod], the Rev. Rani Abdulmasih, Mr. C. Abel Arroyo Traverso, the Rev. Priscilla N. Paris-Austin, Mr. Joseph Castañeda Carrera, Ms. Cheryl T. Chatman, the Rev. Joan A. Conroy, Ms. Grace Kuttab El-Yateem, the Rev. Maria G. Sijera Grant, the Rev. Moses P.P. Penumaka, Ms. Jennifer Kirby, Ms. Maribel Lorenzana, Ms. Vickie L. Murph, the Rev. Surekha Nelavala, the Rev. Lorenzo (Larry) T. Thiele, Mr. Kevin O. Vandiver and the Rev. Lamont A. Wells to the task force assigned with providing benchmarks, accountability and support for attaining diversity goals in all expressions of this church toward becoming an authentic diverse church; and

To request a progress report be submitted to the Church Council at its April 2018 meeting.

Response from the Domestic Mission unit (April 2018)

The Rev. Abraham D. Allende, bishop of the Northeastern Ohio Synod, and the Rev. Albert Starr Jr., director for ethnic specific and multicultural ministries, co-convoked the first gathering of the Strategic Task Force Toward Authentic Diversity on March 14-15, 2018 at the Lutheran Center in Chicago, Ill. The purpose of the meeting was to establish working relationships among task force members and to provide direction on the scope of work. The task force is comprised of a racial and ethnic diversity of persons of color and/or whose primary language is other than English, with attention to gender balance, sexual orientation, regional and rostered/laity representation. It was noted that the current task force lacks participation from person(s) with disability. Task force members shared experiences of racial inequity

and other barriers hindering this church in achieving racial parity — especially in places where resistance is high. Collectively, they expressed resilience and fruitful hope in moving forward. The Rev. Priscilla N. Paris-Austin, author of Motion B, presented the intent and background of the action. Her remarks named existing racial inequities within this church and the removal of the constitutional goal of achieving representation of 10 percent persons of color and/or whose primary language is other than English within the first ten years of the ELCA's formation.

The task force reviewed the scope of its assignment in increasing racial and ethnic diversity within the ELCA. The group acknowledged previous efforts toward multiculturalism and existing denominational resources that are underutilized. Ms. Judith Roberts, program director for racial justice, presented an overview of all the diversity and racial justice resolutions adopted at the 2016 Churchwide Assembly in addition to Motion B. Work currently underway through the Ethnic Specific, Multicultural Ministries and Racial Justice team was also shared. In addition, the task force received a report from the 2016 Multicultural Leadership Summit. The task force will incorporate recommendations from the Multicultural Leadership Summit in its future reporting to the Churchwide Assembly. The task force divided into three working groups: Group 1 focused on a working definition of "authentic diversity"; Group 2 developed a process and timeline for the work; and Group 3 worked with support for the implementation of 2016 Churchwide Assembly actions.

Each task force member will engage synod bishops and councils within her or his related region to introduce/raise awareness of the task force. Bishop Allende will inform the Conference of Bishops of the task force and its participants so that synod leaders will know to expect to be approached for conversation by task force members seeking to gain insight of the synod's past and present work around racial inclusivity, anti-racism and racial justice. A video conference with the task force is scheduled for April 19, 2018. The next in-person task force meeting is set for July 23-24, 2018. The group will adopt a working definition of "authentic diversity," suggest a method for assessing diversity initiatives, and develop a timeline for reporting to Church Council and pre-2019 Churchwide Assembly work.

Church Council action:

To receive the progress report from the Domestic Mission unit regarding the implementation of the Strategy Toward Authentic Diversity within the ELCA (Motion B); and

To request the Domestic Mission unit to provide periodic reports to the Church Council on the work of the Strategic Task Force Toward Authentic Diversity leading up to a final report to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly.

B. Gun violence prevention

Churchwide Assembly action [CA16.02.03]

To receive with gratitude the memorials of the Saint Paul Area and the Upper Susquehanna synods concerning legislation on background checks and gun violence;

To reaffirm this church's commitment to addressing the broad issues of violence in society through worship, education, service, advocacy and ongoing moral deliberation as called for in the 1994 social message on "Community Violence" and the 2013 Conference of Bishops' Pastoral Letter on Violence;

To reaffirm that ELCA social policy does not reject gun ownership or the recreational activities associated with guns as morally wrong;

To encourage bishops, pastors and Lutheran leaders to communicate with members of Congress and state legislators this church's long-standing support for managing gun purchases, such as background checks for all gun sales including private sales;

To urge bishops, pastors and Lutheran leaders to communicate to members of Congress and state legislators this church's sense of urgency for the renewal or replacement of the Federal Assault Weapons Ban (expired in 2004), including a definition of assault weapons comparable to that in the renewal attempt of the Assault Weapons Ban bill of 2013; and

To refer to the Church Council, in consultation with staff of the churchwide organization, consideration of the request for establishing an ELCA task force to organize actions consistent with ELCA policy that addresses gun violence prevention.

Response from the Domestic Mission unit (November 2016)

The Domestic Mission unit addresses gun violence in a manner consistent with ELCA Social Policy through the education and advocacy work of ELCA Advocacy in the Washington, D.C., office and state advocacy ministries. For example, on July 8, 2016, ELCA Advocacy invited its network to take action through an alert on Gun Violence urging Congress to take action on gun safety. This action was in response to a call from Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton to ELCA ministries and members to be present in their communities in the wake of violence.

Presiding Bishop Eaton will be working with the Public Policy Procedures Group (PPPG), which includes ELCA Advocacy staff and other colleagues, to determine the most effective timeline for communicating with members of Congress regarding “this church’s sense of urgency for the renewal or replacement of the Federal Assault Weapons Ban, including a definition of assault weapons comparable to that in the renewal attempt of the Assault Weapons Ban bill of 2013.” This letter will also state “this church’s long-standing support for managing gun purchases, such as background checks for all gun sales including private sales.” Often when such a letter is sent, it is followed up with an ELCA Advocacy alert to its network to encourage others to write their own letters to members of Congress and state legislators.

The hope is that this work can be completed before the end of the 2016-2017 legislative session. This letter may also be timed with the work of state advocacy ministries, such as Faith Action Network, the ELCA advocacy ministry in Washington state, in their work to pass gun safety legislation (Extreme Risk Protection Order and Safe Gun Storage). The churchwide organization does not at this time have financial resources to devote to the work of a national task force “to organize actions consistent with ELCA policy that addresses gun violence prevention.”

Church Council action [CC16.11.46t]

- To receive the response from the Domestic Mission unit;
- To decline to establish an ELCA task force addressing gun violence prevention;
- To commend the ongoing efforts of ELCA Advocacy in addressing gun violence in a manner congruent with this church’s social teaching documents; and
- To request a follow-up report be provided to the April 2018 Church Council meeting.

Response from the Domestic Mission unit (April 2018)

On Thursday, March 16, 2018, Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton sent a letter to all members of Congress that called for action on the reauthorization of an assault weapons ban and strengthening background checks. On March 22, 2018, ELCA Advocacy sent a follow-up Action Alert with the same requests, timed to coincide with the March for Our Lives on March 24, 2018, a national event supported by ELCA Conference of Bishops in the Statement in Solidarity with Our Children and Youth.

ELCA State Public Policy offices worked on 2018 legislative priorities that focus on managing gun purchases, including:

- Faith Action Network in Washington State supports gun responsibility legislation that includes the Dangerous Access Prevention Act, Enhanced Assault Weapon Background Checks, and action to prohibit sale of bump stocks.
- Virginia Interfaith Center supports legislation that will require background checks for all firearm sales and prohibit straw sales, making it illegal to purchase a firearm on behalf of anyone not lawfully allowed to purchase it themselves. In addition, the Virginia Interfaith Center supports legislation to further limit access to firearms for individuals that are previously convicted of violent crimes.
- Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Pennsylvania is working on a 2018 priority for legislation that would make it more difficult for defendants in domestic abuse cases to gain access to firearms.
- Lutheran Episcopal Advocacy Ministry in New Jersey organized advocacy including phone calls to the governor's office that led to a ban on bump stocks signed by outgoing Gov. Chris Christie on January 15, 2018.

Church Council action:

- To receive the report from the Domestic Mission unit on “Gun Violence Prevention”; and**
- To request that the secretary of this church notify the synods of this action.**

C. Deepening relationships with Historic Black Churches

Addition background was provided in the memorandum regarding the November 2016 meeting of the Church Council:

In November 2016, the Church Council voted [CC16.11.46p]:

To receive with gratitude the response from the Office of the Presiding Bishop regarding the relationship-building already underway to deepen relationships with Historic Black Churches; and

To request a report to the April 2018 Church Council meeting on the development of a strategy to further this goal.

Response from the Office of the Presiding Bishop (April 2018)

The ELCA has continued to engage in a multi-faceted strategy for strengthening relations with the Historic Black Churches. This has included strengthening bilateral, coalition and conciliar work and witness, as well as partnerships among churchwide colleagues, synods and the African Descent Lutheran Association (ADLA). A considerable amount has been accomplished within existing budget and capacity; a more expansive strategy will require further consideration of both.

Highlights for 2017 include:

- *Paving the way for renewed dialogue with the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church.*
Following up on 2016 meetings, Bishop Eaton received Bishop John F. White, president of the AME Church's Council of Bishops, as a special guest at the 2017 Bishops' Academy in Charleston, S.C. High-level meetings to discuss new possibilities for dialogue and collaboration, ecumenical worship and fellowship on the occasion of Epiphany, and a shared visit to Mother Emanuel for prayer took place. Senior Bishop McKinley Young has since expressed interest in continued dialogue.
- *Strengthening joint reception of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ)-ELCA 2010 Statement of Mission.*
At the national level, we have continued to cultivate our partnership with AMEZ bishops, including Senior Bishop George E. Battle Jr., as we live into our common commitments expressed in the 2010 Statement of Mission. Bishop W. Darin Moore spoke powerfully at the ELCA's 500th anniversary of the Reformation event in Washington, D.C., on truth-telling and racial justice. Further work has continued in the Carolinas with the leadership of Bishop Herman R. Yoos III [South Carolina Synod], Bishop Timothy M. Smith [North Carolina Synod] and synod ecumenical committees in partnership with Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations, Racial Justice Ministries and ADLA. Local relationship-building and partnerships are being renewed or established through events and initiatives. These models are being shared through the Conference of Bishops.
- *Continuing presence and participation in strategic coalitions and conferences.*
We have continued to participate in the ecumenical body Churches Uniting in Christ (CUIC), especially on the shared commitment to racial justice. At this table, we engage in common work with other Protestant and Historic Black Churches on questions related to the intersection between racism and the reconciliation of ministries. In 2017, the churches of CUIC publicly celebrated their mutual recognition of ministries and held a series of public events focused on racial justice in the greater Dallas area. In 2017, we also participated for the third year in the Conference of National Black Churches, as part of their cross-racial dialogue. This conference is the organization of the eight largest Historic Black Churches in the United States. The presiding bishop spoke, and Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations staff and Ethnic Specific and Multicultural Ministries staff were present.
- *Exploring new possibilities for strengthening historic black church relations.*
In 2017, the Rev. Lamont A. Wells, ADLA president, provided leadership in organizing the first-ever joint African Descent Lutheran Association and Union of Black Episcopalians Summit in Cherry Hill, N.J., on the theme "Like A Mighty Stream, Let Justice Roll: Absalom, Jehu, and Beyond." The summit provided an opportunity for these organizations to meet separately and together, and to celebrate the vital history and continued calling of black leadership in the Lutheran and Episcopal churches in the United States. It was an exciting opportunity for deepening relationships with one of our full communion partners. The presiding bishop, several synod bishops and various churchwide ministries staff members were present.

Church Council action:

To receive the response from the Office of the Presiding Bishop regarding “Deepening Relationships with Historic Black Churches”;

To commend the work of building and strengthening relations given the existing budget and capacity and to encourage the continued multi-faceted strategy of engagement; and

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