

Report from the Vice President

*The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?
When evildoers assail me to devour my flesh—
my adversaries and foes— they shall stumble and fall.
Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear;
though war rise up against me, yet I will be confident.*
Psalm 27:1-3 [NRSV]

It is good to be with you all again. For my opening comments, I am sharing this passage from Psalm 27 because I am using “Lasting Hope, Devotions for Lent 2019” to guide my walk with God during this Lenten season. I don’t know about you, but I feel our country and culture is at war with itself. We don’t take time to find common ground about most things because we are so confident that we are right about our perspective on just about everything. I believe this kind of existence eventually leads to despair and hopelessness. My life as a public local government official will end soon, and I wonder how I will become a regular citizen again. I certainly won’t be out of the limelight because I will still be the ELCA Vice President doing my best to fulfill all the expectations the church places on this position, spoken and unspoken. Psalm 27 reminds me I should not be fearful because God will always deliver me from those who would do me harm and situations that would destroy my life. People tell me I am always positive and optimistic in the face of challenge and hardship. This is a true characterization of me partially because I see no real value in the negative, but what really drives my optimism is my belief that God will help me overcome any difficulty I may face no matter what. As Paul states in Romans 8:39, nothing “will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” This is why the Lord is my light and salvation; whom shall I fear?

I will highlight a few activities since our last meeting because I spent most of the time recuperating from lower back surgery I was able to delay until after Thanksgiving. The surgeon insisted I be a model patient for at least eight weeks, and I tried to do just that. I am happy to report I have returned to a full schedule of church, work and play activity free of pain. During the recuperation, I was reintroduced to what it means to relax, rest and do no work.

During May and June, I will attend three synod assemblies as the churchwide representative. I am looking forward to learning more about our church context at the South Dakota, Central States and Southeastern Pennsylvania synod assemblies. All the synod bishops and their staffs have reached out to me, and all of them will have bishop elections.

I attended the spring Conference of Bishops meeting along with Mike Ward and Emma Wagner as Church Council guests. The first of two significant conversations occurred during the retreat phase of their meeting that featured bishops sharing what congregational vitality means for them. During the retreat phase of the meeting, Wes Granberg-Michaelson, General Secretary Emeritus, Reformed Church in America, now a consultant and author, delivered a presentation based on his most recent book entitled, “The Future of Faith-Ten Challenges Reshaping Christianity in the 21st Century.” The presentation and discussion were well worth the time.

The second meaningful discussion was centered around the Conference of Bishop desire to approve a final draft of the *Trustworthy Servants of the People of God* document (formerly *Vision and Expectations*) that could be recommended for Church Council approval at this meeting. There is a sense of urgency to get this task accomplished, but reaction within this church to the draft may influence the Church Council approval at this time. We need to hear from you on this matter during the discussion.

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In addition to addressing concerns related to the controversial issues currently facing our church, we must keep our eye on the work being done by the Ad Hoc Governance Policy Committee. Church Council governance is one of our highest priorities, and I hope we will move it forward at our meeting. We need to make sure the changes we make will give us the flexibility to efficiently conduct church business, manage our meeting schedule, deepen our spirituality, and strengthen relationships with the churchwide organization, Conference of Bishops and Separately Incorporated Ministries.

Finally, I believe Joint Leadership Table collaboration is still the way forward to achieve the Future Directions 2025 Goals. I believe this collaboration still improves with good governance. A Church Council that fully understands its role and responsibilities and relationship to the other church expressions and Separately Incorporated Ministries of this church makes a better partner to all. I also believe the Leadership Tables must tackle the most difficult challenges and problems we face in the church. Church Council decision making must meet the expectations of rostered ministers, lay leaders and congregational members. Looking ahead, I believe the churchwide officer elections, key churchwide office staff changes and restructure (2019 and Beyond) along with demographic changes within the Conference of Bishops show me that God is doing a new thing in the ELCA. I hope we embrace it with a positive spirit. God is calling the ELCA to do God's mission in the world. I believe we are all committed to getting it done in Christ's name.

God's Work. Our Hands.

Report from the Secretary

At this meeting, much of what you will be considering and acting upon is in preparation for the 2019 Churchwide Assembly, August 5-10, in Milwaukee, WI. “We are Church” is the theme under which we will gather to worship, learn and do the work of this church in assembly. Lutherans have this unique definition of the church in our confessions. The church exists where the people of God gather to hear the word and to celebrate the sacraments. We will be the church as we gather in Milwaukee.

At this meeting, you will be acting on the proposed Rules of Organization and Procedure that will be presented to the assembly for action. There are also a couple of bylaws that may be proposed for amendment in addition to all the amendments that were given to you in November. These earlier amendments to the Constitution, Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions were sent to the synods in February. Bylaws and continuing resolutions do not have the same notification requirements as do provisions of the constitution, so these can still be proposed.

As you know, you are currently advisory members of the assembly. One of the first actions being brought to the assembly is the amendment that would make members of the Church Council voting members of the assembly. It is important that you prepare for that possibility and have read all the pre-assembly material prior to the vote on this amendment.

Churchwide Assembly Preparation

As you consider the proposed Rules of Organization and Procedure, let me point to the changes from the rules of the 2016 Churchwide Assembly. The references to the *Constitution, Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* that were amended in 2016 have been changed in the rules. The allocation of additional voting members is changed to match your action at the April 2018 council meeting. No synod receives fewer than 6 voting members.

Under the “*Speeches*” heading, we have included language that has been added late in the past two churchwide assemblies. “*After four people have spoken in a row on the same side of the motion before the assembly and no one is in line to speak on the other side, the previous question will be automatically called.*”

In Part Eight, “Memorial from Synod Assemblies,” we require financial review by the Memorials Committee and potentially the Budget and Finance Committee of the Church Council. It is hoped that this will give voting members financial information as part of their consideration of the recommendations of the Memorials Committee.

The posting of information on those identified as potential nominees for secretary would be taken down from the website and from the Guidebook App after the adoption of the rules. This will be communicated in several ways to the voting members, so no one is caught by surprise. Finally, the deadlines have been changed to match the proposed agenda. The Executive Committee reviewed Part 16 and agreed that rules should stand as is for the elections of officers. The rest of the rules are the same as have served us well in prior assemblies.

As of the writing of this report in mid-March, synods have identified 910 of the 927 allocated for this assembly. Synod councils can select voting members that replace members elected by synod assemblies last year. Within thirty days of the assembly, the synod bishop is responsible for identifying replacement voting members. Michala Mahoney is serving as the registrar for the assembly. She has been very involved with the IT department in making the registration system more readily available to synods. We have begun voting member registration, starting with the Conference of Bishops as our test group. If you have any trouble with the registration process after you are invited to register, please contact Michala.

A preliminary credentials report of the 910 members identified finds that 553 of these voting members are laypersons (60.77 percent). Of these lay persons, 294 are women (53.2 percent) and 258 are men (46.6 percent) and 1 person reported as “other.” Of the 910 members, 164 identified as a person of color or whose primary language was other than English (18 percent). As to youth/young adults, 21 voting members are under 18 at the time of election (2.3 percent) and 94 are between 18-30 at the time of election (10.3 percent).

While not a part of the credentials report required by the representational principles, it is interesting to note that of the 357 ministers of Word and Sacrament identified 184 are women (51.5 percent) and 173 are men (48.46 percent).

Expecting that the assembly will adopt the amendment that grants the privilege of vote to the Church Council, I am asking that your synod not appoint you as a voting member if there is a vacancy. This is especially true after May 1. Our credentials system is being set up so that if the amendment is adopted, your status would be changed automatically. Given the way your information is flagged in the system, it would create major problems if we need to change your information after May 1. So, if the synod is considering identifying you as a voting member as part of the synod’s allocation, please make sure that this is reported to us prior to May 1. After May 1, we ask that you not let your name be identified as a voting member from your synod.

This is the first time we have used an identification process in preparation for the election of the secretary. We are in the stage in the process when biographical forms are being returned by those identified by voting members of the assembly. Marit Johnson is the only person who knows who has been identified as potential nominees for this office. She tells me that 64 different names were received. She has contacted all of these requesting them to provide biographical information if they are willing to let their name be published as a potential nominee. We will not post the names of those who do not return the forms. We also will not share the number of times someone’s name may have been submitted.

Synod Assemblies

As always, it is my hope that you will attend your synod assembly. For those in “paired synods,” if you can attend that synod’s assembly as well, this is very helpful. Maintaining these connections with synod assemblies and synod councils is an important way to show the interdependence between all three expressions of this church. You will be designating the churchwide representative to each synod at this meeting as authorized in S7.23. I encourage you to check in with the representative that will be at the assemblies you attend. At the very least, the churchwide representative should recognize you during their report.

21 synods will be electing a bishop at their assemblies this year. If you are from one of these synods or relate to one of these synods, it would be important for you to be in touch with the newly elected bishop or the re-elected bishop relatively soon after the assembly. This contact lets the bishop know how to relate to the Church Council in ways that will help them and the council. We do know that 10 of these synods will be electing a new bishop.

The following synods will be holding elections this year:

- 1B Northwest Washington (bishop retiring)
- 1C Southwestern Washington
- 1E Oregon
- 1F Montana (bishop retiring)
- 2B Southwest California
- 3C South Dakota (bishop term limited)
- 3D Northwestern Minnesota (bishop retiring)
- 3I Southeastern Minnesota (bishop retiring)

- 4B Central States
- 4F Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast
- 5A Metropolitan Chicago (bishop retiring)
- 5E Western Iowa
- 6B North/West Lower Michigan
- 6F Southern Ohio
- 7A New Jersey
- 7C Metropolitan New York (fill vacancy)
- 8A Northwestern Pennsylvania (bishop retiring)
- 8B Southwestern Pennsylvania
- 8D Lower Susquehanna
- 8G Metropolitan Washington D.C. (bishop retiring)
- 9D Southeastern (bishop retiring)

Roster Issues

Church Council action CC08.04.19 authorizes the secretary of this church to issue letters of call on behalf of the Church Council. The action provides as follows:

To authorize the secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to issue letters of call on behalf of the Church Council for ordained ministers, associates in ministry, deaconesses, and diaconal ministers, in accordance with the Sources of Calls tables in Chapter 7 of the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*;

To note that this action supersedes Church Council action CC87.06.03; and

To request that the secretary annually report letters of call issued under this authorization.

You will find the list of those who have received a Church Council call in 2018 in Appendix 1 of this report.

Closing Thoughts

In the past I have included my list of goals for the year in this report. I have not compiled them this year as in the past. Part of that is the pressure of Churchwide Assembly issues and the reality of transitions that have already begun to appear on the horizon. I can say the following will be the primary focus of my work this year:

1. That the Office of the Secretary continue the responsive way the staff addresses calls, emails and letters that come to us.
2. Prepare for and follow up on the 2019 Churchwide Assembly.
3. Work with the newly elected secretary on a smooth transition.
4. Continue work with staff on the digitization of roster files.

I am regularly being asked what I am going to do in retirement. My response is, I have not had time to think about it as there is so much work left to do. DeDe and I will be moving to Gig Harbor, WA after this call concludes. I have also told the presiding bishop that I am open to doing special projects that can be done from Gig Harbor, after some time of letting go of the pace of this office and my prior call. I cannot imagine I would disappear from life in this church, but I have not spent time exploring what that may mean. I will be putting a count-down clock on my phone after the assembly, but not before. DeDe has that information. I don't need it yet.

Transition is a reality in the Office of the Secretary. At your last meeting, we welcomed Marit Johnson to the staff. At this meeting, you will meet Dana Adams for the first time. Dana is our new director of meeting management. I will be introducing him during my verbal report. As you have opportunity, please welcome him to this role.

I noted six years ago that I was inheriting a very dedicated and long-tenured staff in the Office of the Secretary. Of the 18 people that were here in 2013, only 7 remain. We have seen the retirements of most of those who have left this organization after significant lengths of time. I feel good about the staff that has been assembled to do our work. The Office of the Secretary requires people with unique skills and those who do very detailed work. This church is blessed to have had those who worked in this office before us and continues to be blessed by the current staff. I have been honored to work with these colleagues.

This is my last written report to the Church Council. I want to thank you and those who proceeded you on the council for your service to this church. You are wrestling with important issues that will affect this church into the future. I have been impressed during my service as a liaison bishop and as secretary with the careful and faithful consideration of the many items that come before the council. Your work makes this church better. Thank you and thank God for you.

I never anticipated doing this work when I started seminary in 1971. This church was not in existence then. Our issues were a country divided by civil unrest related to the Vietnam War and the ongoing struggle for equal rights for all people in this country. The issues then are not dissimilar to the issues today. The speed of our communication and the methods of responding were different, but the issues of trust and inclusion were confronted daily. The church was seen as a leader in issues related to peace and justice.

Today, the church has been marginalized into a lesser voice in the cultural dialogue. That does not diminish the importance of our voice. Jesus is still the head of the church. We have a loyalty to the reign of God in the face of all other loyalties put upon us. That should give us hope as we grapple with the issues of our day. God is faithful, and we continue to serve in Jesus' name. Thanks be to God.

Church Council Calls issued in 2018

Name	Job Start Date	Job Title	Name of Organization
Elizabeth J Colver	1/1/2018	Director of Vocation & Education	Deaconess Community Of The Evangelical Lutheran Church In America
Kathryn A Kleinhans	1/1/2018	Dean	Trinity Lutheran Seminary
Beth A Gaede	1/2/2018	Senior Acquisitions Editor	1517 Media
Karen M Sease	1/15/2018	Major Gift Officer	United Lutheran Seminary - Gettysburg
Richard A Wehrs	1/22/2018	Regional Manager	ELCA Mission Investment Fund
Aura M. Suarez	2/1/2018	Latino Lay Academy Coordinator	
Hitoshi Adachi	2/5/2018	Pastor	
Sarah Hinlicky Wilson	2/5/2018	Pastor	Japanese Evangelical Lutheran Church
Julianne D Smith	2/23/2018	Director for Evangelical Mission	Northeastern Ohio Synod, ELCA
Andrew S Fitch	3/16/2018	Associate Director of Admissions	United Lutheran Seminary - Gettysburg
Teresita C Valeriano	3/19/2018	Director for Evangelical Mission	Sierra Pacific Synod, ELCA
Linda O Norman	3/26/2018	Vice President of Administration	ELCA Mission Investment Fund
Mark D Burkhardt	3/28/2018	Director, Faith Formation	ELCA
Katie L. Osweiler	4/20/2018	Pastor	All Saints Episcopal Church
Rosemarie G Doucette	5/1/2018	Pastor	
Dianne S Johnson	5/15/2018	Director for Evangelical Mission	Northwest Washington Synod, ELCA
Sara V. Bishop	6/4/2018	Vicar to the Archbishop	Australia
Charlene M. R. Cox	6/11/2018	Director of Contextual Education	Wartburg Theological Seminary
Matthew W Dobyms	6/22/2018	Chaplain	
Allison R. DeForest	7/1/2018	Director of the Graduate School	United Lutheran Seminary - Philadelphia
Amy Lynn Allen	7/1/2018	Assistant Professor	Christian Theological Seminary
John E Wertz Jr	7/1/2018	Director for Evangelical Mission	Virginia Synod, ELCA
John G Largen	7/1/2018	Dean of the Chapel	United Lutheran Seminary - Philadelphia
T Gregory Knepp	7/1/2018	Director of Contextual Formation	United Lutheran Seminary - Gettysburg
Elise Eklund Rothfusz	8/1/2018	Director for Evangelical Mission	Central/Southern Illinois Synod, ELCA
Mari L Thorkelson	8/1/2018	Pastor	American Church In Berlin
Emlyn A Ott	8/16/2018	Associate Professor	
Jessica L Harris Daum	8/20/2018	Director for Evangelical Mission	Eastern North Dakota Synod, ELCA
Eric M. Miletti	9/1/2018	Director for Evangelical Mission Program Executive for Gender	Southwestern Texas Synod, ELCA
Judith A. VanOsdol	9/1/2018	Justice	Lutheran World Federation
Peter Rogness	9/1/2018	Interim Pastor Program Director, Learning &	Bratislava International Church
Robert K James	9/4/2018	Evaluation	ELCA
Erin L Nelson	9/10/2018	Director for Evangelical Mission	Northwest Synod of Wisconsin, ELCA

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Said R Ailabouni	9/10/2018	Interim Area Desk Director	ELCA
Anthony J Striffler	9/14/2018	Chaplain	
Nathan J Huffman	9/16/2018	Chaplain	
Robert M Stuberg	10/1/2018	Music Lecturer	Mwika Bible And Theological College
Zachary S Courter	10/5/2018	Pastor	City Park Lutheran Church
Matthew T Barnhouse	10/8/2018	Director for Evangelical Mission	Rocky Mountain Synod, ELCA

Report of the Treasurer

The churchwide organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America had total operating revenue and support of \$69.5 million for the twelve-month period ending January 31, 2019. This was \$3.9 million greater than expenses of \$65.6 million. Net operating results were also favorable to the annual breakeven budget by \$3.9 million. A portion of this favorable variance will be used to balance the FY 2019 budget, based on Church Council action that was taken in November 2018.

Operating revenue totaled \$64.8 million for the twelve-month period compared with \$65.9 million in the prior year, excluding the nonrecurring impact of the \$2.8 million released from the Endowment Fund Pooled Trust for a one-time capital contribution to the ELCA Foundation in 2017. In addition, \$4.6 million in support was released from restriction or designation during fiscal year 2018, resulting in \$69.4 million in total revenue and support.

Income from congregations through synods in the form of Mission Support income for the twelve months was \$43.0 million (99 percent of budget) compared to \$44.4 million in 2017, a decrease of 3.2 percent. Other unrestricted and temporarily restricted revenue and support available for the budgeted operations of the churchwide organization amounted to \$21.8 million. This income was relatively consistent with the prior year; however, favorable to budget by \$3.0 million with the most significant drivers of favorability to budget being investment income and general unrestricted gifts. Consistent with the prior year, the Mission Investment Fund provided grant support of \$1.5 million to the churchwide organization. The attached revenue summary provides additional details on the sources of revenue.

Spending by the operating units and offices of the churchwide organization was tightly managed, generating a \$2.6 million favorable variance when compared to the spending authorizations. The report which details the actual versus the authorized spending by unit for the year is attached.

Fiscal year 2018 marked a record year for ELCA World Hunger with total contributions for the twelve months of \$23.6 million. This represented a \$.6K increase over the budget and was partially fueled by \$1 million raised through the ELCA Youth Gathering Global Farm Challenge which included a matching gift.

Contributed support of \$11.6 million from ELCA members and partners for Lutheran Disaster Response was received with nearly \$13 million being spent to assist with relief efforts and related work.

Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA was launched 5 years ago and has raised \$180.8 million in revenue and commitments (91.3 percent of the goal) to date. Some categories of the campaign have already exceeded their specific goals, including Fund for Leaders and Missionaries/Young Adults in Global Mission, Malaria and Where Needed Most, with World Hunger at 94.5 percent of goal. In addition, over \$45 million in planned gifts has been contributed toward campaign priorities. The campaign will conclude June 30, 2019.

Report from the Conference of Bishops

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect. [Romans 12:2, NRSV]

As we continue to discern and experiment with how the Holy Spirit is transforming the Conference of Bishops (CoB) so we may grow in faithful and effective service to the gospel and in partnership with other leadership teams of the ELCA, the most recent meeting was shaped in significantly different ways from past meetings. Along the way, across differences, in the midst of significant challenges, our time together was an experience of renewal and transformation in the power of the Spirit.

At the center of the gathering was a two-day retreat, Saturday and Sunday. The retreat was, essentially, CoB members only but also included Church Council guests and a handful of others who were invited to be with us as resource persons. Saturday was given to a focus on congregational vitality and the various ways some bishops and their synods are addressing that concern. This gave us opportunity to go deep with each other in exploring themes related to congregational vitality and the sorts of transformations required in our leadership and in the life of the church for us to embrace the renewal and new life the Holy Spirit offers. Along the way, we were reminded that, as we seek to cultivate and support vital congregations across the church, each synod is a laboratory of the Spirit.

Sunday provided opportunity for worship, which included laying of hands and prayer for bishops who will be involved in election processes in coming weeks, interest/affinity groups focused on a handful of topics, and conversation about a couple of shared concerns. No decisions were made – nor could be made – during this retreat time.

We also met for one less day, concluding at 4:00 p.m. Monday rather than 11:00 a.m. Tuesday. This influenced a number of other changes in the agenda, including the committee work on Wednesday and Thursday of the meeting (in which committees were asked to follow up on the work the CoB did with churchwide office leaders last fall) and the movement of Ready Bench lunch meetings from Tuesday to Friday. This put the CoB in a better position to receive and give appropriate consideration on Monday to any action items that might come from committees, ready benches, and other groups.

In the end, I believe that the retreat in the center of our gathering provided some spiritual and relational breathing room out of which arose, among other things, a [pastoral message](#) confessing and repenting of uneven and inequitable application of the document *Vision and Expectations* and advice and counsel to the ELCA Church Council as you consider the revised replacement of that document, *Trustworthy Servants of the People of God*, at this April meeting. Here is the advice and counsel from the CoB regarding *Trustworthy Servants*:

The Conference of Bishops has reviewed “Trustworthy Servants of the People of God.” We affirm it as a timely replacement for Vision & Expectations and a faithful expression of the aspirations of the ELCA for its rostered ministers and candidates. We believe that “Trustworthy Servants” can create a healthy environment for accountability in this church. We offer our prayers for the ELCA Church Council in their discernment and deliberation as they consider this policy in the days to come.

We also engaged in conversation with ELCA seminary leaders about dismantling racism in theological education and formation for ministry. About two years ago, the CoB committed itself to such intentional engagement with seminary leaders around common concerns about vital leadership for the church.

We reviewed the draft social statement on women and justice, titled *Faith, Sexism and Justice: A Lutheran Call to Action*.

Addressing concerns about the situation in Venezuela, the conference also issued a [statement](#) calling for “all parties to respect internationally recognized human rights,” for “a halt to the deportation of Venezuelans currently in the U.S.” and for “a new presidential election in Venezuela as soon as possible, one that will be administered by new electoral authorities, conducted under international supervision, and overseen by a neutral government.” The statement was issued in both English and Spanish.

The CoB also issued a [letter](#) to the bishops of the United Methodist Church, expressing “our abiding love and concern for The United Methodist Church and for you, its Council of Bishops.”

Of course, while a good bit of important work was done around a variety of concerns during the spring gathering of the Conference of Bishops, the process around *Trustworthy Servants of the People of God* has garnered the most attention since then. Please note that statement to the Church Council regarding *Trustworthy Servants* that was adopted during the meeting still stands.

Unfortunately, some of the most extreme and strident voices have dominated the conversation about this on social media and in other venues. Claims have been made by a few that bishops have failed as leaders in this process. These claims are rooted in misinformation and shaped by misguided assumptions. Thankfully, more folks have responded carefully and in the spirit of mutual honoring and partnership, have inquired as to factual information about the processes involved, and have offered thoughtful reflection both on the content of *Trustworthy Servants* and the process of its development.

As the Church Council considers *Trustworthy Servants* and related processes, I encourage us to be clear on the facts of the process, to ask for clarity where there are questions or confusion, and to keep in mind the concerns of all those who are affected by the aspirations of such a document. This is a time to engage with one another as a community of discernment that listens deeply, thinks creatively, and acts boldly in seeking what is good and true for the well-being of the whole body, for the sake of the good news entrusted to us.

In early March, I shared a message about the CoB’s pastoral message and *Trustworthy Servants* with the people of the Indiana-Kentucky Synod (as many bishops did with the people of their synods). The last paragraph of that message read:

I especially hope that rostered ministers and candidates for rostered ministry will discuss “Trustworthy Servants” not only among themselves, but also with lay members of the congregations and other ministries they serve, and with people who hold different perspectives on the various topics covered in the document. As you read, reflect on, and discuss the content of the documents, I invite you to do so thoughtfully, prayerfully, and in ways that honor one another as siblings in Christ and as partners in proclaiming and embodying the good news of Jesus Christ crucified and risen for the life of the world.

May it also be so among us, the Church Council of the ELCA, as we engage *Trustworthy Servants of the People of God* and all the other important work before us in April.

Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA

We are now in the final months of the ELCA's first comprehensive campaign, *Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA*. **As of January 31, we have collectively raised more than \$226 million, including \$181 million in cash and multi-year commitments, and \$45 million in planned gifts, for churchwide ministries.** We are so grateful for the continued support and partnership of generous individuals, synods and congregations.

Between now and June 30, the Mission Advancement development team is focused on closing out key priority areas that have momentum and are near their financial goals. These include International Women Leaders (80 percent of goal reached), ELCA World Hunger (94.5 percent of goal reached), Young Adults in Global Mission (91 percent of goal reached), and Global Ministries projects where work has been initiated and partial funding secured. Additionally, we continue to build support for the Where Needed Most fund, which is being allocated to support Campaign priorities where the response has been less than estimated. Individual fundraising plans are in process for each of these key areas.

Major gift work supporting these priorities is led by a special initiative called "Project 500." The goal of this initiative is to focus the ELCA's resources on engaging the top 500 major donor prospects, and ultimately, build a sustainable major-gifts program for the ELCA. In 2018, these efforts saw impressive results, including:

- \$7.5 million in cash gifts of \$5,000+ received
- \$1.5 million in new major gift commitments
- \$9 million total impact in current major gift
- \$8.6 million in new documented planned gifts

Reaching our goal for the International Women Leaders program continues to be a top priority. As of Jan. 31, total gifts received are at \$3.2 million of the \$4 million goal. In March, we launched a concentrated effort around International Women's Day, encouraging ELCA members to participate in a \$100,000 match provided by a generous family in the ELCA. Efforts included an e-blast series, social media campaign, worship service and brunch with the 26 International Women Leaders scholars in Chicago, and a donor-hosted event in Austin, Tex., with special guests Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton and Dinah Murekatete, an International Women Leaders scholar from Rwanda. At the time of this writing, more than \$70,000 has been contributed towards this match.

Reaching our \$115-million goal for ELCA World Hunger is another top priority. One way we do this is by supporting efforts like ELCA World Hunger's 40 Days of Giving. This Lent, ELCA members, congregations and synods are invited to join together with fellow members and supporters of ELCA World Hunger to study, reflect and give during ELCA World Hunger's 40 Days of Giving. In its fourth year, 40 Days of Giving encourages us to experience how the grace of Christ moves us to engage in transformative works of love around the world as God calls us into the ministry of hope, liberation and restoration for our world. New resources were made available this year, including a devotional calendar, study guide, coin jar wrapper and weekly email series, which were provided to synods and congregations to use as part of their 40 Days of Giving initiative.

Our impact

Since the campaign's launch in 2014, we have accomplished amazing things with the help of ELCA members, congregations, synods and other partners. Many thanks go to you, our colleagues, who have supported and continue to support our work with congregations, hunger and poverty, global church and leadership.

- **Global Church:**
 - More than 180 established and emerging women leaders from our Global Companions have accessed educational opportunities designed specifically for them, including four-year scholarships to ELCA colleges and universities.
 - Young Adults in Global Mission opened four new country programs – Rwanda, Cambodia, Australia and Senegal – with 83 young adults sent into service across 14 countries during the 2018-2019 year. An additional 315 young adults have served in the program since the campaign began.

- **Leadership:**
 - This year, 26 ministries will receive a grant to further their work through the campaign's Youth and Young Adults priority. A total of 47 grants and more than \$1.2 million have been distributed to programs across the ELCA through this initiative.
 - The ELCA Fund for Leaders is providing 254 students with more than \$2.6 million in seminary scholarships during the 2018-2019 academic year. This includes 50 full-tuition scholarships for new seminarians given out in 2018 – the highest number ever awarded.

- **Hunger and Poverty:**
 - With campaign support, ELCA World Hunger provided more than \$3.2 million in new funding to 47 growth projects in 27 countries last year. This is above and beyond its ongoing support of existing projects and programs.
 - The total income for ELCA World Hunger in 2018 was over \$23.5 million – the largest annual income in the 44-year history of the program, with a growth of 24 percent in annual revenue compared to five years ago (2013).
 - There are 77 ministries across 63 synods of this church that have been awarded 2019 ELCA World Hunger domestic hunger grants for a total 3-year (2019-2021) investment of over \$1.1 million with an average 3-year total award of \$15,400 per ministry.

- **Congregations:**
 - With more than \$1 million in support from the campaign, Renewing Congregations grants are being implemented across the ELCA, including 19 Synod Renewing Congregations Strategies, six Area Ministry Strategies and four Fast Growth Congregations initiatives.
 - 258 total new-start congregations have been approved during the campaign – a record growth in ELCA new starts.
 - Through the campaign, Disability Ministries has distributed 17 gathering and inclusivity grants, 18 equipping congregations and synods grants and 12 preparing leaders grants. An additional \$250,000 in grants will be distributed to mental health ministry projects by January 2020.

Our opportunity

We have accomplished so much through the campaign, and we couldn't have done it without your partnership. Yet, there is more work to be done before the campaign ends on June 30. We hope each of you will come forward, as you are able, with leaders from your synods, congregations and communities to accelerate the successful completion of this effort. If you do not yet have a will or estate plan that supports the ELCA ministries you are most committed to, ELCA gift planners can help – and your gift to any of the campaign priorities will count toward our final campaign impact number. Our continued collaboration in these final months is important so that we achieve all we set out to do together. Let's finish strong as church together!

Report from the Executive for Administration

FUTURE DIRECTIONS 2025

Goal One:	A thriving church spreading the gospel and deepening faith of all people.
Goal Two:	A church equipping people for their baptismal vocations in the world and this church.
Goal Three:	An inviting and welcoming church that reflects and embraces the diversity of our communities and the gifts and opportunities that diversity brings.
Goal Four:	A visible church deeply committed to working ecumenically and with other people of faith for justice, peace and reconciliation in communities and around the world.
Goal Five:	A well-governed, connected and sustainable church.

Strategic Planning

Churchwide Organization Operational Plan 2018 Annual Report

The churchwide organization just completed the first year of its current two-year operational plan for 2018-19. The 2018 annual report is appended to this report. The Planning and Evaluation Committee will review this report during its meeting and make any recommendations to the full Church Council. (See Attachment)

Planning 2019 and Beyond

During 2018, the Administrative Team worked with senior staff and consulted with the Joint Leadership Table regarding strategic planning for 2019 and beyond. The objective of long-term sustainability has led to several actions to-date:

- Beginning in January 2018, at the recommendation adopted by the November 2017 Church Council, the ELCA Foundation was established as a Separately Incorporated Ministry. The president of the Foundation serves simultaneously as the Executive Director for Mission Advancement, thereby maintaining close coordination and mutual support.
- The ELCA World Hunger Domestic Program was redesigned. A major new feature of the program is “Big Dream Grants.” These are grants ranging from \$10,000-\$75,000 envisioned as a one-time investment but may present multi-year program plans.
- A new Congregational Vitality team was created, as a result of a recommendation from a guiding coalition that reviewed the work of new and renewing congregations.
- The work of Racial Justice was moved from the Domestic Mission unit to the Office of the Presiding Bishop to create a deeper connection with theological discernment and ecumenical and interreligious relations.
- A voluntary separation incentive program was offered to eligible employees. Eight employees elected to participate in the program.
- The health insurance program for employees was changed from Gold+ to Silver+.
- Travel budgets for 2019 were reduced between ten and twenty percent for 2019.
- Mission Advancement unit restructured with a February 1, 2019 implementation date. The restructure is part of planning to bring *Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA* to a close on June 30, 2019 and position the churchwide organization for future development ministry.

Churchwide Organization Operational Plan 2020-22

During 2019, the churchwide organization will develop its operational plan for 2020-22. The plan will be built from Future Directions 2025 goals and priorities for action. Congregational Vitality and Leadership will continue to be the foci lens for our work.

Leadership Development Laboratory

The presiding bishop is launching a leadership development laboratory in the churchwide organization. The lab is designed as a hybrid of John Kotter's *guiding coalition*. The lab's purpose is to develop a comprehensive strategic plan for the leadership ministries within the churchwide organization; provide a space of research and innovation; convene and connect with agencies and institutions across this church with responsibility for leadership development both rostered and lay. The Administrative Team will share additional information about the lab during this council meeting.

"Toward a Faithful and Multidimensional Understanding of Sustainability"

This past January, the Joint Leadership Table (Church Council Executive Committee, Conference of Bishops Executive Committee, and the Administrative Team of the churchwide organization), affirmed "Toward a Faithful and Multidimensional Understanding of Sustainability" as a thought document that advances the aspiration expressed in goal five of Future Directions 2025 for a "well-governed, connected and sustainable church." The document includes four recommendations for action and will be presented to you at this meeting.

Ethnic Specific Ministry Strategic Plans

The five ethnic-specific ministry strategic plans have all been reviewed and updated and will be presented en bloc at this Church Council meeting through the Planning and Evaluation Committee. The listing below shows the original adoption of each strategy by an ELCA Churchwide Assembly:

- African Descent Ministries – 2005
- American Indian and Alaska Native Ministries – 1997
- Asian and Pacific Islander Ministries – 2001
- Arab and Middle Eastern Ministries – 2005
- Latino Ministries – 2001

Common threads among these ministry plans include resourcing implementation plans across this church; more consistent reporting of progress and engagement of the goals; and deeper commitment from the whole church to these ministries.

The Planning and Evaluation Committee will also review the report and recommendations from the Strategy Toward Authentic Diversity Task Force, which was appointed in response to 2016 Churchwide Assembly Action – Motion B – CA16.05.25.

The work of the task force and the Ethnic-Specific Ministry Strategies are part of this church's efforts to live into being an inclusive and multicultural church as called for in Future Directions 2025.

Budget

We closed the 2018 fiscal year with a balance of income over expenses. We are grateful for the generosity of the members of this church that continues to fund the ministries we share. The Office of the Presiding Bishop, working with the Office of the Treasurer and the Administrative Team, prepared a balanced budget for 2019 that was approved at the November 2018 meeting of this council. We will present the 2020 expenditure authorization and 2021-22 budget proposals at this meeting for your approval and transmission to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly. Please see the [Treasurer's report](#) for more details.

Staff Demographics

The total number of churchwide organization employees as of March 1, 2019 is 349. The distribution of staff was 59 percent female, 41 percent male; 38 percent persons of color; 31 percent rostered ministers; 71 percent Chicago-based. There are 275 regular full-time positions, 11 regular part-time and 63 term contracts.

In addition, over 220 ELCA pastors, doctors, nurses, teachers, theological educators, communicators and community organizers, and Young Adults in Global Mission are serving as missionaries in 40 countries across the world.

The Separately Incorporated Ministries under the umbrella of the Churchwide Organization personnel policies are: The ELCA Foundation, Mission Investment Fund, Women of the ELCA and Lutheran Men in Mission. Their staffing demographics as of March 1, 2019 were:

The ELCA Foundation: Total number of employees: 29. The distribution of staff was 59 percent female, 41 percent male; 28 percent persons of color; 1 percent rostered ministers; and 52 percent of the staff is Chicago-based.

Mission Investment Fund: Total number of employees: 57. The distribution of the staff was 63 percent female, 37 percent male; 37 percent persons of color; 11 percent rostered ministers, and 89 percent of the staff is Chicago-based.

Women of the ELCA: Total number of employees: 11. The distribution of the staff was 100 percent female; 55 percent persons of color; eight percent rostered ministers. All staff are Chicago-based.

Lutheran Men in Mission: Total number of employees: 2. The distribution of the staff was: 2 white males; 1 non-ELCA clergy; both are deployed.

The Human Resources web site can be found at www.elca.org/humanresources; information regarding positions in Global Mission can be found at www.elca.org/globalserve.

ELCA Churchwide Organization Operational Plan

Annual Report for 2018

Report to the ELCA Church Council

April 2019

future@elca.org



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

Introduction

In 2018, churchwide organization operational planning supported the identity, vision and shared purpose of this church as outlined in *Future Directions 2025*. The Churchwide Organization Operational Plan sets out the goals and objectives that the churchwide organization worked toward in 2018 and will continue through 2019. The plan shows a strong emphasis on *Congregational Vitality and Leadership*, the strategic foci identified by the presiding bishop and affirmed by the Administrative Team, Conference of Bishops and Church Council.

The operational plan's objectives establish the framework for ongoing planning and reporting. While management-level reporting on major activities will continue, the Administrative Team and senior leaders are aiming for analysis and reporting that shows how the churchwide organization's work has contributed toward achieving the objectives, whether the results are tracking in the right direction, and what has been learned with respect to assumptions, strategy, resources and adjustment of plans.

This report summarizes selected work, baseline measures and measured progress toward the five strategic goals of the 2018-19 Churchwide Organization Operational Plan. The report is organized by the *Future Directions 2025* goals for the ELCA. Because goals one and two share objectives, they are presented together.

For each goal and accompanying set of objectives, this report highlights work of the churchwide staff (often in collaboration with other expressions of the ELCA and/or separately incorporated ministries, companion synods and other religious bodies). When available, metrics show where impact has been observed by measuring change in outcomes. For newer initiatives and programs being measured for the first time, metrics may serve as the baseline for tracking future progress.

During 2018, the Administrative Team consulted with the Joint Leadership Table (executive committees of the Church Council and Conference of Bishops), the separately incorporated ministries and churchwide staff; surveyed the full Church Council and Conference of Bishops; and met with churchwide senior leaders and the Conference of Bishops to prepare a churchwide organizational design for 2020. The design will be completed during 2019.

Goal 1

A thriving church spreading the gospel and deepening faith for all people.

Acts 1:8, 1 Peter 2:9-10,
Matthew 28:16-20, Romans 1:16

Goal 2

A church equipping people for their baptismal vocations in the world and this church.

Philippians 2:4-11, 1 Corinthians
12:4-7, Romans 6:3-4, Mark 10:13-16

Goals one and two; objective one: Promote a wider understanding of the ELCA's identity (we are church; we are Lutheran; we are church together; and we are church for the sake of the world) and equip leaders and disciples to communicate our theology and beliefs in accessible and compelling ways.

◇ **2018 survey of Lutheran rostered ministers and congregation council members:**

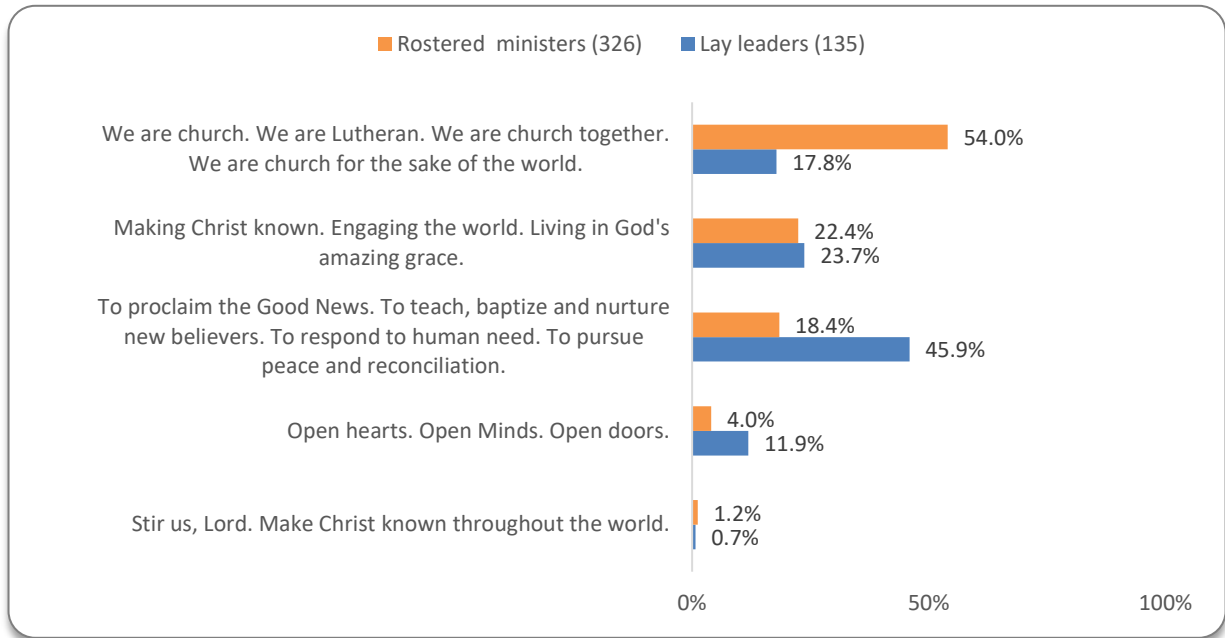
For baseline measures of objective one, a sample of lay leaders and rostered ministers was surveyed in summer 2018. A comparison of those responses with a 2008 survey of lay leaders (*Lutherans Say #6*) suggests that Lutheran theology and beliefs are being better communicated than a decade ago (*graph at right*).

In both surveys, respondents were asked if they agree with the statement: "We

decide to follow Jesus." Though the surveys polled different people, the 20 percent drop in agreement with the statement suggests that Lutherans in general may be less inclined to agree with a "decisional" theology that contrasts with Lutheran Confessional theology, which asserts that we are captive to sin and totally dependent on God's saving grace through Jesus Christ. However, with 40 percent of lay leaders indicating they believe salvation to be a personal decision, there is room for improved communication.



Despite being promoted throughout the church for five years, less than 1 in 5 lay leaders in the 2018 survey could identify the current emphases of the ELCA. In addition, slightly over half of rostered ministers could identify the emphases. This indicates that more promotion of the emphases is needed. The graph below shows the responses of lay leaders and rostered ministers (number who responded to survey shown in parentheses):

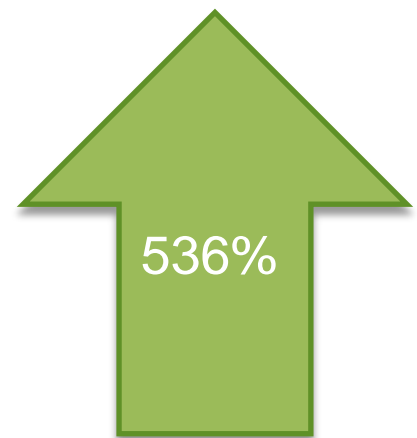


- ◇ **Living Lutheran:** The magazine has a monthly circulation of 129,087, with 97,943 copies going to congregations, 11,792 individual subscriptions and 19,455 gratis copies. Individual subscribers are staying steady and three-year subscriptions are growing due to a fall promotion. In 2018, LivingLutheran.org had a total of 783,989 page views.



- ◇ **Social media presence, news stories:** Social media posts accounted for 88 percent of the ELCA's "voice" in 2018, with over 28,000 posts. News mentions accounted for 12 percent, with more than 4,000 mentions. This represents a 536 percent increase over 2017, with a potential news reach of 1.1 billion.

In July 2018, the Three Sides podcast launched. Currently, Three Sides has almost 17,000 unique downloads over seven episodes. The podcast is consistently averaging downloads higher than national averages per Libsyn, the largest distributor of podcasts.



Goals one and two; objective two: Renew and strengthen faith formation and evangelism practices by lay members and rostered ministers, drawing on success stories among ELCA expressions and lessons from global accompaniment with companion churches.

◇ **Congregational faith formation and evangelism programs:**

- “God’s Good Creation” (first Lutheran vacation Bible school program made available in many years) was released in 2018; the 2019 theme is “Who is My Neighbor?”
- An Advent study on “meals and feasting” around the world was produced.
- A take-home activity for congregational use and study was created for 2018 ELCA Youth Gathering participants based on the ELCA World Hunger Field Experience, which communicates Lutheran identity.

- ◇ **Strengthening faith formation and capacity for evangelism through Glocal Events and accompaniment training:** Through 30 events in 2018, the Global Mission unit offered education and trainings that create an alternative narrative of why and how our church participates in God’s mission through the lens of accompaniment.



IMPACT:
12,000 people across the United States were reached through Glocal events at synod assemblies and ecumenical trainings.

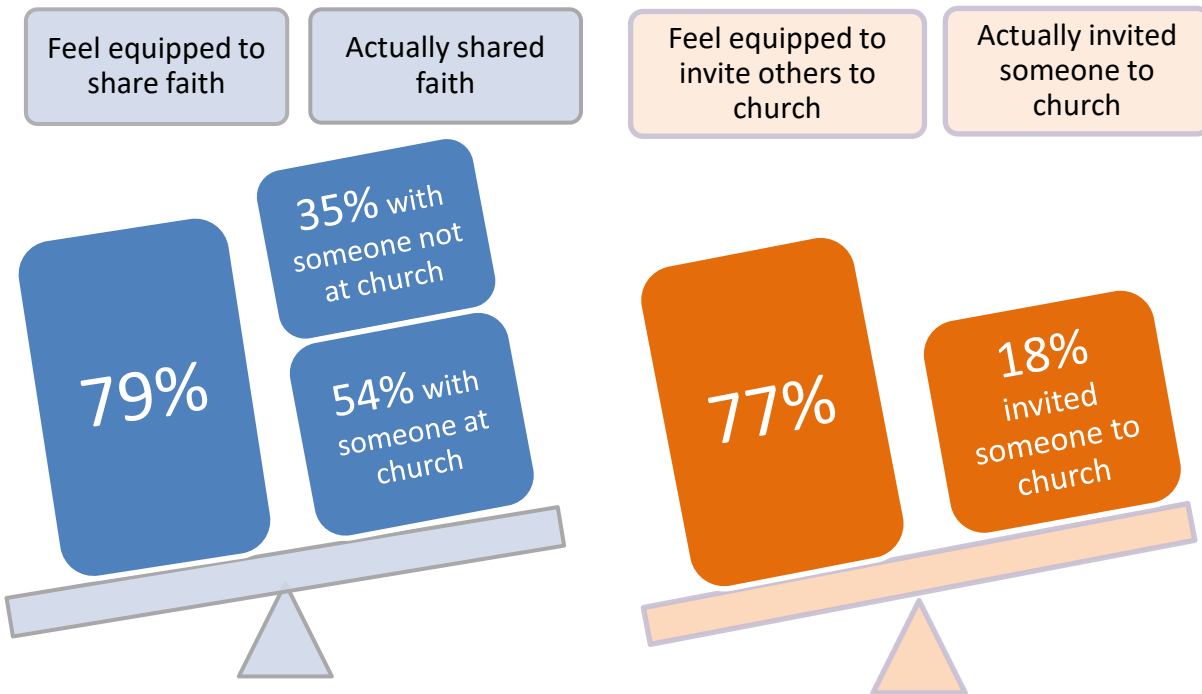
◇ **2018 survey of Lutheran rostered ministers and congregation council members:**

In the 2018 survey described in objective one, questions were asked to obtain a baseline measure of faith formation for future comparison.

The table below shows the current pace of respondents’ spiritual growth. There are no significant differences between the lay and rostered respondents. The pace of spiritual growth for over three-quarters of respondents is slow or moderate. However, 17 percent of lay leaders and 13 percent of rostered ministers are stalled or not growing (numbers who responded in parentheses).

Current pace of spiritual growth	Lay (135)	Rostered (326)
Not growing but content where I am	9.6%	4.3%
Stalled and want to move	7.4%	8.9%
Slow but steady	47.4%	43.9%
Moderate	29.6%	35.0%
Rapid	5.9%	8.0%

In the same survey, lay leaders were asked how well-equipped they feel to share their faith with others and how comfortable they are inviting others to church. The *chart below* shows that lay leaders say they are comfortable, but there is opportunity to work on follow-through.



Goals one and two; objective three: Work with engaged synods to support renewal and revitalization of congregations and worship communities in ways that deepen spiritual life and faith practice, welcome and retain worshipers, and increase engagement in God's mission, locally and globally.

- ◇ **Partnered Synod Project:** A cross-unit Partnered Synod Project (PSP) team began a two-year project to support and assess how synod staff and directors for evangelical mission (DEMs) strengthen the capacity of congregations to engage their local communities for evangelical witness and service.

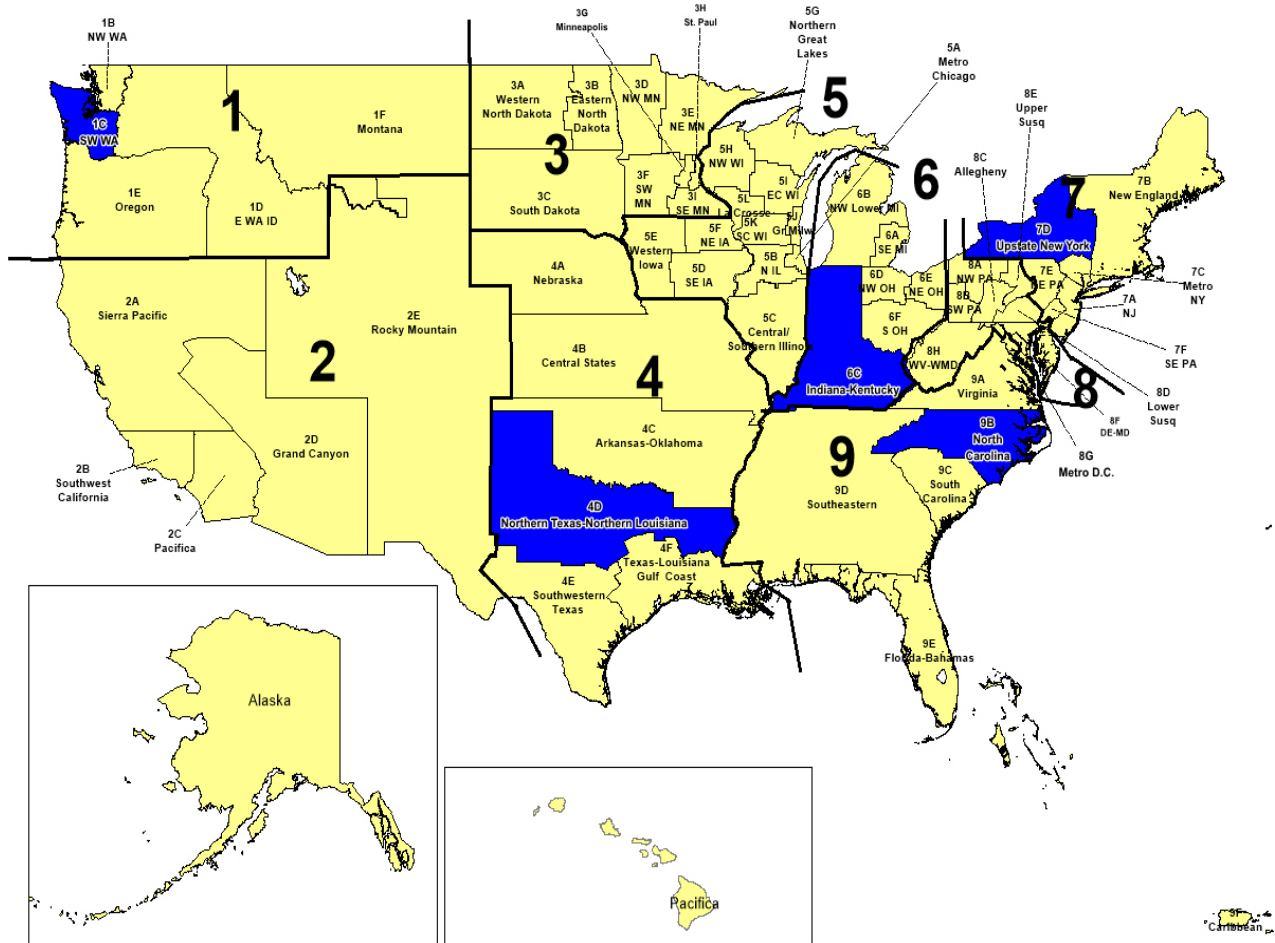
The PSP brought together resources and programs from across the churchwide organization, including Global Mission; Domestic Mission; Mission Advancement; and Planning, Research & Evaluation; to support synods in growing these capacities and for mutual engagement and learning. Synods shared plans to guide the work in 2019. Additional meetings are planned in 2019 to further develop action plans and collaborate on projects where there are shared priorities.



IMPACT:

Participating bishops and DEMs expressed gratitude for the relationships formed in the PSP and feel more connected to churchwide resources and staff than before.

The partnered synods are shown in dark blue on the map below:



- ◇ **Congregational vitality and renewal:** Through new strategies for renewing congregations, synods are equipped to invite collaboration among groups of churches to move into a future of vitality by increasing their impact on local communities. These initiatives include Congregational Vitality training and providing grants for this work.

Five strategic shifts for renewing existing congregations:

- ✓ Accompanying and training synod teams rather than individual congregations.
- ✓ Moving to collaborative strategies for revitalization (groups of churches).
- ✓ Increasing commitment to accompany ethnic communities and ministries among people experiencing poverty.
- ✓ Working out of strength: Anchor churches and others sharing resources each other.
- ✓ Multicultural and contextual learning and sharing of learnings.

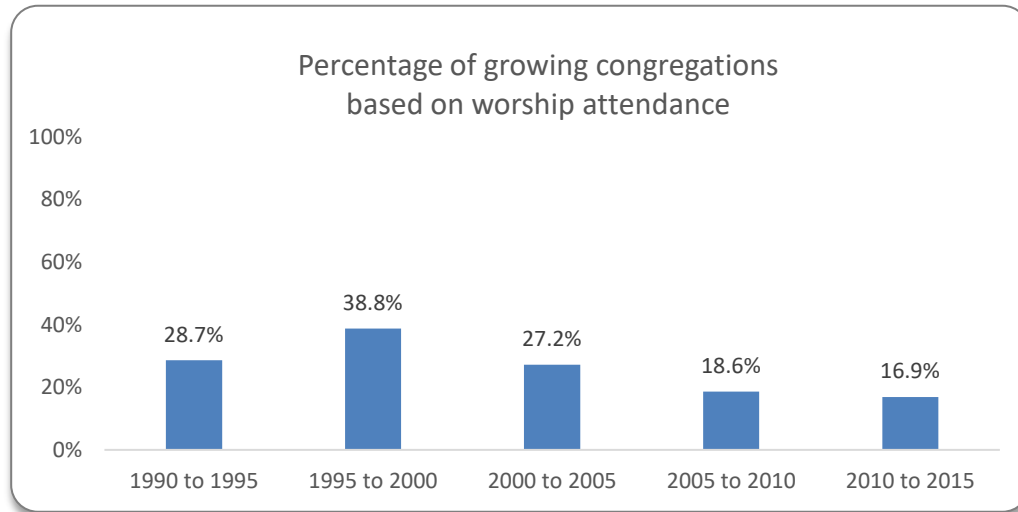
Congregational Vitality training: The new approach includes creating a churchwide learning community and accompanying synods and congregations by training and equipping leaders across the church. *More than 750 leaders participated in ELCA Congregational Vitality trainings in the last 12 months. This includes the following events:*

Who	What	When	Where
250 mission developers, redevelopers, synod leaders, congregational leaders and seminarians	Congregational Vitality training	January/February 2018	Houston
60+ leaders	Training for facilitators/cohort coordinators for congregational development training specialized tracks for mission development	January/February 2018	Houston
40 leaders	Congregational development training with the Lutheran Seminary Program in the Southwest for ELCA leaders and churches starting Latino ministries	June 2018	Austin
More than 450 mission developers, redevelopers, synod and congregational leaders, and seminarians	Congregational development training	August 2018	Seattle
33 DEMs	Training for developing and sharing new plans and strategies for congregational vitality with the congregations in their synods	August 2018	Seattle
35 synods	American Indian Alaska Native gathering	August 2018	Seattle
More than 300 leaders/34 synods	Congregational Vitality training	Feb 2019	Las Vegas

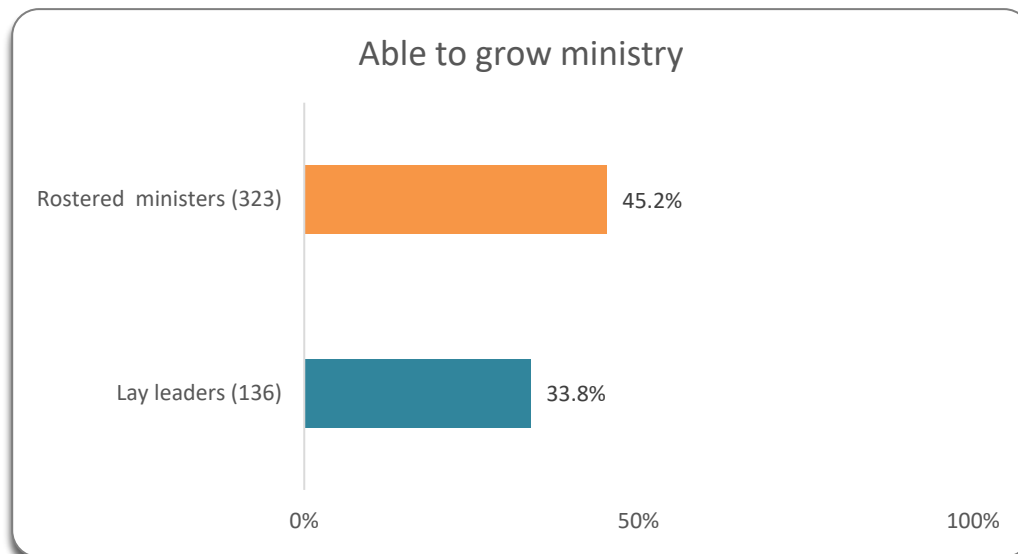
Congregational Vitality grants: As part of the new strategy, the granting process was changed in 2018. In the new model, synods have vitality plans to create cohorts of congregations to work on developing mission plans for vital ministry. Grants are then distributed to the synods. These plans are rooted in spiritual foundation, grounded in discipleship and focused on empowering churches for vital ministry with their neighbors and out in the world. *Grants that were approved or are awaiting approval are summarized below:*

2018	2019
16 Holy Innovations were approved	3 Holy Innovations proposals await approval
8 new Strategic Ministries were approved	5 new Strategic Ministries were approved
122 ELCA Strategic Ministries were continued	1 Anchor Church Strategy is approved
6 Synod Vitality Initiatives were approved, as well as continued funding for several more initiatives that began earlier	Synod Vitality Initiatives will be approved at upcoming review tables

- ◇ **Percentage of ELCA congregations that are growing:** The impact of these initiatives can be measured by reviewing annually reported congregational data from Form A. The graph below serves as a baseline measure and shows the percentage of growing ELCA congregations over time. The trend has been downward. If these initiatives are helping, the trend should reverse or stabilize.



- ◇ **2018 survey of Lutheran rostered ministers and congregation council members:** The 2018 survey of lay leaders and rostered ministers mentioned earlier also asked about the sustainability of their congregations, given the current financial and people resources. Rostered ministers were more optimistic than lay leaders. Even so, only one-third of lay leaders and less than half of rostered ministers feel their congregations are able to grow ministry. Seven percent of lay leaders and 5 percent of rostered ministers are not sure their congregations will survive much longer. This will serve as a baseline measure; if initiatives work, these should increase.



Goals one and two; objective four: Support new congregations and worship communities to start and become vital and viable expressions of this church, with a specific focus on ethnic-specific and multicultural ministries.

- ◇ **New congregations and worship ministries:** New ministries represent the future of the church; they are one of the many places where God is “doing a new thing,” to quote the prophet Isaiah. In addition to the new strategic shifts for renewing existing congregations, there have been shifts in strategy for new-start ministries as well, as shown in the box below:

Five strategic shifts for new-start ministries:

- ✓ Practitioners as trainers
- ✓ Contextualized curricula for trainings
- ✓ Interactive learning
- ✓ Working out of strength: “Churches Starting Churches”
- ✓ Multicultural and contextual learning and sharing of learnings

Training for leaders of new congregations:

The ELCA Congregational Vitality Team convenes a variety of training events each year, providing opportunities for leaders to share and learn from each other. Some highlights:

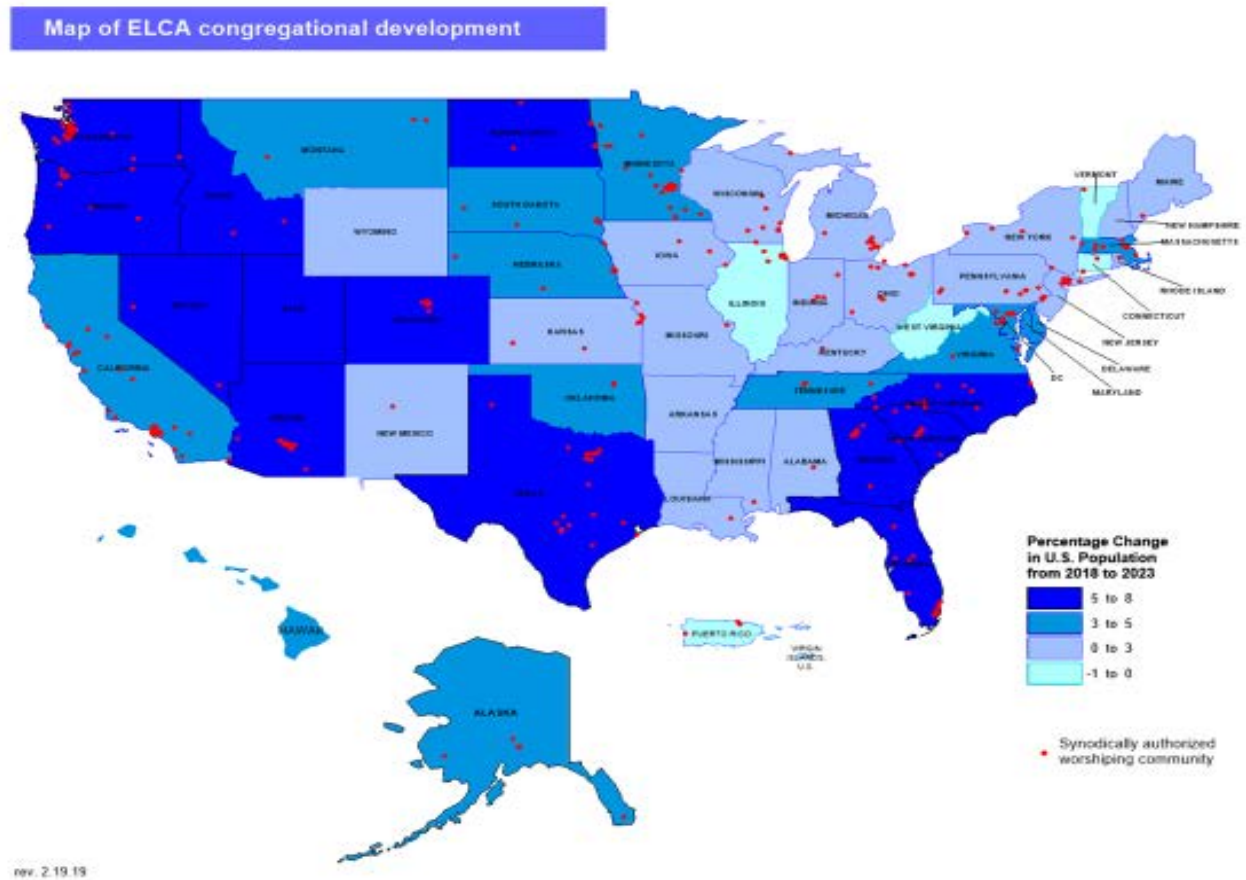
- ELCA Newly Organized Congregations Gathering in November 2018 in Chicago.
- Ecumenical Partners in Outreach at the Florida-Bahamas Synod in 2018.
- Red Ecumenica Para el Desarrollo de Iglesias Latinas REDIL Congregational Development Training planning meetings/gatherings.
- Eleven specialized ELCA New Start Tracks, teaching curricula and support groups.



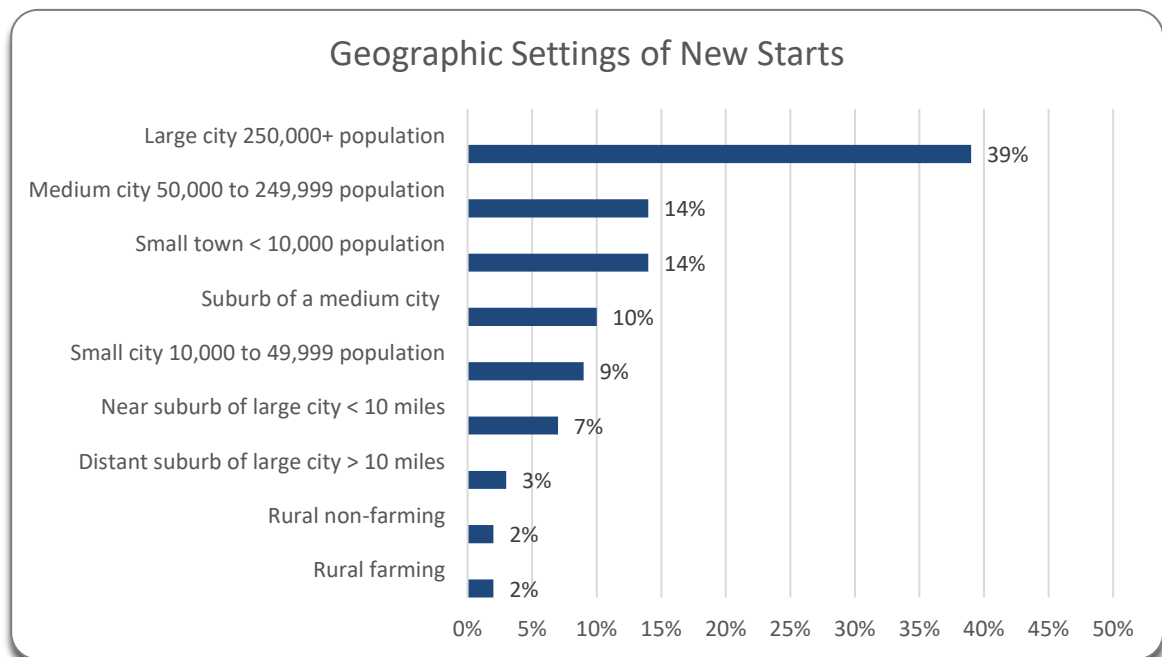
IMPACT:

- ✓ *28 new starts were approved in 2018.*
- ✓ *10 new starts have been approved in 2019 so far, with more proposals in consultation and process.*
- ✓ *Of the 65 ELCA synods, 54 currently have new starts.*
- ✓ *Mission developers report that lives are being transformed in new ministries.*

365 new starts are shown on the *map below*, updated February 2019:

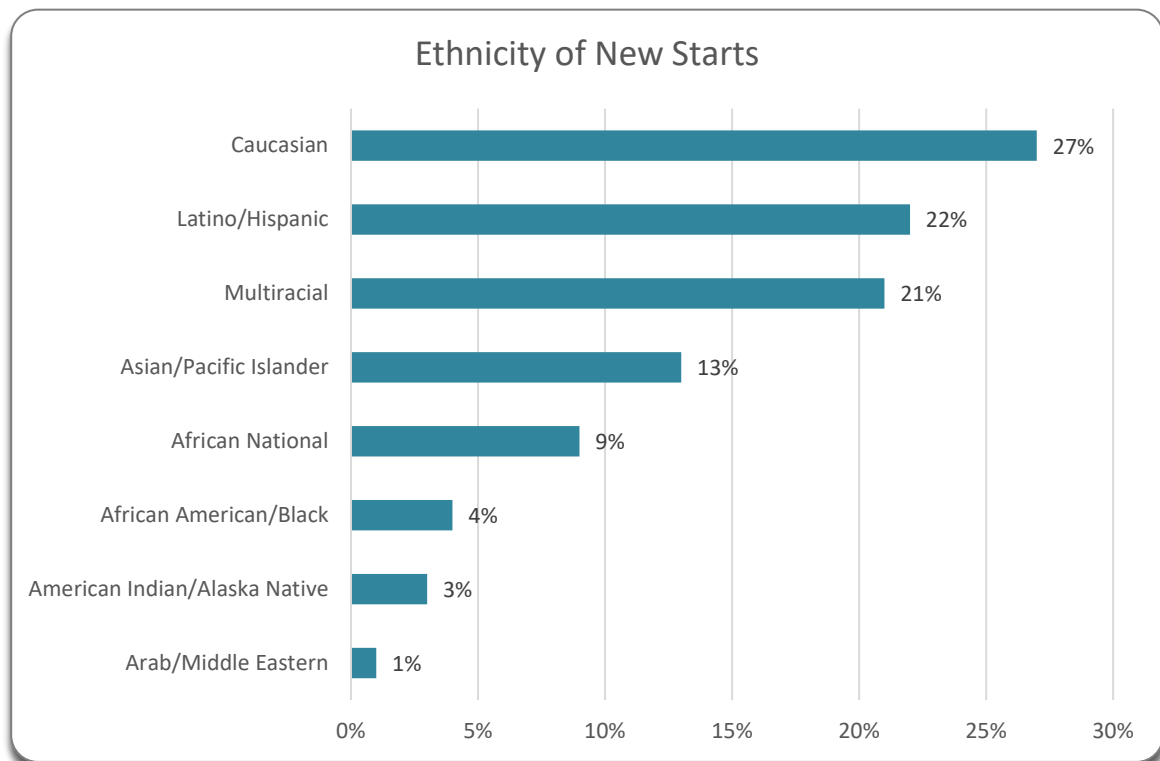


The graph below shows the variety of settings in which new starts are found. A large proportion (39 percent) are found in large cities:



- ◇ **The ELCA ethnic-specific strategic ministry plans:** Over two-thirds of ELCA congregations report five or fewer active participants who are people of color. There is a clear need for ethnic-specific strategies to achieve goals one and two. The ethnic-specific communities updated their strategic plans, which will be presented to Church Council in April 2019. The common thread among the revised strategic plans points to the need for more specific attention to the broader awareness and resourcing for implementing the plans across the church. Developing plans for more consistent reporting of the progress or lack of progress and a call for fresh commitment from the whole church was lifted up as each of these strategies was being reviewed. These include:
 - African Descent Ministries
 - American Indian and Alaska Native Ministries
 - Asian and Pacific Islander Ministries
 - Arab Middle Eastern Ministries
 - Latino Ministries

- ◇ **New congregations are more ethnically and racially diverse:** *The graph below* shows that the ELCA is making progress toward its diversity goal through its new starts. Only 27 percent of new starts are predominately Caucasian. New starts also tend to be more diverse economically.



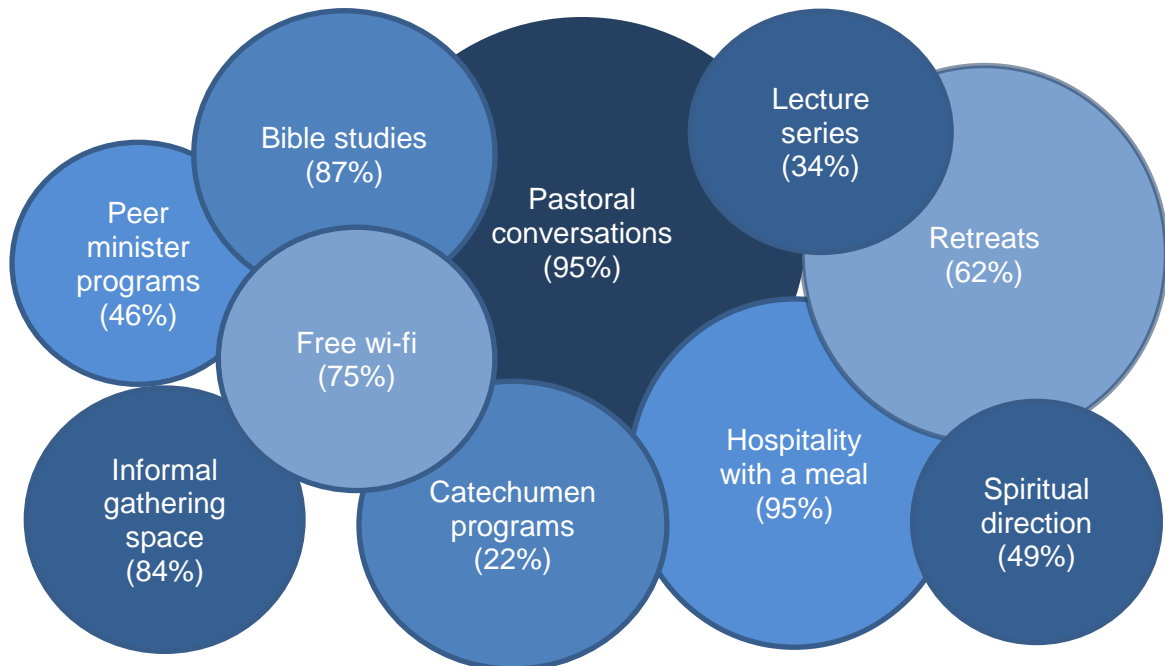
Goals one and two; objective five: Provide access to continuing education and development opportunities for youth and young adults, other lay leaders and rostered ministers to enhance the church's capacity for evangelical witness and service.

- ◇ **Equipping missionaries for vocation:** The ELCA has 220 pastors, doctors, nurses, teachers, theological educators, communicators and community organizers, and Young Adults in Global Mission volunteers serving as missionaries in 40 countries across the world.

In 2018 the ELCA sent 105 new missionaries in the following categories of service:

Category of service	Number
Long-term (4+ years, salaried)	6
Central Europe Teachers Program	5
Japan-3 Program (three-year stipended teachers)	3
Global Mission Volunteers (self-funded or supported directly by the companion church)	7
Global Mission Associates (ELCA rostered ministers serving in international congregations)	3
Horizon International Seminary Interns	3
Shared Personnel Placement (jointly appointed by GM and Companion Synod)	2
Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGM) volunteers	76
TOTAL	105

- ◇ **Campus ministries:** The ELCA supports campus ministries at 137 sites that offer opportunities for faith formation in many forms (percentage of sites offering an opportunity in parentheses):



Additionally, worship services with communion are offered frequently across these campuses. Over 4,500 students attended worship at least once during the academic year.

◇ In some places, the ELCA ministry is the only religious organization on a campus that welcomes students in the LGBTQIA+ community.

○ Ecumenism and interfaith relationships are important elements of campus ministry.

○ Training is provided for peer ministers, as well as other forms of leadership development.

○ Leadership in campus ministries also tends to lead to enrollment in seminary.

○ Justice and advocacy programs provide opportunities for learning, sharing, building coalitions and participating in advocacy activities.



IMPACT:

- ✓ 10,500 new students reached
- ✓ 46 baptisms
- ✓ 132 enrolled in seminary
- ✓ 187 involved in leadership
- ✓ 150 participated in community service

◇ **Triennial youth gathering:** The ELCA Youth Gathering June 27 – July 1 in Houston included more than 32,000 participants, with 80 at the *tABle* and 600 at *MYLE*, as well as about 1,200 volunteers and team members. The theme was “This Changes Everything,” a call for participants to examine their identity as Lutherans and as children of God. All 65 synods were represented, and 10,000 people were sent out each day to serve alongside more than 200 community partners. A survey of participants shows the event had the following impacts:



IMPACT:

- ✓ 71% SAID THEIR FAITH WAS FORMED.
- ✓ 90% SAID THE EVENT HAD A POSITIVE EFFECT ON THEIR LIVES.
- ✓ 83% SAID THEY ARE PONDERING WHOM GOD IS CALLING THEM TO BE.

Goals one and two; objective six: Through mutual accompaniment, strengthen the capacity of ELCA synods and global companion churches for evangelical witness and service, and encourage all expressions of the ELCA to more fully embrace the gifts and knowledge of the companion churches.

- ◇ **Companion Synod Program:** ELCA companion synod relationships connect Lutheran churches from around the world with ELCA synods and congregations. Toward this end, multiple trainings, nine consultations and meetings were held in 2018, including:

How many	What	Who
29 participants	Inaugural German - ELCA consultation	Representatives from six ELCA synods, five German companion churches, Trinity Seminary, and ELCA Europe, Middle East and North Africa (EuMENA) staff
10 participants	Inaugural Russia Network gathering	Representatives from three ELCA synods
141 participants	ELCA – Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT) Companion Synod/Diocesane summit	Sixty-nine were from ELCT; 72 from ELCA. Participants included 25 ELCT bishops, 26 dioceses; eight ELCA bishops, 17 synods; nine ELCA missionaries serving in Tanzania; 12 musician/educators (four ELCT and eight ELCA); five Independent Lutheran organizations
17 participants	Consultation with the Augustinian Church of Guatemala [Iglesia Luterana Agustina de Guatemala (ILAG)]	Ten leaders of the ILAG, two ELCA synods, one ELCA large congregation
40 participants	The Third Caribbean Synod Consultation	Representatives from the Florida-Bahamas Synod and five presidents from the companion churches of the Caribbean
9 participants	Consultation with the Lutheran Church of Colombia (IELCO)	One Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) synod, two ELCA synods and two IELCO members

In addition, multiple trainings took place in support of the International Camp Counselor Program and the International Companion Program for the Youth Gathering.

- ◇ **International Leaders Program (ILP):** Accompanies global companion churches and institutions in providing education, training and leadership development for the sake of mission and ministry. The table below shows growth stats across all facets of this program:

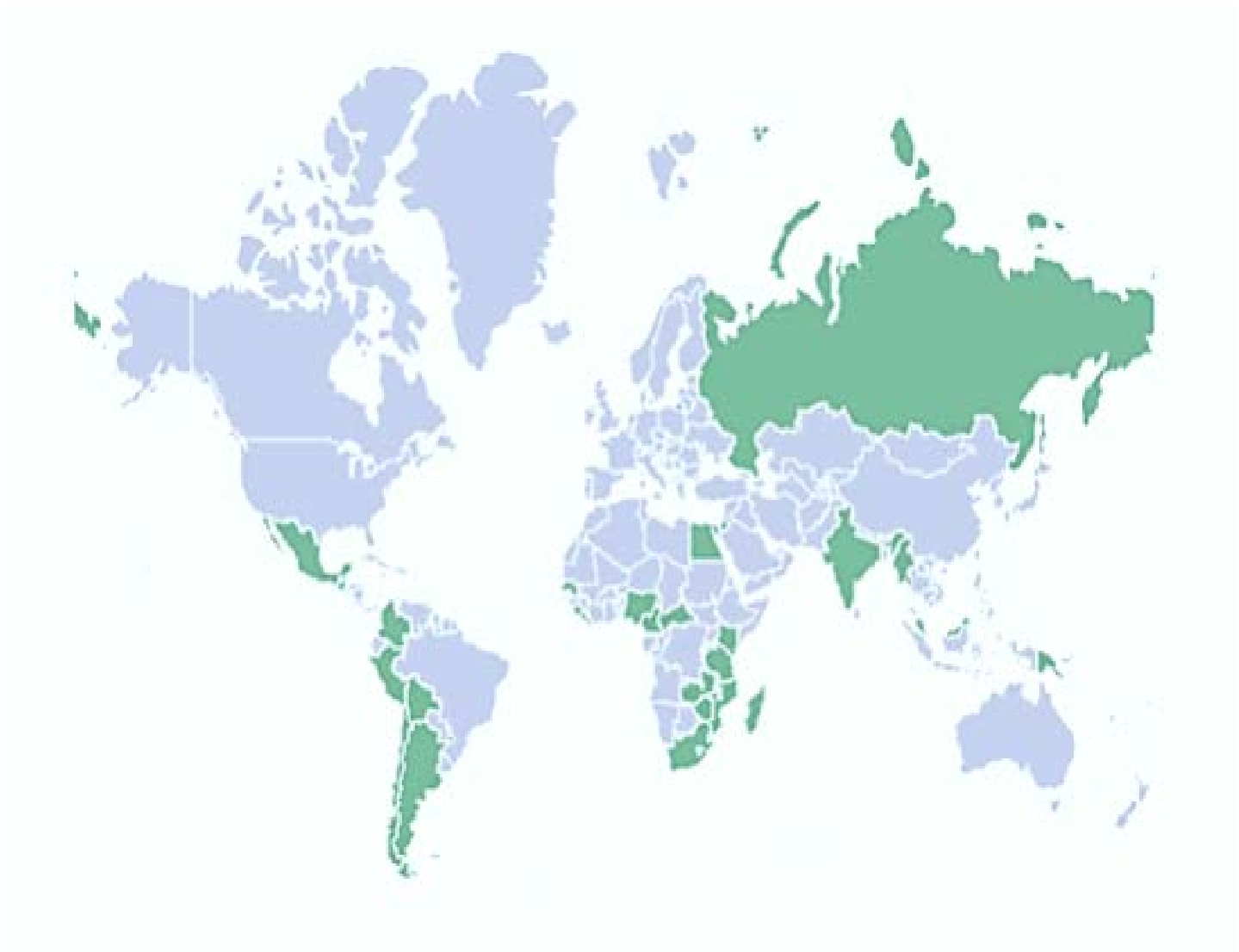
International Leaders Program	2014	2015	2017	2018	% Increase 2014 --> 2018
Scholarship applicants	50	144	157	160	220%
Scholarship awards	69	73	127	129	87%
Events planned/hosted	2	3	7	8	300%
Visits to partner schools	3	5	10	12	300%
Active ELCA college, university, seminary partners	4	7	13	15	275%

Additionally:

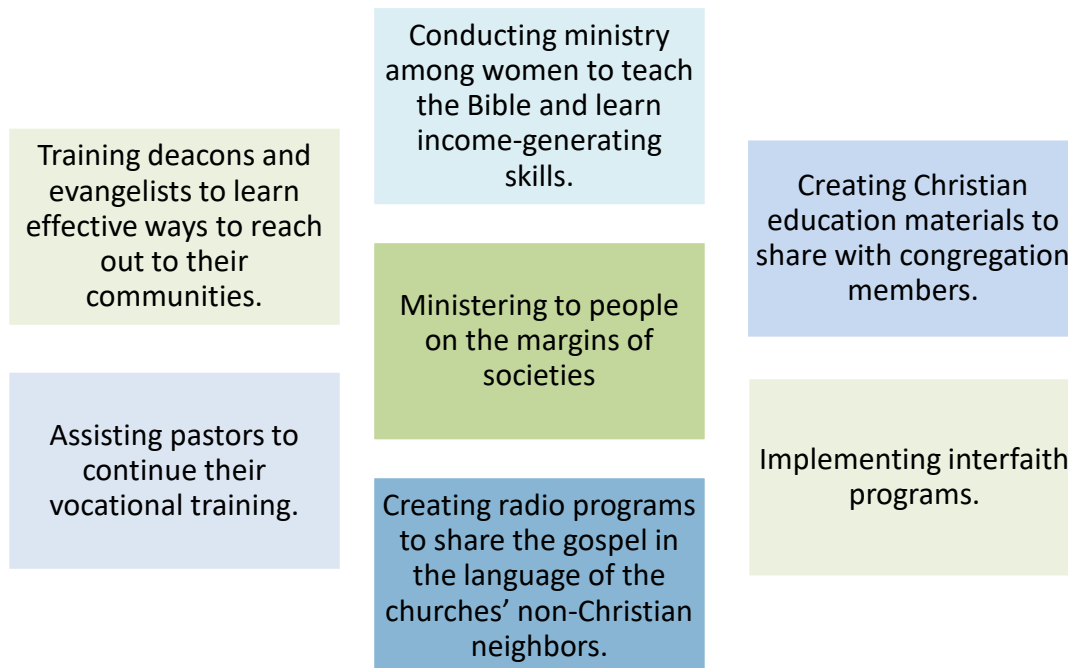
- Thirty-one scholarship recipients completed their ELCA-supported academic programs in 2018.
- The Global Leadership Academy, a leadership and networking event for women, was held in India in 2018, bringing together women from 12 companions for a week of learning and networking.

The ELCA expended \$1,226,575 in 2018 for leadership development and in-country scholarship opportunities through grants to companion churches. In conjunction with Global Missions' commitment to gender justice, priority is given to scholarships for women or for churches that are trying to become more educated on how to become gender inclusive in their ministries.

- ◇ **Global companion evangelism efforts:** In 2018 this church spent \$1,112,822 on 55 evangelism projects in 32 countries and with two ecumenical partners throughout the world. The global reach of these efforts is shown on the map below:



International evangelism projects look different throughout the world and are contextualized for each particular ministry context. Evangelism projects include, but are not limited to:



The ELCA accompanied churches around the world to strengthen their evangelism efforts, partnering with 11 companion churches and helping emerging churches expand their evangelism work to bring the gospel to communities that were hard to reach, including:

- **Cambodia** – the Lutheran Church in Cambodia received \$234,200 in 2018 to expand its ministry outreach within rural communities.
- **Malaysia** – the Lutheran Church in Malaysia received \$257,532 in 2018 to expand its outreach among the indigenous Orang Asli community. The church has been able to host worship services, Bible studies, prayer meetings and children’s after-school programs.
- **Russia** – The church in Russia was able to establish “Equipping for Service,” a vocational discernment program that helps people understand their vocational calling to gospel and evangelism work.

Goals one and two; objective seven: Provide avenues for youth and young adults from diverse backgrounds to participate in domestic and global service, thereby deepening their faith, increasing engagement in the ELCA and enabling their formation as leaders.

- ◇ **Young adult discernment retreats:** Two events were held in 2018 and early 2019, reaching a total of 95 young adults. About a third were young people of color, and 18 were Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGM) alumni, seeking reconnection to the wider church.
- ◇ **Youth & Young Adult Ministry Innovation Grants:** \$405,630 was paid out to 17 ministry partnerships across the church through *Always Being Made News: The Campaign for the ELCA*,

and \$315,270 of funding was secured through the campaign’s “Where Needed Most” funding for eight additional Youth & Young Adult Ministry Innovation Grants.

- ◇ **Elisha’s Call:** Elisha’s Call is a weekend event for leadership discernment, development and engagement of young adults of African descent ages 18 to 35. After the event, they are encouraged to form networks in their home communities for mutual learning and support. It is hoped that these networks will flourish and grow.



IMPACT:

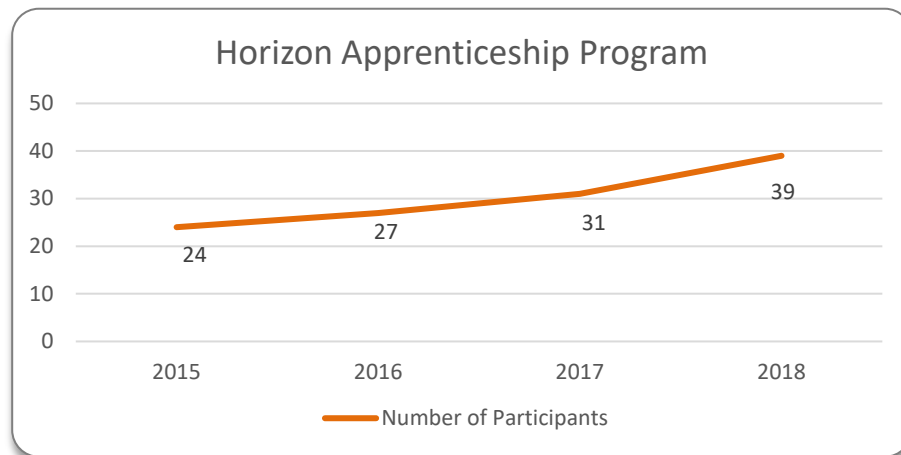
PARTICIPANTS HAVE SERVED AS CONGREGATIONAL PRESIDENT, SECRETARY, OFFICE STAFF, AND ARE LEADING MINISTRIES IN LOCAL CONGREGATIONS.

Since 2009 about 100 young adults of African descent have been involved. Participants have come from 13 synods and 30 congregations or communities.

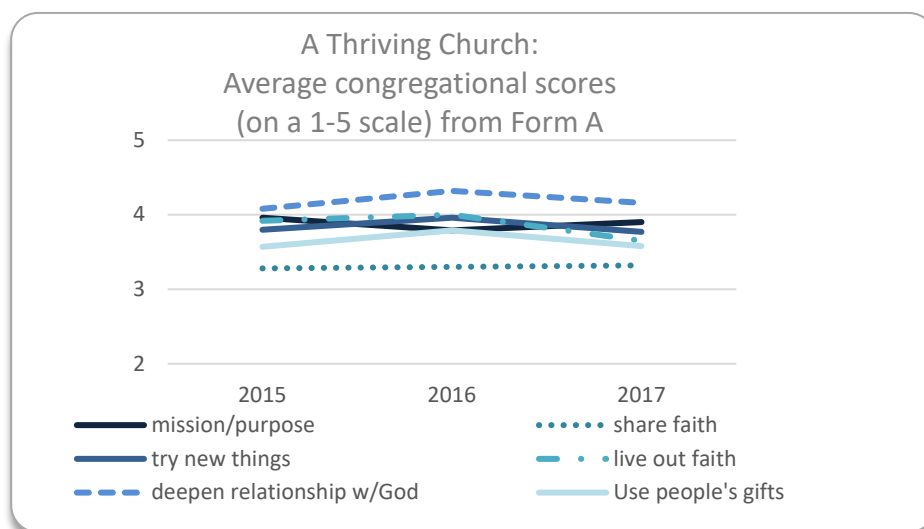
- ◇ **Global service:** The ELCA sent 86 young adults into service in 2018, including 76 Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGM) volunteers. The number of volunteers has tended to increase annually along with the growth of the program (more program sites, more capacity). Although there was a drop in volunteers in the past two years (*see graph below*), it is too early to tell whether the overall trend is changing. The growing job market for recent college graduates may be a factor in the recent downturn.



- ◇ **Horizon Apprenticeship Program:** This growing program helps young people of color or whose primary language is other than English acquire a missional imagination that will help them discern their future. Horizon apprentices are between the ages of 16 and 20 and are enrolled in high school or college. They are nominated by their pastor and commit to an internship at their home congregation for 20-plus hours per week for two months in the summer. They receive a stipend for their work, which is paid for by the Horizon endowment funds. The program will be capped at 35 to 40 participants to allow for continued expansion of offerings. Growth in participation is shown in the graph below:



- ◇ **Thriving Church – congregational measures:** Finally, another way to track progress on goals one and two is to note whether there are changes across time on Congregational Vitality measures from Form A. For objectives one, two, three, five and seven, six items related to the *Thriving Church* goal are shown in the graph below, which serves as a baseline for the 2018-19 operations plan. Between 2015 and 2017, the lines are all flat, suggesting that ELCA congregations have not yet made progress on these objectives:



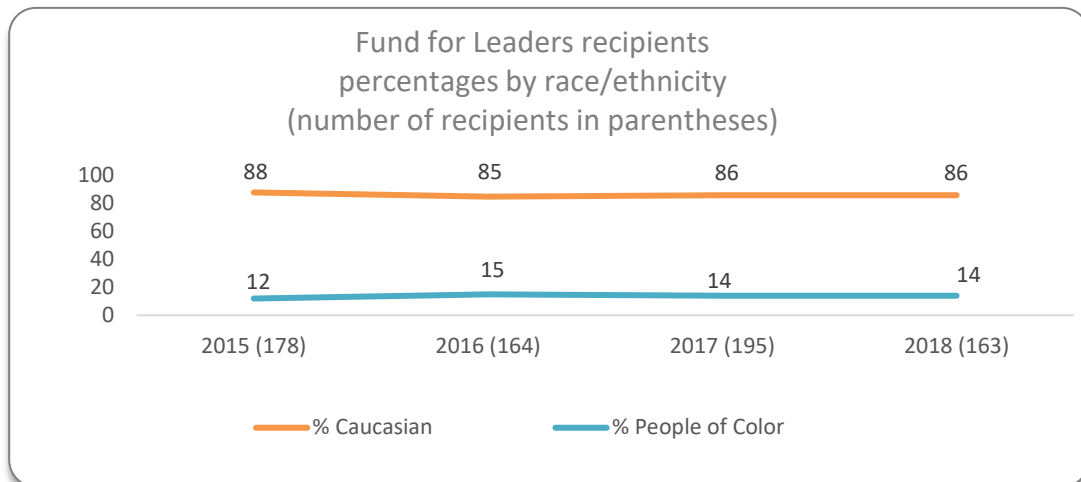
Goal 3

An inviting and welcoming church that reflects and embraces the diversity of our communities and the gifts and opportunities that diversity brings.

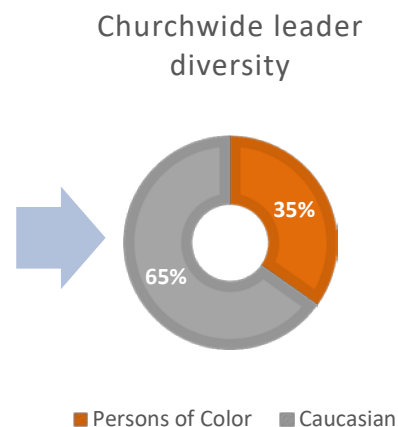
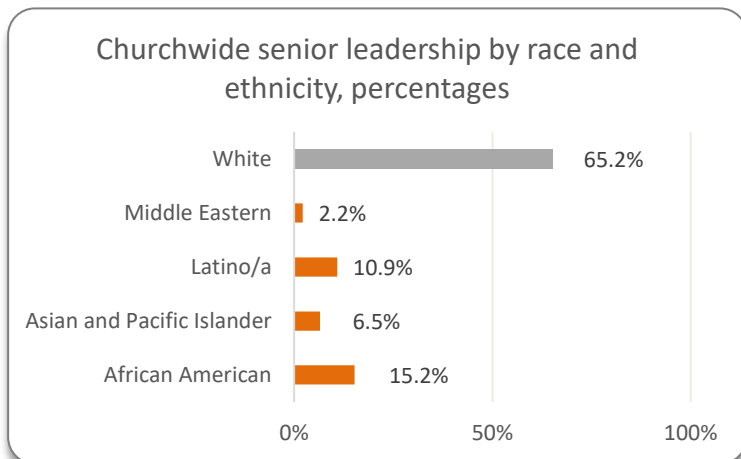
1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 2:14-20,
 Acts 10, Galatians 3:26-28

Goal three; objective one: Develop proactive recruitment and formation strategies to achieve a more diverse leadership profile with a clear focus on ethnic, cultural, gender generational diversity, and social status, and better matching the gifts and experiences of leaders to different communities and ministries.

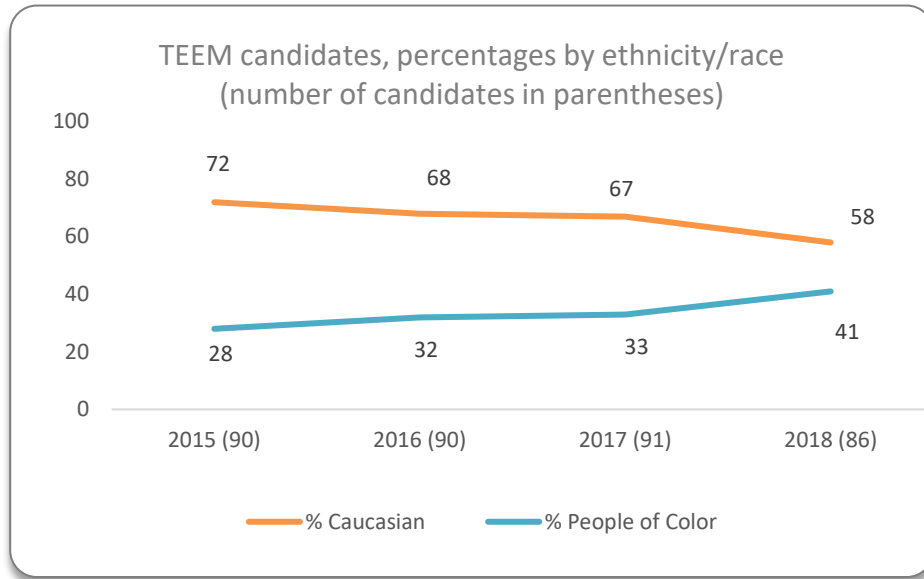
- ◇ **Growth in diversity among Fund for Leaders scholarship recipients:** Diversity has not been growing. These numbers provide a baseline measure:



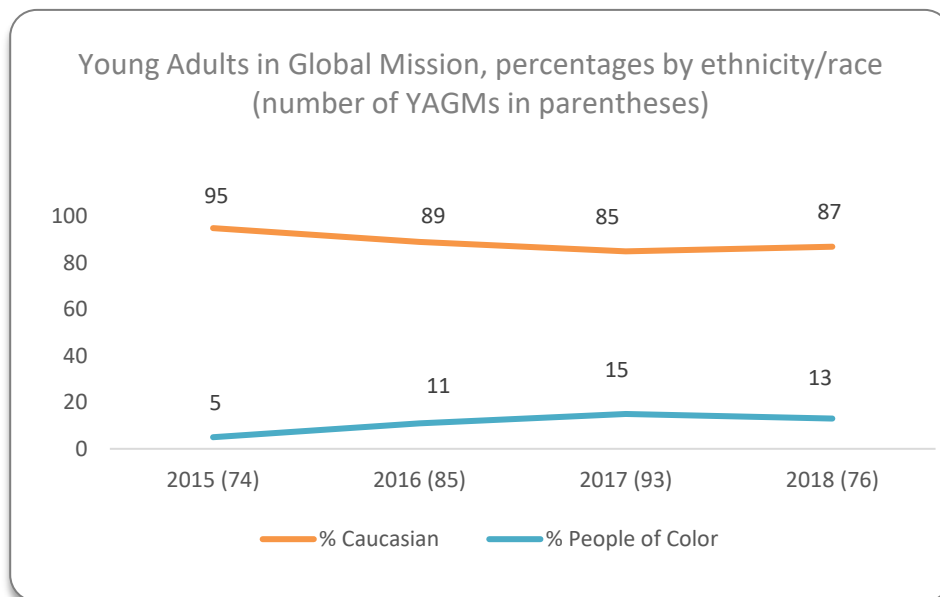
- ◇ **Baseline measure of the diversity among ELCA churchwide senior leadership staff, 2018:**



- ◇ **Growth in diversity among candidate participants in Theological Education for Emerging Ministries (TEEM):** TEEM is a certificate program providing theological education for candidates who are called to serve in emerging ministries or settings that are without ordained pastoral leadership, and who otherwise might not be able to respond to such a call through traditional seminary residency. They are assisted through the call and ordination process. Over the past four years, the proportion of TEEM candidates of color has increased:

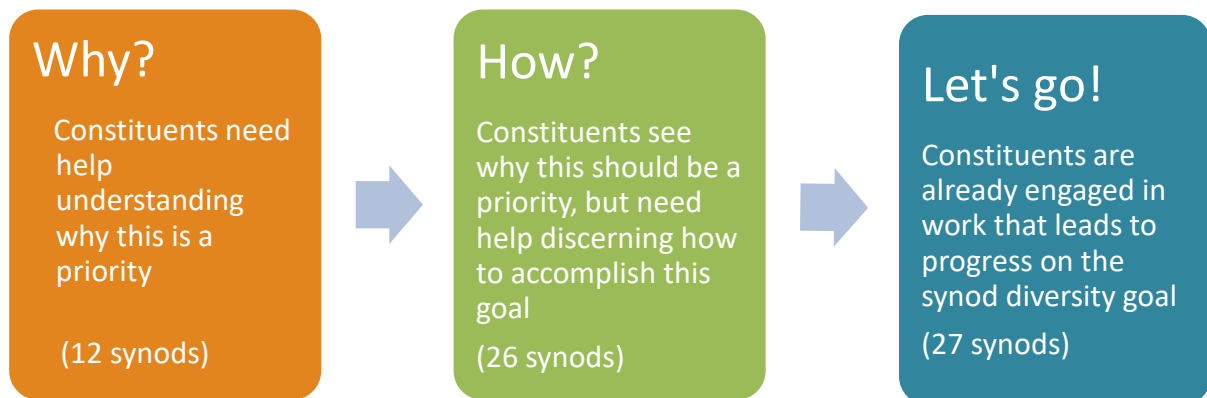


- ◇ **Growth in the diversity of the Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGM) program:** As with Fund for Leaders scholarship recipients, diversity among YAGMs has leveled off rather than growing:



Goal three; objective two: With synods, equip congregations with resources and strategies to reach out to people in their neighborhoods and embrace new ways to facilitate engagement and participation in this church through worship, evangelical witness and service.

- ◇ **Synod diversity goals:** In 2018, churchwide staff worked with the Conference of Bishops to help bishops discern where they are in the process of meeting synod diversity goals, as outlined in the ELCA Continuing Resolution to the Constitution¹. Churchwide staff, in consultation with synod bishops, are developing a tool for synods to report progress annually to the Church Council. All 65 synods have placed themselves in one of three categories, and will set goals and report on their progress:



The “Let’s go!” synods will serve as the key resource group. This group is engaging by:

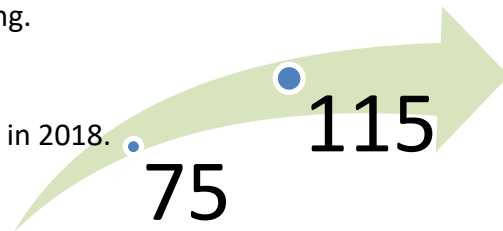
- Adding synod staff and building diversity teams.
 - Using resources for self-learning and providing workshops.
 - Building new relationships with local organizations.
 - Getting to know their neighbors.
 - Working with ecumenical partners, churchwide staff, other synods.
- ◇ **Companion Synod Program:** In 2018, 25 bishops and church leaders and nine rostered ministers visited the ELCA churchwide office to share their evangelical witness; 15 international youth participated in the 2018 Youth Gathering in June; and 40 international camp counselors participated in the international camp counselor program.
 - ◇ **Increasing intercultural competence through a global lens:** In 2018, four synods (Saint Paul Area, Western Iowa, Southwestern Minnesota, and Southwestern Texas) increased ELCA members’ competencies for evangelism through administration of the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) and implementation of educational plans. Additionally, at the Global Leadership Academy in Hyderabad, India, and the Tanzania companion synod consultation, 40 international leaders and 20 ELCA synods’ and Tanzanian dioceses’ general intercultural competencies were built through accompaniment training.

¹ ELCA Continuing Resolution to the Constitution 5.01.B16

- ◇ **Strengthening faith formation and capacity for evangelism through Glocal Events and accompaniment training:** Trainings to increase capacity in mission engagement were conducted in the Central States, Southwestern Minnesota and Western Iowa synods and with 20 additional ELCA synods through the consultation in Tanzania. Approximately 1,500 ELCA members were reached through these assemblies and other events.

Goal three; objective three: Develop, empower and support networks among ethnic-specific and multicultural ministries and share their experience and knowledge with synods and congregations seeking to welcome and nurture diversity.

- ◇ **Authentic Diversity Task Force:** A task force was established, initially made up of people of color. The group had its first meeting in the late winter of 2019 and is preparing a separate report for the April 2019 Church Council meeting.
- ◇ **AMMPARO Network:** The AMMPARO network grew by 53 percent from 75 to 115 participants in 2018.



Goal three; objective four: Actively encourage youth and young adults from diverse backgrounds to be agents of generational change and role models for becoming a more culturally diverse church.

- ◇ **MYLE (Multicultural Youth Leadership Event):** This pre-event to the Youth Gathering empowers young people of color and those whose primary language is other than English to claim their story as a part of God’s story. It may be the largest gathering of people of color in our church.

In 2018, **610** youth and adults from 36 synods, plus a leadership team of 70 young adults, youth and adults, gathered in Houston under the theme “One,” based on Ephesians 2:14-19. In God’s eternal wisdom, there is a plan for the unity of many into ONE new people in Christ.



IMPACT:

- ✓ DEEPENED FAITH
- ✓ EXPLORED CULTURE
- ✓ MADE FRIENDS
- ✓ CLAIMED IDENTITY
- ✓ FORMED LEADERS

- ◇ **The tAble:** The tAble (formerly the Definitely-abled Youth Leadership Event or DAYLE) is also a pre-event to the Youth Gathering that blesses and empowers young people who live with a wide range of physical, cognitive and emotional disabilities so they might grow as faithful, wise and courageous witnesses.

70 young people and their adult caregivers from 20 synods, plus a leadership team of about 10, gathered under the theme “You Belong” at the tAble in 2018. About 90 percent of respondents do not attend other conferences aimed at people with disabilities, so this is a unique and needed opportunity.



IMPACT:

- ✓ *75% of respondents said the event helped them see what gifts they bring to ministry.*
- ✓ *Several youth participants are now engaged in leadership opportunities in the church.*

Goal three; objective five: Support congregations and synods to grow in their commitment to and practice of gender justice and racial justice.

- ◇ **The proposed social statement on women and justice:** Now titled “*Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Lutheran Call to Action*,” this proposed social statement will be presented to the Church Council this spring. Included are 17 implementing resolutions to serve as a guide for its use by agencies and organizations. Colleagues are working on study resources to help churchwide assembly voting members make informed decisions about the social statement.
- ◇ **Synod leadership anti-racism training:** In 2018, the Racial Justice office offered instruction on anti-racism to prepare synod teams to conduct training. Fifty participants from approximately 30 synods participated in this synod capacity training.

Goal three; objective six: As a church in the public space, speak out against discrimination and violence based on race, gender, sexual orientation and social status through advocacy and other forms of public witness.

- ◇ **Advocacy work:** in 2018, the Washington, D.C., office engaged in public discourse and action that was shaped by the ELCA’s social teaching documents and experiences of its congregations, ministries and partners.

This advocacy work included:

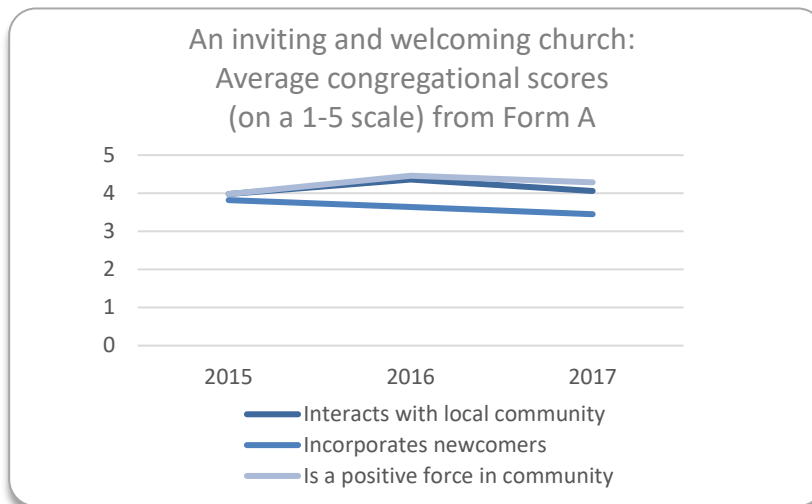
- Support for a bipartisan farm bill that *did not include* harmful cuts or ineffective job provisions, and expanded support for the farmer safety net, environmental impact, and international food aid.

- Support for U.S. government funding for anti-corruption mechanisms and development programs to reduce the need for migration from Central American communities.
- Opposition of U.S. foreign policies that support the militarization of Central American countries or prevent people from seeking asylum.
- Discussion of the Paris Climate Change Agreement and the development of video and print resources co-branded with ecoAmerica's Blessed Tomorrow program.
- Advocacy for funding increases for homeless programs, senior assistance and affordable housing.



- ✓ *19,128 emails were sent to Congress and the administration.*
- ✓ *4,950 new advocates joined the ELCA Advocacy Network (a 14 percent increase).*
- ✓ *During the Hunger Leadership Gathering, 115 visits with Hill/administration contacts.*
- ✓ *A 12 percent increase in Twitter followers @ELCAadvocacy.*
- ✓ *A 31.6 percent increase in Facebook followers @ELCAadvocacy.*

- ◇ **Speaking out against all forms of discrimination against women through the United Nations:** The Lutheran Office for World Community (LOWC) in New York was very present at the 2018 Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), issuing two statements to influence the CSW. Also:
 - Twenty Lutheran delegates attended official and unofficial U.N. events and met with government representatives from their home countries.
 - Lutherans made seven visits to missions of U.N. member states during CSW.
 - Lutherans hosted a panel event, co-sponsored by a government, U.N. agency and other faith-based organization partners, titled “Do you Have Faith in the SDGs?” (sustainable development goals).
- ◇ **Inviting and welcoming church – congregational measures:** Finally, another way to track progress on goal three is to note changes across time on Congregational Vitality measures from Form A. For objectives two, three, five and six there are three related items—how well a congregation: interacts with the local community, incorporates newcomers and is a positive force in the community. These provide baseline measures. Between 2015 and 2017, the trend lines are all flat, suggesting that ELCA congregations have not yet made progress on these objectives (*graph below*):



Goal 4

A visible church deeply committed to working ecumenically and with other people of faith for justice, peace and reconciliation in communities and around the world.

1 Corinthians 5:14-21,

John 13:12-15, Isaiah 58:1-11

Goal four; objective one: Expand and deepen engagement with “God’s work. Our Hands,” as a vehicle for witness and service by congregations, synods and ministries of this church.

- ◇ **“God’s work. Our hands.” (GWOH) Sunday:** On Sept. 9, 2018, ELCA congregations participated in “God’s work. Our hands.” Sunday, a day dedicated to celebrating who we are as the ELCA – one church, freed in Christ to serve and love our neighbor. Service activities offer an opportunity for us to explore one of our most basic convictions as Lutherans: that all of life in Jesus Christ – every act of service, in every daily calling, in every corner of life – flows freely from a living, daring confidence in God’s grace.



It is estimated that a minimum of **7,000** Lutherans participated in GWOH Sunday in 2018.



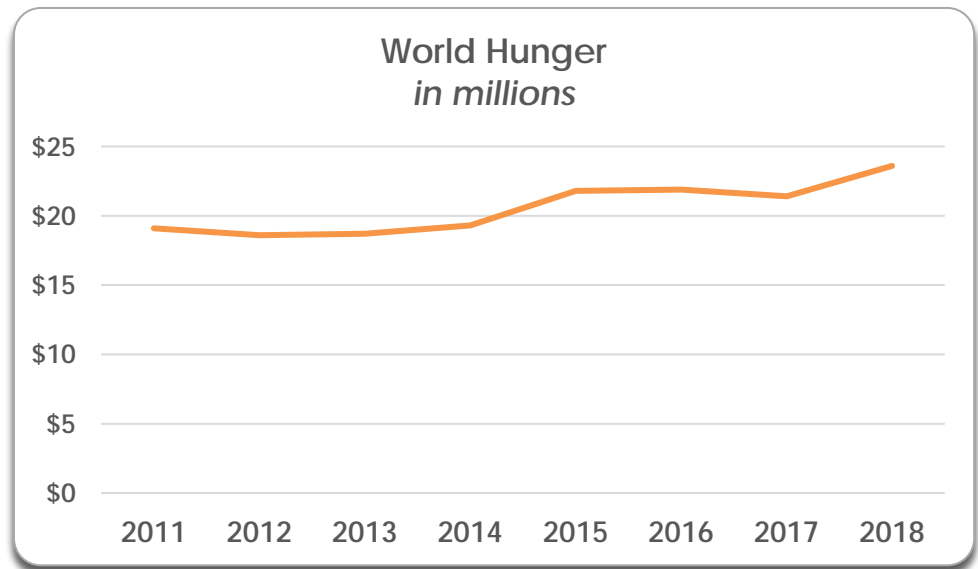
It is estimated that a minimum of **25,541** work hours were performed in the service of GWOH Sunday in 2018.

Goal four; objective two: Mobilize and harness resources for local, national and global ministries to alleviate poverty and hunger – including funds, networks, partnerships, ecumenical and interfaith relationships, and mutual accompaniment with companion churches and the global church.

- ◇ **ELCA World Hunger:** In the final year of *Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA*, giving to ELCA World Hunger was a record-breaking **\$23.6 million**, which was a 10.4 percent increase over giving in 2017.

Through generous gifts, ELCA World Hunger was at work through 540 projects in 62 countries, including 32

states, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico, creatively and courageously working toward a just world where all are fed.



- ◇ **Global Farm Challenge:** ELCA World Hunger’s Global Farm Challenge was a yearlong, youth-driven fundraising challenge to support the agriculture-related programs. Youth and youth groups raised funds ahead of the 2018 ELCA Youth Gathering in June, and many brought their offerings to the event in Houston. More than 4,000 youth and adults participated in an unforgettable virtual reality experience designed to immerse them in what it’s like to be a smallholder farmer around the world. The challenge collected \$179,495 on site at the Gathering.

The goal has been **EXCEEDED** by at least 50%!

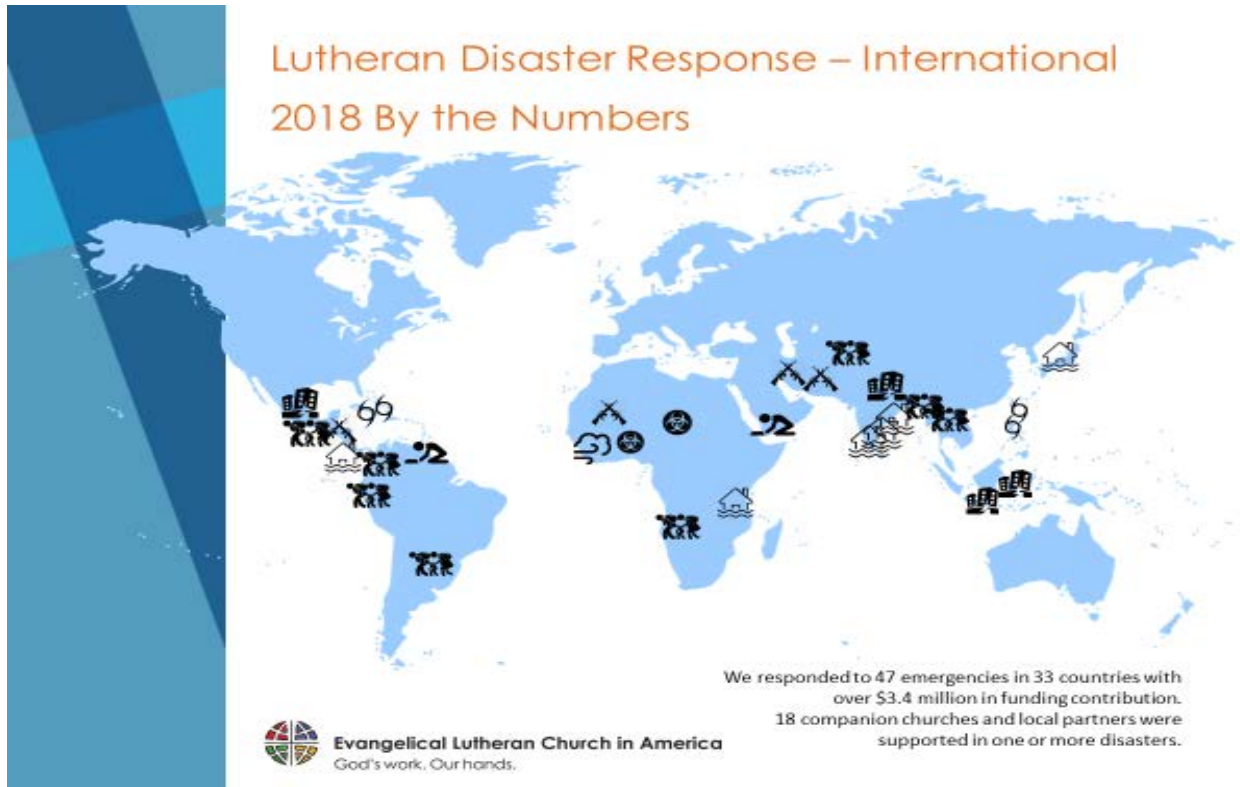


The goal was to raise \$500,000 or more in 2018 to equip communities around the world and in the United States with livestock, seeds, tools, training and other agriculture-related activities to turn a hungry season into a hopeful season. This goal has been exceeded by at least 50 percent; final results are not yet available as of this writing.

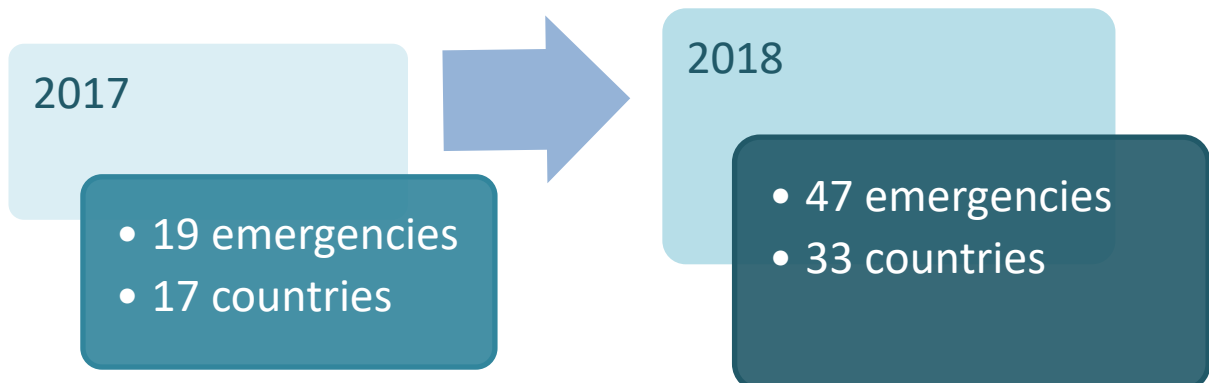
Goal four; objective three: With synods and domestic affiliates, global companions and partners, respond effectively to natural disasters and humanitarian crisis in the U.S., Caribbean and throughout the world, and develop local capacities in disaster preparedness and response, including displacement and migration of crisis-affected people.

- ◇ **Lutheran Disaster Response:** Thanks to the generosity of ELCA members, **\$11,556,179** was raised in 2018 for disaster response.

Lutheran Disaster Response – International provided \$3.4 million in immediate relief in the face of a dramatically increased number of disasters:



The growth in Lutheran Disaster Response is partly due to an increase in rapid onset emergencies at the local level, as well as more church-to-church relationships we can call on for an immediate response.



Relief for displaced people:

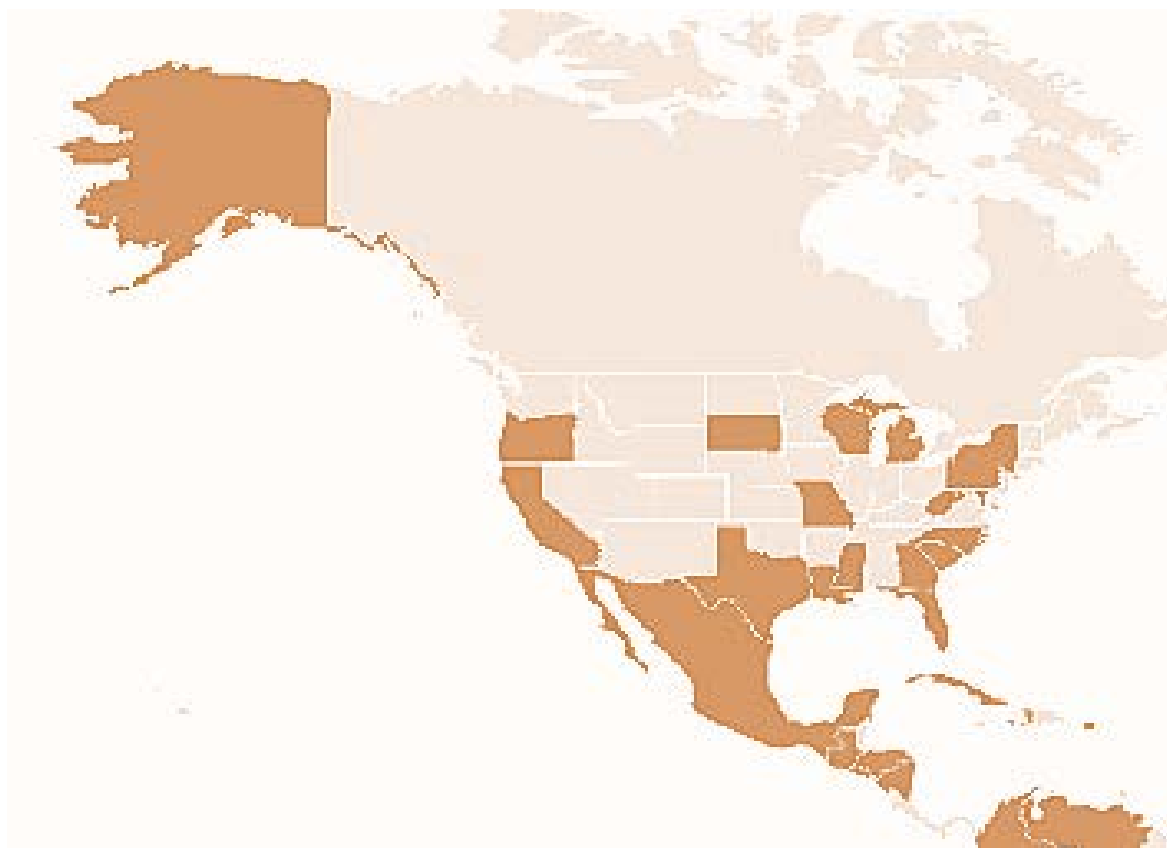
In 2018, 25 percent of Lutheran Disaster Response – International (LDR-I) grants (\$3.4 million) went to projects that assist people on the move (refugees, migrants and internally displaced people) through immediate relief, temporary shelter, psychosocial counseling and information about their rights. *Some examples include:*

What happened	The impact of this ministry
Extreme violence in Myanmar drove over 700,000 Rohingya refugees into Bangladesh beginning in August 2017.	Through ACT Alliance, \$174,500 was provided for food and cash to over 1,000 households; for street lights; counseling for 200 children; and 78 community kitchens for almost 2,000 households.
Indonesia suffered three deadly natural disasters in 2018: a tsunami, a 6.9 magnitude earthquake, and then a 7.5 earthquake and subsequent tsunami. In all, more than 3,600 perished, thousands of homes were destroyed, and many people’s livelihoods were affected.	Across these three disasters, LDR-I contributed almost \$50,000 to ACT Alliance-Indonesia members and Huria Kristen Batak Protestan (HKBP) toward immediate relief and health care assistance to families.
Central American refugees, known in the media as the “Migrant Caravan,” have migrated through Mexico, seeking asylum.	The Mexican Lutheran Church actively responded to this Central American refugee crisis by providing food, clothes and shoes to the migrants who were temporarily sheltered at a stadium in Mexico City.
In Yemen, 75 percent of the population (22.2 million people) are in critical need of assistance, and the country is likely headed toward famine. The crisis has also resulted in more than 2 million internally displaced people.	LDR-I provided an initial response of \$75,000 to assist Christian Aid and Action Contre La Faim for a water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and cholera treatment program reaching nearly 30,000 people in the conflict area near the town of Hodeidah.
U.N. figures suggest that 2.3 million Venezuelans (7.5 percent of the population) live outside the country, of which 1.6 million (5.2 percent) have left since 2015.	Several companion churches across Latin America are providing food, shelter, non-food items, psychosocial counseling, pastoral care and information. In addition, LDR-I is supporting a network of local journalists in Colombia and Venezuela to develop an alternative migration narrative to facilitate the integration of migrants.

Lutheran Disaster Response – Domestic: In 2018, the ELCA responded to 32 emergencies in 19 states/territories listed below:

Location	Type	Location	Type
Alaska	Earthquake	Missouri	Flooding
California	Wildfires (Carr)	New York	Unaccompanied minors
California	Wildfires (L. Mendocino)	United States	Unaccompanied minors
California	Wildfires (Camp)	United States	Unaccompanied minors
California	Wildfires (Woolsey)	North Carolina	Hurricane Matthew
Florida	Hurricane Matthew (LSF)	North Carolina	Hurricane Florence
Florida	Hurricane Matthew (FBS)	Pennsylvania (Central)	Hurricanes Irma and Maria (evacuees)
Florida	Hurricane Michael	Pennsylvania (Eastern)	Hurricane
Georgia	Hurricane Matthew	Puerto Rico	Hurricane
Georgia	Hurricane Irma	South Carolina	Flooding
Georgia	Severe storms w/tornadoes	South Carolina	Hurricane
Georgia	Hurricane Michael	South Dakota	Severe storms (Pine Ridge)
Maryland	Hurricane Sandy	Texas	Hurricane Harvey
Michigan	Flooding (U.P.)	US Virgin Islands	Hurricanes Irma and Maria
Mississippi	Flooding	West Virginia	Flooding
Mississippi	Tornadoes	Wisconsin	Severe storms

The map below shows locations of these disasters in the U.S., Central America and the Caribbean:



◇ **AMMPARO: Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities – An ELCA strategy:**

2018 highlights include:

- The creation of 116 welcoming and sanctuary congregations across 30 synods in all nine regions.
- The formation of six new Guardian Angel programs (for a total of eight), which accompany migrant children and their families during their court proceedings.
- International engagement to protect migrant children, youth and families.
- National advocacy leadership in the Interfaith Immigration Coalition.
- Regular consultation with Congress on conditions in Central America.
- Accompaniment of the exodus of Central Americans.
- An invitation to give a presentation in Rome at the World Vision Global Partners Forum.
- Legal engagement to protect migrants through volunteer service in family detention facilities by ELCA members who are lawyers.
- People across the ELCA have been mobilized by AMMPARO's advocacy for justice and fairness for migrant families, to stand with asylum-seekers and reunite separated families.



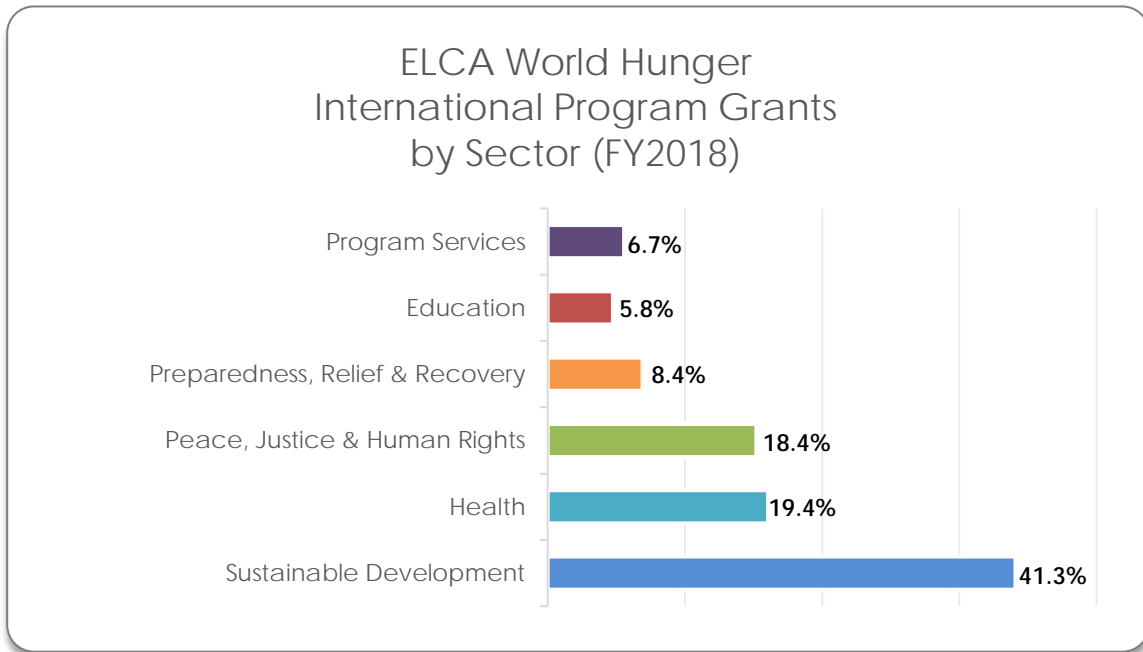
IMPACT

IN HONDURAS IN THE LAST 18 MONTHS:

- ✓ *321 returned migrants enrolled in vocational training.*
- ✓ *115 returned migrants started microenterprises.*
- ✓ *12 returned migrants started a savings and loan cooperative.*
- ✓ *321 returned migrants received group counseling.*
- ✓ *184 returned migrants received individualized psychological attention.*
- ✓ *50 returned migrants have organized a network for communications and advocacy.*
- ✓ *718 families received humanitarian assistance during repatriation.*

Goal four; objective four: Plan and direct the ELCA's international relief and development program to respond to needs identified by our companion churches and our global operating partners.

- ◇ **International relief and development:** In 2018, ELCA Global Mission provided 247 sustainable development grants in 61 countries. This far-reaching impact was made possible with over \$16.8 million provided through ELCA World Hunger, a priority under the *Campaign for the ELCA*. An overview of the grants provided is found below in the two graphs, along with specific stories of the lives that are being transformed:



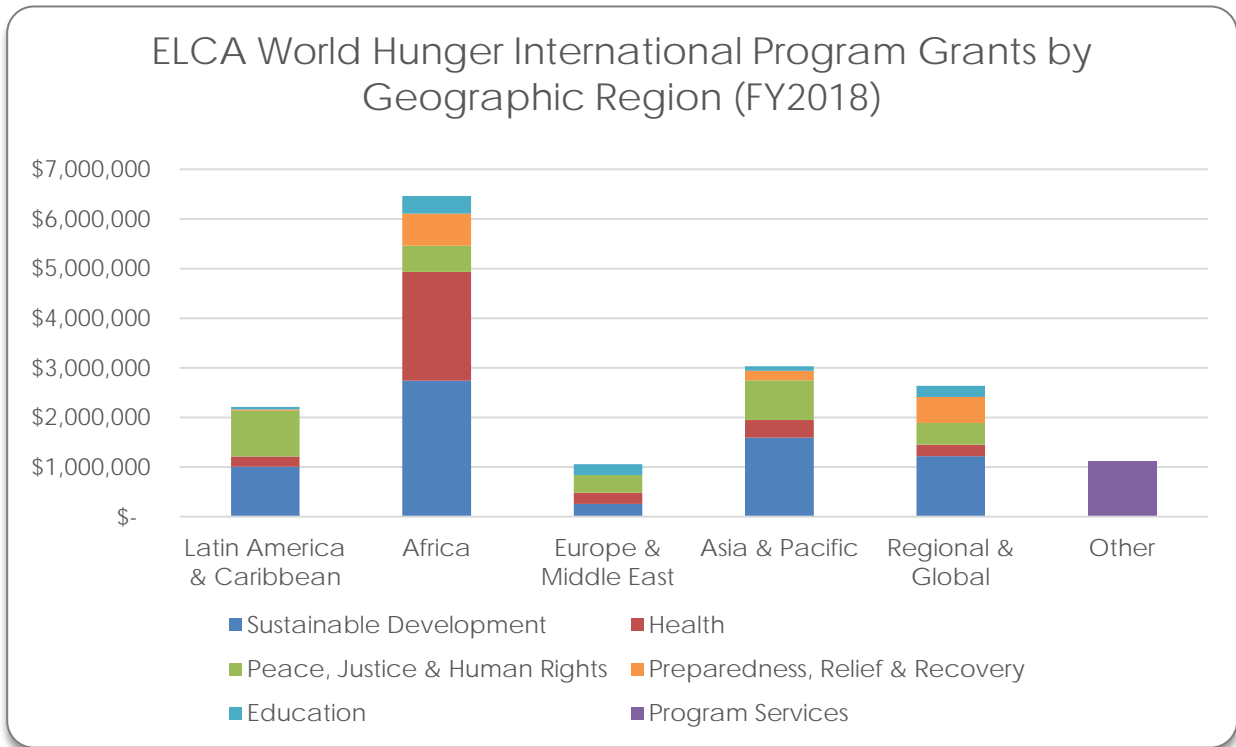
o *Serbia – Ecumenical Humanitarian Organization (EHO)*

The ELCA supports several EHO sustainable development programs:

- ✓ The Roma Mobilization program aims to develop sustainable community-based organizations within Roma communities.
- ✓ The Sombor Center project enabled the construction of an educational resource center at the Sombor Refugee Camp and will now support educational programs for children and women at this transitional center.
- ✓ The Misar Project brought flood relief to the village of Sabac, enabling the reconstruction of 15 homes and income-generating activities for each family. With ELCA financial support, now the village also has water access.
- ✓ The Tailoring Project provides women living with disabilities opportunities to improve their tailoring skills and earn a livelihood. In all these efforts, Christians in Serbia are growing in their diaconal ministry and witness.

o *Nepal: Harvesting freedom’s fruits among formerly bonded laborers*

The Freed Haliya of western Nepal were legally freed from bonded labor 10 years ago. However, challenges remained as they were not necessarily freed socially or economically. Through the Lutheran World Federation Nepal office, the ELCA has provided support for transformative training that includes literacy, vocational training and capacity-building. Human dignity is now flourishing among individuals, families and whole communities that now are free and no longer trapped by what amounted to modern slavery.



Goal four; objective five: Lead and participate in national and global advocacy efforts to advance gender justice, climate justice and human rights, and to alleviate poverty and hunger, engaging church networks and joining with ecumenical partners, leaders of other faiths and the global church.

- ◇ **Peace Not Walls (PNW):** The ELCA is working for peace with justice in Palestine and Israel through our campaign, Peace Not Walls (PNW). PNW encourages and supports ELCA members to take action toward this goal through accompaniment, advocacy and awareness-raising activities. In June 2018 a PNW gathering was held with 45 participants from 18 synods. Since January 2018, PNW has had 1,246 responses (messages sent to members of Congress using the action alert form) to 13 action alerts.
- ◇ **International Leaders Program (ILP) student gathering:** At the 2018 ILP student gathering:
 - Thirty-seven U.S.-based scholarship recipients received training on gender justice issues, especially gender-based violence.
 - Three scholarship recipients attended the 2018 U.N. Commission on the Status of Women and learned about intersectional advocacy.
 - Twenty-six women from companion churches received training on gender justice as participants in the 2018 Global Leadership Academy, a project of the International Women Leaders Initiative, a leadership and networking event for women.

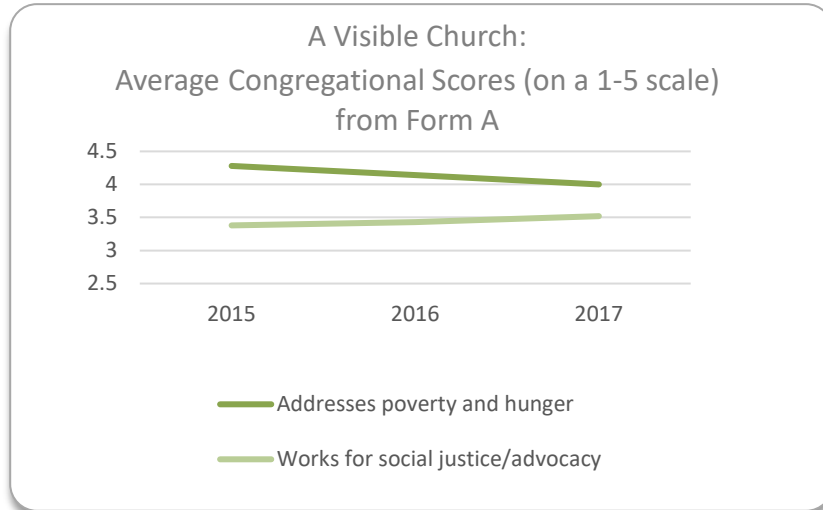
- ◇ **Lutheran Advocacy at the United Nations:** The Lutheran Office for World Community, which represents both the ELCA and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), participated in 14 dialogues with governments who are members of the Security Council and met with U.N. officials five other times on similar matters. They had at least six other opportunities to raise ELCA priority issues, delivered two statements on-the-record for the LWF and joined three sign-on letters to U.N. member states.
- ◇ **Fostering peace and reconciliation in Southern Africa:** Church leaders in several countries in Southern Africa (Zimbabwe, South Sudan and South Africa) have come together to proactively address the root causes of conflict and violence that threaten human security and create political instability across the region.



IMPACT:

- ✓ *In 2018 local peace committees were formed in Zimbabwe and trained to create and implement a conflict prevention and developmental strategy at the community level.*
 - ✓ *The committees' work includes creating spaces for community members to face up to and get closure from past pain, hurt and bad memories.*
 - ✓ *The resulting healing and reconciliation are a powerful testimony to the church's role in societies emerging from conflict.*
- ◇ **Ecumenical and interfaith relations:**
 - Continued advocacy with ecumenical partners, especially Episcopal, Catholic and Armenian, related to Israel/Palestine and the East Jerusalem Hospitals Network.
 - Participated at the National Council of Churches' "Act Now, Unite to End Racism" rally in Washington, D.C., on the 50th anniversary of the martyrdom of Martin Luther King Jr.; launched the initiative "Unite2EndRacism.org"; and worked to strengthen relationships with the Historic Black Churches, including cross-racial dialogue with the Conference of National Black Churches.
 - Participated in new Hindu, Buddhist and Sikh inter-religious dialogue tables co-convened by the National Council of Churches.
 - Hosted a national Jewish-Christian dialogue immediately following the anti-Semitic massacre at Tree of Life Synagogue.
 - Participated in the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies, an interfaith forum uplifting the common commitments of people of faith, based on an "Alliance of Virtues."
 - Provided leadership through the "Shoulder to Shoulder Campaign: Advancing American Ideals," including at several local and regional "Faith Over Fear" training events.

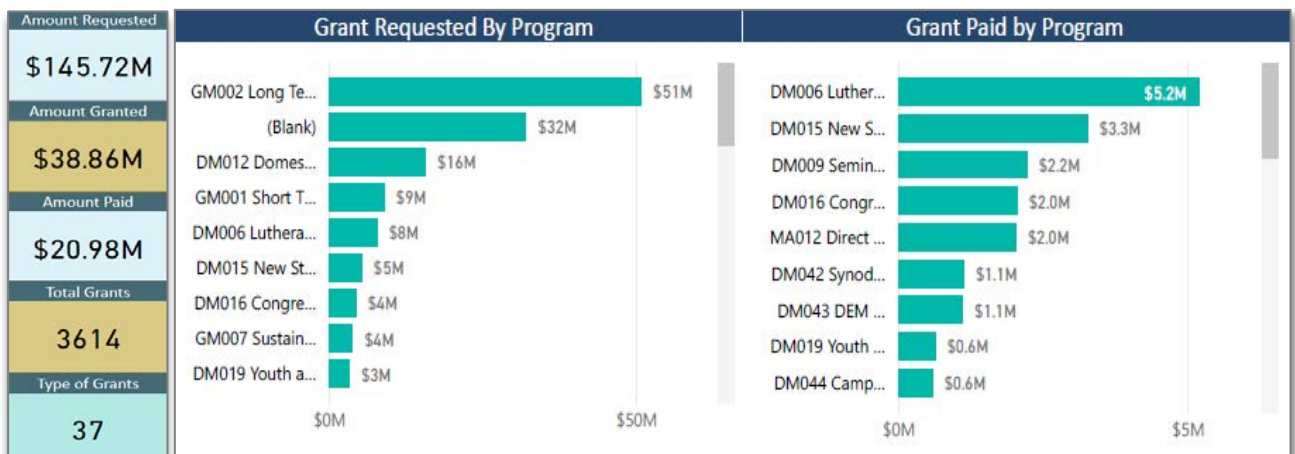
- ◇ **A Visible Church – congregational scores:** Congregational Vitality measures from Form A for objectives two, four and five provide two items related to the *Visible Church* goal: *addresses poverty and hunger* and *works for social justice/advocacy*. The graph below serves as a baseline. Between 2015 and 2017 the lines are all flat, suggesting that ELCA congregations have not yet made progress on these objectives:



Goal four; objective six: Strengthen the churchwide organization’s capacity to monitor the impact of ELCA’s World Hunger grants – domestic and international – and gather and tell these stories across this church.

- ◇ **ELCA GrantMaker Project:** In 2018, a GrantMaker steering committee determined that a project manager was needed to oversee the use and maintenance of the database that manages all outgoing grants. A GrantMaker manager was hired in early 2019 and will work collaboratively across churchwide units, ensuring that data are being entered to enable evaluation and storytelling about the impacts these grants are making.

Below is a partial dashboard to illustrate the types of information that can be pulled from GrantMaker at present:



IMPACT:

The GrantMaker System facilitates an improved process for submitting and shepherding grants:

- ✓ *An improved tool for DEMs to stay on track as they shepherd their new starts and vitality initiatives in existing congregations.*
- ✓ *Ease of locating the correct paperwork and what is required at each step in the grant process.*
- ✓ *Ability for those with access to each grant to follow up on grant status.*
- ✓ *A built-in way to access data and reviewer input and comments, all in one location.*

Goal four; objective seven: Expand and deepen engagement with dialogue, full communion, conciliar, interreligious and global partners to enhance capacity for working collaboratively for justice, peace and reconciliation in communities and around the world.

◇ **Ecumenical and interfaith relations:**

- Continued dialogue with the Catholic Church on faithful teaching; this year will mark the 12th round of meetings.
- Explored new models of local and national collaboration with full communion partners.
- Updated exchange documents that provide guidelines for clergy exchange with full communion partners.
- Prepared and shared for public comment “The Declaration of Inter-religious Commitment,” then edited, revised, and submitted it to the November 2018 Church Council, which unanimously recommended it for adoption by the upcoming 2019 Churchwide Assembly.

- ◇ **Support of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF):** Over \$6.5 million of support was sent in 2018 for LWF programs, which are carried out throughout the world by its 145 members (including the ELCA). With support from the Lutheran Office for World Community, the LWF Council considered seven resolutions, statements or messages at its 2018 meeting. The Global Mission unit assisted at three LWF meetings/events.

Goal 5

A well-governed, connected and sustainable church.

1 Corinthians 4:1-2, 2 Corinthians 4:1-2,
Micah 6:8, 2 Corinthians 9

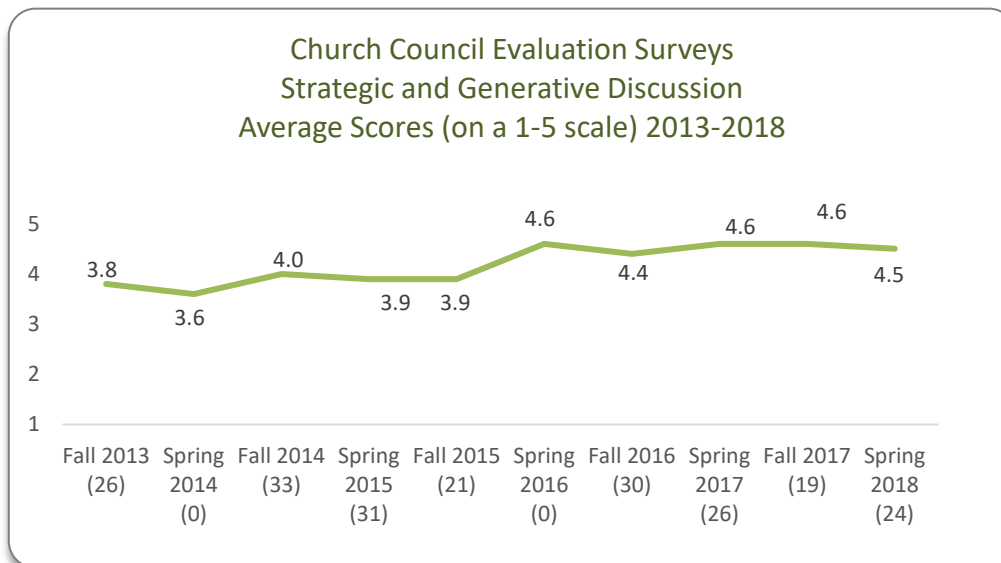
Goal five; objective one: Facilitate strong relationships across the ELCA's leadership tables and further build a culture of collaboration and mutual accountability.

- ◇ **Joint Leadership Table survey:** The Joint Leadership Table was surveyed in summer/fall 2018 to assess how well members feel they collaborate, communicate and hold one another accountable. This will serve as a baseline measure for future comparison. Results shown below:



Goal five; objective two: Support and enable effective governance by Church Council and a churchwide assembly, in line with the outcomes of the 2017 Church Council retreat.

- ◇ **Church Council evaluation:** Surveys are conducted after every meeting. One measure of effective governance is whether council members feel there is enough strategic and generative discussion. A positive trendline shows that this perception has improved since 2015 and then stabilized (number of survey responses for each year shown in parentheses):



Goal five; objective three: Identify and take forward structural redesign and reform opportunities that contribute to more effective stewardship of God's mission and this church's resources and assets (roles and structures of synods and the churchwide organization, seminaries, networking of lay schools, repurposing property assets).

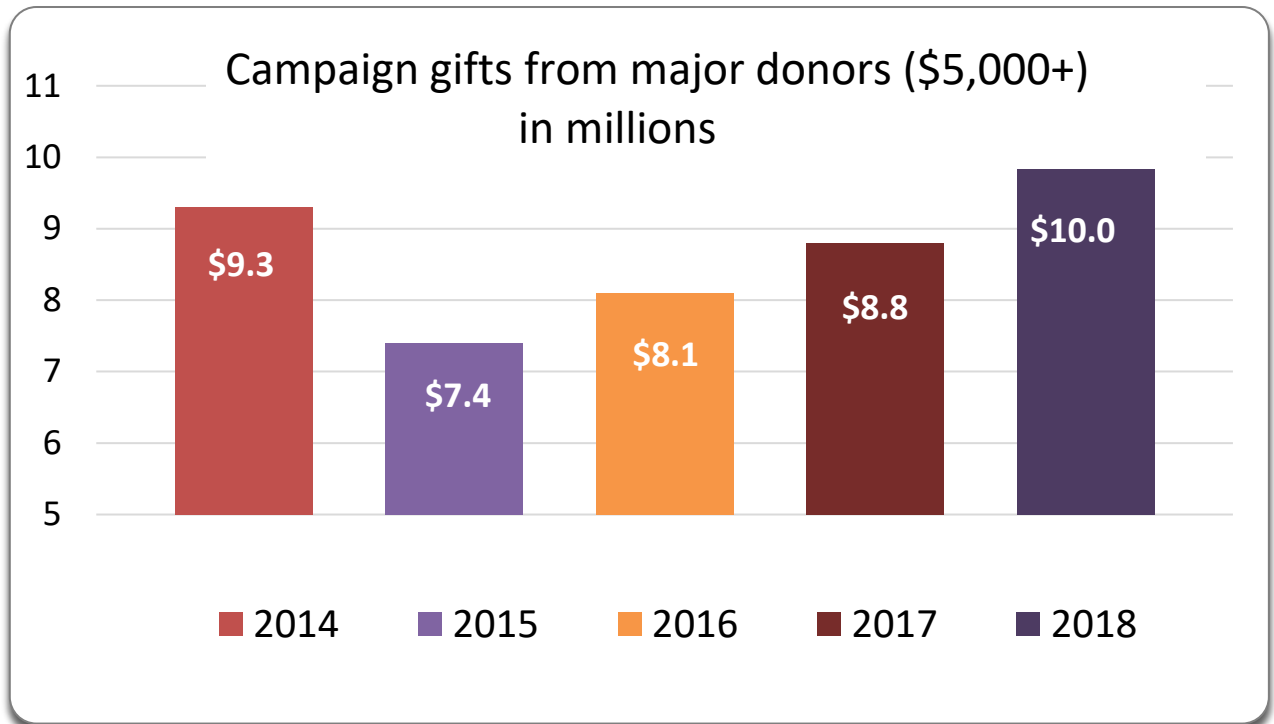
- ◇ **Mission Support experiment report:** In November 2018, Church Council action extended the Mission Support experiment with five synods (Nebraska, Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast, New England, Lower Susquehanna, and Metropolitan Washington, D.C.) and requested an initial report be brought to its April 2019 meeting, with a final report and recommendations to its November 2019 meeting. In response, a group of participating bishops, churchwide staff and others with interest in the experiment were convened by the Church Council's Budget and Finance Committee during the February meeting of the Conference of Bishops and collaborated on a list of metrics to measure the experiment's impact. This group will produce an interim report for the spring 2019 Church Council meeting and a full report for the fall 2019 meeting with learnings and implications.
- ◇ **Current work of the Conference of Bishops in collaboration with the Joint Leadership Table on roles and structure of synods:** The Joint Leadership Table has recommended that synods have a conversation within their regions to consider the ideal number of synods, whether any boundaries need to change, and innovations that could increase efficiencies and effectiveness.
- ◇ **ELCA Foundation's transition into a separately incorporated ministry:** The Foundation became a separately incorporated ministry of the ELCA on Jan. 1, 2018, consolidating all aspects of managing the business – including fundraising, finance, deferred gift planning, processing and administration, compliance and investment management oversight.
- ◇ **Lay Schools Network:** A gathering was held in Chicago in December 2018, that created a network space, gathered asset mapping information, identified leaders and created a working group that will imagine, plan and develop the Lay Schools Program for 2019 and beyond. The Agora and Diakonia programs sent their representatives as well as Luther Seminary, Disability Ministries, Book of Faith, the Lutheran Center in Atlanta and 1517 Media.

Goal five; objective four: Grow resources for mission and ministry in line with the ELCA's shared goals and priorities and the expectations and roles of its three expressions (successfully conclude and wind up the Campaign for the ELCA and develop the next generation of strategies to raise resources for this church, in line with its priorities; Comprehensive Mission Support Strategy).

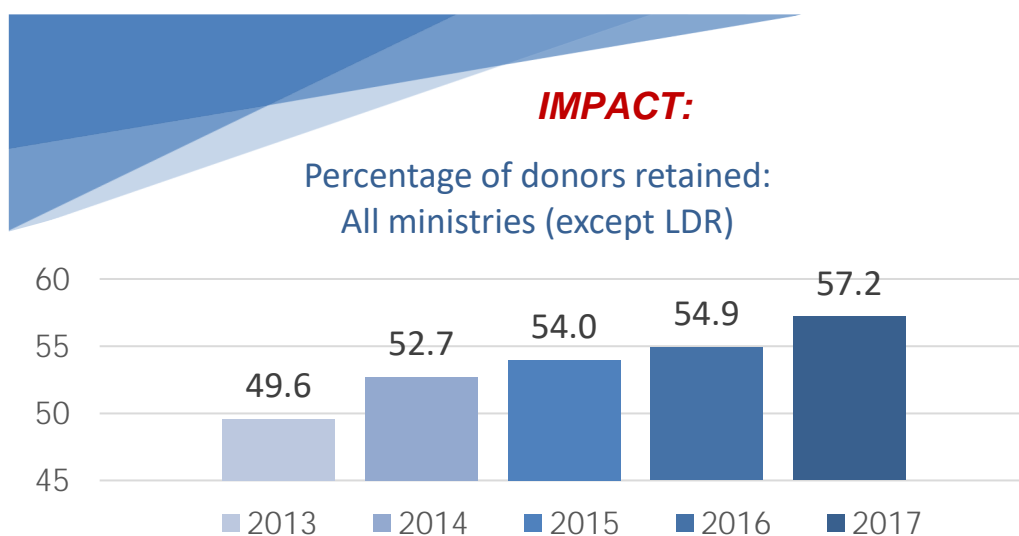
- ◇ **Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA:**
The campaign seeks to raise \$198 million in support of new and expanded churchwide ministries around the world. As of Jan. 31, 2019, we have collectively received more than \$226 million, including \$181 million in cash and multiyear commitments, and \$45 million in planned gifts, for churchwide ministries.



- ◇ **Increasing major donor gifts:** As the campaign winds down, the Mission Advancement unit has been exploring new strategies for raising resources. A restructuring of the unit is putting more emphasis on raising gifts from major donors. The graph below shows the recent annual increases in major gifts (because the 2018 accounting was not finalized as of this writing, the amount shown for 2018 is a projection):

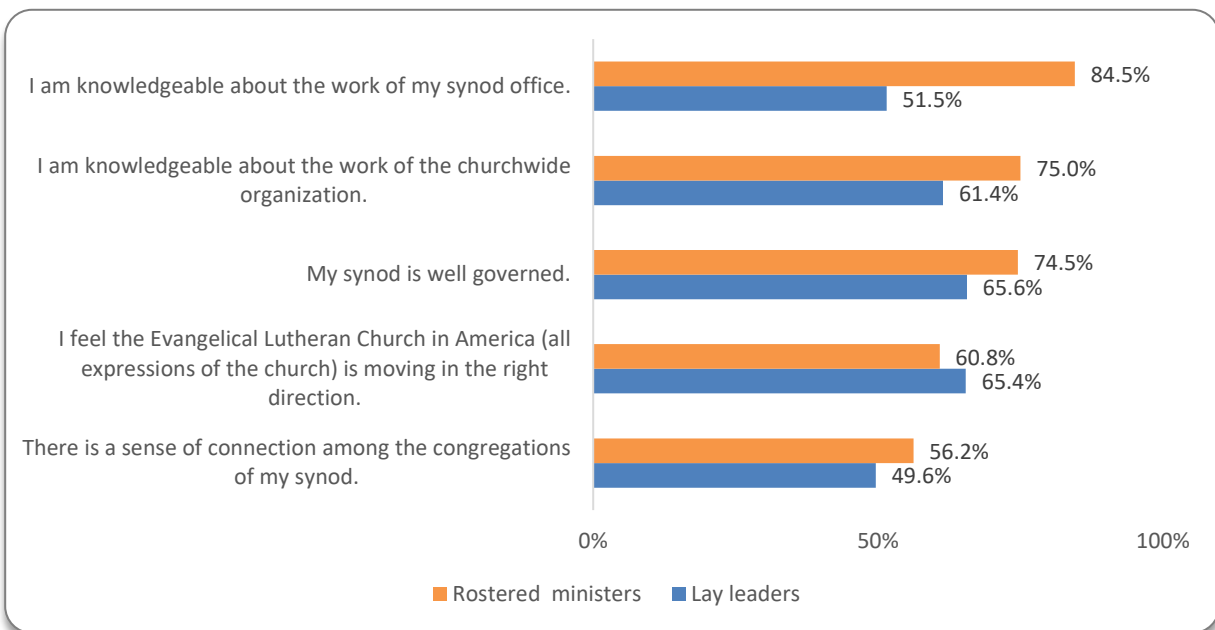


A director for donor stewardship position was created to increase donor retention and to thank and steward the major donor relationships initiated in the life of the campaign. Overall donor retention has increased by 7.6 percent in five years:



Goal five; objective five: Ensure the presiding bishop’s strategic focus on common identity, becoming a more relational and connected church, congregational vitality and development of leaders is supported by contemporary and effective communication strategies and platforms for information sharing and learning.

- ◇ **2018 survey of Lutheran rostered ministers and congregation council members:** Results from this survey, described earlier, show that a high percentage of rostered ministers know about the work of their synod and of the churchwide organization. Generally, they feel their synod is well governed. However, only 61 percent feel the ELCA is moving in the right direction and only 56 percent feel there is a sense of connection among their congregations. Lay leaders don’t agree as much with each survey item as do rostered ministers, though they are slightly more likely to feel the ELCA is moving in the right direction. Results are shown below:



Goal five; objective six: Improve structures, systems and processes of the churchwide organization, including those relating to deployed staff, synods, congregations, ministries and partners, to ensure they provide for efficient and effective teamwork, management and accountability (HR, technology, team structures, internal communication and information sharing).

- ◇ **Operating efficiencies analysis related to cross-unit finance functions:** The roles of finance and accounting staffs across churchwide office units were analyzed to determine whether operational efficiencies and savings can be achieved by clarification and redistribution of workloads, streamlining of processes and revising the reporting structure of these individuals. Recommendations have been made to the churchwide office Administrative Team for action.
- ◇ **New home for the Congregational Vitality Survey (CVS):** The CVS is a tool administered to all worshipers in a church to capture a snapshot of a congregation’s spiritual vitality. In early 2019,

the survey moved from being overseen by a contractor to being housed at the churchwide office. It is primarily being used by DEMs as “before and after” evaluations of renewal efforts and will be required as part of the congregational vitality grant proposals that synods write as part of the evaluation of those strategies.

- ◇ **Conference room upgrades at the churchwide office:** In efforts to increase meeting productivity and efficiency, and to facilitate phone/internet/Skype-based meetings to reduce the need for travel, conference rooms at the Lutheran Center have been upgraded with new equipment. Training on use of the new features, as well as meeting best practices, is being offered to staff.
- ◇ **New financial system to increase efficiency:** The ELCA churchwide office is switching financial software to *Workday for Financials*, a very powerful tool. The focus is on a process that allows for collaborative financial planning and then tracking progress. It will greatly simplify several financial functions.
- ◇ **Audit/analysis of churchwide staff meetings for efficiency:** An audit of regular churchwide staff cross-unit meetings was conducted and recommendations were made to the Administrative Team for reducing the number of these types of meetings. This change is expected to reduce the number of hours that most executives and senior leaders spend in meetings each month.
- ◇ **Guiding coalition to support Congregational Vitality:** Eighteen leaders from throughout the ELCA have been invited to create a guiding coalition to support the vision of Congregational Vitality, including bishops, DEMs, rostered ministers and lay leaders, seminary staff, and practitioners of ministries reflecting our diversity and key churchwide staff.
- ◇ **Congregational digital giving:** The ELCA has endorsed two preferred vendors to provide congregations with choices for digital giving: *Tithe.ly* and *Vanco GivePlus*. Each provides a secure all-in-one platform to receive and track donations, make deposits and produce reports.



IMPACT:

- ✓ *\$16,500 estimated processing savings.*
- ✓ *Increased giving: St. John in Bellevue, Ill., saw a 15 percent increase in giving since starting to use Tithe.ly.*

Finally

We are grateful for staff and partners who have made these ministries and this report possible. As this is the first year of a two-year operational plan, we are presenting this as an interim report. We hope it has highlighted important ministry work that is being done around the globe in the name of Christ, shown impact where it has been measured, and provided baselines to use for comparison with future measures to see tangible progress as we work toward the goals and objectives of *Future Directions 2025*.

Publishing House of the ELCA (1517 Media)

Submitted by Tim Blevins, President and CEO

We have chosen once again to use the goals identified in the [ELCA's Strategic Directions 2025](#) to frame recent work of [1517 Media](#). Our Congregational Resources publishing area, under the imprints [Augsburg Fortress](#) and [Sparkhouse](#), addresses a wide range of needs in worship, music, and congregational life, as well as faith formation for children, youth, and adults. Our Books publishing area, under the imprints [Fortress Press](#) and [Beaming Books](#), includes academic, education, and ministry titles, as well as trade adult and children's books.

Goal 1: A thriving church — spreading the gospel and deepening faith for all people.

Priorities: Church identity; Renew and strengthen evangelism; Church leaders; Renewal and formation of congregations and worship communities; Ecumenical dialogues and relationships

Alongside many church leaders across the ELCA, we recognize that “spreading the gospel and deepening faith” happens in increasingly varied ways. We seek to support leaders in the efforts that happen directly through congregations, while at the same time releasing titles that reach readers who may not currently be connected to the life of the church.

One ever-present need for ministry attention is supporting and accompanying those who are experiencing grief and loss, and for those who are facing illness and dying. For over fifty years, *Good Grief* by Lutheran chaplain Granger Westberg has played an essential role as a compact guide for those encountering these life passages. This year an updated edition of [Good Grief](#) is enriched with *The Good Grief Journal* and *The Good Grief Devotional*. [The Memory Box](#) has rapidly become a similarly essential resource to lead children along these same journeys. [Remembering God's Promises: A Funeral Planning Handbook](#) provides a planning tool for pastors and families. Musicians who surround life passages with song are discovering a new repository of possibilities in [Music Sourcebook for Life Passages: Healing, Funeral, Marriage](#).

We continue to develop resources aimed at the “formation, education, and continuing development of rostered ministers and lay leaders.” [Word & World Books](#), our partnership with Luther Seminary and the editorial board of *Word & World*, includes Rollie Martinson's [Elders Rising: The Promise and Peril of Aging](#), joining the series' first book, [Future Faith: Ten Challenges Reshaping Christianity in the 21st Century](#).

Our [Living with Hope](#) series supporting pastoral care ministries includes among its newest titles [Carrying Them with Us: Living through Pregnancy or Infant Loss](#) and [Addiction and Recovery: A Spiritual Pilgrimage](#).

Goal 2: An equipping church — equipping people for their baptismal vocations in the world and this church.

Priorities: Baptismal vocation, Faith formation and practice, Youth and young adults in mission

Baptismal vocation is grounded in the weekly word and sacrament encounter central to our identity as church. In 2019 the engaging baptismal theology of [Daniel Erlander](#), whose books about Lutheran identity and practice have been beloved for decades, is finding renewed expression in the [Come to the Water](#) series of baptism resources for the whole congregation. This new series, building upon Dan's *Let the Children Come* and *Water Washed, Spirit Born*, offers resources for wide range of congregational needs, including a comprehensive Sourcebook, an Interactive Edition of *Let the Children Come* for kids, an animated video, and a board book for the youngest, *Come to the Water, Little One*. This new series, due out in June 2019, joins [A Place for You: Holy Communion Resources for the Whole Congregation](#), released in 2018.

Our comprehensive array of [faith formation resources](#) for all ages includes several major curricula for children and youth. [Spark All Kids](#) and [Whirl All Kids](#) are new models of these popular Sunday school curricula being rolled out for churches with multi-age or single room classrooms for kids 5-12.

Our [T.B.D.](#) (*Think. Believe. Do.*) series helps youth discover what they believe and why. The first high-impact, four-week topical studies are focused on [Prayer](#) – [Sin](#) – [Mission](#) – and [Salvation](#).

Goal 3: An inviting, welcoming church — reflecting and embracing the diversity of our communities and the gifts and opportunities that diversity brings.

Priorities: An outwardly focused church; Theological and cultural competence of leaders; Church leadership profile; Addressing discrimination and oppression

More than a dozen distinguished African-descent scholars offer thoughtful viewpoints on Luther's Small Catechism in the new [Luther's Small Catechism with African Descent Reflections](#). While affirming the gifts of the Small Catechism, these theologians provide framework for broadening these explanations to address the experiences of Lutherans from various strands of African descent.

Our Beaming Books imprint is intentionally “outwardly focused,” reaching directly to parents and others who want children to thrive emotionally, socially, and spiritually, with a mix of high-quality religious and values-based children's books. Here are two recent examples. [Gritty and Graceful: 15 Inspiring Women of the Bible](#) inspires children to imagine their place in God's story and how they can make a difference. [There's No Wrong Way to Pray](#), by an ELCA pastor and her 10-year-old daughter, offers a kid-friendly reflection on talking to God.

Beyond new product development, we've committed 1517 Media to this key initiative: “Design and implement intercultural competency learning experiences” — for all employees in 2019 and beyond. The initiative launched in the first quarter of 2019 with all-organization training on Unconscious Bias.

Goal 4: A visible church — visible and deeply committed to working ecumenically and with other people of faith for justice, peace, and reconciliation in communities and around the world.

Priorities: Poverty and hunger; Response to disasters and humanitarian crises; ELCA-related social ministries; Advocacy and action on economic justice, racial justice, gender justice, climate justice

Two upcoming 2019 releases illustrate how our publishing efforts continue to expand in these areas. [Dear Church: A Love Letter from a Black Preacher to the Whitest Denomination in the US](#) by Lenny Duncan offers a vision for the future of the ELCA and the wider church, calling for renewal of the church through racial justice. Rozella Haydée White in [Love Big: The Power of Revolutionary Relationships to Heal the World](#) introduces readers to how relationships can heal the brokenness of our lives by crossing over the dividing lines of race, gender, religion, orientation, ability, identity, and class.

In 2019 we are also expanding [Dialogues](#), an adult small group series intended to spark healthy dialogue around difficult topics facing our society today. New releases on Sexuality and Race follow the first release on The Refugee Crisis.

Goal 5: A well-governed, connected, sustainable church.

Priorities: Leadership in governance; Church structures; Resources for mission; Communication

We strive to work with partners in ministry all across the ELCA in this arena, seeking communication and collaboration in areas such as lay and professional education, resourcing congregations, and pursuing future directions for this church and its mission for the sake of the world.

Thank you for your interest in and continuing support of your ministry of publishing! If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact me at blevinst@1517.media.

DIGEST OF BOARD ACTIONS

Unit: 1517 Media, Publishing House of the ELCA

Submitted by: Tim Blevins, President and CEO

Date of Board Meeting: November 2-3, 2018

Category 1: *(Policies with an impact beyond the unit, which require Church Council approval.)*

None

Category 2: *(Policies related to the day-to-day functioning of the unit or to the specific mandate of the unit.)*

Voted to approve the minutes of the June 8-9, 2018 Board of Trustees meeting in open session.
(PH.18.11.05)

Executive Session actions

Voted to approve the minutes of the June 8-9, 2018 Board of Trustees meeting in executive session.
(PH/ES.18.11.05)

Voted to receive the 2018 Stub Year Financial Statements Annual Report as submitted.
(PH/ES.18.11.06)

Voted that the Acquisitions Committee be reinstated with the description of duties as approved during the October 2000 meeting (PH.00.10.2), and further be it

RESOLVED, that the following members of Management to be included on the Acquisitions Committee:

President and Chief Executive Officer
Vice President of Finance and Chief Financial Officer
Vice President of Human Resources and Organizational Development
Vice President of Business Development. (PH/ES.18.11.07)

Voted to appoint Rob Flynn as an “At Large” member of the Acquisitions Committee.
(PH/ES.18.11.08)

Category 3: *(Other procedures and board actions.)*

None

Mission Investment Fund of the ELCA

Submitted by Eva M. Roby, President and CEO

Financial Update

The Mission Investment Fund (MIF) ended 2018 in strong financial position, with steady growth in our loan portfolio for the fourth consecutive year and the continuation of our strong, stable capital position. While we recorded positive \$2.9 million in net operating income, unrealized losses in our fixed, equity and endowment investments led to a \$3.1 million net loss.

Total loans outstanding rose to \$556.6 million at December 31, 2018, an increase of \$17.5 million over the \$539.1 million in loans outstanding recorded at December 31, 2017. The number of MIF loans rose to 917 from 888 at year-end 2017. Total investment obligations, however, decreased to \$499.1 million at December 31, 2018, from \$506 million at December 31, 2017.

Total assets fell to \$705.4 million at December 31, 2018, from \$715.7 million the prior year. The main contributors to this decrease were the decline in MIF investment obligations coupled with the net loss. Net assets decreased slightly to \$200.8 million at December 31, 2018, from \$203.9 million at year-end 2017. Our capital ratio remained constant at 28.5 percent.

Key Initiatives and Partnerships

MIF rolled out a new Strategic Plan for 2019-2021—an enterprising plan that challenges us to pursue new opportunities and continue our support of the mission and ministry of the church in new ways.

We continue to provide support and guidance for our sister ministry, the ELCA Federal Credit Union, as it grows. The credit union, which will celebrate three years of operation in June, continues to introduce new products and services for its members, including a new mobile app and a new World Mastercard. There has been great interest in the ministry credit card program. MIF is working toward an even stronger alliance with the credit union to assure greater value for our customers and greater efficiencies for MIF.

MIF continues to draw closer to the church extension funds of our full-communion partners. MIF and our four closest partner funds have agreed to survey our denominations, congregations and ministries to determine the needs for specific advisory services. MIF and our ecumenical partners hope to meet these needs by delivering specialized services.

This past year, MIF has been successful in executing an organizational structure designed to support ongoing growth. With executives in place in key management positions—including Administration, Deposit Operations, Enterprise Business Systems, Regulatory Compliance and Organizational Development—we are better positioned to embrace the opportunities before us.

Looking Ahead

Our new Strategic Plan is focused on initiatives that support MIF's growth as well as church vitality and sustainability. We are excited to set forth on new ventures that will bring us closer to our markets and achieve greater awareness of the ministry of MIF.

Portico Benefit Services Update

Submitted by: The Rev. Jeffrey D. Thiemann, President and CEO

Reaching More Who Serve

Portico has long partnered with social ministries and other faith-based organizations to deliver benefits to their employees. Over the last two years, we've expanded our benefit program to better meet the needs of these organizations, and interest is growing. At year-end 2018, four new Lutheran organizations selected Portico as their benefits partner — Missouri Slope Lutheran Care Center, Concordia Place, King's Manor Senior Living Community, and Lutheran Sunset Ministries. In addition, we're fielding more requests for proposals (RFPs), and are now in conversation with a number of ELCA colleges and universities. Regrettably, we parted ways in December with the Good Samaritan Society after its merger with a secular organization made it ineligible to participate in a church plan.

\$1 Million Milestone

LSS Financial Counseling recently notified us that, since the start of our 10-year partnership, 54 Portico plan members have, collectively, repaid just over \$1 million in unsecured debt. This is one of the many ways we help people increase their financial confidence.

2019 ELCA Medicare-Primary Health Benefits

For most members, the transition in 2019 to the new Medicare Advantage plan offered through Humana has gone smoothly. Many have appreciated the cost savings, post-hospital-stay meal service, and follow-up care. While some have expressed concern about their provider's unwillingness to bill Humana, Portico has worked with Humana to make progress in some areas of the country, and we've been impressed with Humana's diligent response to our members' concerns.

Resourceful Servants

Portico reached its \$100,000 pledge goal to the ELCA's Resourceful Servants matching program through donations from Portico employees and trustees. Through this program, 210 rostered ministers and lay leaders qualified to receive matching contributions in 2018 based on starting or increasing their pretax retirement contributions by \$600 annually. In 2019, 113 applicants are eligible to participate.

2019 Live Well

We launched 2019 Live Well, our new online tool offering activities centered in the Wholeness Wheel — including a focus on spiritual well-being. At the recent Assistant to the Bishops gathering, our regional representatives introduced the new program as a source of inspiration and education, one that encourages leaders to care for their own health and advocate for it among their people.

ELCA Philosophy of Benefits

Every two years, Portico's board of trustees reviews this document to ensure that it serves ELCA priorities. In August, the board recommended forming an ELCA ad-hoc working group to update language and address questions related to flexibility, affordability, sustainability, and our responsibility as church together. The group identified several reasons to modify the document — employment of part-

time rostered ministers, expanded roles for lay employees, and decreasing resources — and recommended increasing flexibility for individual employers while preserving a robust benefits package and support for church together. The proposed revised ELCA Philosophy of Benefits was reviewed by the Conference of Bishops and comes to the ELCA Church Council for approval.

Investing for Social Impact

- For the 2019 proxy voting season, Portico filed shareholder resolutions with 12 companies regarding climate change, board diversity, human rights, sustainability, and emissions reduction. To date, five companies have responded positively, prompting us to either withdraw our resolution or continue dialogue.
- Following Church Council and Portico Board of Trustees approval of the ELCA human rights social criteria investment screen, Portico is now working toward implementation during the first half of 2019, with input from the ELCA Corporate Social Responsibility Table.
- Recent social purpose fund news: [Companies Holding Oil Shale and Tar Sands Reserves Screened Out](#) and [Impax Investment Continues to Deliver](#).

Lawsuit

In the case of Bacon v. Portico Benefit Services: On March 5, 2015, a lawsuit was filed against Portico in Minnesota State Court (Hennepin County) alleging and seeking remedies related to the fees for investment and administration of the plans and selection of ELCA Retirement Plan investment funds. Portico filed a motion to dismiss this lawsuit under the Federal and Minnesota State Constitutions, asserting that the court's evaluation of the claims would constitute government entanglement in the free exercise of religion. This motion was granted Oct. 13, 2015. On Dec. 14, 2015, plaintiffs Pastor David Bacon, Pastor Timothy Hepner, Ruth Dold, and Sharon Hvam appealed the case dismissal to the Court of Appeals of the State of Minnesota. The Court of Appeals ruled in favor of the plaintiffs. The Minnesota Supreme Court and the United States Supreme Court declined to hear the case. Work on the substance of the case has begun and we are responding to plaintiffs' requests for discovery. This is a long process that we expect will ultimately bring the case to conclusion.

Investment Market & Fund Performance

Amid concerns surrounding global trade and economic growth, volatility returned to global financial markets in 2018, making full-year positive returns elusive across most major asset classes. While our retirement plan fund returns were below long-term expectations for the year, the funds performed competitively relative to select mutual fund peer groups, both in 2018 and over longer time periods.

Recognizing Innovation and Service

In October, BenchmarkPortal certified Portico's Customer Care Center as a [Center of Excellence](#) for the fourth year in a row. In November, Portico was one of four recipients honored with the Church Benefits Association's new [Innovation in Benefits Administration Award](#) for positive outcomes stemming from the personalized health management programs added to ELCA-Primary health benefits. Also in November, Portico Chief Operating and Financial Officer Stacy Kruse was recognized as a [2018 Twin Cities CFO of the Year](#).

2019 DIGEST OF BOARD ACTIONS

Unit: Portico Benefit Services
Submitted by: The Rev. Jeffrey D. Thiemann, President and CEO
Date: March 14, 2019
Meeting Dates: December 28, 2018 and February 21-22, 2019

Category I: Policies with an impact beyond the unit which require Church Council approval.

February Resolutions/Actions

Approved changes to the ELCA Philosophy of Benefits with forthcoming minor editorial changes to be made as needed by staff and recommended review by the ELCA Conference of Bishops and approval by the ELCA Church Council at its April 2019 meeting.

Category II: Policies related to the day-to-day functioning of the unit or to the specific mandate of the unit.

December Resolutions/Actions

ELCA Master Institutional Retirement Plan – Effective January 1, 2019

Section 8.04, 8.13, 8.17 (amendments to remove spousal consent for withdrawals, including hardship withdrawals and loans made from member accounts with a balance in excess of \$20,000).

February Resolutions/Actions

Approved the reelection of the Rev. Jeffrey D. Thiemann to another four-year term as president and chief executive officer of Portico Benefit Services for the period October 1, 2019 to September 30, 2023.

Approved the resolution relating to the Execution of Instruments pursuant to Section 9.4 of the Bylaws of this Corporation.

Category III. Other procedures and board actions.

November 2018 Resolutions/Actions

Received the report on the 2019 Trustee Conflict or Duality of Interest and Code of Conduct.

Received Porticos' February 2019 Management Report and all Committee Reports, en bloc.

ELCA Foundation

Submitted by Christina Jackson-Skelton, President and CEO

The ELCA Foundation (officially known as the Endowment Fund of the ELCA) has completed its first year of operations as a separate corporation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Its Board of Trustees has oversight for managing the deferred giving programs and related assets of the churchwide organization, including the Charitable Remainder Trust (CRT) and the Charitable Gift Annuity (CGA) programs, the endowment fund (Fund A), management of the Foundation's planned giving work, and financial and operational activities. A critical component of strengthening the oversight the Foundation assets has been the establishment of four committees of the board: Audit, Finance, Investment, and Resource Development. All four of the committees have actively and strategically engaged the work delegated for their review and recommendation.

Overview of Transition Implementation

Most components of the Foundation transition implementation plan that were identified by the Church Council Foundation Task Force have been completed over the course of this past year. Updates on the remaining items are:

Transfer of CGA assets

Phases I and II of the CGA program transfer to the Foundation have been completed. Phase I was effective March 31, 2018 and included a transfer of \$16.8 million. Phase II was effective June 30, 2018 and included a transfer of \$13.2 million. There are 1,252 contracts with a market value of \$24.5 million remaining on the books of the ELCA churchwide organization. We have contracted with PG Calc to help us navigate the process of initial filings for the Foundation in the states in which we are not yet registered. This relationship continues to provide positive results. The ELCA Foundation is now registered in 13 of the 30 Phase III states. New charitable gift annuity contracts will be issued in the name of the ELCA Foundation in all states in which the Foundation is registered; however, existing contracts will stay with the churchwide organization until they are transferred to the Foundation in January 2020 with an effective date of December 31, 2019. To date, none of the annuitants opted to retain their agreement with the ELCA instead of allowing the transfer.

Name Change

The legal name of our organization is the Endowment Fund of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, dba ELCA Foundation. We have contracted with CT Corporation to assist us with the annual requirements of those states that require the Foundation to register to do business as the ELCA Foundation. We continue to consider the value of changing the legal name of the organization to the ELCA Foundation. We believe that having our corporate identity as the ELCA Foundation may be advisable for the organization going forward to avoid confusion for donors, potentially resulting in unclear gift intention.

Financial Systems and Administration Services

- A new financial system has been selected and implementation is expected for fourth quarter 2019. The system will be used by both the churchwide organization and the Foundation.
- It has been determined that CGA administration and investment management should be outsourced and the preferred vendor based on a Request for Proposal process is State Street Global Advisors. The actual outsource date will coincide with the new system implementation. Our investment consultant will oversee all aspects of the asset transfer.

Development Results - 2018

- **Endowment Fund A**

As of December 31, 2018, Endowment Fund A had total assets of \$685.4 million, down from \$737 million the year prior, reflecting declines in market value at the close of the 2018 fiscal year. Total investing participants in Fund A were 1,100, including 887 congregations and 52 synods. For 2018, 71 new endowment accounts totaling \$12.5 million were opened and 15 accounts were closed totaling \$1.3 million. Total contributions (from outside participants) to new and existing endowment accounts for the year were \$44.2 million. Withdrawals totaled \$16.8 million.

- **Charitable Gift Annuity Pool**

Twenty-nine new charitable gift agreements were signed in 2018 with a total value of \$1.3 million. The CGA Pool had a net return in 2018 of negative 2.87 percent, which was above the target benchmark return of negative 3.27 percent.

- **Charitable Remainder Trusts**

Despite the fact that there were no newly funded charitable remainder trusts in the first half of 2018, we ended the year with nine newly funded CRTs in 2018. The initial contributions into these nine trusts totaled \$4.4 million.

- **Gift Planner Results**

The ELCA Foundation network currently has 22 regionally located gift planners, 17 partnerships and over 150 partners. 2018 was a record-breaking year with over \$95 million in total gifts and endowment assets developed. Of that, \$62.2 million was written in future gift commitments, \$5.4 million in current gifts, including funded trusts, gift annuities and individual endowments, and \$27.4 million in net new outside investor managed assets. The number of gift plans written has also been on the rise. Starting with 98 in 2016, new plans increased to 102 in 2017 and 167 in 2018. Further, gift planners stewarded over \$34 million in previously written plans, in some cases increasing the estimated gift size to ministry.

- **Gift Distributions**

Over the course of 2018, approximately \$56 million was distributed to ministry.

Looking Ahead

On August 31 of this year, I will complete my second and final four-year term as executive director of Mission Advancement and president of the Endowment Fund of the ELCA. I am grateful that over the past two years ELCA leadership and the Church Council have worked with us to consider how to best sustain and grow the gift planning and endowment management ministries of the ELCA. Those conversations resulted in a Church Council action to expand the Endowment Fund corporation in order to create the corporation now doing business as the ELCA Foundation. I believe that the ELCA Foundation is well positioned and structured to significantly support the growth and sustainability of ministries across the ELCA. I give thanks for the vision of the Church Council and trust that there will continue to be collaborative and strategic leadership to guide the ELCA Foundation into the future. It has been my deep privilege to serve this ministry over the past eight years.

ELCA Foundation Digest of Board Actions

Submitted by: Christina Jackson-Skelton, President and CEO

Date of Board Meeting: March 2019

Category 1: *(Policies with an impact beyond the SIM, which require Church Council approval.)*

None.

Category 2: *(Policies related to the day-to-day functioning of the unit or to the specific mandate of the SIM.)*

Voted to approve the minutes of the September 14, 2018, meeting and the November 12, 2018 written action of the ELCA Foundation Board of Trustees. (FO.19.03.2)

Voted to receive the report of the president of the Endowment Fund of the ELCA. (FO.19.03.3)

Voted to receive the report of the treasurer of the ELCA Foundation. (FO.19.03.05)

Voted to receive the report of the external auditor. (FO.19.03.06)

Voted to approve the 2018 audited financial statements of the Endowment Fund Pooled Trust. (FO.19.03.07)

Voted to approve the Ethics Policy for the ELCA Foundation. (FO.19.03.08)

Voted to receive the report of the Audit Committee. (FO.19.03.09)

Voted to affirm the 2020 and 2021 Endowment Fund A distribution rate of 4%. (FO.19.03.10)

Voted to approve the CGA Investment Policy. (FO.19.03.11)

Voted to receive the report of the Investment Committee. (FO.19.03.12)

Voted to approve the revised 2019 Operating Budget for the ELCA Foundation. (FO.19.02.13)

Voted to approve Endowment Fund A Operating Cash Management Policy. (FO.19.03.14)

Voted to receive the report of the Finance Committee. (FO.19.03.15)

Voted to approve the revised Gift Acceptance Policy. (FO.19.03.16)

Voted to receive the report of the Resource Development Committee. (FO.19.03.17)

Voted to change the beneficiary of The Gunther C. and Johanna W. Holpp Memorial Endowment Fund from Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Lutheran Charities to the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod for the benefit of Diakon, KenCrest, Liberty Lutheran, Lutheran Settlement House, and Silver Spring Martin Luther School. (FO.19.03.18)

Voted to amend the Authority to Act in Financial Matters policy to include the Executive Vice President of the ELCA Foundation to be an authorized signer. (FO.19.03.19)

Category 3: *(Other procedures and board actions.)*

None.

Women of the ELCA

Submitted by Linda Post Bushkofsky, Executive Director

The work of the churchwide staff of Women of the ELCA is to support the organization's participants as they live out the mission of mobilizing women to act boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ. Here are a few highlights since the last meeting of the Church Council.

Caribbean Synod Women's Organization

Following the devastating hurricanes of late 2017, the women of the Caribbean Synod suffered immeasurable losses and feared that the women's organization would fold. New life is being generated there now, with the help of the churchwide organization of Women of the ELCA. [About 80 women from 23 congregations across the four islands that comprise the synod gathered](#) in mid-January 2019 to start anew, learning about the organization's governance structure, the need for constitutions, the definition of an active unit, and the various offerings that support the women's organization and its ministries. Many congregational units and the synod organization itself had lost all documents during the hurricanes.

Exploratory Committee

[An 11-woman committee](#) met in St. Louis, Missouri from January 4-6, centering its work on investigating the organization's current business model and asking how the organization can best fulfill its mission and purpose into the future. The committee's examination went to governance structure, communication methods, constitutional structure and financial realities. The work on the committee was supported theologically by the Rev. Leila Ortiz, assistant to the bishop in the Metro D.C. Synod, ELCA. The committee is currently in a data-gathering stage and will make a preliminary report to the executive board of Women of the ELCA in April, with a final report due at the board's October 2019 meeting.

Bold Women's Day

Women across the organization observed [Bold Women's Day](#) on Sunday, February 24. This annual observance celebrates women who have acted or are acting boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ. This year's celebration included a letter writing challenge, combining Bold Women's Day and International Correspondence Writing Month. Participants were challenged to hand-write one letter every day of February, writing to a bold woman they know or admire. It was a month-long effort of building authentic community using honest words.

Conference of Synod Presidents

This annual conference was held in February. Learning focused on AMMPARO, suicide prevention, inviting new women and advocacy. The Rev. Linda Norman, vice president of administration for the Mission Investment Fund of the ELCA, was chaplain and assisted women through Bible study and worship in exploring the conference theme "Child of God." The presidents spent time in regional groups, discussing three questions posed by the exploratory committee: 1) If you could make changes to our constitutions to encourage more participation in the organization, what would they be? 2) Annual revenue from offerings has been insufficient to pay for the last two triennial conventions. How could your synod organization assist with the costs? and 3) Why is this organization important to you? If this organization went away tomorrow, would you miss it? Would it matter? Why? [Additional information is found in this news story.](#)

National Quilting Day

[Women of the ELCA is joining with Lutheran World Relief](#) (LWR) to highlight relief quilting on National Quilting Day, an annual celebration observed this year on March 16. Churchwide staff of Women of the ELCA are hosting a free hands-on workshop for those throughout the Metro Chicago Synod. Participants can learn about relief quilts, cover the basics of quilt-making, learn how to start a quilting ministry, trade tips and ideas and discover how Women of the ELCA supports LWR relief quilts at its triennial gatherings. Similar events are being coordinated on March 16 by LWR in Minnesota, Pennsylvania and Virginia, and Women of the ELCA groups are hosting their own events throughout the country.

Gather

Our magazine's current three-session Bible study, "The Gospel of John: Meetings with Jesus," has been written by the Rev. Julie Kanarr (Christ Lutheran, Belfair, Washington). For *Gather's* May 2019 intergenerational devotional, the Rev. Christa von Zychlin (Trinity Lutheran, Las Cruces, New Mexico) presents "Two way blessings," a study of intergenerational relationships in Scripture. The summer 2019 three-session study, "For such a time as this: Lessons from Esther," has been written by the Rt. Rev. Dr. Kay Ward, a bishop of the Moravian Church, now retired. The magazine is offering a twice-weekly Lenten devotion this year via email.

Gathering 2020

When Lutheran women gather in Phoenix in July 2020, they'll be gathering under the theme "Just love." More about the theme and the logo art can be found at <https://www.womenoftheelca.org/blog/news/just-love>.

The next meeting of the churchwide executive board is April 26-27, 2019, at the Loyola University Chicago Watertower campus.

1 **Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**
2 **Church Council Governance Policy Manual**
3 **(Draft for Church Council) (April 4, 2019)**

4
5 **Part 1 (continued)**

6
7 **4. Responsibilities of individual Church Council members**
8

9 Given the polity of the ELCA and the collective responsibilities of the Church
10 Council in terms of governance, it is vitally important that Church Council members
11 understand their individual responsibilities as directors of the churchwide organization
12 and members of its interim legislative authority. Translating concepts of fiduciary,
13 strategic, and generative leadership from the collective to individual responsibilities
14 requires ongoing reflection on and consciousness of both the structure and polity of this
15 church and best practices in terms of governance.
16

17 The starting point is that Church Council members must understand and act as
18 representatives and fiduciaries of the churchwide organization. They are not delegates
19 from a particular congregation, synod, or geographical area or constituency. Although
20 the method of nomination may be based on geography and/or other criteria, Church
21 Council members do not function as a House of Representatives in which they have a
22 home constituency. This does not mean that members of the Church Council should
23 forget the geographical area from which they come and the issues and concerns of the
24 congregation they attend and the synod in which they reside, but their role is to represent
25 the interests of this whole church. Embedded in that understanding is the reality that
26 every churchwide representative has an inherent potential conflict of interest because
27 actions taken in furtherance of the fiduciary responsibility to the churchwide
28 organization may not always be consistent with the best interest of a particular synod or
29 congregation.
30

31 In this context, it is important that individual Church Council members covenant
32 with one another and the leadership of this church that, in fulfilling their fiduciary duties,
33 they understand and accept the following individual responsibilities.
34

35 **A. Responsibilities relating to meetings**

- 36 • Become and remain familiar with the Constitution, Bylaws, and
37 Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA, this Governance Policy Manual, as
38 well as other policies and documents relevant to the governance of this
39 church.
40 • Prepare for, attend, and actively participate in Church Council and
41 committee meetings, as well as retreats, and other Church Council events.

- 42 • Exercise loyalty, discretion, and best judgment in making informed
43 decisions, following open discussion; in participating in meetings, always
44 treat fellow members, staff, and visitors with dignity and respect.
- 45 • Facilitate and assist in mentoring new members and help establish an
46 atmosphere of collegiality and mutual support among Church Council
47 members.
- 48 • Participate in evaluation, process observation, and providing constructive
49 feedback of the Church Council and its structures; always assist in
50 improving its effectiveness and fulfilling its missional responsibilities.

51 **B. Responsibilities outside Church Council meetings**

- 52 • Serve as an ambassador of and be willing to be an advocate for the
53 ministries and priorities of the ELCA in congregations, synods, and other
54 settings; in so doing, communicate clearly, support the actions and
55 decisions of the Church Council, and preserve the confidentiality of
56 decisions and discussions held in executive session.
- 57 • Be a faithful steward and support financially ministries of this church.
- 58 • Assist in identifying and recruiting talented and committed individuals to
59 serve on committees, boards, task forces and in leadership positions in
60 this church, including future members of the Church Council.
- 61 • Foster effective teamwork with the churchwide organization staff and be
62 sensitive to their responsibilities in management and implementation of
63 churchwide ministries and policies; in so doing, bring to the attention of
64 the Vice President potentially inappropriate or harmful behavior of a
65 fellow member.
- 66 • Remember in prayer the leaders of this church and the members and
67 activities of the Church Council.

68
69
70 These individual responsibilities may be expanded upon and further described in
71 the *Orientation Manual for Church Council Members* and in policies adopted by the
72 Church Council.

73 **Part 2**

74 **1. Organization and structures of the Church Council**

75
76
77 In accordance with provisions in Chapter 14 of the CBCR, the voting members of
78 the Church Council are the four officers, the chair of the Conference of Bishops, and 32-
79 45 individuals elected by the Churchwide Assembly. There also are nine liaison synod
80 bishops, one from each region, who serve as advisory members with voice but not vote
81 (14.31.01.). In addition, representatives of ecumenical partners, ethnic ministries,
82 separately incorporated ministries, and others attend Church Council meetings as guests.

83 In the exercise of its governance responsibilities and in furtherance of its fiduciary,
84 strategic, and generative leadership of this church, the Church Council shall organize
85 itself consistent with provisions of CBCR Chapter 14. The Church Council shall
86 authorize or establish standing committees, other committees, boards, task forces, and
87 other groups necessary to assist the Church Council in carrying out its work. The
88 responsibilities of each such committee, board, task force, and group shall be specified
89 in CBCR provisions, charters, policies, and/or authorizing actions of the Church
90 Council. In all cases, the enabling documents must include specific descriptions of the
91 responsibilities and authority of the committee, board, task force, or group, as well as its
92 composition, and requirements for reporting to the Executive Committee and/or Church
93 Council. In its role as the governance committee of the Church Council, the Executive
94 Committee shall answer questions and provide clarification, as necessary, regarding the
95 roles and responsibilities of committees, boards, task forces, and groups.

96
97 **A. Standing committees**

98 The standing committees of the Church Council are described in the bylaw
99 and continuing resolutions following CBCR provision 14.40. Additional
100 responsibilities, procedures, and requirements are described in charters, prepared by the
101 committees and approved by the Church Council or the Executive Committee.

102
103 **B. Temporary committees, boards, task forces, and ad hoc groups.**

104 In addition to standing committees, the Church Council or the Executive
105 Committee also may establish temporary committees, boards, task forces, and/or ad hoc
106 groups to facilitate and assist in the work of the Church Council and to communicate
107 with and to serve as liaison to others in this church. Such committees, boards, task
108 forces, and ad hoc groups may contain individuals in addition to Church Council
109 members, bishops, and staff, who may be appointed by the Church Council or Executive
110 Committee to serve as advisory members. In all cases, the Church Council or Executive
111 Committee shall carefully describe the authority for and responsibilities of such
112 committees, boards, task forces, and ad hoc groups, including a timetable for reporting.
113 Actions taken, recommendations for action, and requested reports shall be
114 communicated in a timely manner to the Church Council and/or Executive Committee.

115
116 **C. Meetings of committees, boards, task forces, and ad hoc groups**

117 Committees, boards, task forces, and ad hoc groups must meet often enough
118 to fulfill their responsibilities under the applicable governing and policy documents and
119 the instructions provided by the Church Council and/or Executive Committee. Because
120 technology provides the opportunity to meet electronically, holding meetings and/or
121 conferring in advance of scheduled in-person meetings are encouraged to facilitate
122 identification of issues and streamlining of agenda time for the Executive Committee
123 and Church Council. When reports to the Executive Committee or Church Council are

124 required, meetings or conferences of committees, boards, task forces, and ad hoc groups
125 (whether in person or electronically) should take place sufficiently in advance to raise
126 agenda matters according to the timetable specified below. In particular, standing
127 committees should meet electronically before a regularly scheduled meeting of the
128 Church Council, as well as before or during the in-person meeting.

129

130 **D. Evaluation of organization and structures**

131 During each triennium, the Church Council shall evaluate its committees,
132 boards, task forces, and ad hoc groups, and the evaluation shall include how their
133 activities meet the criteria specified in the relevant governing document provision(s) and
134 applicable policies, as well as how they align with the strategic plan and goals of the
135 churchwide organization.

136

137 **2. Meetings of the Church Council**

138

139 **A. Types of meetings, scheduling, and attendance**

140 In accordance with ELCA constitutional provision 14.12, the Church
141 Council shall meet at least two times a year. In addition, in the year of a Churchwide
142 Assembly, a one-day meeting precedes the Assembly. Additional meetings may be
143 scheduled by the Executive Committee in consultation with the Office of the Presiding
144 Bishop. If feasible, during each triennium, a portion of at least one meeting will be
145 devoted to a retreat, and a portion of one Church Council meeting will be scheduled with
146 a meeting of the Conference of Bishops.

147

148 In accordance with this church's Open Meetings policy, meetings are public
149 sessions and open to invited guests and visitors, unless otherwise indicated in the
150 meeting agenda or approved by vote of the Church Council. The Office of the Presiding
151 Bishop shall be advised by voting members if invitations have been extended to attend
152 a Church Council meeting to persons other than those identified in the meeting materials.

153

154 In accordance with *Robert's Rules of Order*, the Church Council may meet in
155 executive sessions, either when indicated on the agenda or upon adoption of a motion to
156 enter executive session. Prior to beginning an executive session, the chairperson shall
157 identify which staff members and others are invited to participate in the executive
158 session. If actions are taken in executive session that may be publicly disclosed, the chair
159 will report those actions when the Church Council returns to open session. If
160 confidential minutes are taken in executive session, they will remain confidential, unless
161 authorized for public distribution by the Executive Committee.

162

163 Voting members and advisory members are expected to attend Church Council
164 meetings; they should not miss more than one full day of a meeting or two consecutive

165 meetings. If a member needs to be excused, electronic notification should be sent to the
166 Secretary.

167

168 **B. Calendars**

169 A calendar of Church Council meetings shall be prepared to schedule
170 meetings at least three years in advance. In addition to identifying prospective meeting
171 dates, the triennial calendar will identify subjects that should be addressed at each
172 meeting, including scheduling follow-up consideration of Churchwide Assembly actions
173 and reports on matters previously delegated by Church Council action. In all cases,
174 scheduling of Church Council meetings and matters to be addressed shall be coordinated
175 with meetings of the Conference of Bishops. The Office of the Presiding Bishop in
176 consultation with the Executive Committee will regularly review and update the triennial
177 calendar.

178

179 **C. Agendas and meeting materials**

180 The Office of the Presiding Bishop in consultation with the Executive
181 Committee shall prepare agendas for all Church Council meetings. At least 60 days
182 before the commencement of a Church Council meeting, chairpersons of standing
183 committees of the Church Council shall advise the Office of the Presiding Bishop and
184 the Executive Committee of matters that the committees intend to bring to the Church
185 Council, including anticipated recommendations and an estimate of the amount of time
186 required for report and consideration in a plenary session. In addition, at least 45 days
187 before the commencement of a Church Council meeting, members of the Church
188 Council and liaison bishops will be invited to request matters for inclusion on the Church
189 Council agenda. Such requests should include a brief explanation of the topic to be
190 addressed, its importance and relevance to the responsibilities of the Church Council,
191 and an estimate of the amount of time required. (In exigent circumstances, these
192 deadlines may be waived.)

193

194 A provisional schedule will be distributed at least 30 days prior to Church Council
195 meetings. Draft agendas will be distributed to Church Council members, liaison bishops,
196 invited guests, and appropriate churchwide staff at least 14 days before meetings.

197

198 Meeting agendas must include issues of governance, including addressing
199 implementation of actions of the Churchwide Assembly, evaluation of implementation
200 of the strategic plan, and fulfilling fiduciary responsibilities and missional imperatives
201 identified in the CBCR. Either prior to or during every meeting, the agenda should
202 include a component of training on some aspect(s) of the ministry of this church and/or
203 governance responsibilities of the Church Council. In addition, portions of every
204 meeting should include time for generative discussions about where God is leading this
205 church and how it can live into the future to which God is calling us. Agendas also must

206 include focusing on the spiritual aspects of servant leadership. Thus, worship and prayer
207 must be incorporated into the fabric of Church Council meetings, as well as in committee
208 meetings and in all activities that take place during the times that a Church Council
209 meeting is scheduled. Balancing these multiple imperatives is challenging, but must be
210 accomplished in a proactive manner. In addressing the agenda components and time
211 requirements of a meeting, it is imperative to allocate time based on priorities at the
212 meeting, including sufficient time to consider matters requiring action.¹

213
214 In order to enhance efficiency, meetings may include en bloc agendas.² Any
215 Church Council member may request that a matter or matters on the en bloc agenda be
216 considered separately; a request may be made to the Secretary with notification to the
217 Office of the Presiding Bishop to do so. The request should be made before the meeting
218 begins. In addition, in order to further enhance meeting efficiency, agendas also may
219 include special orders and time estimates for discussion/action in order to inform
220 members in advance of the meeting.³

221
222 Fulfilling the responsibilities of the Church Council – including all modes of
223 leadership (fiduciary, strategic, and generative) -- necessarily requires dissemination of
224 relevant materials on a timely basis before meetings. A delicate balance must be
225 maintained between an overwhelming “information dump” and providing necessary
226 materials addressing only proposed actions. To the extent reasonably possible, the
227 Presiding Bishop, in collaboration with the Executive Committee, shall provide an
228 executive summary of key issues to be addressed at Church Council meetings at least 30
229 days before the meeting. In addition, to the extent reasonably possible, reports should
230 include dashboards reflecting progress in implementing strategic plan and other goals.

231
232 To the extent reasonably possible, meeting materials will be distributed at least 14

¹ BoardSource describes the challenge of balancing the need for efficient decision-making while maintaining a focus on teamwork and collegiality in furtherance of an organization’s mission as follows: “The most effective boards plan their meetings to focus on the important matters of governance while preserving the sense of community and mission that brings the organization together.” C.F. Dambeck, M. Davis, and R.L. Gale, *Structures and Practices of Nonprofit Boards* (2nd Ed.) (2009).

² “En bloc” agendas are analogous to “consent calendars” or “consent agendas”. See *Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised* (11th ed.), pp. 361-62

³ A “special order” is a matter scheduled for a particular time that takes precedence over what is being addressed when the time occurs. See *Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised* (11th ed.), pp.364-65. In addition, agendas may contain estimates of discussion time for planning purposes, but they are not binding unless they are special orders.

233 days before the meeting, and earlier if reasonably possible⁴.
234
235
236

237 **D. Meeting process**

238 Pursuant to bylaw 14.12.02, “[t]he Church Council shall use parliamentary
239 procedure in accordance with *Robert’s Rules of Order*, latest edition, unless otherwise
240 ordered by the council.” Bylaw 14.12.03 also prohibits proxy and absentee voting. The
241 Church Council may adopt standing rules or rules of organization and procedure to
242 provide additional procedural rules or processes to facilitate its work. Notwithstanding
243 these rules, it is very important for the Church Council to set aside meeting time for
244 generative discussions, prayer and reflection, and other non-legislative purposes.
245

246 **E. Meeting evaluations**

247 An integral governance aspect of the work of the Church Council is self-
248 evaluation. The purpose of evaluation is to provide feedback on both its effectiveness
249 in addressing the substantive matters on the agenda and the process by which discussion
250 and actions are addressed. With respect to the former, a meeting evaluation form,
251 developed by the Board Development Committee and approved by the Executive
252 Committee, will be distributed at or shortly following the conclusion of every meeting.
253 The evaluations will be reviewed by the Board Development Committee and the
254 Executive Committee, and a summary will be distributed to all Church Council members
255 before the next meeting. In addition, each year the Church Council shall conduct a more
256 thorough evaluation of its work; the evaluation template will be developed by the Board
257 Development Committee and approved by the Executive Committee. The results of the
258 evaluation will be analyzed by the Board Development Committee and the Executive
259 Committee, and a summary will be distributed to all Church Council members. (In
260 addition to elected members of the Church Council, liaison bishops also will be asked to
261 provide input to all evaluations of the Church Council. Others also may be invited by the
262 Vice President to complete evaluations.)
263

264 In addition to substantive evaluations, a process observation team shall be
265 identified for each meeting of the Church Council by the Board Development
266 Committee. The process observation team will monitor the conduct of business and the
267 manner of discussion and debate and report during the meetings on issues such as
268 whether agenda matters have been fully addressed, whether multiple viewpoints and
269 voices have been heard, whether discussion has been respectful, and whether there has
270 been clarity in decision-making and delineation of follow-up, if any. The process

⁴ Distribution of materials may be accomplished by electronic transmission or posting on a dedicated portal or website, as approved by the Church Council and consented to by members. The late distribution of materials does not preclude consideration of a matter.

271 observation team is authorized to make suggestions to the Vice President and the Board
272 Development Committee to improve the work of the Church Council.

273

274 **F. Minutes**

275 Minutes constitute the official record of the proceedings of the Church
276 Council, and their preparation and maintenance are the responsibilities of the Office of
277 the Secretary (13.41.01.). Draft minutes of open sessions will be distributed with
278 meeting materials in advance of meetings. Church Council members are encouraged to
279 advise the Office of the Secretary of additions or corrections to the minutes at least 14
280 days in advance of meetings so that plenary time is not spent addressing such issues, and
281 approval of the minutes may be included in the en bloc agenda.

282

283 Minutes of executive sessions will not be included in minutes distributed as part
284 of meeting materials. If minutes of executive sessions are taken, they must be distributed
285 and approved in executive session. The Office of the Secretary shall keep a separate file
286 of minutes of Church Council executive sessions.

287

288 **G. Updates and training between meetings**

289 To the extent reasonably possible, the Office of the Presiding Bishop with
290 input from the Executive Committee will provide periodic updates between meetings
291 regarding the work of the Church Council and anticipated issues on the horizon.

292

293 In addition, the Board Development Committee, in consultation with the Office
294 of the Presiding Bishop and the Executive Committee, may schedule a primer or other
295 educational session(s) to be conducted electronically between regular meetings of the
296 Church Council.

297

298 **4. Relationships and communications**

299

300 As the Board of Directors and the interim legislative authority of the churchwide
301 organization, the Church Council interacts with many entities, organizations, and
302 individuals both within and outside of the denomination. These relationships are
303 essential to the ministry of the ELCA, to practicing interdependence, and to developing
304 synergistic leadership.

305

306 The starting point in analyzing interrelationships is Chapter 8 of the CBCR. It
307 addresses both the polity of the ELCA and defines the interrelationships among the
308 expressions of this church, as well as with agencies and institutions. With respect to
309 congregations and synods, the churchwide organization shares a relationship of
310 interdependence: "Each part, while fully the church, recognizes that it is not the whole
311 church and therefore lives in a partnership relationship with the others" (8.11.). Chapter

312 8 continues by describing relationships and defining responsibilities of this church with
313 respect to institutions and agencies, other Lutheran organizations, interchurch agencies,
314 institutions and councils, church-to-church relationships, and others. Within the polity
315 of the ELCA, it is the churchwide organization that “shall implement the extended
316 mission of the Church, developing churchwide policies in consultation with
317 governmental, ecumenical, and societal agencies in accordance with accepted
318 resolutions and/or in response to specific agreed-upon areas of responsibility” (8.14.). In
319 the exercise of its fiduciary responsibilities, the Church Council must endeavor to
320 nurture and strengthen these relationships, but the Church Council must remember that
321 its role is governance and not management.

322
323 **A. Church Council relationships with churchwide organization and staff**

324 As a general proposition and principle of governance, the Church Council
325 is responsible for exercising fiduciary, strategic, and generative leadership of the
326 churchwide organization. The Church Council has tools to ensure that the churchwide
327 organization is fulfilling its role within the mission of this church. Consistent with
328 actions of the Churchwide Assembly and provisions of the CBCR, the Church Council
329 develops and oversees the implementation of a strategic plan, develops and oversees the
330 implementation of policies consistent with the plan and the applicable governing
331 documents, approves a budget and authorizes expenditures consistent with fiscal policies
332 and the budget, and periodically reviews the work of the offices and units of the
333 churchwide organization. (These collective responsibilities are described in Part 1.) It
334 does not manage the offices and units of the churchwide organization or supervise staff.
335 Implementation of policies and programs and personnel management are
336 responsibilities of the churchwide staff under the supervision of the Presiding Bishop.

337
338 Translating these concepts and the provisions of the CBCR into effective
339 governance that recognizes different roles and appropriate limitations can be
340 complicated. As a preliminary matter, clear communications and transparency are
341 important to maintaining constructive relationships between the churchwide
342 organization and the Church Council. In addition, a number of general principles should
343 guide communications between Church Council members and churchwide officers and
344 staff:

- 345 • As a general proposition, communications between a Church Council member and
346 churchwide officers and staff should be channeled through the Office of the
347 Presiding Bishop, except as otherwise authorized by the CBCR, approved
348 policies, or with the permission of Presiding Bishop. (For example, questions
349 about CBCR interpretation should be directed to the Office of the Secretary;
350 budgetary issues may be directed to the Office of the Treasurer.) When in doubt,
351 a Church Council member should advise the Office of the Presiding Bishop
352 through the appropriate executive that communication is taking place with a staff

353 person. Thus, it is not appropriate to telephone or to email a staff person in a unit
354 or office without the knowledge of the Office of the Presiding Bishop or other
355 relevant officer. As a matter of practice, such communication should take place
356 with the consent of the relevant officer or, in the case of email or correspondence,
357 by providing a copy of the communication to the relevant officer.

- 358 • In the event that a Church Council member learns of an issue or problematic action
359 on the part of a churchwide staff person, the member should communicate the
360 issue immediately to the appropriate officer or executive.
- 361 • When a policy of this church is under consideration for revision or for
362 development and the policy is one that will be subject to adoption by the Church
363 Council, the Church Council shall set out a roadmap for the process for
364 development, review, and adoption that includes a timeline.

365 **B. Relationships and communications with the Conference of Bishops**

366 The relationship between the Church Council and the Conference of Bishops is
367 important and unique because each synod bishop is the chief executive officer and pastor
368 of a synod with specific responsibilities in relation to congregations and the churchwide
369 organization. Synod bishops, Church Council members, and leaders in the churchwide
370 organization also are interconnected and unified by common purposes and principles of
371 organization in this church (CBCR Chapters 4, 5, and 8). Collectively, the Conference
372 of Bishops has defined responsibilities with respect to the Church Council.
373

374
375 The Conference of Bishop is a unique asset to the Church Council and this church
376 as a whole. The Church Council is encouraged to work pro-actively to engage the
377 Conference of Bishops in consultation and in providing advice and recommendations on
378 numerous issues that warrant generative discussion and thoughtful advice.
379

380 With these interconnections, it is important to maintain effective lines of
381 communication between the Conference of Bishops and the Church Council. Official
382 communications between the Church Council and the Conference of Bishops should be
383 limited to written communications between the officers and the chair of the Conference
384 of Bishops. Informational communications between individual bishops and the
385 appropriate churchwide staff and/or Church Council members are encouraged, but they
386 are not intended to officially transmit referrals or respond to actions by the Conference
387 of Bishops. Recommendations from the Conference of Bishops to the Church Council
388 shall be transmitted through the chair of the Conference of Bishops.
389

390 If the Conference of Bishops is required to review an existing or proposed policy
391 that the Church Council must approve in accordance with the CBCR, the Church Council
392 shall refer the policy to the Conference of Bishops for review. The referral shall describe

393 the scope of the requested review, as well as sufficient background to provide a roadmap
394 of the issues to address and a timetable for reporting to the Church Council.
395

396 **C. Relationships and communications with synods and congregations**

397 In the exercise of interdependence, it is important for the Church Council to
398 interact with and provide mutual support to synods and congregations. Nothing in this
399 Governance Policy Manual should be interpreted to inhibit interdependence and mutual
400 support, but clarity is required with respect to “official” communications and the role of
401 individual Church Council members when interacting with synods and congregations.
402 Notification to synods and congregations of official ELCA policy is the responsibility
403 of the Presiding Bishop and/or Secretary, and care must be exercised in the interpretation
404 of that policy.
405

406 As indicated in the listing of their responsibilities, all Church Council members
407 are encouraged to serve as ambassadors of the Church Council and this church outside
408 of meetings. In this regard, if a Church Council member will speak at a synod event or
409 in a congregation of the synod as a representative of the Church Council, the synod
410 bishop should be notified in advance. In such situations, Church Council members
411 should clearly articulate when they are attending a meeting or speaking as a
412 representative of this church. If potential disputes or problematic issues are anticipated,
413 Church Council members are encouraged to confer in advance with the appropriate
414 executive in the Office of the Presiding Bishop and/or Office of the Secretary, as well as
415 with the synod bishop.
416

417 **5. Related Policies**

418
419 The CBCR identifies many policies of the churchwide organization for which the
420 Church Council has governance responsibility, and the Church Council has a fiduciary
421 responsibility for ensuring that these policies are up-to-date and that the churchwide
422 organization is faithfully implementing them. A number of other policies are necessary
423 for the Church Council to consider in the exercise of its fiduciary responsibility. These
424 include:

- 425 • Policies for the churchwide organization:
 - 426 ○ Personnel policies
 - 427 ○ Open meetings policy
- 428 • Policies called for in the CBCR:
 - 429 ○ Policies for addressing social concerns
 - 430 ○ Policies addressing standards for ministry
 - 431 ○ Policies addressing discipline

432
433 A more complete list of policies is included as an appendix to this manual.

434

435 **6. Review and amendment**

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At least triennially, provisions of this Church Council Governance Policy Manual shall be reviewed and amended, as necessary. Proposed amendments shall be reviewed by the Executive Committee in consultation with the Office of the Presiding Bishop and Office of the Secretary in advance of presentation for action to the Church Council. Any member of the Church Council, liaison bishop, or churchwide staff member may suggest amendments by submitting proposals to the Executive Committee. Amendments will be adopted by majority vote of the Church Council and become effective immediately upon adoption.

Draft

**AHGPC Items for Further Council Consideration
March 20, 2019**

Resources/Documents

- Review and revise orientation manual
- Include Robert's Rules charts with Manual

Agenda-building

- Time for agenda items
 - o Include target times in drafts to executive committee for consultation
 - o Be vigilant about time limits for informational pieces and presentation
 - List some specific times when want to set clearly
 - Time card
- When draft agendas are shared for possible feedback from council members, should include committee agenda items
- Build in time for in-depth discussion following CEO overview – attend to rhythm of CEO/board
 - o Connect CEO overview to Executive for Administration report
- Intentional board of directors' time/format to focus on BoD roles (e.g. strategic planning)
- Designated generative thinking time for 'deep-dive' conversations
 - o CWO admin brings at least one question for consultation
 - o Executive session set aside in the middle of the meeting
 - o Sensitive conversations ahead on the phone

Information-sharing, time outside of meetings and technology

- Utilize time before meetings and technology
 - o Information-based conference call in between meetings to keep up to date – standing conference call mid-point between meetings (non-legislative)
 - o Use pre-meeting technology to help Council members understand context/range of options for action before meeting
 - o Use pre-meeting informational calls to present detailed information on complex issues (e.g. Trustworthy Servants, foundation)
- Regular "packets" via email in between meetings
- Mechanism to call for special informational meetings in between meetings

Structure

- Size of council is an issue to work with, especially for certain topics/issues
- Committees: three kinds:
 - o Permanent: audit, BFC, legal, exec
 - o Standing/strategic: fundraising?
 - o Ad hoc

Other questions

- Do we need a group responsible for strategic vision and planning for whole church (vs. CWO, as Church Council does)?
- What role does JLT have and should it be formalized?

En Bloc Items

- I. Board Development Committee**
- II. Budget and Finance Committee**
 - A. Audit Committee Membership**

CC ACTION [EN BLOC]

Recommended:

To approve the appointment of Mr. Gary Hecht as an at-large member to the ELCA Audit Committee for a two-year, renewable term beginning May 2019; and

To approve the appointment of Ms. Ingrid Stafford as an at-large member to the ELCA Audit Committee for a two-year, renewable term beginning September 2019.

B. 2019 Mission Support Plan Revisions

The Church Council has responsibility for reviewing and acting on synod mission support plans as an interdependent partner with congregations and synods in implementing and strengthening the financial support for the work of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA Constitution, 8.15 and 10.71).

Since the November 2018 Church Council meeting, we have received revisions for 2019 Mission Support plans from thirteen synods. Eleven synods have requested to decrease the projected amount to be shared, two also requested a decrease in their percentage to be shared and two requested an increase in the projected dollar share.

CC ACTION [EN BLOC]

Recommended:

To acknowledge with appreciation the action of the following synods to maintain the percentage of sharing of 2019 Mission Support contributions by congregations for synod and churchwide ministries but estimating an adjustment in the projected amount to be shared:

Eastern North Dakota, East-Central Synod of Wisconsin, Northern Great Lakes, Pacifica synods;

To further affirm that we will steward these gifts to maximize their impact in mission for the sake of God's Work. Our Hands. in the world.

CC ACTION [EN BLOC]

Recommended:

As a grateful church that affirms the partnership of congregation, synod and churchwide expressions, we affirm the percentage of sharing of 2019 Mission Support by congregations for synod and churchwide ministries:

Eastern Washington/Idaho, Rocky Mountain, Western Iowa synods;

As a Church Council, we thank the bishops and synod leaders of every synod as they strive to be faithful to shared commitments within the ELCA and to direct synod and churchwide staff, including the directors for evangelical -mission, to deepen their partnership in efforts to strengthen financial support for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; and

**We will steward these gifts to maximize their impact in mission for the sake of God's Work.
Our Hands. in the world.**

C. 2020 Mission Support Plans

To date we have received 57 mission support plans for 2020. Compared to the prior year, eight synods are showing increased percentages, two decreased percentages and forty-five synods are maintaining current levels of percentage sharing. Two synods have chosen to report their synod intent based on dollar share and did not provide a percentage.

CC ACTION [EN BLOC]

Recommended:

As a grateful church that affirms the partnership of congregation, synod and churchwide expressions, we affirm the percentage of sharing or dollar amount of sharing of 2020 Mission Support by congregations for synod and churchwide ministries:

Alaska, Allegheny, Arkansas-Oklahoma, **Caribbean**, Central/Southern Illinois, Central States, Delaware-Maryland, Eastern North Dakota, Eastern Washington-Idaho, East-Central Synod of Wisconsin, Florida-Bahamas, Grand Canyon, Greater Milwaukee, Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast, **Indiana-Kentucky**, La Crosse Area, Lower Susquehanna, **Metropolitan Chicago**, Metropolitan Washington D.C., Metropolitan New York, Minneapolis Area, Montana, Northern Great Lakes, Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana, Northwest Washington, Northeastern Iowa, **Northeastern Ohio**, Northeastern Pennsylvania, Northeastern Minnesota, Nebraska, New England, New Jersey, North Carolina, Northern Illinois, Northwestern Ohio, Northwestern Pennsylvania, Northwestern Minnesota, Northwest Synod of Wisconsin, Oregon, Pacifica, Rocky Mountain, Southern Ohio, Southwestern Washington, Southwestern Texas, Southeastern Iowa, Southeastern Pennsylvania, Southeast Michigan, Southeastern Minnesota, Sierra-Pacific, Slovak Zion, South Carolina, South Dakota, **South-Central Synod of Wisconsin**, Southeastern, Saint Paul Area, Southwest California, Southwestern Pennsylvania, Southwestern Minnesota, Upper Susquehanna, Upstate New York, Virginia, Western North Dakota, West Virginia-Western Maryland, Western Iowa synods;

As a Church Council, we thank the bishops and synod leaders of every synod as they strive to be faithful to shared commitments within the ELCA and to direct synod and churchwide staff, including the directors for evangelical mission, to deepen their partnership in efforts to strengthen financial support for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; and

**We will steward these gifts to maximize their impact in mission for the sake of God's Work.
Our Hands. in the world.**

D. Revisions to Resolutions Regarding Authority to Act in Financial Matters

In April 2018, the Church Council adopted CC18.04.12e, regarding the Appointment of Assistant Officers. A revision is being proposed to update the appointments. The proposed revisions are as follows:

1. Appointment of Assistant Officers

CC ACTION [EN BLOC]

Recommended:

RESOLVED, that for the sole purpose of executing, when necessary, documents approved and authorized in accordance with actions of the Church Council, the following are hereby appointed as assistant vice presidents of this corporation: M. Wyvetta Bullock, Walter S. May, Kathryn M. Lohre, and Jodi L. Slattery, to serve until replaced or removed by subsequent appointments, with such subsequent appointments to be based upon the nomination and recommendation of the Presiding Bishop;

RESOLVED, that for the sole purpose of executing, when necessary, documents approved and authorized in accordance with actions of the Church Council, the following are hereby appointed as assistant treasurers of this corporation: Cecilia Favela, Christina Jackson-Skelton, ~~Christopher Carpenter~~, **Santiago Padilla**, and Annette Roman, to serve until replaced or removed by subsequent appointments, with such subsequent appointments to be based upon the nomination and recommendation of the Treasurer;

RESOLVED, that for the sole purpose of executing or attesting, when necessary, documents approved and authorized in accordance with actions of the Church Council, the following are hereby appointed as assistant secretaries of this corporation: Thomas A. Cunniff, Sue E. Rothmeyer, and Aja M. Favors to serve until replaced or removed by subsequent appointments, with such subsequent appointments to be based upon the nomination and recommendation of the Secretary.

RESOLVED, that prior resolutions adopted by this Council, including CC15.04.31b and the prior actions identified in CC15.04.31b, addressing the appointment of assistant officers are hereby rescinded and replaced by this action.

E. FY2018 Designation of Revenues Over Expenses

CC ACTION [EN BLOC]

Recommended:

To approve a Church Council Designated Fund in the amount of \$1,275,000 representing the remaining excess revenue over expenses from fiscal year 2018 (after satisfying previously approved designation) to be released to fund a portion of the projected budget shortfall in FY2020.

III. Executive Committee

A. Church Council Committee Chair Elections

The chairs of the Church Council's Budget and Finance, Legal and Constitutional Review, Planning and Evaluation and Program and Services committees serve on the council's Executive Committee. The Church Council terms of Mr. Clarence Smith, Mr. Jim Hushagen, Mr. Reid

Christopherson and Ms. Cynthia Gustavson, end at the conclusion of the 2019 Churchwide Assembly.

At their Spring 2019 meetings, the council's committees will elect new chairs to begin their terms on Aug. 10, 2019. The newly elected chairs will be invited to participate with voice, but not vote in the Executive Committee meetings from the time of their election to the Churchwide Assembly. This overlap will allow for a smoother transition of this committee and carry out the functions of the Executive Committee between the Churchwide Assembly in August 2019 and the first regular meeting of the newly constituted Church Council in November 2019. At large members to the Executive Committee will be elected at the November 2019 Church Council meeting.

CC ACTION [EN BLOC]

Recommended:

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 beginning at the close of the Churchwide Assembly on August 10, 2019.

IV. Legal and Constitutional Review Committee

A. Designation of Churchwide Organization Representatives at Synod Assemblies

In accordance with S7.23, the Church Council is to designate official representatives of this church who will have voice but not vote in the meetings of the Synod Assembly. Bishop Eaton has named the official representatives for the synod assemblies. The grid that identifies each representative to a respective synod assembly can be found [here](#).

CC ACTION [EN BLOC]

Recommended:

To designate the persons identified in the "Synod Assembly Info BY SYNOD" 2019 grid with voice but not vote in the meetings of the assigned Synod Assembly, including like privileges accorded to those additional persons whom the Synod Assembly or the Synod Council has designated.

B. 2019 Churchwide Assembly Rules of Organization and Procedure

In each triennium, the Church Council submits a recommendation to the Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America on proposed rules of organization and procedure. Voting members of the assembly act on the rules in the first plenary session. A two-thirds vote of the assembly is required for adoption of the rules.

The text of the proposed rules can be found [here](#). These rules have been developed and refined as a result of the experiences of the previous Churchwide Assemblies as well as the experience of predecessor church bodies.

CC ACTION [EN BLOC]

Recommended:

To recommend adoption of the following proposed action by the voting members of the 2019 Churchwide Assembly:

To adopt the "Rules of Organization and Procedure" for the 2019 Churchwide Assembly (exclusive of quoted and highlighted constitutional provisions and bylaws that are already in force).

CC ACTION [EN BLOC]

Recommended:

To authorize the presiding bishop and secretary of this church to prepare further editing and scheduling revisions that may be found necessary for the Rules prior to their publication in the *Pre-Assembly Report*; and

To report any changes to the Church Council at its August 2019 meeting.

C. Proposed amendments to the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*

Since the November 2018 Church Council meeting, additional amendments to certain bylaws and continuing resolutions have been identified for consideration at the Churchwide Assembly. The process for adopting bylaw amendments and continuing resolutions at a Churchwide Assembly is specified in Chapter 22 of the ELCA Constitution.

CC ACTION [EN BLOC]

Recommended:

To recommend the following for adoption by the 2019 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America:

To adopt, *en bloc*, the following amendments to the *Constitutions, Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*.

5.01.H19. *To implement 5.01.g., those deacons elected as layperson prior to the adoption of this provision may complete the term to which they were elected as a layperson. They would not be eligible for reelection as a layperson if such reelection were otherwise possible.*

8.31.03.d. completed at least one year of residency in a seminary of this church or of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, except when waived by the appropriate committee in consultation with the faculty of a seminary of this church or of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada;

e. been recommended for approval by the faculty of a seminary of this church or of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada **or have received the waiver described in 7.31.03.d.;**

S8.11. and S8.11.01. *(language to be determined)*

D. Synod Constitution Amendments

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

CC ACTION [EN BLOC]

Recommended:

To ratify the following amendments to the constitution of the North/West Lower Michigan Synod:

S7.33.01A19 Resolutions presented to the Reference and Resolution Committee for referral to the Synod Assembly for action shall be supported by at least 25 confirmed members of the North/West Lower Michigan Synod whose signatures appear on the resolutions as submitted.

CC ACTION [EN BLOC]

Recommended:

To ratify the following amendments to the constitution of the Upper Susquehanna Synod:

S7.21.e.A0718. The number of lay voting members to Synod Assembly from each congregation shall be based upon ~~average worship attendance~~ baptized membership as reported on the previous year’s parochial report. Congregations with an ~~average worship attendance~~ baptized membership of ~~1 through 150~~ up to 500 shall ~~be~~ be allowed 2 voting members; congregations with ~~an~~ average worship attendance baptized membership of ~~151~~501 through ~~300~~900 shall ~~be~~ be allowed 3 voting members and congregations with an ~~average worship attendance~~ baptized membership of ~~301~~901 and above shall ~~be~~ be allowed 4 voting members.

V. Planning and Evaluation Committee

A. Ethnic-Specific Ministry Strategic Plans

In November 2018, Planning and Evaluation Committee received a schedule of the original date of adoption by the Churchwide Assembly and the updated status for each plan. The [Asian and Pacific Islander](#) and [Latino Ministry](#) Strategies were both updated in 2016. The [African Descent](#) and [Arab and Middle Eastern Ministry](#) Strategies were finalized this spring. The American Indian and Alaska Native Strategic Plan remains relevant and can be found [here](#).

These strategic plans are in alignment with Goal 3 in Future Directions 2025 to be an inviting and welcoming church that reflects and embraces the diversity of our communities and the gifts and opportunities that diversity brings.

CC ACTION [EN BLOC]

Recommended:

To affirm the following ethnic-specific ministry strategic plans: Asian and Pacific Islander Ministry Strategy of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Latino Ministry Strategy of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, African Descent Ministry Strategy of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and Arab and Middle Eastern Ministry Strategy of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

VI. Program and Services Committee

A. Corporate Social Responsibility Roles and Responsibilities Chart

Church Council is responsible for reviewing this church's ongoing work in corporate social responsibility.

CC ACTION [EN BLOC]

Recommended:

To approve the amended Corporate Social Responsibility Roles and Responsibilities Chart.

B. Archival of a social message and certain social policy resolutions

In accordance with *Policies and Procedures of the ELCA for Addressing Social Concerns* (2018), the proposed archival of "[A Changing Europe: Peace and the Churches](#)" social message, along with the reasons for the proposed action, was reviewed by the Conference of Bishops and comes before the Church Council for action. A two-thirds vote of the Church Council is required to archive a social message.

Social policy resolutions serve as this church's policy directives until a) replaced by subsequent resolutions, b) rendered mute by subsequent social teaching documents, or c) sent to archive by a churchwide assembly. A review for relevance shall be initiated 25 years after adoption. Social policy resolutions are adopted in a particular social context, and this planned review of their continued relevance enables subsequent generations of church leaders to consider whether a resolution should continue to represent the policy of this church.

The director for theological ethics has compiled all resolutions that are now 25 years or older and recommended to be archived in the category of historical documents. For the past three months, this [compilation](#) has been shared with a variety of groups for review. The Conference of Bishops reviewed the list at its spring 2019 meeting and it comes before the Church Council at this meeting. All social policy resolutions recommended by the Church Council for archive shall be placed on the en bloc agenda of the 2019 Churchwide Assembly for final action. Only a majority vote is required.

CC ACTION [*EN BLOC – Two-thirds approval required*]

Recommended:

To archive “A Changing Europe: Peace and the Churches” social message (1990) to the category of historical documents, in accordance with the “Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns” (2018).

CC ACTION [*EN BLOC*]

Recommended:

To recommend adoption of the following proposed en bloc action by the voting members of the 2019 Churchwide Assembly:

To archive the social policy resolutions identified in the “2019 Archival of Certain Social Policy Resolutions” document, in accordance with the “Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns” (2018).

VII. Other Items

A. Church Council Nominations and Elections

The Church Council has the responsibility of electing people to fill terms on boards of Separately Incorporated Ministries (SIM), social ministry organizations, and seminaries. Bylaw 8.31.03. outlines basic parameters for the election of members to the boards of ELCA seminaries. Pursuant to 14.15. of the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, the Church Council is also to elect nominees to a vacancy on a board or committee of the churchwide organization.

Biographical information is provided in [Biographies](#).

CC ACTION [*EN BLOC*]

Recommended:

To elect to the board of trustees of the Publishing House of the ELCA — 1517 Media — to fill a vacancy with a term ending in August 2019: Ms. Linda J. Brown.

CC ACTION [*EN BLOC*]

Recommended:

To re-elect to the board of directors of The Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago for a three-year term expiring in 2022: The Rev. Gordon A. Braatz.

CC ACTION [*EN BLOC*]

Recommended:

To nominate to the advisory council of Luther Seminary for a four-year term expiring in 2023: Ms. Tracey Gibson, Mr. Dean Gruner, and Ms. Christina Lien.

CC ACTION [*EN BLOC*]

Recommended:

To elect to the board of directors of Wartburg Theological Seminary for a two-year term expiring in 2021: The Rev. Amsalu T. Geleta.

CC ACTION [*EN BLOC*]

Recommended:

To elect to the board of trustees of United Lutheran Seminary for a three-year term expiring in 2022: The Rev. L. Michael Rhyne.

Executive Summary from Task Force for Strategic Authentic Diversity

Since its inception, this church has wrestled with the challenge of becoming an authentically multiethnic, multicultural church. The vision and promised “**kindom**” and reign of God lie within us. The transformative power for being God’s change agent in society is intricately bound to our own transformation as God’s people.

For the task force participants who created this report, the conversations, prayers, and reflections that informed the work were deeply personal and, at times, extremely painful. In many ways these conversations, prayers, and reflections have modeled the struggle toward authenticity in ethnic diversity that is both a challenge and an opportunity for this church in all its expressions.

The report calls not for a brand-new strategic plan but for this church, in faith and with integrity, to “go deeper.” It seeks:

- **Theological Framing and Equipping** that more broadly reflect the wide ethnic diversity of who we are, have been, and are yet becoming. Our church must dig deeper into the history and emerging theology that ground, clarify, and justify our call and continuing commitment to ethnic diversity and inclusion.
- **Healing Action** to address the personal woundedness perpetuated by racism and racial prejudice. Deeper diagnosis of the collective, structural, and systemic nature of these sins will give us the opportunity for deeper prescriptive action toward healing.
- **Structural Accountability** to deepen the intentional focus of ELCA policies, governance, related structures, agencies, and organizations, so that they might serve the goals and initiatives of an authentically diverse church in society.
- **Theological Education and Leadership Development** that, drawing on the aforementioned theological framing, equip leadership for a “*metanoia movement*,” a change of hearts and minds about the violent

sin of racism and the value of diversity, equitable inclusivity, and racial justice.

- **Partnerships With Full Communion, Ecumenical and Interreligious Partners, and Related Organizations** that deepen our shared commitment and struggle toward authentic diversity and inclusion in our systems, structures, and organizations.

The task force has discerned a call to engage these opportunities more fully, deepening our work, our journey, and our joy as our church moves toward **Strategically Authentic Diversity**.

In the report’s final section, the task force lifts up **Recommendations** to be embodied in the life of the ELCA. A number of these are not new, but they warrant new attention, resources, and energy to be implemented.

The 2016 Churchwide Assembly adopted a resolution to create a task force composed entirely of persons of color from regions and synods across the country, so that the views and voices of this church so often unheard or unheeded might benefit the whole church. We have this ministry together.

The spirit and intent of the document are to help us transcend the paralysis of guilt and blaming and reach a shared accountability and honest relational engagement in the body of Christ.

Future Directions 2025 calls for a more equitable investment in the gifts and passions of people of color; those gifts are reflected in the vitality and leadership of the task force and this document.

Mindful of the marginalization that is evident throughout this church and society, the task force tried to be faithful to the work of naming and addressing with its recommendations, so that they might contribute to this church’s ongoing challenge to formulate its own goals and expectations for racial diversity and inclusion.

How Strategic and Authentic is Our Diversity; A Call for Confession, Reflection and Healing Action

Background Summary

At the 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly, voting members considered a proposal to delete from the ELCA constitution language directing that 10 percent of the members of its assemblies, councils, committees, boards, and other organizational units be people of color or whose primary language is other than English.¹ In response to the proposal, a resolution was presented to the assembly and adopted to create a Task Force for Strategic Authentic Diversity composed entirely of people of color (African Descent, American Indian and Alaska Native, Asian and Pacific Islander, Arab and Middle Eastern, Latino) and inclusive of immigrant and LGBTQIA+ identities.

This task force listened to stories from across the ELCA and, mindful of working constructively with white allies within the church, consulted with the European Descent Lutheran Association for Racial Justice (EDLARJ). Throughout its work, the task force learned that the commitment and work of developing strategies for Multicultural Ministries has been done and continues to be happening in the church, though not always in full view or with public accountability. Drawing upon the Multicultural Ministry Strategy document “A Strategy for Proclamation of the Gospel” (1991), the subsequent “Recommitment to a Strategy for Proclamation of the Gospel” (1997), and the recommendations of the 2016 Multicultural Summit, the task force believes the time has come for the ELCA to live even more intentionally into what God calls us to be together.

Sharing collective wisdom and reviewing historical documents, the task force has come to a consensus on the following statement and recommendations. This document

will offer the task force’s working definition of authentic diversity, provide a theological frame for the discussion, name the need for healing, address the question of structural accountability, examine our theological education and leadership development, and reflect upon our relationships with full communion, ecumenical, and interreligious partners and their related agencies. Finally, it will propose a set of recommendations in each of these areas.

Authentic Diversity

The manifold communities of the ELCA are called to exhibit *authentic diversity*—demographically matching the ethnic and racial composition of their respective contexts, as stated in the ELCA constitution (5.01.A16). They are likewise called to recognize that race and ethnicity intersect with other marginalizing traits (including gender, sexuality, and ability) and that people in these groups are also vulnerable.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is a predominantly white, middle-class church, most of whose members are of European descent. Intentional outreach efforts have increased the proportion of nonwhite members (African Descent, American Indian and Alaska Native, Asian and Pacific Islander, Arab and Middle Eastern, and Latino) from 2 percent to 7.3 percent.² Yet this proportional increase coincides with a membership decline in white communities and congregations. Despite the ELCA’s numerous multicultural efforts, there is still a lack of authentic diversity in all its expressions. Racism exists within the ELCA, boldly and outwardly as well as subtly and inwardly. White privilege is systemic and persistent. The problem calls for a radical, systemic change in accordance with the proclamation of the gospel. The ELCA

¹ 5.01.B87., *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, 2013 ed. (Chicago: ELCA, 2013), pg. 25.

² “Statistical Review of the Ethnic Specific Ministry Participation,” Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, February 2016.

How Strategic and Authentic is Our Diversity; A Call for Confession, Reflection and Healing Action

recognizes the perpetuation of racism still exists within the denomination despite personal good intentions. Yet, the systemic and structural ambiguity toward the elimination of racism continues.

In faithfulness to the biblical mandate to proclaim the gospel³ requires us to foster greater equity, fairness, and justice at all levels of the ELCA to ensure authentic diversity. The ELCA recognizes that such diversity is not reflected across all three expressions of this church. The dominant center of power and privilege still resides with people of European descent and their culture, while people of color and/or whose primary language is other than English remain at the margins, along with their cultures and identities. This problem is compounded by the cross-cutting issues of gender, sexuality, and ability. As a result, we have not been able to turn the ELCA into the just, inclusive, and authentically diverse community described in the priority area for action under goal one of Future Directions 2025, where the ELCA is called to “develop a deep and shared understanding of who we are as a Lutheran church and equip leaders and all the baptized to communicate our theology and beliefs in accessible and compelling ways.”⁴ We have failed to realize our vision of a church that welcomes all people regardless of race, background, status, ability, family situation, and numerous other identifiers.⁵ The ELCA continues to be the whitest denomination in the U.S.

In a country where 39 percent of the population are people of color, only structural and systemic reinforcement can account for the glaring whiteness of our church. Thus, the work of this task force is rooted not in charity or pity

but in resistance to tokenism and the nominal representation of cultures in ELCA structures. We work toward seeing a fuller glimpse of God’s image and the fullness of God’s creation. In addressing the need for authentic diversity within the ELCA, we strive for what the Holy Spirit created in the Pentecost moment: the fullness of God’s diversity and creativity existing simultaneously in space and time.

We condemn any form of discrimination or harassment based on color, gender, race, ethnicity, social or socio-economic status, sexual orientation, gender expression, or physical or intellectual (mental) ability. We propose a *metanoia* (a change of heart and mind) to dismantle structures of discrimination. We yearn to promote systemic and structural strategies to establish and ensure authentic diversity.

Theological Framework: Why Strategic Authentic Diversity? ⁶

In Mark 12:31, as part of the Great Commandment, Jesus tells the disciples, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Our baptismal covenant reminds us that “We will seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbors as ourselves, we will strive for justice and peace among all peoples and respect the dignity of every human being.”

Therefore, we seek authentic diversity not as an option but in obedience to the Great Commandment, in affirmation of our baptismal promise, in proclamation of the gospel, and toward the restoration of God’s beloved community from the brokenness we have created. The need for this authentic diversity, tied to incarnational identity and a Lutheran theological framework, is expressed in goal two of Future Directions 2025, which in part aims to

³ “Recommitment to a Strategy for Proclamation of the Gospel,” Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 1997.

⁴ “[Future Directions: Goal One](#),” Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

⁵ “Recommitment to a Strategy for Proclamation of the Gospel.”

⁶ In accordance with “Recommitment to a Strategy for Proclamation of the Gospel.”

How Strategic and Authentic is Our Diversity; A Call for Confession, Reflection and Healing Action

“form and equip the baptized to express their faith through their life and witness as followers of Jesus.”⁷ Part of this expression of faith is to acknowledge our identities as both saints and sinners when we address the realities of authentic diversity within the ELCA.

As proclaimed in our confessions, we have marred the body of Christ and the household of faith⁸ through what we have done and have left undone. The sin of racism, like all sin, causes brokenness, so no one should be surprised that this sinfulness is manifested in the ELCA. Racism—a mix of power, privilege, and prejudice—and other forms of oppression are sins, violating God’s intention for humanity. As Lutherans, we honor the value of calling a thing what it is, shining a light on evil to reveal it to the world. Since the inception of the ELCA, our aim has been to achieve a gospel vision of community. Though the church has developed strategies for multicultural ministry,⁹ named racism as sin,¹⁰ and even continues to affirm the importance of multiculturalism¹¹, we have fallen far short of affirming authentic diversity. Thus, the ELCA had committed and recommitted itself to “an ongoing comprehensive [multicultural] ministry.”¹² Healing together is our responsibility. Dismantling racism and building an inclusive community are things we must do together.

As Martin Luther counseled us, we can do no good works of our own accord. It is the Holy Spirit who empowers us to speak, listen, and act, as on the day of Pentecost. Article 20 of the Augsburg Confession states:

[I]t may be readily seen that this doctrine is not to be charged with prohibiting good works, but rather the more to be commended, because it shows how we are enabled to do good works.

This work of justice, peacemaking, and reconciliation is not only our call; we are equipped to perform it, as members, congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization. In this humbleness we can remember that Christ has given us the ministry of reconciliation¹³ and that we belong to each other.

If we remain silent, it may be as Mordecai told Esther:

God will bring healing, relief and deliverance to the world from another place. And, who knows? That you have come to your privileged position for such a time as this.¹⁴

As we address the theological framework for authentic diversity, we recount that we are a humanity enslaved to sin and falling short of the glory of God.¹⁵ We also recount that we are a church gathered in freedom and looking toward the freedom of God’s reign as announced and embodied by Jesus. Trusting the promise of

⁷ “[Future Directions: Goal Two](#),” Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

⁸ In Romans 12:4-5 and Ephesians 2:19, the apostle Paul gives us the image of the body of Christ and the household of God.

⁹ “A Strategy for Proclamation of the Gospel,” Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 1991.

¹⁰ “Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity and Culture,” Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 1993.

¹¹ Called Forward Together in Christ, 2015.

¹² “Recommitment to a Strategy for Proclamation of the Gospel.”

¹³ “All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:18).

¹⁴ Esther 4:14 (paraphrased).

¹⁵ Romans 3:23.

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freedom, we confess that each of us is held captive by sin.¹⁶ Because we are sinners as well as saints, we rebuild walls that were broken down by Christ, fall back into enslaving patterns of injustice, and betray the truth that sets us free. Because we are saints as well as sinners, we reach for the freedom that is ours in Christ.

The racial, ethnic, and cultural barriers erected by racism and other forms of oppression deny the truth that all people are created by God and, therefore, created in dignity. Racism and other forms of oppression fracture and fragment church and society. When we speak of racism and other forms of oppression as though they were only matters of personal attitude, we underestimate them. We have only begun to comprehend the complexity of the sin, which spreads like an infection through the entire social system. Racism and other forms of oppression infect and affect everyone, though their impact varies according to race, ethnicity, culture, and such additional factors as gender, sexuality, and ability.

As siblings in Christ, baptized into the priesthood of all believers, we must hold one another accountable in confession and repentance. Racism may affect each of us differently, but we must take responsibility for our participation, acknowledge our complicity, repent of our sin, move toward restoration, and pray to God for reconciliation.

Healing: Why Healing?¹⁷

The historical and contemporary reality of racism demonstrates that racism is violence, manifested in multiple ways to injure and harm individuals and the greater society. The church in society as an agency of the redemptive, restorative will, and reign of God, carries a

responsibility and an opportunity to be a primary facilitator of healing from the generational trauma of racism, internalized racial oppression, white supremacy, and racial injustice in contexts both foreign and domestic¹⁸.

The ELCA, as church in society, has been and is complicit in this racial hindering and harm—institutionally, systemically, and structurally. This hindering and harm must first be boldly named and identified as diminishing the life and vitality of the ELCA's congregations, synods, churchwide organization, and related agencies and institutions. As the ELCA was unable to reach a constitutional goal of 10 percent people of color/and or whose primary language is other than English by 1998, it was removed from the ELCA constitution in 2016. The removal was attempted en bloc (without discussion) but was brought to the floor of the 2016 Churchwide Assembly by concerned voting members who saw the placement of the 10 percent goal in an en bloc motion as an offense made to marginalized communities within the ELCA.

Our church must, with increasing intentionality, acknowledge and name the deep and pervasive wound of racism. Our church must boldly recognize and renounce the many forms of denial that contribute to the continuation of racist thought, action, policy, and practice. Our church must fully engage in a *metanoia* movement—a change of heart and mind—that will, in partnership with the gospel, generate redemptive recognition, restorative justice, and the conscious development of capacity for healing. Goal three of Future Directions 2025 aims to equip church members to “understand, speak out, and act against discrimination based on race, gender, disability,

oppression; gender, gender identities, sexuality, physical, and neurological difference, are only a few. These manifestations of diversity are of no less importance than the specific ethnic and cultural diversity named in this document.

¹⁶ 1 John 8.

¹⁷ How can we heal without honest and humble confession?

¹⁸ The Task Force acknowledges there are other varied ways in which individuals experience

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sexual orientation and social status.”¹⁹ If truly embodied and enacted, this can initiate a healing process within the ELCA.

Some synods, associations, and congregations within the ELCA have shown leadership by developing antiracism programs, training antiracism facilitators, and working to prioritize the dismantling of racism within their communities. Yet this should be the work of all entities within the ELCA, not just a few. This work must boldly reflect the historical and present lived experiences and stories of those affected by racism and racial oppression within the ELCA.

Structural Accountability

Within the myriad structures of the ELCA, people experience a diversity of faith journeys. Through these individualized experiences, people are called by God to accompany one another together in community. When transformed into Christ’s image, one joins a community of people who affirm the values of diversity, dignity, compassion, justice, and inclusion, and who summon the courage to change and to invest in beloved community. The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. defined beloved community as a “global vision in which all people can share in the wealth of all the earth.” This vision can be realized only by creating a climate of accountability that grows out of love, not guilt. The ELCA’s congregations, synods, colleges, universities, seminaries, and churchwide organization must become accountable in this journey of creating authentic diversity in observance of our baptismal promise. Working through the Holy Spirit, we are gathered and created to be a beloved community that includes all. This inclusivity is reflected in goal five of Future Directions 2025, especially through leadership in governance “to provide for clarity in roles and authority, strong

relationships and shared leadership and a culture of willing accountability.”²⁰

The task force is committed to a calling that the manifold communities of the ELCA exhibit *authentic diversity*—demographically matching the ethnic and racial diversity of their contexts, as stated in the ELCA constitution (5.01.A16.), while also understanding that racial and ethnic diversity intersects with other marginalized identities (including gender, sexuality, and ability) and recognizing their vulnerability. To accomplish this, the church must embody Christ’s mission through the lens of a *crucified* Jesus, who gathers all to himself in one family devoid of hierarchies and unhealthy power structures. This communal life mutually respects, nurtures, and embraces, with the certain hope that, though each member of the community remains unique, our fellowship will transcend age-old borders that hinder forward progression and God will be glorified.

Theological Education and Leadership Development

Theological education within the ELCA is highly Eurocentric and rooted in hierarchical colonial education practices. ELCA colleges, universities, and seminaries are overwhelmingly white communities of privilege at all levels of staff, faculty, students, and decision-making bodies. The curriculum of our seminary education makes room for other races and cultures only when they are palatable and serve as foils to a Eurocentric, predominantly white agenda. Our institution and churches pay minimal attention to social movements such as “Black Lives Matter.” Over the years, theological education within the ELCA has failed to equip Lutherans with an understanding of the gospel that can help dismantle racist practices and structure within our churches and institutions. The inadequacy of theological

¹⁹ “[Future Directions: Goal Three](#),” Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

²⁰ “[Future Directions: Goal Five](#),” Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

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education and leadership formation in our church should be addressed by engaging voices from the margins.

Without enforcing assimilation, colleges, universities, and seminaries must create equity and equitable opportunities to study theology, share in privilege and power, and serve the people of God. Students, faculty, and staff of color must be given equitable opportunities to participate in seminaries, congregations, and decision-making bodies at all levels of leadership, including boards, presidencies, permanent chairs, etc. This must be modeled by this church's leadership, starting at the churchwide organization.

Specifically, within leadership formation, seminaries must create spaces and resources for people of color to engage in higher education. Programs, such as Theological Education for Emerging Ministries (TEEM) and lay mission schools, need to be promoted to recognize the leadership and gifts that people of color bring to make the ELCA a truly diverse church. Discernment and candidacy for ministry must be systems of support and not processes of inhibition and intimidation, especially for people of color.

We need theological education and leadership formation that affirms our freedom to embrace and uphold the gospel mandate. This mandate is biblically rooted and centers on the life, ministry, crucifixion, and resurrection of Christ. Instead, the values upheld by ELCA colleges and seminaries have been predominantly those of the status quo, reinforcing a colonial, Eurocentric model of education and leadership.

We need theological education and leadership formation that is life-giving, transforming, and transcending. It must also be honest, impartial, and inclusive. With education and leadership focused primarily on western and

Eurocentric voices, the stories of those who do not fit such a model are excluded from the greater narrative of the gospel. This is a denial of identity and existence. Theological education and leadership must endorse not a single, controlling narrative but a collection of stories and experiences that bring wholeness to the body of Christ as represented in God's creation. Goal three of Future Directions 2025 must be made manifest in theological education and leadership cultivation, particularly in building "confidence and competence among lay leaders and rostered ministers to provide an authentic welcome to people from different cultures and circumstances and embrace the ideas and experience they bring."²¹ When we know and embrace one another's complete story within God's created world, we have a greater ability to share honestly, to be impartial, and to live into inclusivity and authentic diversity.

We need theological education and leadership formation that honors and embraces the covenant of being "reconciled in Christ." We need a new hermeneutic in speaking of reconciliation with one another, focused on a crucified and resurrected Christ. We must also recognize that reconciliation is not a singular event but a process that must be fostered, cultivated, and developed over time to pass on to future generations.

Finally, we need theological education and leadership formation that practices cultural humility while also engaging the power of the gospel. There is no single cultural context in which the gospel exclusively resides or is better comprehended. Both the gospel and our various cultures are important to the church of which we are a part.

Partnerships With Full Communion, Ecumenical, and Interreligious Partners, and With Related Organizations

²¹ "[Future Directions: Goal Three](#)," Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

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Given the changes happening around the world, many denominations, institutions, and organizations have been reexamining their traditional postures toward justice and discrimination. Social change cannot be stopped, so the church must embody the gospel of Jesus Christ and not fear change.

The time has come to embody what we believe and preach, yet never forgetting the lessons learned of past inaction and indifference that have lasting generational impacts. Past inactions and stances of indifference include adhering to the doctrine of discovery, slavery, and the accumulation of wealth at the expense of marginalized communities. The church must renew its commitment to the fullness of authentic diversity represented in God's creation within denominations, institutions, and organizations. We must seek, ask, and understand the stories of those impacted by inaction and indifference. We must recognize what divides us, what continues to hurt the fullness of God's creation, and begin a communal process that will embody compassion and understanding.

We recognize that many of the ELCA's full communion partners struggle with similar histories of inaction and indifference. Many of these partners have recognized and are learning from their past actions, especially concerning authentic diversity. Some denominations and institutions have moved faster than others, yet all have recognized that justice work and partnerships cannot survive in a vacuum. There is a common belief that, to strive for and embody justice, we must commit to working together. This commitment must be made active and tangible through allocation of resources, including people and money. Investing in

partnerships with other denominations, institutions, and organizations can prompt a congregation to reassess its views²² and can create new opportunities to develop training and educational material for youth and children.²³

The ELCA is not alone in working toward authentic diversity. We must take advantage of the work already completed and lessons already learned from our ecumenical partners and related organizations. We have the unique opportunity to share not only resources but also the burden of labor. We must consult and learn from different organizations within the ELCA—such as Women of the ELCA—that have been deeply invested in addressing discrimination and racial justice for some time. This need for partnership is reflected in goals one and four of Future Directions 2025, recognizing the need for dialogue and coordinated action with ecumenical partners and related organizations to embody the church we desire to be.

We must ask ourselves how the ELCA has not only allowed but also perpetuated a culture of division that has kept us from an authentic diversity. In seeking answers, we must discern with our full communion partners and related organizations what it means to embody the vision of a beloved community. As siblings in the gospel, we must be invested in this work together, so that we might not only learn from one another but also work together to bring about the fullness of God's reign. This involves learning lessons from years past, reassessing and recalibrating our work,²⁴ beginning a process of healing, and committing to embody change from within ourselves and our institutions.

²² [“Welcoming Diversity: An Inventory for Congregations,”](#) Partners for a Racism-Free Community, www.prfc-gr.org.

²³ [“AntiRacism/Diversity – Required Training - Sept 29,”](#) United Church of Christ.

²⁴ “A Strategy for Proclamation of the Gospel” and “Recommitment to a Strategy for Proclamation of the Gospel.”

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Recommendations

The task force has developed recommended responses to be embodied within the ELCA. Some of these recommendations are currently being implemented, whereas others will require a thoughtful, communal, and embodied response that can move us to better comprehend and incarnate authentic diversity within the expressions of the ELCA.

Recommendations for Healing

1. Awareness

- The three expressions of the ELCA should host learning opportunities for a deeper understanding of the systemic and root causes of historical and contemporary racism and internalized racial oppression. The task force recommends developing liturgical and teaching resources related to our baptismal covenant, with the need of confession as part of the awareness of naming and addressing racism within the ELCA.
- The three expressions of the ELCA should encourage individuals to report instances of oppression, exclusion, etc. to a designated person outside their system who will document and facilitate resolution.

2. Reflections

- Those participating in the provided learning opportunities should write reflection papers, blogs, social media posts, etc. on insights gleaned from those sessions, and should share their work within congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization.

3. Training

- ELCA synods, seminaries, colleges, and universities should require their staff and rostered ministers to participate in antiracism training every two to three years, and that training should be reported in the Ministry Leader Profile

and annual reporting. This type of training is reflected in the 2016 Churchwide Assembly resolution on Racial Justice (CA16.05.22).

- Synods should help their congregations seek training on white privilege, internalized racial oppression, and cultural humility. This training should intersect with issues of gender, sexuality, class, ability, naturalization status, etc. in a way that is holistic, comprehensive and mutual.
 - Work in affinity groups, caucus groups, etc.
 - Empowerment through an educational process.
 - Support for gatherings such as Multicultural Summit.
- The Office of the Presiding Bishop should develop a theological statement on deconstructing whiteness, white privilege, and white supremacy.
 - Synods should be strongly urged to include the statement in any antiracism training provided to rostered leaders.
 - The Office of the Presiding Bishop should develop educational and worship resources that support the statement, for use by synods, congregations, and antiracism teams.
 - The churchwide organization should incentivize training and teaching of the statement by linking a specified percentage of its financial support for Lutheran institutions of higher learning to the development and implementation of curricula that encompass the statement.

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Recommendations for Structural Accountability

1. The churchwide organization should develop an assessment process, to be utilized across all three expressions of the ELCA, that records, maps, and evaluates the efforts of diversity initiatives. Planning, Research and Evaluation, in partnership with appropriate churchwide staff and stakeholders, should create a Synod Accountability Report Card Toward Authentic Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; synod bishops and directors for evangelical mission (DEMs) should be responsible for providing data for this report card,²⁵ with the ultimate goal of an audit system across all three expressions of the ELCA.

2. Synods and the churchwide organization should designate resources (for example, grants or the creation of specific funds) to incentivize multicultural educational events and antiracist leadership development for all leaders, both rostered and lay. This work should be done in alignment or conjunction with the vision for mission of Congregational Vitality.²⁶

3. Because congregations of color are closing at a higher rate than white congregations, a racial equity assessment process should be initiated to determine the reinvestment of resources whenever any congregation is in conversation for closure.

- The Office of the Presiding Bishop should create an office(r) for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. The primary functions of this office should be (a) to

equip and support leaders at all levels of the church to understand, speak out about, and act against discrimination based on race, gender, ability, sexual orientation, or social status, and (b) to receive reports of harassment and discrimination and to investigate such claims, working in conjunction with functioning areas such as marketing, legal counsel, and human resources. This office should also assess the organization's current representation and recruitment of people of color, people whose primary language is other than English, and other protected classes.

4. The Office of the Presiding Bishop and Conference of Bishops should incorporate mandatory diversity training into its orientation of new bishops. Every current and established bishop should be assigned a diversity and inclusion coach.
5. Synods and the Domestic Mission unit should develop resources/funding for alternative communities. It should also:

- Assess and develop new measures of evaluation and benchmarks for ministries that do not follow traditional congregational models.
- Increase representation of people of color and/or people whose primary language is other than English at synodical tables—including but not limited to the Vitality table, Stewardship Mission Support table, and Strategic Thinking table—to adapt strategies for

²⁵ Gap Analysis from 1997 Recommitment assessment to today; Designate funding to Provide Intercultural competency program & work for congregations doing multicultural ministry or wanting to do it ([assessment](#), [tools for preparation](#), resources for development of readiness)

²⁶ "[Future Directions: Congregational Vitality](#)," Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

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- creating and cultivating authentically diverse leadership.
6. Synods should encourage all congregations to learn about their communities and neighborhoods, and to develop and implement outreach plans geared toward increasing authentic diversity representative of race, ethnicity, gender, age, socioeconomic class, and ability. The Domestic Mission unit should develop tools to aid congregations in this work.
 7. The churchwide organization should strongly encourage, appropriately prepare and incentivize synods and predominately white congregations to call rostered ministers of color, particularly women of color.
 8. The churchwide organization should ask synods to monitor the duration of the call process for people of color, particularly women of color. The average duration of the call process for white males should serve as a benchmark, and people of color still waiting for call after that amount of time has passed should receive priority.
 9. The churchwide organization in partnership with synods should determine the extent to which all white or predominantly white congregations are implementing goal three of Future Directions 2025 and the extent to which they are engaged in outreach to people of color in their geographic location or beyond.
 10. Synods and the churchwide organization should incentivize white or predominantly white congregations to call people from marginalized communities by linking such activity to a specified percentage of the financial support the congregation receives.
 11. The Mission Advancement unit, in conjunction with the Ethnic Specific Ministries, Racial Justice, and Multicultural desks, should develop a communications strategy to highlight the ELCA's efforts toward strategic authentic diversity. This should include alerting mainstream media to the ELCA's shifts in investment toward greater diversity and presenting our written and spoken history in a way that shows the true full diversity within the historical bodies of the ELCA.
 12. The Church Council should further empower this task force or create another external body to track this work, support the staff desk responsible for it, and assess:
 - whether the churchwide organization should create intentional relationships between the areas doing this work;
 - whether the reporting and auditing process requires volunteer support; and
 - whether intentional full accountability for the work of strategic authentic diversity satisfies goal five of Future Directions 2025.

Recommendations for Theological Education and Leadership

1. The boards of ELCA colleges, universities, and seminaries should be authentically diverse and should focus on stakeholder engagement to ensure such diversity.
2. The staff of ELCA colleges, universities, and seminaries should be authentically diverse, with professors, pastors, field education directors, and supervisors for internship and ministry in context who are people of color or LGBTQIA+ people of color, or who have shown the cultural competency to engage with communities of color and their many facets.

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3. ELCA colleges, universities, and seminaries should be multicultural centers offering space/safety, educational resources, and policy changes that address the specific needs of people of color in all their facets.
 - Encourage pathways to leadership for people of color and people whose primary language is other than English, including church council boards, boards of Lutheran organizations, employment within the ELCA, and access to ELCA colleges, universities, and seminaries.
4. In consultation with the Theological Education Advisory Committee, synods and churchwide organization should develop a comprehensive multicultural curriculum that integrates the concept of cultural humility. This curriculum should be part and parcel of the full requirements for being rostered in the ELCA.
5. Supervisors for internship and ministry in context and contextual education directors should participate in antiracism training that includes all systemic oppressions and stresses a cultural humility representative of strategic authentic diversity.
6. The churchwide organization should recommit monies from the Fund for Leaders capital campaign to the Educational Grant Program to ensure that such grants are intentionally and appropriately distributed to the communities of color for which they are intended. Specifically, it should:
 - Develop a plan in partnership with ethnic-specific directors and associations to welcome the gifts, skills, and bodies of work of theologians and lay leaders from marginalized communities, and to promote and distribute the opportunities for learning from the work of theologians, teachers and leaders from marginalized communities.
 - Provide funding for mentorships between lay and rostered leaders of color and those interested in and exploring opportunities within lay and rostered ministry.
7. ELCA colleges, universities, and seminaries should require a percentage of faculty to be representative of strategic authentic diversity.
8. The churchwide organization should create a database of rostered and lay leaders of color to create an effective networking platform.
9. Synods and the churchwide organization should invest in lay leadership schools and lay formation that is culturally responsive.
10. ELCA seminaries should provide guidance on incorporating cultural competency into the Hein-Fry Book of Faith Challenge and expanding its panels to be more representative of strategic authentic diversity.
11. The churchwide organization should strategically disburse Fund for Leaders scholarships to enhance the capacity of people of color who are TEEM candidates, non-English speakers, part-time students, or seminary students. It should provide communities of color with opportunities for student leadership and reinstate the Horizon Internship Program so that students of color can train in their own communities.
12. Synods and the churchwide organization should institute annual leadership schools of governance that give people of color and persons impacted by poverty—particularly young adults from a diverse range of communities—the opportunity to both learn

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and affect governance, polity, structure, and practice of the ELCA's three expressions.

13. The churchwide organization should create a pathway for lay congregational leaders of color to pursue greater leadership opportunities within their congregations and synods.
14. The churchwide organization should incentivize Lutheran institutions of higher learning to hire faculty, deans, and/or presidents from marginalized communities by linking such hires to a specified percentage of the financial support provided to those institutions.

Recommendations for Partnerships With Full Communion, Ecumenical, and Interreligious Partners and Related Organizations

1. Working in alignment with Congregational Vitality, synods and the churchwide organization should establish grants for congregations and synods to fund work that focuses on strategic authentic diversity.
2. The ELCA should intentionally partner with The Episcopal Church (TEC) and other full communion, ecumenical and interreligious partners on justice, antiracism, and reparations, while also sharing resources and the burden of labor to broaden such work and relationships.
3. The Office of the Presiding Bishop and the Domestic Mission unit should review the racial audit processes of our full communion, ecumenical, and interreligious partners for the purpose of developing a similar audit within the ELCA.
4. Increase the level of intentional engagement with historically ethnic-specific religious communities, which includes through Churchwide Assembly memorials, and should establish relationships with historically black denominations.
5. The churchwide organization, synods and other appropriate ELCA agencies should work with full communion, ecumenical, and interreligious partners to address and name historical and current oppressions and to tell the truth about denominational, congregational, and organizational wealth. This includes learning the racial history of our religious partners, with areas of study including but not limited to:
 - Kristallnacht,
 - the massacre of the Mennonite,
 - actions to/with the African-descent community,
 - Salzburgers,
 - communities whose paraments, etc., were purchased by the Ku Klux Klan,
 - repudiation of the doctrine of discovery, and
 - the legacy of slavery.
6. Congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization should research the titled curricula of full communion, ecumenical, and interreligious partners, utilizing and adapting educational materials for youth and children. This research should also include material from partners' publishing houses that have an ecumenical department. Because this is a common effort, the churchwide organization may need to incentivize congregations and synods by establishing grants to fund this work.
7. The churchwide organization should work with the National Council of Churches, the Lutheran World Federation Communion Office, and the ELCA's synod partners to address the goal of strategic authentic diversity.

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8. The churchwide organization should honor the work of our related agencies through board development, engagement, and utilization of already existing curricula.
9. Churchwide organization monitor authentic diversity in representation on boards of ELCA Related Organizations.
10. The churchwide organization should intentionally engage directors for evangelical mission and roundtables to increase diversity among senior pastors, executives at Lutheran social service organizations, CEOs, and other leadership positions within related organizations.

1 A social statement...

2 **Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Lutheran Call to Action**

3 This social statement comes in two versions. The short version conveys the statement's essence in
4 40 articles, containing the entire scope of convictions and commitments.¹ The full statement consists of
5 those same 40 articles but with a preface, conclusion, and an explanation for each, allowing readers to go
6 deeper into an article's meaning. These two formats serve different needs, yet both were crafted in the
7 hope that the Holy Spirit will move readers into fruitful understanding, commitment, and action.

8 Several supplemental resources are available to aid readers with this statement, including a user's
9 guide that provides an index, contemporary examples, and additional reference material. All supplemental
10 resources are available on the statement's web page, www.ELCA.org/socialstatements.

11 This document concludes with a glossary for select terms. When any such term first appears in
12 the short or full statement, it is noted with **boldface** type.

13

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¹ The short statement, with preface, conclusion, and glossary, is also available separately, both online and in print. Visit www.elca.org/socialstatements.

Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Lutheran Call to Action

Short Statement

I. Fundamental Teaching: God desires abundant life for all.

- 1) We of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America believe God's intention revealed through the Scriptures is that all people have life abundantly and flourish.
- 2) We believe all people are created equally in the image of God. Every individual is dependent upon God, and all share in the God-given vocation to contribute their gifts to help all of creation flourish. Being in the image of the triune God means that we humans are relational, that we are interconnected. Just as we interact with God, we are social creatures relating with each other and all of creation.
- 3) Despite God's intention for creation, humans exist in a state of sin. Because we fail to trust God as we should, we are alienated from God, from other people, and from creation itself. Not only individually, but also collectively, we live out this alienation through disobedience to God, pride, complacency, self-abasement, and acts against others, all of which limit the abundant life God intends.
- 4) We believe that we are healed and redeemed from this alienation. That is, Lutherans confess that we are justified by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ, no matter what we have done or left undone. This promise means we are freed from bondage to the people and things we trust and love more than God or the ways we try to justify ourselves, sometimes at the expense of others. God's grace frees us and empowers us to love others as God loves all of creation.
- 5) As Lutheran Christians, our focus on Jesus Christ affects how this church understands **justice**. Because we are freed in Christ for others, we are able to respond to God's call to love our neighbor as ourselves. In society, neighbor love takes the form of **neighbor justice**.
- 6) This focus on Jesus Christ also affects how we understand the Scriptures. While the Scriptures speak both Law and Gospel, Martin Luther emphasized that the Scriptures should be read by paying attention to what proclaims Christ—what carries the Gospel message of God's grace and mercy to all people.
- 7) As Lutheran Christians, we recognize human reason and knowledge as gifts from God to be used for the common good. While the scriptural call to neighbor justice is clear, human reason and knowledge are essential to discern the specific forms, policies, and structures that best enable us to enact justice in particular contexts. Recognizing that the gifts of reason and knowledge are given to people of all religions and worldviews, Christians are freed to work together with them for the common good.

82 8) We believe that the Church is called to live as the body of Christ in the world even while
83 we struggle with the realities of sin. As Lutherans, we recognize that acting justly within family,
84 church, and society for the common good is central to the vocation to which God calls all people.

85

86

II. Analysis of the Problem:

87

Sin subverts human flourishing in many ways.

88

89 9) Though God desires fullness of life and **equity** for everyone, as a church we recognize
90 that women and girls in particular suffer a range of harm and injustice due to **sex** (biological),
91 **gender**, or both. In addition to sex and gender, the experiences of individuals and groups are
92 shaped and complicated by intersecting factors. These include race, ethnicity, national origin,
93 nationality, immigration status, **sexuality**, marital status, economic means, age, ability, embodied
94 experiences, and education. This reality is known as **intersectionality**.² This statement's
95 references to women and girls are intended to be inclusive of all people who identify as women
96 or girls in the diversity of their individual and communal identities and expressions.

97

98 10) The experiences of women and girls from a variety of backgrounds, both in the past and
99 in the present moment, reveal that they have often been restricted in realizing abundant life on
100 the basis of sex (biological) or gender.

101

102 11) The far-reaching harm experienced by women and girls is rooted in a pattern of power,
103 **privilege**, and prejudice, the key elements in any social system of oppression. This is the basis of
104 the ELCA's understanding of racism.³ When power, privilege, and prejudice are associated with
105 sex, gender, and sexuality, sociologists use the terms **patriarchy** and **sexism**.⁴

106

107 Patriarchy is a social system dominated by men, identified with men, and centered on
108 men's actions, voices, and authority. Patriarchy does not mean that males are bad, and females
109 are good, or that only males support this unfair system. However, in patriarchal systems, men are
110 typically viewed as superior to women, are given more power than women, and have more
111 authority than women. A patriarchal worldview and way of life grants male privilege. Sexism is
112 the reinforcement of male privilege, which leads to discrimination. It promotes the silencing,
113 controlling, and devaluing of women, girls, and people whose gender expression is different
114 from the conventional expressions of masculinity and femininity.

114

115 Because people live within social and religious systems, everyone knowingly or
116 unknowingly participates in this patriarchal system. Although patriarchy and sexism affect
117 different people in different ways, as individuals we are socialized to conform to these patterns
118 of power, privilege, and prejudice. This makes us complicit in maintaining social systems of
119 oppression.

119

² Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum* (1989): 139-167.

³ *Freed in Christ: Race Ethnicity and Culture* (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 1995): 4, www.ELCA.org/socialstatements.

⁴ See Allan G. Johnson, *The Gender Knot: Unraveling Our Patriarchal Past*, 3rd ed. (Philadelphia: University Press, 2014).

120 12) Although men and boys often benefit from this social system, patriarchal structures and
121 values also harm men and boys, including gay and **transgender** men. They are harmed when
122 they are pressured to conform to narrow gender stereotypes or are unable to live out a false ideal
123 of male superiority and control. People of all genders who do not conform to gender-based roles
124 and stereotypes often are not seen or valued; sometimes they are violently oppressed and even
125 killed. Men of all racial and ethnic minorities in North America may experience patriarchy and
126 sexism particularly intertwined with white privilege. The message of white-identified patriarchy
127 and sexism is that men and boys of color are not fully men and boys.

128
129 13) Some social and religious beliefs compound patriarchy. Most instances of gender-based
130 harm are connected to commonly held beliefs and customs. For example, ideas that people are
131 created into a **hierarchy** based on sex—being only male or female—reinforce and sometimes
132 lead to gender-based injustice.

133
134 14) The ELCA celebrates that humans are relational beings and that we live in social
135 systems. Positive, equitable social systems can lead to joy and gladness. However, social systems
136 can also have negative consequences.

137 Even though individuals make choices within social systems, those systems are more
138 powerful than any individual, government, culture, or religious community. Beliefs and customs
139 are reflected in laws, policies, and practices within both secular and religious institutions, which
140 makes them so systemic that they are difficult to identify and dismantle.

141 This church's commitment to neighbor justice compels us to expose how patriarchy and
142 sexism are woven into individual, social, and religious life, causing harm to all people and even
143 to all of creation.

144
145 15) As Christians, we see that patriarchy and sexism prevent all human beings from living
146 into the abundant life for which God created them. Patriarchy and sexism reflect a lack of trust in
147 God and result in harm and broken relationships. Just as this church has identified racism as sin,
148 this church identifies patriarchy and sexism as sin. We confess that, as God's people forgiven in
149 Jesus Christ, we are simultaneously liberated and sinful. We are broken, yet we are made new by
150 grace through faith. This good news is true even as we participate in cultures and societies that
151 are broadly patriarchal and sexist.

152
153 **III. The Christian Tradition:**
154 **It is both challenge and resource.**

155
156 16) In faith, this church confesses that Christianity has been complicit in the sin of patriarchy
157 and sexism through certain beliefs, practices, and aspects of its history. At the same time, we
158 believe God provides resources within the Christian faith and the Lutheran tradition to challenge
159 the harmful beliefs and effects of patriarchy and sexism and to bring forth new ways of living.

160
161 17) The ELCA teaches that God's Word of Law and Gospel speaks through the Scriptures.
162 We also recognize that there are words and images, social patterns, and moral beliefs in the
163 Scriptures that reflect values rooted in what today we call patriarchy and sexism. Some aspects
164 of the Scriptures reflect the cultures and societies in which they arose. Their continued misuse

165 contributes to maintaining hierarchies and patterns of inequity and harm. A Lutheran reading of
 166 the Scriptures through Christ, focused on the devotional, historical, literary, and theological
 167 aspects of texts, frees us from the harm of taking all the Scriptures only literally.

168

169 18) The Christian theological tradition is full of ideas and teaching that can negatively or
 170 positively affect people. In particular, some doctrines affect our understanding of humanity and
 171 God more than others. Teachings about the cross and suffering, the image of God, the
 172 incarnation, the body of Christ, and the Trinity have sometimes been misused to support
 173 patriarchal beliefs, attitudes, church practices, behaviors, and structures. These teachings affect
 174 our use of language and our understandings of humanity and Christian ministry. At the same
 175 time, these doctrines can be liberating resources for healing the effects of the sins of patriarchy
 176 and sexism.

177

178 19) The central Lutheran belief that we are justified by grace through faith empowers this
 179 church to challenge patriarchy and sexism, which devalue people according to sinful human
 180 standards.

181

182 20) The Lutheran understanding of the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion, in
 183 which the Word of God is connected with tangible, physical elements, grounds efforts to prevent
 184 the harm that sexism and patriarchy cause to the bodies, minds, and spirits of human beings.

185

186 21) The ELCA has identified sufficiency, sustainability, solidarity, and participation as the
 187 key principles for creating and supporting justice.⁵ This church commends these principles to
 188 create and support neighbor justice, specifically **gender justice** for the neighbor. Social and
 189 religious structures and institutions—including ideas, beliefs, religious teachings, laws, policies,
 190 practices, and language—must be assessed and should be guided by these principles.

191

192 22) The ELCA recognizes that some progress has been made to address patriarchy and
 193 sexism and to reduce their effects; however, more effort is required. We believe that this church,
 194 together with many other partners, can identify and challenge the complexities of patriarchy and
 195 sexism and advance equity. Gender-based equity happens through beliefs and ideas that are
 196 gender just and through laws, policies, and practices that support an equitable common good—
 197 abundant life for all.

198

199

IV. Response:

The ELCA is called to new commitments and action as a church.

200

201
 202 23) Propelled by these theological convictions and the robust resources of the Lutheran
 203 heritage, this church responds to God's call to justice with the following commitments to
 204 promote and support action toward a more equitable life together in Christ.

205

⁵ These principles are evident throughout ELCA social teaching and policy. Examples include the social statements *Caring for Creation*; *Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All*; and *Genetics, Faith and Responsibility*. Visit www.ELCA.org/socialstatements.

206 24) This church recognizes that the Body of Christ is called to honor and support women and
207 girls from a variety of backgrounds, identities, and personal experiences in ways more consistent
208 with life-giving theology and faith practices. As a church, we commit ourselves to celebrating
209 and affirming the gifts and insights that women and girls bring to every expression and
210 dimension of this church.

211

212 *The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America specifically commits to:*

213

214 25) Promote the practice and use of scriptural translation and interpretation that acknowledge
215 the contexts in which the Scriptures were written and reject the misuse of Scripture that has
216 supported sexist attitudes and patriarchal structures.

217

218 26) Promote theological reflection that responds to the gender-based needs of the neighbor.
219 Teachers and theologians need to be honest about how church teachings have been misused to
220 support patriarchy and sexism. More importantly, this church calls upon its teachers and
221 theologians to work toward worthier expressions of the historic faith that honor God's desire for
222 all people to thrive.

223

224 27) Use **inclusive language** (all genders) for humankind and inclusive and **expansive**
225 **language** (other than human) for God. This church is committed to the deepest Christian
226 understanding of the Trinity revealed through Jesus Christ and to the importance of imagining
227 and speaking about God in faithful ways that expand rather than limit the expression of God's
228 self-revelation and mystery. In particular, we support developing liturgies, hymns, prayers, and
229 educational materials that broaden use beyond predominantly masculine language. This practice
230 follows the scriptural witness that God transcends human categories. Therefore, as in the
231 Scriptures, metaphors for and images of God should be drawn frequently from the lives of people
232 of all identities and experiences and gleaned from nature in all its diversity. Employing inclusive
233 and expansive language for and images of God helps human beings approach and encounter the
234 God of beauty and love who reveals God's self to humanity in rich and mysterious ways.

235

236 28) Develop and support more extensive policies and practices within the ELCA that
237 promote equitable authority and leadership within this church in all its expressions. In many
238 instances this requires promoting the leadership of women, with special concern for women of
239 color. In other cases, this means promoting the participation of men in more varied roles,
240 including those traditionally seen as "women's work."

241

242 29) Promote changes that are economically just, including equitable pay and benefits, for
243 women in all ELCA institutions and organizations, with special attention to the situations of
244 people affected by intersecting forms of discrimination.

245

246 30) Seek and encourage faithful dialogue, discernment, and, when possible, joint action on
247 issues of patriarchy and sexism with other members of the body of Christ and with partners of
248 other religions and worldviews. As a member of a global communion, the ELCA affirms the
249 Lutheran World Federation's "Gender Justice Policy."

250 (https://www.lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/DTPW-WICAS_Gender_Justice.pdf)

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V. Response:

The ELCA calls for action and new commitments in society.

31) This church teaches that the God who justifies expects all people to seek justice in earthly relationships, structures, and systems. The ELCA calls for sustained and renewed efforts through which women, girls, and **gender non-conforming** people experience greater equity and justice. The following commitments express this church’s firm hope for renewed social relationships and structures that benefit the common good.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America commits itself to:

32) Advocate for and support laws, policies, and practices that respect diverse bodies rather than discriminating against, objectifying, or devaluing them. Women, girls and people who identify as **non-binary** must not be deprived of their human or civil rights. (See the ELCA’s social message “Human Rights,” www.ELCA.org/socialmessages.)

33) Advocate for and support the eradication of **gender-based violence** within the church and more broadly in society by addressing both the systemic aspects of such violence and the personal responsibility of those who perpetrate harm. (See the ELCA’s social messages “Gender-based Violence” and “Commercial Sexual Exploitation,” www.ELCA.org/socialmessages.)

34) Advocate for and support medical research, health care delivery, and access to equitable and affordable health care services, including **reproductive health care**, that honor how bodies differ and eliminate discrimination due to sex (biological), gender, or sexual orientation. (See the ELCA social statements *Caring for Health: Our Shared Endeavor* and *Abortion*, www.ELCA.org/socialstatements.)

35) Advocate for and support economic policies, regulations, and practices that enhance equity and **equality** for women and girls, with special concern for raising up women and girls who experience intersecting forms of oppression. (See the ELCA’s social statement *Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All*, www.ELCA.org/socialstatements.)

36) Advocate for and support multifaceted understandings of social and economic roles so that neither our human traits (such as courage or compassion) nor our callings (such as business leader or stay-at-home parent) are dictated by our sex (biological) and gender. Encourage and empower all people to use their gifts for the sake of the common good, whether at home, at work, or in the public sphere.

37) Advocate for and support resources for families of various configurations and the communities in which they live. Empower parents and all who raise or care for children or other family members to nurture, protect, and provide for their households in ways that do not reinforce gender-based stereotypes. In particular, advocate for institutional changes that support and encourage men and boys to participate in all family roles associated with the home, caregiving, parenting, and nurturing.

- 297 38) Advocate for and support legal reforms, humane policies, and adequate services for
298 migrants, immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, especially those who experience
299 intersecting forms of oppression. (See the ELCA's social message "Immigration,"
300 www.ELCA.org/socialmessages.)
301
- 302 39) Advocate for and support portrayals in entertainment, media, and advertising that do not
303 objectify or stereotype people but rather show all people as capable of the wide variety of human
304 characteristics and roles.
305
- 306 40) Advocate for and support means for increasing women's participation in local, state, and
307 national politics, with special attention to the proportionate advocacy and support needed by
308 those who face intersecting forms of oppression.

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Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Lutheran Call to Action Full Statement

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A Shared Vision: We trust God’s promises, and we hope for justice.

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We of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) rejoice that God is always at work to transform and inspire us to new ways of living, ways that more fully embody God’s intention of abundant life. However, due to sexism, many are deprived of God’s good intention that all flourish. Over time and in many places, people have made changes to counter the effects of sexism. Yet we accept that we are called to seek even fuller measures of justice and equity for all those affected by this sin. We do not presume to have quick, perfect, or easy solutions as we work together with all people who strive for justice in the world. Yet, grounded in God’s promises, we know that Christians have both the freedom and the responsibility to serve all neighbors in love.

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In the Book of Isaiah, God sends the prophet “to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor” (Isaiah 61:1b-2a). God promises new heavens and a new earth—for all God’s people. God envisions not only healing and freedom from bondage, but also gladness, joy, and abundant and flourishing life for all people, which we will feel even in the bones of our bodies (Isaiah 65-66). Mirroring a mother’s care for her child (Isaiah 66:13), God desires harmony and integrity for individuals and communities, physically and spiritually. God’s promise of new creation is the vision of what will come to be and the assurance of God’s faithfulness. What hardly seems possible will be possible, for even the wolf and the lamb will feed together (Isaiah 65:25).

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In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus proclaims at the beginning of his ministry that he is the one through whom God acts to bring good news to the oppressed and captive, to heal, and to set free. Women respond to God’s promise. Mary proclaims God’s favor. An unnamed woman anoints Jesus’ feet. Women—among them, Mary and Martha—follow Jesus publicly and use their means to support Jesus’ ministry. A bleeding woman trusts in Jesus’ power to heal. Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and “the other women” witness the empty tomb and the angels who announce the resurrection of Jesus; they spread the word that God reaches from the promised future to raise Jesus Christ to new life, as the first fruit of the new creation. (See Luke 1:39-56; 7:36-50; 8:1-3; 8:42b-48; 10:38-42; and 24:1-12; and I Cor. 15:20-23.) The incarnate and risen Jesus Christ is the embodiment of the new creation God promises.

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We of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America join the witness of these women and live in the hope of God’s promise of new creation through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We offer thanksgiving to the holy Trinity, whose love intends an abundant life for every person (John 10:10). We live in hope, anticipating God’s promise of a just world without the oppression of sin and evil. God’s vision in Isaiah is that people live in gladness, joy, safety, and harmony until old age—so that “your bodies shall flourish like the grass” (Isaiah 66:14).

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We believe that the Holy Spirit is always at work through God in Jesus Christ to transform us, to draw us into the promised life of the new creation. In this church, we confess that we ourselves are always being made a new creation in Christ through baptism. Who we are

353 becoming in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit gives meaning to who we are and how we act
354 right now.

355 Society and the Church universal are gifts from God. Nevertheless, personal, social, and
356 religious forces often work in opposition to God’s desire for abundant and flourishing life for all.
357 This church sees and denounces all the ways human sin interferes with flourishing. With
358 thanksgiving for God’s gracious promise through Jesus Christ to break the bonds of sin, this
359 church lives in the confidence that we are always being made new to love and serve the
360 neighbor.

361 Love of neighbor is expressed in seeking justice for the neighbor. This includes gender
362 justice. Gender justice is for all people and requires particular attention to seeking fuller justice
363 for women and girls. Because we rely on God as a God of promise, this church speaks about
364 sexism and the harm it causes for all people. Those who support gender justice are intent on
365 righting gender-based wrongs that prevent the abundant and flourishing life God intends.

366 We in this church rejoice in the ways God’s people are already being led forth in joy
367 (Isaiah 55:12). We are thankful God gives the vision and sustenance to change what seems
368 unchangeable, even as we wait for God to wipe away every tear (Isaiah 25:8). Most of all, we
369 live in hope because, through Jesus Christ, we trust that God’s promises will not fail.
370

371 **I. Fundamental Teaching:** 372 **God desires abundant life for all.**

373 *1) We of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America believe God’s intention revealed through*
374 *the Scriptures is that all people have life abundantly and flourish.*
375

376 From creation to redemption in the Christian story, the Scriptures reveal God’s intention
377 of abundant and flourishing life for creation, including for human beings. On the sixth day of
378 creation, “God saw everything that [God] had made, and indeed, it was very good” (Genesis
379 1:31a). Creation stories tell of the goodness, flourishing, and majestic diversity that flow from
380 God’s creative and sustaining power (e.g., Genesis 1 and 2, Psalms 8 and 104, and Job 38).
381 Throughout the stories of the life of God’s people in ancient Israel, God is ever-present, willing
382 them into flourishing life and often showing them ways out of situations that seem to have no
383 way out.⁶

384 The Gospels underscore God’s desire for abundant life. Jesus Christ, the Word made
385 flesh, embodies and proclaims God’s desire. In the Gospel of John, Jesus declares, “I came that
386 they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10b). Jesus put this into action by eating
387 with everyone, including marginalized people (Mark 2:15). Jesus lived compassionately, healing
388 and casting out evil spirits (Matthew 14:14). Jesus criticized those who neglect justice and mercy
389 (Matthew 23:23) and delivered God’s call to respond to the needs of anyone who is
390 disadvantaged, marginalized, and unjustly treated (Matthew 25:35-40). Jesus Christ embodied
391 God’s urgent and persistent desire for the well-being of all people yesterday, today, tomorrow,
392 and in the promised, future life.

⁶ The adage that God provides a way out of no way comes from African-descent religious traditions and is developed by Delores S. Williams in *Sisters in the Wilderness* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1993). Two examples of God’s provision are the stories of Hagar and Ishmael in Genesis 16 and 21 and the Israelites’ passage through the Red Sea in Exodus 10.

393 The Book of Revelation speaks of the healing of the nations and closes with a vision of
394 new heavens and earth as the ultimate outcome of God’s resolve (Revelation 22:1-2). This
395 church believes the triune God intends creation to flourish and is ever at work so that all people
396 may thrive.

397
398 *2) We believe all people are created equally in the image of God. Every individual is dependent*
399 *upon God, and all share in the God-given vocation to contribute their gifts to help all of creation*
400 *flourish. Being in the image of the triune God means that we humans are relational, that we are*
401 *interconnected. Just as we interact with God, we are social creatures relating with each other*
402 *and all of creation.*

403 As the Scriptures witness, all of creation originates from God, who sustains creation and
404 will ultimately bring creation to its fullness. In Genesis 1, God speaks creation into existence; by
405 a word, humans are created in the image of God (*imago Dei*). “Then God said, ‘Let us make
406 *’ādām* [the Hebrew word for “humankind”] in our image, according to our likeness” (Genesis
407 1:26a).⁷ Human dignity flows from the reality that all humans are made in the image of God.
408 When we see one another, we see the image of God.

409 In the ancient world, typically only kings were thought to be in the image of God.
410 Genesis offers a striking contrast to a hierarchical view that sets rulers over those they rule or
411 men over women. The point of the creation story in Genesis 1 is that all humankind is created at
412 the same time and with the same value, in the image of God.

413 The account of creation in Genesis 2 emphasizes human dependence upon God as the one
414 who gives us life and breath. In this text, God makes humans by forming them from the soil
415 (*humus*), the source of trees and all vegetation. Humanity comes to life only when God breathed
416 the breath of life into the first human.

417 In both Genesis 1 and 2, the emphasis is on God’s creation of humankind in unity and
418 **equality**.⁸ A translation of the Hebrew text helps to explain this:

419 “then Yahweh God formed the earth creature [hā-’ādām]

420 dust from the earth [hā-’ādāmâ]

421 and breathed into its nostrils the breath of life,

422 and the earth creature [hā-’ādām] became a living *nephesh* [being]” (Genesis 2:7).⁹

423 In Hebrew, the word for “Adam” means “earth creature;” it is not a proper name but a poetic
424 play upon the Hebrew word for earth. English translations of Genesis refer to “Adam” being
425 formed first and refer to this earth creature as a male, but the original language never suggests
426 that a man was created first.¹⁰ Rather, it recounts the creation of all humanity. Only later does the
427 text refer to distinct bodies, called “Adam” and “Eve.”

428 The differentiation of humankind expressed in the creation stories communicates the joy
429 humans find in having true partners, true peers: “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my
430 flesh” (Genesis 2:23a). God creates community and family within an interdependent creation that
431 wholly depends upon its creator, not upon a **hierarchy** of humans.

432 The Scriptures reveal the diversity and interconnectedness of creation. God creates a
433 teeming universe filled with plants and animals, the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, and

⁷ See Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 18, 78.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁹ Translation by Phyllis Trible, 78.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 72-81.

434 humans—all remarkably diverse. We believe God creates humanity in diversity. Scientific
 435 research in conversation with the Christian tradition shows that this diversity encompasses a
 436 wide variety of experiences, identities, and expressions, including **sex** (human biology), **gender**
 437 (how humans understand and express themselves), and **sexuality** (sexual attraction).¹¹ These are
 438 interconnected yet distinct aspects of humanity.

439 Many Christians, in the past and still today, interpret the creation and fall stories in
 440 Genesis 1-3 to support the belief that females are secondary to males and more sinful than males.
 441 For example, repeating an ancient belief, some early Christian theologians defined women as
 442 malformed men.¹² Martin Luther sometimes repeated the idea that women are inferior. Genesis
 443 has also been used to argue for seemingly fixed realities about human identity based on being
 444 male or female.¹³ Some Christian communities and individuals continue to teach and practice
 445 these ideas.

446 The concept of “the image of God” has often been used problematically. Sometimes it
 447 has been used to describe men as a “fuller” image of God and women as a “lesser” image of
 448 God. In particular, the description of the woman being created second, to be the man’s “helper”
 449 (Genesis 2:18), has been used to reinforce the idea that women and girls are inferior and
 450 subordinate. Actually, the Hebrew word translated in English as “helpmate” is a word most often
 451 used in the Scriptures for God! Misuses, misunderstandings, and the limitations of translations
 452 have led to and still reinforce beliefs and actions that devalue women and girls.

453 This church focuses instead on God’s delight in the diversity of creation, as well as God’s
 454 intention of equality, unity, and relationality within that diversity. God says, “Let us make
 455 humanity in our own image.” Just as there is relationality among the persons of the Trinity, there
 456 is relationality between the humans God creates and between God and humans. This reading of
 457 the Scriptures promotes an understanding of human diversity that is not limited by either a
 458 **binary** or a hierarchical view of gender.

459 We honor the image of God in others when we do everything in our collective and
 460 personal power to meet others’ needs and to empower them to flourish. We believe that God
 461 creates human beings not just in marvelous diversity but also with the intention of **equity**,
 462 including gender-based equity. The God in whose image we are made calls us to use our
 463 creativity, freedom, responsibility, diversity, and compassion for the fulfillment of creation. Just
 464 as God uses wisdom, understanding, and knowledge to create and nourish (Proverbs 3:19-29),

¹¹ For reference to the science and to an engagement by Christian thinkers, see Patricia Beattie Jung and Aana Marie Vigen, eds., *God, Science, Sex, Gender: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Christian Ethics* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010). It is important to note here that recognition of this diversity follows the contemporary scientific consensus. For the ELCA’s teaching about how to regard marriage relations or publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous same-sex relationships, see *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2009), www.ELCA.org/socialstatements, 19.

¹² Although philosophers Aristotle and Plato initiated the belief that women are inferior to men and potentially “malformed” men, many early Church Fathers maintained a similar understanding of women. See Nancy Tuana, *The Less Noble Sex: Scientific, Religious and Philosophical Conceptions of Women's Nature* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 21, 169.

¹³ This argument is known as an ontological argument based on what sex a person is. According to a sex-based understanding of humans, there are two kinds of human nature, based strictly on being male or being female. According to this idea, humans are particular, fixed beings strictly set by biological sex. This idea stands in contrast to a different understanding of humanity (a different ontological argument), that there is a single “human beingness” (ontology) in which everyone shares. Understanding humans from this viewpoint allows for the actual diversity of human bodies and characteristics.

465 humans are to use these same means to serve all of creation. In creation, no human is granted
466 domination over another human. Rather, all are given the responsibility to care for creation,
467 including the responsibility to address the effects of sin (Genesis 1:26-31; 2:15).¹⁴
468

469 *3) Despite God's intention for creation, humans exist in a state of sin. Because we fail to trust*
470 *God as we should, we are alienated from God, from other people, and from creation itself. Not*
471 *only individually, but also collectively, we live out this alienation through disobedience to God,*
472 *pride, complacency, self-abasement, and acts against others, all of which limit the abundant life*
473 *God intends.*

474 As Christians, we understand humanity's fall into a state of sin through the story of Adam
475 and Eve in the Garden of Eden. "[Y]ou will be like God," (Genesis 3:5b) the serpent promises.
476 The Genesis story shows that the human desire to be powerful disrupts God's intention for
477 human flourishing and for the well-being of creation.

478 Sin is a condition in which we humans live because we do not trust God for our sense of
479 identity and value.¹⁵ This may take the form of pride (being centered on ourselves), idolatry
480 (placing someone or something else other than God at the center of our lives), or self-abasement
481 (not recognizing our value and dignity as a person created by God). As a result of this broken
482 trust in God, human relationships also become broken and distorted. We hurt each other, God's
483 creation, and ourselves.

484 Particular sinful *actions* (sins) are expressions of our human life in a state of sin.
485 Individuals, families, communities, institutions, governments, and societies can all sin. Sin is not
486 only individual; it is also collective or communal. Sinful humans create structures, organizations,
487 and societies that perpetuate sin, sometimes unintentionally. This is called "structural sin."

488 God gives the Law to help us see humanity's sinful state: our sinful thoughts and actions
489 and our sinful systems. It also helps to curb these. The Law helps us see that what breaks and
490 distorts human relationships is sinful and unjust.
491

492 *4) We believe that we are healed and redeemed from this alienation. That is, Lutherans confess*
493 *that we are justified by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ, no matter what we have done*
494 *or left undone. This promise means we are freed from bondage to the people and things we trust*
495 *and love more than God or the ways we try to justify ourselves, sometimes at the expense of*
496 *others. God's grace frees us and empowers us to love others as God loves all of creation.*

¹⁴ See Kristen E. Kvam on Luther's reading of Genesis in "God's Heart Revealed in Eden: Luther on the Character of God and the Vocation of Humanity" in *Transformative Lutheran Theologies*, ed. Mary J. Streufert (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 57-67.

¹⁵ The Lutheran Confessions explain sin fundamentally as the failure to fear and trust God. "Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article II," *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, eds. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 112. The Lutheran Confessions are Reformation-era writings, central to Lutheran theology and practice and constitutionally affirmed by the ELCA.

497 The Lutheran tradition emphasizes that we do not have to do anything for God to be
498 gracious to us. The gift of salvation is a divine work, not a human work. “For we hold that a
499 person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law” (Romans 3:28). God’s
500 justification of us overturns both our own attempts to justify ourselves and our own injustice.
501 Faith unites believers with Christ; union with Christ transforms believers. God’s redemption of
502 believers is not simply a transaction but an intimate relationship that influences who we are
503 becoming in Christ.

504 Although we have been called into the freedom of the Gospel, we remain sinners. Martin
505 Luther described this as being “simultaneously saint and sinner.” We are freed in Christ to love
506 and serve others, but our efforts to live out God’s love are always imperfect. Through our
507 baptism, we experience daily renewal, and so we continue to respond to the divine call to love
508 God, self, and neighbor and to work for justice.

509
510 *5) As Lutheran Christians, our focus on Jesus Christ affects how this church understands justice.*
511 *Because we are freed in Christ for others, we are able to respond to God’s call to love our*
512 *neighbor as ourselves. In society, neighbor love takes the form of neighbor justice.*

513 The Scriptures repeatedly remind us of God’s call to show love and justice to others. The
514 prophet Micah insists that what God wants from us is “to do justice, and to love kindness, and to
515 walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8). Isaiah provides some specific examples of what this
516 means: “[L]earn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the
517 widow” (Isaiah 1:17). The psalms describe the blessing of living according to God’s intention:
518 “Happy are those who observe justice, who do righteousness at all times” (Psalm 106:3).

519 In the parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-33) Jesus teaches that compassion for
520 others is how we express love for God; neighbors are people who need acts of love. Martin
521 Luther reflected, “Now our neighbor is any human being, especially one who needs our help.”¹⁶
522 Neighbor love means we are called to *be* a neighbor. Depending on the neighbor’s needs, this
523 may require not only direct service in response to an immediate situation, but also working more
524 broadly for justice. Because justice is the form love takes in society,¹⁷ we refer to this as
525 neighbor justice.

526 Faith active in the form of love of neighbor is not our own doing but God’s gift.¹⁸ We
527 respond to and exercise God’s gift by loving others. In society, this responsive love takes the
528 form of justice for the neighbor in an unjust world. Grounded in faith and love, we seek justice
529 for ourselves and our neighbors within congregations, religious and secular institutions,
530 governments, and societies. This love includes **gender justice**.¹⁹

531 Reading the Scriptures with a neighbor-justice perspective helps us challenge and uproot
532 oppression, brokenheartedness, and captivity. This approach can be understood as an extension
533 of the traditional Lutheran focus on interpreting the Scriptures through the vantage point of the
534 proclamation of Christ. When, through the Scriptures, we have heard the Good News of
535 justification by God’s grace through faith in Jesus Christ, we are able to return to the Scriptures,
536 reading them in light of the call to live out our faith in service of our neighbors.

¹⁶ Martin Luther, “Letters to Galatians, 1535,” *Luther’s Works* (LW) (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955-1986), 27:58.

¹⁷ See Carl E. Braaten, *Principles of Lutheran Theology*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 160-161.

¹⁸ See *Church in Society* (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 1991), 2.

¹⁹ See also “The Lutheran World Federation Gender Justice Policy” (Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 2013), https://www.lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/DTPW-WICAS_Gender_Justice.pdf.

537 Striving for justice for the neighbor and for ourselves encourages Christians to live,
538 worship, and work in ways that empower all people to live with dignity, responsibility, equity,
539 and justice. God in Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit, frees the Church to live now
540 into the future God promises. Both as individuals and as communities, we are called into God's
541 new creation.

542

543 *6) This focus on Jesus Christ also affects how we understand the Scriptures. While the Scriptures*
544 *speak both Law and Gospel, Martin Luther emphasized that the Scriptures should be read by*
545 *paying attention to what proclaims Christ—what carries the Gospel message of God's grace and*
546 *mercy to all people.*

547 Lutherans understand the Scriptures as speaking both Law and Gospel—God's judgment
548 and God's promise. Both Law and Gospel are God's Word, but they have different purposes.
549 God's Law commands us to love God above all else and to live for the sake of the common
550 good; it judges us when we fail. The Gospel is the promise of God's grace and mercy freely
551 given to us for Christ's sake.

552 Luther taught that Christians should read the Scriptures through the lens of the Gospel
553 promise: "The Gospel itself is our guide and instructor in the Scriptures."²⁰ Being guided by the
554 Gospel helps Christians interpret difficult texts in the Scriptures in light of the Good News of
555 Jesus Christ.

556 This way of reading the Scriptures also frees us to look at the Scriptures within their
557 historical and cultural contexts.²¹ Some things apply to people in every generation, and some
558 things do not. For example, Luther pointed out that some of the Old Testament laws were given
559 by God to the Jewish people at particular times in their history; these laws do not necessarily
560 apply to Christians today.²² Luther even warned against the temptation of "changing Christ into a
561 Moses" by misunderstanding the gift and promise of the Gospel as laws and commandments.²³

562 Because of this Christ-centered focus, Lutherans not only interpret but also translate the
563 Scriptures in ways that keep proclamation of God's Word central. When Luther translated the
564 Scriptures from Hebrew and Greek into German, he took great care to use language that
565 Germans of his day could understand. Sometimes this meant using common German idioms
566 instead of a literal, word-for-word translation of the original languages. Sometimes this meant
567 adding a word to emphasize the central proclamation.²⁴ Luther always translated the Scriptures
568 so that the living Word of God could be received by people in their context.

569

570 *7) As Lutheran Christians, we recognize human reason and knowledge as gifts from God to be*
571 *used for the common good. While the scriptural call to neighbor justice is clear, human reason*
572 *and knowledge are essential to discern the specific forms, policies, and structures that best*
573 *enable us to enact justice in particular contexts. Recognizing that the gifts of reason and*
574 *knowledge are given to people of all religions and worldviews, Christians are freed to work*
575 *together with them for the common good.*

²⁰ Martin Luther, "A Brief Instruction on What to Look for and Expect in the Gospels, 1522," *LW* 35:123.

²¹ See the ELCA "Book of Faith" initiative's emphases on reading the Scriptures, <http://www.bookoffaith.org>.

²² Martin Luther, "How Christians Should Regard Moses, 1525," *LW* 35:170-172.

²³ Martin Luther, "A Brief Instruction on What to Look for and Expect in the Gospels, 1522," *LW* 35:123.

²⁴ Martin Luther, "On Translating—An Open Letter, 1530" and "Defense of the Translation of the Psalms, 1531," *LW* 35.

576 The Lutheran theological tradition places a strong emphasis on the appropriate use of
577 human reason and knowledge. Thus, this statement draws on current scientific research,
578 including the social sciences. It also assumes that such values as human rights are commonly
579 shared. While sin can distort our use of these gifts, they remain important tools for work in the
580 world, especially as common ground for working with others.

581 This church recognizes that people of other religions and worldviews may accept some of
582 the analysis and share many of the convictions expressed here. For example, many individuals of
583 other religions and worldviews believe that all people, including every woman and girl, deserve
584 full human dignity, equality, equity, and the opportunity to thrive. Many others share the
585 conviction of this church that all people have the responsibility to seek and safeguard universal
586 rights for others, as well as for themselves.

587 With thanks to God for the gift of reason, the ELCA offers this statement as a
588 contribution to public discussion about how to understand and advance full and equitable
589 participation of women and girls in an equitable society. This statement is an invitation to
590 conversation with and action by those who may not share the same starting point of faith but who
591 share underlying values, such as human dignity. This church seeks to join in common cause with
592 all who desire that all people may thrive.

593

594 *8) We believe that the Church is called to live as the body of Christ in the world even while we*
595 *struggle with the realities of sin. As Lutherans, we recognize that acting justly within family,*
596 *church, and society for the common good is central to the vocation to which God calls all*
597 *people.*

598 As Christians, we confess that Jesus Christ is the true image of God (Colossians 1:15). In
599 baptism, all Christians are unified in Christ and are equal members of the body of Christ. The
600 apostle Paul compared the early Christian community to the human body. He wrote that
601 Christians are united in the body of Christ, that this body has many diverse parts, and that the
602 members of the body need one another. Members of the body that we think are weaker than
603 others are, in fact, indispensable. (See Romans 12:4-5 and 1 Corinthians 12:12-18.) The body of
604 Christ is made of physical bodies, of human persons. The health of the body of Christ is linked to
605 our human flesh and blood.

606 In the face of ever-present ways in which we humans sin against each other, including in
607 this church, we confess that God's Word affirms the goodness of our bodies, minds, and spirits
608 and those of our neighbors. The Gospels testify to the full, embodied humanity of Jesus, who
609 was born, walked, ate, slept, and wept. The Hebrew Scriptures, the Gospels, and the New
610 Testament letters all teach that human bodies are a good gift of God.

611 Because of our understanding of the body of Christ, we are called not to objectify other
612 people, diminish their worth, or define them by gender-based stereotypes. Paul taught that what
613 happens to one part of the body affects every part of the body. This church seeks to value all
614 people and recognize that we depend upon one another. We will not dominate or politicize other
615 people but will respect them, promote their health and well-being, and suffer and rejoice together
616 as we strive for justice for all bodies—indeed, for all persons.

II. Analysis of the Problem:

Sin subverts human flourishing in many ways.

9) *Though God desires fullness of life and equity for everyone, as a church we recognize that women and girls in particular suffer a range of harm and injustice due to sex (biological), gender, or both. In addition to sex and gender, the experiences of individuals and groups are shaped and complicated by intersecting factors. These include race, ethnicity, national origin, nationality, immigration status, sexuality, marital status, economic means, age, ability, embodied experiences, and education. This reality is known as intersectionality.²⁵ This statement's references to women and girls are intended to be inclusive of all people who identify as women or girls in the diversity of their individual and communal identities and expressions.*

Grounded in the Scriptures and in Christ, the living Word of God, this church affirms that God creates humanity in diversity and desires all in creation to flourish. However, everyone does not flourish. Talking about this reality requires care and attention to the language and framework we use to understand the complexities of the situation and to serve all our neighbors adequately.

Intersectionality refers to the ways in which various forms of discrimination and oppression, linked to aspects of a person's identity, overlap. The concept of intersectionality helps to express the multiple discriminations many women face daily.

This church recognizes that each person is uniquely created in God's image and that each person's identity consists of different aspects. One individual might be a mother, an employee, a Christian, and a college graduate; she might be middle-class, able-bodied, heterosexual, Spanish-speaking, and Latina. Some aspects of this woman's identity are affirmed by the dominant culture in the United States (e.g., Christian, college graduate), yet other aspects are devalued (e.g., Spanish-speaking, Latina). Broadly speaking, the dominant culture treats some identities as ideal (e.g., white, able-bodied, heterosexual) and other identities as less than ideal, or even imperfect (e.g., person of color, older adult, lesbian). What the dominant culture affirms affects people's lives.

Many women experience intersectional **sexism**. For a woman of color, sexism in the workplace is compounded by the discriminatory effects of racism. If someone is also **transgender**, data show staggering levels of discrimination and violence. Intersectionality helps to explain why some women and girls benefit more than others within a society that operates with intersectional patterns of dominance and submission. For example, white women in the predominant culture in North America benefit at the expense of women of color. This is illustrated in arrangements in which women of color are often caregivers for the children of affluent white women.

Therefore, references to women and girls in this document mean *all* people who identify as women and girls. A word such as *women* often fails to convey its full meaning because our minds tend to default either to our own experiences and identities or to what the culture validates as a normative, "desired," or dominant meaning.

In the United States, the word *women* has been typically associated with being white, young, and heterosexual unless qualified with other adjectives. The life stories, challenges,

²⁵ Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum* (1989): 139-167.

659 hopes, and gifts of women of color, lesbian and other **queer** women, transgender women, women
660 with disabilities, and immigrant women, for example, have been often ignored and sometimes
661 maligned. By using *women and girls* to refer to us in all our diversity, this church seeks to shift
662 our thinking from limitation or discrimination to inclusiveness.

663 This statement acknowledges both the usefulness and the complexity of the phrase
664 *women and girls*. Social, cultural, economic, religious, and political groups use *women* to
665 describe women's experiences that differ from the experiences of many men. Nevertheless, the
666 phrase should not be used to give the impression that all women and girls have the same
667 experiences, gifts, or identities.

668
669 *10) The experiences of women and girls from a variety of backgrounds, both in the past and in*
670 *the present moment, reveal that they have often been restricted in realizing abundant life on the*
671 *basis of sex (biological) or gender.*

672 Women and girls from a variety of identities and backgrounds experience forms of
673 oppression that affect our lives in profound and intimate ways. The personal experiences of
674 women and girls are connected with larger social, institutional, and religious forces. For
675 example, in the United States many legal rights were granted to women only over the course of
676 the 20th century. These include the rights to vote, serve on juries, own land or businesses, inherit
677 property, divorce, retain custody of their children, inherit property, and attend any school for
678 which they are qualified.

679 However, even when these rights were legislated, factors such as race and ethnicity,
680 education, wealth, and social class intersected to exclude many women. This was the case for
681 women of African descent, who struggled for many of those same rights decades later in the
682 Civil Rights Movement. Even in the latter half of the 20th century, women still had to struggle
683 to secure rights pertaining to voting rights, safety, health care, and public life.

684 Legal, social, and religious forces continue to curb women's and girl's rights and prevent
685 them from affirming, celebrating, and expressing themselves fully as God's good creatures and
686 flourishing. The situation is extensive and complex.²⁶ Poverty and economic insecurity
687 negatively affect women's lives. Far fewer women than men have access to wealth, and in the
688 United States more women than men live in or at the edge of poverty. This is especially true for
689 older adults, single women, divorced women, women of color, women living with disabilities,
690 and child brides, which a number of states allow. Poverty rates among women and children in
691 Native American and Native Alaskan communities, for instance, suggest that sexism is
692 compounded by racism.

693 Women's earnings are not equal to men's earnings. Occupational pay disparities affect
694 women's earnings. More women than men work in service industries, which typically pay less
695 than other occupations. In addition, women in the United States on average earn less than their
696 male peers earn with equivalent experience and expertise. This wage gap is even wider for most
697 women of color. Furthermore, there are wide income disparities within groups of women by race
698 and ethnicity. The term *glass ceiling* refers broadly to gender-based limits on employment, but
699 women of African descent women also experience what is known as "the black ceiling," and
700 Asian women experience what is referred to as "the bamboo ceiling."

²⁶ The reader should consult the User's Guide that accompanies this statement or the many reputable resources for contemporary facts and figures that support claims in this article.

701 Work, money, and violence often are intertwined. Some occupations, such as food
702 service and agriculture, are particularly fraught with gender-based discrimination and violence.
703 Work-place and educational harassment and assault directed at women and girls curtail their
704 safety, productivity, and livelihood.

705 The ELCA has teaching and policy on **gender-based violence** that guides this church in
706 greater specificity.²⁷ On average, women, girls, and people with diverse gender identities
707 experience high rates of gender-based violence. This violence includes but is not limited to
708 **domestic violence**; intimate partner violence; sexual assault; rape; **human trafficking**;
709 pornography; female genital mutilation; early and forced marriages; cyber bullying, stalking, and
710 harassment; and murder.

711 Although men and boys experience some of these forms of violence, women and girls
712 experience the majority of them at the hands of men and boys. Racism particularly compounds
713 gender-based violence for some communities of color. For example, the Centers for Disease
714 Control and Prevention have consistently reported that Native American and Native Alaskan
715 women suffer greater rates of gender-based violence and assault at rates greater than do other
716 ethnic groups. Society often blames women for gender-based crimes and oppression, excusing
717 the perpetrators. A prime example lies in this society's culture of sexualized violence.

718 Objectifying and assaulting people, particularly sexually, has long been tolerated, often to
719 the point where gender-based objectification and assault seem normal. **Objectification** and the
720 normalization of assault are evident in the media we consume (including pornography),²⁸ the
721 games we play, the male role models we idolize, the jokes we tell, and the behaviors we tolerate.
722 Many of these distortions spring from stereotypes, not only of white women but also women of
723 color. It is further evident in the low rates of conviction and penalty in rape cases and the high
724 number of untested rape kits across this country. All these factors together can be described as
725 **rape culture**.

726 U.S. health care policies and practices also affect women's and girls' very own bodies.
727 Because health care in the United States has developed from a male-centered model of
728 physiology, disease, and well-being, the medical system sometimes operates as if women do not
729 know their own bodies or as if their bodies are not their own.

730 Here again, women's health problems and the sexism of health care are compounded by
731 intersectionality. For instance, women of African descent on all economic levels suffer from high
732 rates of infant and maternal mortality, and many Latina women lack the **reproductive** and
733 maternal health care they need.

734 A lack of affordable health care means many women do not get the care they need. In
735 many regions, laws restrict women's access to reproductive health care. In the 20th century,
736 many women and girls were forcibly sterilized because they were considered less valuable than
737 white or able-bodied women. Forced sterilization continues, often in prison systems.

738 Bodies are further managed, manipulated, exaggerated, and made invisible by the media
739 based on age, skin color, and body type. Not every type of woman and girl is shown in the
740 media. Entertainment, beauty, and fashion-industry standards and practices promote narrow,
741 unrealistic images of "acceptable" women's bodies, erasing "unacceptable" lines, spots, colors,

²⁷ For a fuller explanation of this church's teaching on gender-based violence, see "Gender-based Violence" (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2016), <https://www.elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Messages/Gender-Violence>.

²⁸ Commercial Sexual Exploitation (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2001), <https://www.elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Messages/Commercial-Sexual-Exploitation>.

742 or features. The ideals generated by these industries shape the way people think about their
743 bodies. Many women and girls develop eating disorders or seek plastic surgery as they pursue an
744 idealized version of womanhood or girlhood.

745 Despite this cultural obsession with “perfect” women, sports, journalism, and
746 entertainment (including Hollywood movies) are largely focused on men and boys and what they
747 do. Even language referring to people in society is male-identified, with words such as mankind,
748 chairman, alderman, guys, etc.

749 Women constitute a minority in U.S. civic and business leadership. The number of
750 women holding political office is growing but still significantly lower than in other nations.
751 There are prominent women in business, but the total number of women in top leadership
752 positions with access to wealth and decision-making is still disproportionately small. Women
753 who do hold office and prominent leadership roles in society often experience overt and indirect
754 hostility, including gender-based discrimination, speech, and threats.

755 Religious institutions in the United States may limit and prevent women and girls from
756 affirming, celebrating, and expressing themselves fully as God’s good creatures and from
757 flourishing as God desires. Women of color continue to be woefully underrepresented in
758 religious leadership. In this church, for example, there are gender-based inequities and
759 discrimination related to compensation and benefits, authority and leadership, and harassment
760 and violence.²⁹

761

762 *11) The far-reaching harm experienced by women and girls is rooted in a pattern of power,*
763 *privilege, and prejudice, the key elements in any social system of oppression. This is the basis of*
764 *the ELCA’s understanding of racism.³⁰ When power, privilege, and prejudice are associated with*
765 *sex, gender, and sexuality, sociologists use the terms patriarchy and sexism.³¹*

766 *Patriarchy is a social system dominated by men, identified with men, and centered on*
767 *men’s actions, voices, and authority. Patriarchy does not mean that males are bad, and females*
768 *are good, or that only males support this unfair system. However, in patriarchal systems, men*
769 *are typically viewed as superior to women, are given more power than women, and have more*
770 *authority than women. A patriarchal worldview and way of life grants male privilege. Sexism is*
771 *the reinforcement of male privilege, which leads to discrimination. It promotes the silencing,*
772 *controlling, and devaluing of women, girls, and people whose gender expression is different from*
773 *the conventional expressions of masculinity and femininity.*

774 *Because people live within social and religious systems, everyone knowingly or*
775 *unknowingly participates in this patriarchal system. Although patriarchy and sexism affect*
776 *different people in different ways, as individuals we are socialized to conform to these patterns of*
777 *power, privilege, and prejudice. This makes us complicit in maintaining social systems of*
778 *oppression.*

779 Although the dominant culture in the United States often emphasizes individualism, the
780 Scriptures and human reason also stress the importance of social or communal understandings of
781 life and the world. To respond in love to the problems experienced by women, girls, and people

²⁹ For up-to-date information on these issues in recurring church studies, visit www.ELCA.org. To date, reports have been posted on the 25th, 35th, and 45th anniversaries of the ordination of women as pastors.

³⁰ *Freed in Christ: Race Ethnicity and Culture* (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 1995): 4, www.ELCA.org/socialstatements.

³¹ See Allan G. Johnson, *The Gender Knot: Unraveling Our Patriarchal Past*, 3rd ed. (Philadelphia: University Press, 2014).

782 who identify as **non-binary**, we must move beyond individual experiences to analyze how
 783 **patriarchy** functions as a social system. This church believes we need to address the roots of the
 784 problems that threaten abundant life.

785 An honest assessment of patriarchy can be hard to face, yet it is necessary in order to
 786 address such a complex social reality. Harm and injustice result not simply from the acts of an
 787 individual or group but from policies, laws, attitudes, customs, habits, words, images, and
 788 religious beliefs and practices that inform and sanction those acts.

789 As a society, we have fostered patriarchal values that permeate our social organization
 790 and impair the distribution of goods and services, the application of justice, and the division of
 791 labor. Sexism (that which supports male **privilege**) affects human imagination and convictions,
 792 which influences how individuals and groups understand gender, human bodies, employment,
 793 immigration policies, and gender-based violence. Sexism sustains human trafficking and the
 794 politicization of the female body and health care, including reproductive health care.³²

795 Because of our convictions about the right use of reason and knowledge in our shared
 796 pursuit of justice, this statement draws on the results of current scientific research as a basis for
 797 our work. A scientific consensus now holds that there are more than two biological sexes and
 798 more than two genders. Studies of humans reveal rich diversity, showing that individuals do not
 799 neatly fall into two categories. Some people are **intersex**: their bodies are neither male nor
 800 female. People have a diversity of characteristics, most of which cannot be assigned exclusively
 801 to one sex or gender or another. Among humans, sex and gender are more accurately
 802 characterized as multidimensional.³³

803 It is not possible to address patriarchy and sexism without recognizing these scientific
 804 insights. Much harm has been caused by systems and worldviews that assume a binary division
 805 of sex (bodies) and gender (characteristics). These patriarchal systems enforce this binary
 806 division with various levels of control and violence that affect everyone.

807
 808 *12) Although men and boys often benefit from this social system, patriarchal structures and*
 809 *values also harm men and boys, including gay and transgender men. They are harmed when they*
 810 *are pressured to conform to narrow gender stereotypes or are unable to live out a false ideal of*
 811 *male superiority and control. People of all genders who do not conform to gender-based roles*
 812 *and stereotypes often are not seen or valued; sometimes they are violently oppressed and even*
 813 *killed. Men of all racial and ethnic minorities in North America may experience patriarchy and*
 814 *sexism particularly intertwined with white privilege. The message of white-identified patriarchy*
 815 *and sexism is that men and boys of color are not fully men and boys.*

816 Men and boys also suffer mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually from the
 817 dehumanization of patriarchy and sexism, which distorts how they see others and themselves.

818 Misogyny, a deep-seated hatred of the female and feminine, is an ancient problem that
 819 still informs contemporary life, even when unintentional. Misogynistic values can instill men and
 820 boys with a false sense of superiority; patriarchy and sexism can contribute to exaggerated ideals
 821 of dominance and control, usually violent, that men and boys are expected to display. If they fail
 822 to match the ideal model of masculinity, they can be targets of hatred, harassment, bullying, and

³² Many of these topics are addressed in ELCA social teaching documents. Visit ELCA.org/socialstatements and ELCA.org/socialmessages.

³³ See Cordelia Fine, *Delusions of Gender: How Our Minds, Society, and Neurosexism Create Difference* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010), 176-177, 235-239, and Anne Fausto-Sterling, *Sexing the Body* (New York: Basic Books, 2000).

823 violence. These expectations go hand-in-hand with denying and suppressing vulnerability,
824 empathy, and interdependence. This is **toxic masculinity**. The effect of toxic masculinity is that
825 men and boys trying to live by its code hurt themselves and others, including other men and
826 boys. The effect is harm to society.

827 The ideals of patriarchy and sexism can prevent men and boys from having meaningful
828 friendships with other men and boys, and they are often punished when they try to resist male
829 privilege or to live in a way that is authentic to their sense of self. Cut off from emotions,
830 interactions, activities, and careers that are stereotyped as feminine, men and boys are also
831 denied the fullness of life that is God's gift. Within broad social and religious systems, we can
832 end up idolizing men and embracing toxic masculinity.

833 Although this is an overall picture of society, one should note that, within marginalized
834 communities, patriarchy and sexism affect women and men differently. For example, while black
835 lives and bodies are valued less than white lives and bodies in the United States, men of African
836 descent may have more status within their communities than women of African descent do. This
837 same pattern is largely true in many communities of color. However, within the broader society,
838 men and boys of color are uniquely affected by sexism because white male privilege operates
839 against them, too. The message is often that men and boys of color are not "real" men or boys.
840 The pressure to conform to one idea of white, male-identified humanity denies the diversity of
841 humans.

842

843 *13) Some social and religious beliefs compound patriarchy. Most instances of gender-based*
844 *harm are connected to commonly held beliefs and customs. For example, ideas that people are*
845 *created into a hierarchy based on sex—being only male or female—reinforce and sometimes*
846 *lead to gender-based injustice.*

847 Early church theologians were often misogynistic, describing women as "the devil's
848 gateway" and rebuking them as "a feeble race, untrustworthy and of mediocre intelligence."³⁴
849 Throughout much of the history of the Christian church, women were therefore excluded from
850 Christian leadership, including ordained leadership; taught to be submissive in marriage, church,
851 and society; and coerced to endure suffering and violence.

852 In the more recent past, the intersection of patriarchal violence, submission, and
853 Christianity flourished in the mores and actions of colonialism. The United States was forged
854 through this colonialism, and its patriarchal values continue to affect many people, including
855 American Indian and Native Alaska people, often in heightened ways for women and girls from
856 these various communities. For example, consistent data show the ongoing negative effects of
857 colonialism on the mental health of people of color.

858 Misuse and misinterpretation of the Scriptures within contemporary Christianity has also
859 reinforced viewpoints and teaching about the inferiority of women. Many Christian churches
860 continue to support the subservience and obedience of women and girls to men, sometimes in
861 subtle ways. For example, the belief and practice that men are meant to be the head of the church
862 and the family and that women are meant to be the followers reinforce a gender-based hierarchy
863 of importance, authority, and value.³⁵ This is illustrated when some people rebel at having a
864 pastor who is a woman or when they challenge her ministry, either subtly or explicitly.

³⁴ Tertullian, *De Cultu Feminarum*, Book 1, Chapter 1, and Epiphanius, *Panarion*, sect 79.1, respectively.

³⁵ This view is an ancient problem rooted in philosophical ideas and in some religious teachings. See David Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive: The Domestic Codes in 1 Peter* (Chico: Scholars' Press, 1981).

865 Throughout history, human beings, including Christians, have often created hierarchies in
866 which one group dominates another because of their differences. Not all hierarchies are
867 inherently harmful, but hierarchies based on gender are. The Christian church has often reflected
868 and taught a pre-Christian belief that all men and women are created with God-given dominant
869 and subordinate roles. This idea that people exist within a **complementary** hierarchy continues
870 to affect and infect people's self-understanding and relationships.

871 Some Christians, both in this country and around the world, strongly believe that men and
872 women were created to live in complementary relationships with clearly defined roles. This
873 means that a person's identity, self-understanding, vocation, and social roles are fixed at birth
874 and willed by God according to sex (biological) and gender.³⁶ This understanding of
875 complementary roles is sometimes described in terms of men and women as "opposites."

876 Not all persons, however, experience or know themselves to be defined in these ways.
877 Stereotypes about male and female characteristics cause harm because they shape our
878 understandings of ourselves and others from a very early age. Limiting certain roles to people
879 according to their sex or gender interferes with the expression of their full humanity and the
880 vision of abundant life for all people. Placing these limitations on individuals also diminishes
881 the social and religious communities in which they live. The idea that humans are to experience
882 life through gender-based hierarchies contributes to the overwhelming tendency to value what is
883 male and/or masculine at the expense of what is female and/or feminine. The result is male
884 privilege, often expressed through toxic masculinity.

885 In Christianity, male privilege has been and continues to be expressed through a male-
886 identified, male-centered, and male-dominant symbolic universe of language and images.
887 Through its stories and theological tradition, the Christian imagination focuses on what men and
888 boys say and do, even when women are part of the story of God's people from the beginning.
889 Within the Lutheran tradition, the same holds true for hundreds of years of Reformation thought,
890 even though women were part of the Reformation movement. Male privilege leads to ignoring
891 women's presence, women's experiences, and women's voices.

892
893 *14) The ELCA celebrates that humans are relational beings and that we live in social systems.*
894 *Positive, equitable social systems can lead to joy and gladness. However, social systems can also*
895 *have negative consequences.*

896 *Even though individuals make choices within social systems, those systems are more*
897 *powerful than any individual, government, culture, or religious community. Beliefs and customs*
898 *are reflected in laws, policies, and practices within both secular and religious institutions, which*
899 *makes them so systemic that they are difficult to identify and dismantle.*

900 *This church's commitment to neighbor justice compels us to expose how patriarchy and*
901 *sexism are woven into individual, social, and religious life, causing harm to all people and even*
902 *to all of creation.*

903 Social systems are necessary because we are relational beings. When social systems are
904 detrimental to well-being, the Scriptures refer to them as evil "powers." (See Ephesians 6:12 and
905 Romans 8:38.) These powers dwarf any one individual, community, government, or culture, and
906 they distort human flourishing. This church recognizes the systemic character of patriarchy in the
907 way social and religious ideas and beliefs are linked with laws, policies, and practices that result

³⁶ See Linda Hogan, "Conflicts Within the Roman Catholic Church," in *Oxford Handbook of Theology, Sexuality, and Gender*, ed. Adrian Thatcher (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 343-339, esp. 325-327.

908 in injustice. This combination of sexist ideas and beliefs with laws, policies, and practices leads
909 to and reinforces gender-based harm and injustice, including gender-based violence.

910 The effects of patriarchy and sexism diminish, damage, and often destroy people. Our
911 church's faith and a commitment to neighbor justice require us to examine the various
912 components of patriarchy and sexism in order to understand the harm they cause and to seek
913 renewed, life-giving partnerships and approaches to an equitable society. The call to justice
914 specifically means that we seek equity and justice for women and girls and others who
915 experience oppression due to sexism and patriarchy.

916

917 *15) As Christians, we see that patriarchy and sexism prevent all human beings from living into*
918 *the abundant life for which God created them. Patriarchy and sexism reflect a lack of trust in*
919 *God and result in harm and broken relationships. Just as this church has identified racism as*
920 *sin, this church identifies patriarchy and sexism as sin. We confess that, as God's people*
921 *forgiven in Jesus Christ, we are simultaneously liberated and sinful. We are broken, yet we are*
922 *made new by grace through faith. This good news is true even as we participate in cultures and*
923 *societies that are broadly patriarchal and sexist.*

924 Sin is not expressed just in individual acts. Sin is also expressed in organizations and
925 institutions. Sexism and patriarchy are sinful because they foster attitudes and actions that distort
926 relationships, violate God's law, and result in injustice. They are social sins that involve and
927 affect individuals, families, communities, nations, religions, and cultures.

928 Because they are so deeply imbedded in our social systems, the power of patriarchy and
929 sexism can be largely invisible. Because it is invisible, we are often unaware that everyone
930 participates in some measure, sometimes in obvious and intentional ways and sometimes in
931 subtle and unconscious ways. We may hold attitudes and beliefs and support laws, policies, and
932 practices that harm even ourselves. This is the power of systemic sin.

933 In our liturgy, we name this systemic reality in the confession: "We are captive to sin
934 and cannot free ourselves." Once we understand our own participation in this systemic harm, we
935 can identify it as sin, confess it, and, through the grace and strength of God, begin to act
936 differently. We reject patriarchy and sexism as sinful because they deny the truth that all people
937 are created equally in God's image and because they disrupt joy, gladness, and flourishing life
938 for all people.

939

940

941 **III. The Christian Tradition:** 942 **It is both challenge and resource.**

942

943 *16) In faith, this church confesses that Christianity has been complicit in the sin of patriarchy*
944 *and sexism through certain beliefs, practices, and aspects of its history. At the same time, we*
945 *believe God provides resources within the Christian faith and the Lutheran tradition to*
946 *challenge the harmful beliefs and effects of patriarchy and sexism and to bring forth new ways of*
947 *living.*

948 Some central emphases of Lutheran theology offer renewed vision and resources for
949 resisting and dismantling patriarchy and sexism and for transforming social systems. This church
950 believes that a Lutheran theological perspective rings true with insights into God's gift that we
951 are a new creation in Jesus Christ and can live more fully into that promise by the power of the
952 Holy Spirit.

953 In our corporate confession, we recognize that we sin individually and collectively, in
954 word and in deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We do not always
955 live and act as God intends. God's Law helps us to see that we sin and judges us for our failure to
956 live up to God's intentions. The recognition of our sins leads us to confession. When we confess,
957 we give up trying to justify ourselves and our actions. By grace, God forgives us, heals us, and
958 frees us from the state of sin that alienates us from God, neighbors, and ourselves.

959 As a church, we recognize that patriarchy and sexism harm people in many ways. As a
960 church, we confess that we cannot justify our own participation in sinful ways of thinking,
961 believing, and acting. We confess that our actions often reflect patriarchal Christian beliefs that
962 portray women as subservient and inferior to men. As a church, we confess our complicity in the
963 exclusion, exploitation, and oppression of those who do not reflect idealized understandings of
964 masculinity. We confess not only overt complicity but also the complicity of silence and passive
965 acceptance of patriarchal and sexist beliefs and practices.

966 As a church, we also believe and trust God's mercy, love, and forgiveness. We trust that,
967 through faith, God empowers us to identify resources for abundant and flourishing life within the
968 Christian tradition, through which God has been at work through all people, including women.
969 We believe that we share the responsibility to address the ways in which the Christian faith and
970 tradition have been used to reinforce gender-based actions and attitudes that in particular harm
971 women and girls from a variety of backgrounds, identities, and personal experiences.

972
973 *17) The ELCA teaches that God's Word of Law and Gospel speaks through the Scriptures. We*
974 *also recognize that there are words and images, social patterns, and moral beliefs in the*
975 *Scriptures that reflect values rooted in what today we call patriarchy and sexism. Some aspects*
976 *of the Scriptures reflect the cultures and societies in which they arose. Their continued misuse*
977 *contributes to maintaining hierarchies and patterns of inequity and harm. A Lutheran reading of*
978 *the Scriptures through Christ, focused on the devotional, historical, literary, and theological*
979 *aspects of texts, frees us from the harm of taking all the Scriptures only literally.*

980 Within the ELCA, we read the Bible in ways that are grounded in our theological heritage
981 and that can reform sexist uses of the Scriptures. The Word of God is first and foremost Jesus
982 Christ, God incarnate. Secondarily, we encounter the Word as Law and Gospel in preaching and
983 teaching. The canonical Scriptures are the written Word of God, which proclaims God's grace
984 and sustains faith in Jesus Christ.³⁷ The Word of God is living and active. We accept the written
985 form of the Word of God as the authoritative source and norm for faith.

986 Nevertheless, we recognize that many biblical texts originated in cultures that were male-
987 identified and male-dominated, and that they say things about women and girls that we now
988 recognize as harmful. Genesis 3:16, "[A]nd he shall rule over you," seems to support patriarchy
989 if read as a reflection of God's original intention for humans rather than as a result of human sin.
990 Other Scriptural texts relate chilling acts of male domination, such as a host offering his
991 unmarried daughter to a mob of men to dissuade them from raping a Levite man (Judges 19).
992 Many Christian communities struggle with how to interpret such texts.

993 The New Testament reflects what now are understood as patriarchal values of various
994 cultures through its rules and ideals about women. Scholars refer to these New Testament texts

³⁷ *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 1987), 2.02, http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Constitutions_Bylaws_and_Continuing_Resolutions_of_the_ELCA.pdf.

995 as “the household codes.” One example seems to tie salvation to women’s fertility: “[Women]
996 will be saved through childbearing, provided they continue in faith and love and holiness, with
997 modesty” (1 Timothy 2:15). Another example admonishes wives to obey their husbands and
998 instructs them on how to dress. Although husbands are told to be considerate and respect their
999 wives, they are told women are “the weaker sex” (1 Peter 3:1-7; see also 1 Corinthians 11:6).

1000 We recognize that the Scriptures have been interpreted within the Lutheran faith in ways
1001 that accept these limits on women and girls and sanction relationships of power and domination.
1002 Likewise, these interpretations grant men roles that afford them agency, decision-making power,
1003 leadership, and prominence in communities and societies. The result is an **androcentric**
1004 tradition. Our tradition’s complicity in patriarchy and sexism is connected to such biblical
1005 interpretation.

1006 This misuse of the Scriptures continues to foster inequity based on sex (biological) and
1007 gender. It subverts the abundant life God intends. Even today some would deny women positions
1008 of leadership in the church or in society, calling the arrangement “natural” and citing such
1009 scriptural texts as “[W]omen should be silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to
1010 speak, but should be subordinate. . . . For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church” (1
1011 Corinthians 14:34-35).

1012 This church believes that God calls Christians into a different vision. Jesus Christ calls us
1013 to a new kind of freedom in service to God and neighbor. This is not a revision of the Lutheran
1014 tradition but a reaffirmation of its core emphasis. As Lutherans, we interpret the Scriptures in
1015 light of the Gospel promise. This emphasis on the Gospel as God’s promise characterizes a
1016 Lutheran reading of Scripture.

1017 When scriptural passages are unclear or even contradictory, this Lutheran reading
1018 suggests that Christ, as God’s gift of forgiveness, reconciliation, and new life, is the lens through
1019 which such passages are to be read. Our church, for instance, places more weight on Galatians
1020 3:28 (“[T]here is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus”) because of
1021 its Gospel focus, than on 1 Timothy 2:12 (“I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over
1022 a man”). This church’s teaching about how to interpret the Scriptures reinforces this Gospel
1023 orientation. In this way, Scripture interprets Scripture.

1024 This church emphasizes a fourfold reading of the Scriptures: devotional, historical,
1025 literary, and theological.³⁸ We recognize that some passages were given to God’s faithful people
1026 in specific historical contexts that are quite different from our own.³⁹ This is why, for example,
1027 Christians no longer feel bound by certain Old Testament laws, such as kosher dietary principles,
1028 or by New Testament instructions concerning women’s hairstyles, jewelry, and clothing
1029 (1 Timothy 2:9). Our fidelity to the Scriptures does not require us to conform to the social and
1030 cultural practices of the ancient world. Similarly, this Lutheran interpretive practice extends to
1031 the writings of our tradition.

1032 Although the Scriptures sometimes reflect patriarchal structures and values, this does not
1033 mean that God has prescribed patriarchal structures and values. We read the written Word guided
1034 by Christ the living Word speaking today. We do so for the sake of proclaiming a life-giving
1035 word for all people. This approach interprets the Scriptures with an emphasis on what the Word
1036 does; it frees us to read the Scriptures in such a way that God’s Word can be heard as genuinely
1037 “good news.”

1038

³⁸ See <http://www.bookoffaith.org/>.

³⁹ See *Word and Sacrament I*, “How Christians Should Regard Moses, 1525,” *LW* 35:170-172.

1039 *18) The Christian theological tradition is full of ideas and teaching that can negatively or*
 1040 *positively affect people. In particular, some doctrines affect our understanding of humanity and*
 1041 *God more than others. Teachings about the cross and suffering, the image of God, the*
 1042 *incarnation, the body of Christ, and the Trinity have sometimes been misused to support*
 1043 *patriarchal beliefs, attitudes, church practices, behaviors, and structures. These teachings affect*
 1044 *our use of language and our understandings of humanity and Christian ministry. At the same*
 1045 *time, these doctrines can be liberating resources for healing the effects of the sins of patriarchy*
 1046 *and sexism.*

1047 Theological images and themes are used in multiple ways. The same concept can be
 1048 understood and applied to reinforce a patriarchal status quo or to support gender justice.

1049 Two interrelated themes of Christian faith have often been misused to encourage women
 1050 and girls to accept and endure harm because they are women and girls. Sometimes Genesis 3:16
 1051 (pain in childbirth) is invoked to teach women and girls that they deserve gender-based suffering.
 1052 Sometimes the language of taking up one's cross (Mark 8:34) has been used to encourage
 1053 women and girls to endure their pain in order to be like Jesus. Some women report that their
 1054 pastors have characterized domestic violence or rape as "their cross to bear."

1055 Lutheran theology can help to reject the misuse of these biblical texts in such ways. First,
 1056 Lutheran biblical interpretation reminds us that what is said to Eve about bearing children in pain
 1057 has less to do with punishment than with pain humans experience after the fall.

1058 Second, a theology of the cross can remind us that Jesus Christ suffers on our account.
 1059 We are not called to endure violence for its own sake. We might endure violence because we
 1060 confess faith in Jesus Christ and live as Christians, but women and girls are not called to endure
 1061 gender-based violence. In addition, a Lutheran view of the cross reminds us that we see God
 1062 hidden in suffering; despite Jesus' feeling of abandonment on the cross, we can confess that God
 1063 is present even in the depths of our worst experiences.

1064 A number of other theological themes have also been misused to affect how Christians
 1065 understand God and humanity. These teachings include the image of God (See Article 2.), the
 1066 incarnation, the body of Christ, and the Trinity.⁴⁰ It is important to consider how these beliefs
 1067 about God influence human self-understanding and relationships.

1068 The Christian tradition confesses that God is infinite mystery beyond human
 1069 comprehension. Human language and human concepts about God are never enough to know
 1070 God. Unfortunately, language for and images of God in the Christian faith are often
 1071 androcentric—male-centered or male-identified. Insistence on predominantly male-oriented
 1072 language and images restricts our understanding of God, who is beyond gender, to one human
 1073 category. This narrows our theology, our thinking about God. The use of only male language
 1074 leads us to forget the incomprehensible mystery of God and can reduce the living God to an
 1075 understanding of God to the figure of an infinitely powerful man. This is flawed theology.

1076 In addition, insisting on only male language can make maleness itself a false idol. It can
 1077 persuade Christians that men have more in common with God than women and thus that
 1078 maleness is a higher form of humanity. This is flawed theological anthropology—thinking about
 1079 humans—and is pastorally harmful. If God is understood as male and women are seen as inferior
 1080 to men, one can easily justify attitudes and behaviors that discriminate against and devalue
 1081 women, girls, and people whose gender identity and expression fall outside of familiar
 1082 categories. Taking God literally as male or only masculine also alienates people who are
 1083 intersex.

⁴⁰ See Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Quest for the Living God* (New York: Continuum, 2008).

1084 Many voices in the Christian church have argued that the maleness of Jesus justifies
 1085 sexist ideas and structures in church and society. Many Christians, including some in predecessor
 1086 bodies of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, have argued that only men should serve
 1087 as heads of the church and the home, in part because Jesus was a man. In the New Testament and
 1088 in Christian thought, Jesus was often depicted as a groom promised to a bride (the Church).
 1089 Sometimes this description of the Church as the bride of Christ has contributed to a male-
 1090 identified God and his male-identified representatives in relationship with a female-identified
 1091 Church.

1092 We must reject the idea that the maleness of Jesus is somehow related to redemption. In
 1093 the original Greek, the Nicene Creed makes clear that God the Son became human (*an-thró-*
 1094 *pous*), not male (*anér*), “for us and for our salvation.” The point of the creed is Jesus’ humanity,
 1095 not his sex or gender. The long-time generic use of the word *man* in English translations has
 1096 obscured the original meaning of the Nicene Creed and fed patriarchal biases and assumptions.

1097 The biblical narrative that Jesus was male, compounded by translations that default to
 1098 androcentric language, has led to faulty assumptions about the maleness of the Trinity. However,
 1099 the Scriptures and Christian theology witness to an understanding of God that transcends gender.
 1100 They offer life-giving ways to proclaim the Gospel so that all may receive it and share the Good
 1101 News.

1102 In the Scriptures, God is described as a mother in labor—also as a rock, a hen, and a bear
 1103 (Isaiah 42:14, Psalm 89:26, Matthew 23:37; Hosea 13:8). God is not literally any of these, just as
 1104 God is not literally a man or a father. For instance, Jesus taught, “[W]hat woman having ten
 1105 silver coins, if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search
 1106 carefully until she finds it?” (Luke 15:8). Through the prophet Isaiah, God declares, “Can a
 1107 woman forget her nursing child, or show no compassion for the child of her womb? Even these
 1108 may forget, yet I will not forget you” (Isaiah 49:15).

1109 Teachers of the faith have amplified the multiple images within the Scriptures. St.
 1110 Anselm of Canterbury wrote, “But you, Jesus ... Are you not that mother who, like a hen collects
 1111 her chickens under her wing? Truly master, you are a mother.”⁴¹ Julian of Norwich wrote, “A
 1112 mother can hold her child tenderly to her breast, but our tender mother, Jesus, can lead us in
 1113 friendly fashion into his blessed breast by means of his sweet open side.”⁴²

1114 These and other teachers of the faith invert the Savior’s gender to say something
 1115 important about faith in God through Jesus Christ. In fact, the Scriptures make use of gender
 1116 inversion, such as when the apostle Paul compares himself in ministry to a mother in labor
 1117 (Galatians 4:19). Jesus also subverted gender-based expectations when, washing his followers’
 1118 feet, he cast himself in the role of a female slave or a wife—and then called on the male disciples
 1119 to do the same thing (John 13: 3-5, 15).

1120 At the same time, this church’s understanding of the body of Christ goes beyond the
 1121 literal, physical body of Jesus. As Galatians 3:28 reminds us, the body of Christ is inclusive;
 1122 identity markers that we have regarded as irreconcilable no longer hold meanings that divide us.
 1123 Just as “Jew or Greek” are not the only ethnic identities joined to and in Christ, so “male and
 1124 female” do not limit the gender identity of those joined to and in Christ. Understanding the unity

⁴¹ St. Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109) in Prayer 10 to St. Paul, “Opera Omnia” 3:33 and 39-41, based on Matthew 23:37.

⁴² Julian of Norwich (1342-c.1416) in “Revelations of Divine Love,” Chapter 60, para. 6, based on Isaiah 46:3-4; 49:15.

1125 in Christ of persons of various identities frees us from the idolatry of the maleness of Christ—or
1126 of human maleness.

1127 Although most Christian liturgy favors androcentric and Eurocentric language and
1128 imagery, **expansive language** and imagery are both scripturally rooted and theologically faithful.
1129 In their paradoxes and multiplicity, they communicate the mystery and intimacy of the triune
1130 God. Using inclusive and expansive scriptural and theological language and images therefore
1131 honors the Lutheran tradition. This church commends all Christians to retrieve and reform
1132 theological language, images, and themes so that they support faithful proclamations of God’s
1133 grace in Jesus Christ to all persons.
1134

1135 *19) The central Lutheran belief that we are justified by grace through faith empowers this*
1136 *church to challenge patriarchy and sexism, which devalue people according to sinful human*
1137 *standards.*

1138 A robust understanding of justification by grace enriches a Christian commitment to
1139 gender justice. A Lutheran expression of the doctrine of justification underscores gender justice
1140 as a concern of faith in three ways.⁴³

1141 First, justification is wholly God’s work through Christ; we cannot justify ourselves.
1142 Justification as God’s act challenges the self-centeredness of self-justification, of trying to put
1143 ourselves above or before others, as with male privilege. From a Lutheran faith perspective, no
1144 particular group is superior to another based on sex (biological) or gender. Because God redeems
1145 us, we cannot rely on a belief that one group can justify themselves in the world or with God
1146 because of their supposed superiority or “headship.” Sin and grace are great equalizers. All
1147 Christians are sinful, and all Christians are equally dependent upon God’s grace.

1148 Second, justification frees us from bondage. Being freed in Christ involves being freed
1149 from all that tries to replace Jesus Christ as Lord in our lives, including systems of patriarchy.
1150 This reality changes our life with respect to issues of sex and gender. We are freed to recognize
1151 God’s work in creation through human variation, human imagination, and human expression of
1152 gender. We are able to see that humans are not created to be limited in our experience of being
1153 human through a gender-based hierarchy.

1154 Third, justification gives Christians the freedom of a new perspective—to be more
1155 concerned with what the neighbor needs and less concerned with following and enforcing
1156 gender-based rules and assumptions. We are freed to see and support one another in all our
1157 uniqueness. Justification helps us to see gender justice from the perspective of faith.
1158

1159 *20) The Lutheran understanding of the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion, in which*
1160 *the Word of God is connected with tangible, physical elements, grounds efforts to prevent the*
1161 *harm that sexism and patriarchy cause to the bodies, minds, and spirits of human beings.*

1162 Lutheran theology can help reorient sexist and racist theology and practices that limit the
1163 full participation of varied human bodies in the sacraments. According to the Lutheran
1164 Confessions, when the material things of water, bread, and wine are combined with God’s Word,
1165 God is really present: “Baptism is not simply plain water. Instead it is water enclosed in God’s

⁴³ See Mary J. Streufert, “Idolatry-Critical Justification and the Foreclosed Gendered Life,” in *Lutheran Identity and Political Theology*, ed. Carl-Henric Grenholm and Göran Gunner, Church of Sweden Series 9 (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2014), 134-152.

1166 command and connected with God’s Word.”⁴⁴ When we feel the water of baptism and consume
 1167 the bread and wine of the eucharist, God is present to our diverse, individual bodies and in the
 1168 unity of the Church that is the body of Christ. Drawing on the Apostle Paul, Luther taught that
 1169 the Lord’s Supper unites us in one body: “[S]o that by this sacrament ... and through this mutual
 1170 love there is one bread, one drink, one body, one community.”⁴⁵

1171 We must continue to embrace our unity and diversity so that we welcome and uplift
 1172 people of every sex (biological) and gender—indeed, every body—in our work together as the
 1173 body of Christ in the world. God’s love feeds the body of Christ so that it might live in love. The
 1174 sacramental promise that God is present in water, bread, and wine, along with the good news that
 1175 God became human, leads this church to treasure, hold, and advocate for the embodied lives of
 1176 all people.

1177
 1178 *21) The ELCA has identified sufficiency, sustainability, solidarity, and participation as the key*
 1179 *principles for creating and supporting justice.*⁴⁶ *This church commends these principles to create*
 1180 *and support neighbor justice, specifically gender justice for the neighbor. Social and religious*
 1181 *structures and institutions—including ideas, beliefs, religious teachings, laws, policies,*
 1182 *practices, and language—must be assessed and should be guided by these principles.*

1183 As Lutherans, we understand that God intends not only individuals, but also cultures and
 1184 governments, to develop in ways that enable all people to flourish. With other members of
 1185 society, we affirm the national ideal toward which people in the United States continually
 1186 strive—that all people are created equal and endowed with inalienable rights to life, liberty, and
 1187 the pursuit of happiness. We also believe that all people have the responsibility to safeguard
 1188 these rights for others as well as themselves. Insofar as this ideal allows everyone to flourish, the
 1189 ELCA joins people of other religions and worldviews to advance a universal vision of an
 1190 equitable society in which all people participate fully.⁴⁷

1191 Although we recognize that perfect worldly justice is not possible, this church holds that
 1192 efforts toward justice should stress the principles of sufficiency, sustainability, solidarity, and
 1193 participation. These principles guide us away from injustices against women and girls from a
 1194 variety of backgrounds, identities, and personal experiences and toward justice for all those
 1195 affected by patriarchy and sexism.

1196 The principle of sufficiency inspires us to meet the basic needs (physical, emotional,
 1197 intellectual, social, and spiritual) of all women and those who depend on them. This means, for
 1198 example, that society must protect them from violence and provide them with equitable
 1199 opportunities in education and employment. The principle of sufficiency supports not only
 1200 passive respect, but also advocacy in matters of health care, immigration, violence, human
 1201 trafficking, and the workplace, for example.

1202 The principle of sustainability compels society to provide all generations of women with
 1203 the means toward an acceptable quality of life. This applies to both the emotional and the

⁴⁴ “Small Catechism” in *The Book of Concord*, 359.

⁴⁵ Martin Luther, “A Treatise Concerning the Blessed Sacrament and Concerning the Brotherhoods,” cited in *A Compendium of Luther’s Theology*, ed. Hugh Kerr (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1943), 176.

⁴⁶ These principles are evident throughout ELCA social teaching and policy. Examples include the social statements *Caring for Creation*; *Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All*; and *Genetics, Faith and Responsibility*. Visit www.ELCA.org/socialstatements

⁴⁷ See *The Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective* (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 1991) and “Human Rights” (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2017), <https://www.elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Messages/Human-Rights>.

1204 material aspects of life. Both church and society should evaluate how their structures ensure—or
1205 fail to ensure—that all people have livelihoods and the means for well-being.

1206 The principle of solidarity commits society to see and experience our own well-being as
1207 connected to the well-being of others and their communities. It often involves people aligning
1208 themselves with others who have different experiences. Solidarity encompasses empathy and
1209 respect for the lived experience of women and girls; it encourages people not only to share in
1210 their suffering but also to participate in their liberation.

1211 The principle of participation urges us to structure our communities so that women
1212 participate equitably in the personal, local, and political decisions affecting their lives. All people
1213 need to participate in the structures that affect their lives and the decisions that affect their
1214 communities. No one's access to decision-making should be limited by sex or gender.

1215
1216 *22) The ELCA recognizes that some progress has been made to address patriarchy and sexism*
1217 *and to reduce their effects; however, more effort is required. We believe that this church,*
1218 *together with many other partners, can identify and challenge the complexities of patriarchy and*
1219 *sexism and advance equity. Gender-based equity happens through beliefs and ideas that are*
1220 *gender just and through laws, policies, and practices that support an equitable common good—*
1221 *abundant life for all.*

1222 Working together, people from many walks of life have brought about change in the
1223 North American context, diluting the power of patriarchy and sexism. Positive social and
1224 religious views about gender have influenced laws and policies that advance women's rights;
1225 conversely, changes in laws have positively influenced social and religious views. This nation
1226 and this church have seen and supported many positive changes in attitudes and laws that have
1227 helped women and girls to thrive, but more work remains to be done to support neighbor justice.

1228 Individuals and groups must challenge harmful social ideas and practices, reject sexist
1229 religious beliefs, and work to change laws, policies, and practices that justify and reinforce
1230 patriarchy. When enough people—especially people of faith—work, pray, stand, and struggle
1231 together, they can transform attitudes, beliefs, laws, policies, and practices so that all people of
1232 all sexes and genders enjoy God's vision of abundant life.

1233

1234

IV. Response:

1235 **The ELCA is called to new commitments and action as a church.**

1236

1237 *23) Propelled by these theological convictions and the robust resources of the Lutheran heritage,*
1238 *this church responds to God's call to justice with the following commitments to promote and*
1239 *support action toward a more equitable life together in Christ.*

1240 This section draws out the implications of this statement's convictions, analysis and resources in
1241 our tradition. It sets forth this church's commitments to reshape beliefs, attitudes, policies, and
1242 practices. Inevitably, meeting such commitments draws upon judgments of reason in discerning
1243 what exactly must be done, when it must be done, and how. The process may involve difficult
1244 conversations and unforeseen challenges calling for both determination and patience. The
1245 particulars may well be subject to correction and further deliberation. This church, however,
1246 views the following commitments as a signal that our life together in Christ can be renewed in
1247 ways that promote and support greater equity and justice.

1248

1249 *24) This church recognizes that the Body of Christ is called to honor and support women and*
1250 *girls from a variety of backgrounds, identities, and personal experiences in ways more consistent*
1251 *with life-giving theology and faith practices. As a church, we commit ourselves to celebrating*
1252 *and affirming the gifts and insights that women and girls bring to every expression and*
1253 *dimension of this church.*

1254 Over the centuries, women have carried immense responsibility in serving the church
1255 despite being denied ministerial authority. They have served through religious education, music,
1256 elder care, parish nursing, and bible study. They have pursued their vocations in myriad ways
1257 that support the growth of the gospel and the life of their local congregations. The Lutheran
1258 movement, including the ELCA, has only begun to recognize how we have failed to honor the
1259 full range of Spirit-given gifts that have equipped women and girls to serve.

1260 The fundamental commitment needed, then, is not to a particular program, practice, or
1261 process. Rather, we are called to repentance that reorients perspectives and actions, and we
1262 commit to encouraging, celebrating, and affirming the full range of gifts prepared by the Spirit
1263 for use in every expression and dimension of this church.

1264

1265 **The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America specifically commits to:**

1266

1267 *25) Promote the practice and use of scriptural translation and interpretation that acknowledge*
1268 *the contexts in which the Scriptures were written and reject the misuse of Scripture that has*
1269 *supported sexist attitudes and patriarchal structures.*

1270 Drawing deeply upon our Lutheran heritage, the ELCA promotes an understanding of
1271 Scripture that both honors its Word-centered purpose and acknowledges its historical sources and
1272 contexts. This church listens to God's Word speaking through the Scripture to sustain Christian
1273 faith and empower the community for service and justice in the world.

1274 Mindful of how the Christian Scriptures, through translation and interpretation, have been
1275 misused to support patriarchal structures and sexist attitudes, this church will promote translation
1276 and scriptural interpretation sensitive to the concerns of this statement.⁴⁸ Scriptural texts in which
1277 females are degraded, terrorized, debased, dominated, or valued less than males should be
1278 interpreted in light of God's resolve for abundant life through Christ.

1279

1280 *26) Promote theological reflection that responds to the gender-based needs of the neighbor.*
1281 *Teachers and theologians need to be honest about how church teachings have been misused to*
1282 *support patriarchy and sexism. More importantly, this church calls upon its teachers and*
1283 *theologians to work toward worthier expressions of the historic faith that honor God's desire for*
1284 *all people to thrive.*

1285 This church affirms the gifts of the Lutheran Christian tradition—the faithful witness of
1286 the Confessions, the power of the preached Word, and the reflection of theologians. At the same
1287 time, in recent decades this church has begun to recognize how these treasured gifts have
1288 sometimes been misused. Even while proclaiming the life-giving Gospel and the call for service
1289 and justice, preachers and theologians often have omitted or suppressed the stories, reflections,
1290 and experiences of women and girls. For some, this suppression has contributed to a crisis of
1291 faith.

1292 The commitment to articulate and proclaim the Christian faith in a more inclusive manner
1293 calls for renewed efforts from preachers, teachers, and theologians. It means preaching and

⁴⁸ The many different translations of the Scriptures from their original languages are not of equal accuracy or value.

1294 writing that make full use of stories and insights from the lives of women and girls with a variety
 1295 of backgrounds, identities, and personal experiences. It involves teaching and preaching about
 1296 justification, and a theology of the cross that recognizes how the motifs of Christlikeness and
 1297 suffering have been used harmfully. It entails teaching and research that reflect transformative
 1298 understandings, with special concern around key doctrines such as Christology and creation.
 1299

1300 *27) Use inclusive language (all genders) for humankind and inclusive and expansive language*
 1301 *(other than human) for God. This church is committed to the deepest Christian understanding of*
 1302 *the Trinity revealed through Jesus Christ and to the importance of imagining and speaking about*
 1303 *God in faithful ways that expand rather than limit the expression of God's self-revelation and*
 1304 *mystery. In particular, we support developing liturgies, hymns, prayers, and educational*
 1305 *materials that broaden use beyond predominantly masculine language. This practice follows the*
 1306 *scriptural witness that God transcends human categories. Therefore, as in the Scriptures,*
 1307 *metaphors for and images of God should be drawn frequently from the lives of people of all*
 1308 *identities and experiences and gleaned from nature in all its diversity. Employing inclusive and*
 1309 *expansive language for and images of God helps human beings approach and encounter the God*
 1310 *of beauty and love who reveals God's self to humanity in rich and mysterious ways.*

1311 Words are powerful because they shape how humans relate to one another. For this
 1312 reason, the ELCA has long urged **inclusive language** regarding human beings in both worship
 1313 and everyday use.⁴⁹ This statement reinforces that commitment. This church urges renewed
 1314 efforts to move us together from the habits of predominantly male-oriented wording to language
 1315 that embraces all people.

1316 Words about God carry even greater substance and subconscious meaning because they
 1317 are religious symbols. The God revealed in Christ defies *all* human comprehension and speech.
 1318 Still, humans must use words and images to pray and praise. The words that are used carry
 1319 historical depth and communal power and have meaning for an individual's self-understanding
 1320 and relationships.

1321 Moving beyond exclusive language and imagery presents a complex challenge, both
 1322 personally and communally. Changing or expanding Christian symbolism may be both unsettling
 1323 and life-giving. For instance, paternal or maternal references to God may be liberating for some
 1324 people but deeply painful for others. Despite the complexity, this church urges Christians to
 1325 work together to confront the problem of exclusive language and imagery because these
 1326 contribute significantly to patriarchal religious beliefs and practices.

1327 The formulation of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is at the center the conversation. Many
 1328 Christians think this is the only correct way to speak of God, which reinforces exclusively
 1329 masculine associations. Others think that the traditional Trinitarian formulation should be
 1330 changed or discarded because it promotes a faulty understanding of God as essentially male.

1331 The ELCA affirms the creedal witness to the mystery, relations, and actions of the three
 1332 persons of the Trinity. At the same time, this church holds that exclusive use of a male-oriented
 1333 formula to refer to God is problematic. The use of expansive language for God reflects
 1334 faithfulness to God's self-revelation in the Scriptures and in human experience.

1335 In our life together, we call upon leaders and members to enlarge the dialogue about and
 1336 practice of inclusive and expansive language and images for God. It is vital to explore the often-
 1337 neglected variety of symbols for God recorded in the Scriptures, and to plumb the historical

⁴⁹ *ELCA Style Guide* (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2014), 48.

1338 insights found in theology and religious art. In this spirit, this statement urges the continued
1339 exploration and development of expansive liturgies, hymnody, and worship resources.

1340

1341 *28) Develop and support more extensive policies and practices within the ELCA that promote*
1342 *equitable authority and leadership within this church in all its expressions. In many instances*
1343 *this requires promoting the leadership of women, with special concern for women of color. In*
1344 *other cases, this means promoting the participation of men in more varied roles, including those*
1345 *traditionally seen as “women’s work.”*

1346 In the 1970s, the three predecessor churches of the ELCA made independent decisions to
1347 ordain women for the public ministry of Word and Sacrament.⁵⁰ While multiple viewpoints were
1348 argued, these churches concluded that the Scriptures present a mixed record regarding ordination
1349 and that nothing definitive precluded women from serving in this office.

1350 Since then, the experience of this church has shown those decisions to be God-pleasing,
1351 consistent with the words of the prophet Joel (Joel 2) and embodied in the Pentecost story of
1352 Acts in which the Spirit falls upon all without respect to age, gender, nationality, or ability (Acts
1353 2). Women serving in lay leadership, ministries of Word and Sacrament, and ministries of Word
1354 and Service have borne powerful witness to the Gospel and enlivened this church’s ministry.
1355 However, individual journeys have been difficult for many and the communal journey since
1356 1970 has been agonizingly slow.

1357 In light of this experience, this church gives thanks, rejoices, and remains committed to
1358 developing and supporting additional policies and practices that promote women’s authority and
1359 leadership within the ELCA, both rostered and lay. Given the continual struggles of women of
1360 color for acceptance, equity, and leadership, this church’s commitments with them require
1361 special attention.⁵¹

1362 This commitment to confront continuing sexism and promote equitable authority and
1363 leadership of women belongs to the entire church. It also includes encouraging men to seek more
1364 varied roles in lay service and on the roster of Word and Service.

1365 The commitment speaks to, but is not limited to, call committees, boards, and councils. It
1366 requires attention to formal and informal mentoring and succession planning. It requires attention
1367 to practices in seminaries, colleges and universities, social ministry organizations, preschools and
1368 grade schools, and youth ministries. Together we can open ourselves joyfully to the Spirit, who
1369 clearly has used the gifts of female leadership to enhance and empower her work.

1370

1371 *29) Promote changes that are economically just, including equitable pay and benefits, for*
1372 *women in all ELCA institutions and organizations, with special attention to the situations of*
1373 *people affected by intersecting forms of discrimination.*

1374 In support of women’s authority and leadership, this church must continue to seek new
1375 ways to redress economic injustice. As of this writing,⁵² rostered women of the ELCA average
1376 higher pay than ordained women nationally but their compensation remains inequitable
1377 compared to that of men within the ELCA. The ELCA is called renew efforts to support

⁵⁰ The Lutheran Church in America in 1970, the American Lutheran Church in 1972, and the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in 1976.

⁵¹ See “45th Anniversary of the Ordination of Women” (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2016), download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/45th_Anniversary_of_the_Ordination_Women_Ordained_Full_Report.pdf.

⁵² Ibid.

1378 equitable benefits and pay across our church. These should include particular attention to women
1379 affected by intersecting forms of discrimination.

1380 These efforts should not overlook the economic concerns of lay women serving in church
1381 callings, including those serving in less-recognized roles such as office administrators, preschool
1382 teachers, or in ministries of hospitality. The various organizations and institutions of this church
1383 need to review their compensation, including insurance and other benefits.

1384 Finally, this church needs to offer greater support for women's ministry and leadership
1385 in policies related to pregnancy, parental leave, and breastfeeding. Improved arrangements for
1386 ELCA rostered leaders and for employees of ELCA-related organizations and institutions should
1387 support these leaders and demonstrate this church's commitment to family.

1388
1389 *30) Seek and encourage faithful dialogue, discernment, and, when possible, joint action on*
1390 *issues of patriarchy and sexism with other members of the body of Christ and with partners of*
1391 *other religions and worldviews. As a member of a global communion, the ELCA affirms the*
1392 *Lutheran World Federation's "Gender Justice Policy."*

1393 (https://www.lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/DTPW-WICAS_Gender_Justice.pdf)

1394 Governed by the framework of this statement, we in this church acknowledge our
1395 responsibility to continue to address our own actions, attitudes, policies, and practices as
1396 members of the body of Christ. We believe that the Holy Spirit is leading faithful Christians, as
1397 well as people of diverse religions and worldviews, into deeper discernment about questions of
1398 patriarchy and sexism.

1399 In our own exploration of these issues, we seek whenever possible to engage our
1400 Christian siblings in mutual discernment and common action, acknowledging our own
1401 complicity in patriarchy and sexism. This approach is apparent in the ELCA's "A Declaration of
1402 Ecumenical Commitment": "The first word, which the Church speaks ecumenically, may well be
1403 a word of self-criticism, a word against itself, because we are called to be seekers of a truth that
1404 is larger than all of us and that condemns our parochialism, imperialism, and self-
1405 preoccupation."⁵³ Dialogue, while necessary and mutual, begins through self-examination.

1406 Given the diverse but strongly held perspectives in society and throughout Christ's
1407 church, conversations about patriarchy and sexism can be challenging as well as promising.
1408 ELCA leaders and members encounter commitments and perspectives among neighbors of other
1409 religions and worldviews that are quite different from those endorsed by this statement. In our
1410 commitment to engage with and accompany our neighbors, we need to be clear about ELCA
1411 social teaching but also listen carefully to different ideas. This is part of how we seek mutual
1412 understanding and pursue neighbor justice. The goal is to join in honest conversation and to
1413 challenge each other to greater justice while accompanying women and girls in their own
1414 contexts.

1415 The ELCA is grateful for the faithful and courageous witness of our global communion,
1416 the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). While this ELCA social statement is situated in the

⁵³ The policy statement continues: "If it can speak such a word of self-criticism, the Church will be free to reject a triumphalist and magisterial understanding of itself and cultivate instead an understanding of itself as a community of mission and witness that seeks to be serviceable to the in-breaking of the reign of God." See "A Declaration of Ecumenical Commitment" (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 1991), http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/The_Vision_Of_The_ELCA.pdf).

1417 diverse cultural context of the United States, we recognize the biblical rationale, principles, and
 1418 methodology of the LWF “Gender Justice Policy” as a global benchmark toward conversation
 1419 and common practice. In a spirit of “mutual conversation and consolation,”⁵⁴ the ELCA will
 1420 continue to accompany and to be accompanied in implementing that policy within the global
 1421 Lutheran community. Similar efforts by the World Council of Churches, supported by local and
 1422 regional councils, also encourage us in our collective task.

1423 We invite ecumenical partners, especially full communion partners, to work with us for
 1424 gender justice in church and society. The fundamental biblical commitment to justice should
 1425 undergird and guide our common attention to the problems caused by patriarchy and sexism,
 1426 even when we have different ideas about how to remedy these problems. In those areas where we
 1427 are not of one mind in our discernment, we will continue to walk together in the bond of
 1428 Christian unity, seeking the Spirit’s leading.

1429 We also invite partners of other religions and worldviews, especially where we serve
 1430 together in coalition, to continue to collaborate with us whenever possible in seeking justice for
 1431 women and girls. That search is integral to the common good.
 1432

1433 V. Response:

1434 The ELCA calls for action and new commitments in society.

1435
 1436 *31) This church teaches that the God who justifies expects all people to seek justice in earthly*
 1437 *relationships, structures, and systems. The ELCA calls for sustained and renewed efforts through*
 1438 *which women, girls, and gender non-conforming people experience greater equity and justice.*
 1439 *The following commitments express this church’s firm hope for renewed social relationships and*
 1440 *structures that benefit the common good.*

1441 The Scriptures are clear that the God who justifies is the same God who insists that
 1442 “justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream” (Amos 5:24). The
 1443 ELCA affirms that God’s Law, in its civil use, permeates and undergirds basic structures of
 1444 human society to support life and protect all people in a world that remains under the sway of
 1445 sin. God works through shared human endeavor and intends that all people work together to
 1446 deter evil and seek justice.

1447 Lutheran Confessional teachings identify the primary structures of human society—the
 1448 church, family, civil authority, and economic arrangement—as God’s gifts. Justice is the measure
 1449 by which God’s Law guides and assesses these basic structures. Social structures and institutions
 1450 that fail to do justice are not fulfilling the purpose for which God created them. They must be
 1451 challenged and held accountable; this is a matter of great urgency because human life depends
 1452 upon them.

1453 In seeking the well-being of the human community, the Lutheran tradition places a strong
 1454 reliance upon human reason and knowledge tested and exercised through the sciences and social
 1455 analysis. Although imperfect, social movements—enlivened by the insights of human reason and
 1456 knowledge—can be expressions of God’s work through the Law to bring about greater justice
 1457 and social liberation. The women’s movement, broadly understood, is one of these.

1458 In identifying the following aspects of society that require engagement, this church does
 1459 not presume to have quick or easy solutions for the deeply rooted, intertwined, and complex

⁵⁴[2] “Smalcald Articles,” *The Book of Concord*, eds. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2000), 319.

1460 problems that permeate earthly systems and structures. Time, study, effort, and discernment are
1461 required. Nevertheless, it is both a clear biblical teaching and a matter of neighbor justice that
1462 God’s people hold governing authorities and social structures accountable to their purpose,
1463 ensuring greater equity and justice for all.⁵⁵ These commitments to advocate for and support
1464 social renewal express this church’s firm trust that God works to create improved social
1465 relations.

1466
1467 **The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America commits itself to:**

1468
1469 *32) Advocate for and support laws, policies, and practices that respect diverse bodies rather*
1470 *than discriminating against, objectifying, or devaluing them. Women, girls and people who*
1471 *identify as non-binary must not be deprived of their human or civil rights. (See the ELCA’s*
1472 *social message “Human Rights,” www.ELCA.org/socialmessages.)*

1473 ELCA social teaching supports human rights for all people, regardless of their sex
1474 (biological), gender, or sexuality. This stance is rooted in respect and welcome for all people as
1475 created in the image of God, and evident in the ELCA’s longstanding commitment to protecting
1476 civil and human rights. While members may hold differing views on matters related to sexual
1477 orientation or gender identity,⁵⁶ this church is nevertheless united in opposing discrimination,
1478 objectification, abuse, or control of the bodies of women, girls, or individuals who identify as
1479 **genderqueer**.⁵⁷ The ELCA’s commitment to civil and political rights helps to orient the changes
1480 and challenges addressed in the following commitments. Minimal steps include developing and
1481 enforcing laws, policies, and practices that do not deprive any people of their human or civil
1482 rights.

1483
1484 *33) Advocate for and support the eradication of gender-based violence within the church and*
1485 *more broadly in society by addressing both the systemic aspects of such violence and the*
1486 *personal responsibility of those who perpetrate harm. (See the ELCA’s social messages*
1487 *“Gender-based Violence” and “Commercial Sexual Exploitation,”*
1488 *www.ELCA.org/socialmessages.)*

1489 All people deserve safety and protection from violence, along with due process and
1490 support when violence is experienced. Although anyone may experience gender-based violence,
1491 the overwhelming number of attacks target women, girls, and individuals who identify as
1492 genderqueer. Such violence often occurs in domestic settings, yet gender-based violence includes
1493 any physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, economic, or other personal harm inflicted on
1494 someone for reasons of gender, regardless of the setting.⁵⁸

1495 Although individuals are ultimately responsible for their actions, gender-based violence
1496 is rooted in systemic sin. A patriarchal social system affirms, sometimes implicitly, that women

⁵⁵ *Church in Society*, 4.

⁵⁶ See *Human Sexuality*, 19, and “Gender Identity Discrimination” (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2013).

⁵⁷ This statement uses terms regarding sex, gender, and sexuality that are preferred in 2019. Preferences will likely change in the future. See the *GLAAD Media Reference Guide*, 10th ed.,

<http://www.glaad.org/sites/default/files/GLAAD-Media-Reference-Guide-Tenth-Edition.pdf>

⁵⁸ “Gender-based Violence” (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2015), 2, 6-7, and “Foundational documentation for a social message on Gender-based Violence” (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2015), 6.

1497 and girls should be controlled or subordinated. In this way, it underwrites, justifies, or at least
1498 permits acts of violence, whether by individuals or communities. Patriarchy, even when
1499 seemingly harmless or unrecognized, often reinforces the conditions, attitudes, and values that
1500 undergird harmful action.

1501 The wide scope of theological, pastoral, and societal matters related to gender-based
1502 violence is addressed in the ELCA's social message "Gender-based Violence."⁵⁹ In it, this
1503 church calls upon itself *and* upon society to resist and change harmful attitudes, beliefs, and
1504 systems. This social statement affirms the analysis, insights, and commitments expressed there.

1505
1506 *34) Advocate for and support medical research, health care delivery, and access to equitable*
1507 *and affordable health care services, including reproductive health care, that honor how bodies*
1508 *differ and eliminate discrimination due to sex (biological), gender, or sexual orientation. (See*
1509 *the ELCA social statements Caring for Health: Our Shared Endeavor and Abortion,*
1510 www.ELCA.org/socialstatements.)

1511 The ELCA teaches that a just society provides equitable access to health care for all.⁶⁰
1512 Health is a shared endeavor, requiring both personal responsibility and social commitment.
1513 "Health care is the kind of good most appropriately given on the basis of need."⁶¹

1514 The U.S. medical system is widely recognized as a global leader in research, prevention,
1515 and treatment. As a church, we are grateful for amazing medical advancements. At the same
1516 time, U.S. health care has carried a bias against women and girls in its practice and delivery.

1517 This church gives thanks for those who have drawn attention to these problems. We urge
1518 everyone in medical research and health care delivery to recognize that diverse bodies have
1519 differing needs. We look for further advancement in medical research and the health care system,
1520 both rural and urban, that eliminate discrimination based on sex and gender, economic resources,
1521 ability, ethnicity, or race.

1522 This statement affirms previous ELCA teaching on reproductive health care. Such care is
1523 to be provided according to need in all cases,⁶² and this church opposes any effort to roll back
1524 that delivery. While questions about how best to organize and finance mechanisms of care leave
1525 room for legitimate debate, the mandate for equitable access to reproductive health care remains.

1526 The ELCA social statement *Abortion* (www.ELCA.org/socialstatements) addresses in a
1527 nuanced way this critical, complex, and controversial aspect of reproductive health care. It
1528 teaches that the life and decisions of someone who is pregnant, as well as the developing life in a
1529 womb, must be respected and protected through a complex assessment of moral and social
1530 factors.

1531 On that basis, this church teaches that abortion ought to be an option of last resort for
1532 pregnant persons and the people in their lives. At the same time, ELCA teaching opposes laws
1533 that deny access to safe and affordable abortions. It urges efforts to reduce the conditions that
1534 encourage many to turn to abortion as the response to unintended pregnancy.⁶³

1535

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ *Caring for Health: Our Shared Endeavor* (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2003), 18.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ *Abortion* (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 1991), 4-10.

1536 35) *Advocate for and support economic policies, regulations, and practices that enhance equity*
1537 *and equality for women and girls, with special concern for raising up women and girls who*
1538 *experience intersecting forms of oppression. (See the ELCA’s social statement Sufficient,*
1539 *Sustainable Livelihood for All, www.ELCA.org/socialstatements.)*

1540 Through human decisions and actions, God intends economic arrangements to support
1541 human thriving. This church’s benchmark on economic arrangements is that they should provide
1542 “sufficient, sustainable livelihood for all.”⁶⁴

1543 The U.S. economic system has made notable movement in this direction for women over
1544 the last 40 years. However, economic inequality between men and women remains stark,
1545 especially when it overlaps or intersects with social identities. This is evident not only in pay
1546 discrepancy but also in other forms of compensation. Such economic inequalities
1547 disproportionately harms women and their families.

1548 This church expects workers to be paid equitably for similar work. There should be no
1549 discrepancies in benefits nor in access to capital for business or investment. There should be no
1550 discrepancies in access to Social Security or pensions. Intersecting factors such as race, ethnicity,
1551 and ability should not worsen the disparities.

1552 There are various strategies to correct these systemic problems. Some stress regulations
1553 aimed at equity whereas others emphasize market freedom. The primary criteria should be what
1554 provides sufficient, sustainable livelihood, because the lives of providers and their dependents
1555 are at stake.

1556
1557 36) *Advocate for and support multifaceted understandings of social and economic roles so that*
1558 *neither our human traits (such as courage or compassion) nor our callings (such as business*
1559 *leader or stay-at-home parent) are dictated by our sex (biological) and gender. Encourage and*
1560 *empower all people to use their gifts for the sake of the common good, whether at home, at work,*
1561 *or in the public sphere.*

1562 Some people and communities understand gender-assigned roles and characteristics to be
1563 largely fixed. These roles, often connected to the teaching of complementarity, are considered to
1564 be immutably defined by God or nature. The historical evidence demonstrates that many of the
1565 injustices and power inequities visited upon women have followed from that teaching. However,
1566 this church holds that roles within social structures are intended for the sake of human well-being
1567 and are provisional rather than fixed.

1568 As social beings, we humans need social structures and guidance for the roles we live
1569 out. Social structures and roles are not solely social constructions; some aspects of biology
1570 influence some behavioral tendencies. Yet, the admission of women into professions like law or
1571 the military in recent decades, and their success in those fields, demonstrate that gender-assigned
1572 roles are not immutable as once believed.⁶⁵ Social roles and structures require ongoing
1573 evaluation in light of God’s intent that human community should flourish.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ *Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All* (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 1999), 3.

⁶⁵ In 1872 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the right to practice law is not one of the privileges and immunities protected by the U.S. Constitution. Siding with the majority, Justice Joseph P. Bradley argued that “the civil law, as well as nature herself, has always recognized a wide difference in the respective spheres and destinies of man and woman. . . . The Constitution of the family organization, which is founded in the divine ordinance as well as in the nature of things, indicates the domestic sphere as that which properly belongs to the domain and functions of womanhood.” *Bradwell v. Illinois*, 83 U.S. 130, 141 (1872) (Bradley, J., concurring).

⁶⁶ *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2009), 7.

1574 This church celebrates when women find their places of responsibility, whether as heads
1575 of a corporation or full-time homemakers. Either choice illustrates the calling to contribute to
1576 society's good. Men should explore similar variety in the roles they seek. Because there are
1577 many phases in each person's life journey, we also honor roles that are not compensated, such as
1578 retirement or volunteerism. The aim is for individuals in community to seek the most life-giving
1579 roles within the structures of church, family, work, or civil society.

1580 Toward this end, the ELCA urges that society's laws, policies, and practices foster
1581 diversity and flexibility so that all may contribute their gifts to society, regardless of their gender.
1582 U.S. courts and legislatures today generally support women's vocations outside the home. In
1583 addition, this society needs laws and policies that will eliminate hidden discrimination, including
1584 when one becomes pregnant.

1585
1586 *37) Advocate for and support resources for families of various configurations and the*
1587 *communities in which they live. Empower parents and all who raise or care for children or other*
1588 *family members to nurture, protect, and provide for their households in ways that do not*
1589 *reinforce gender-based stereotypes. In particular, advocate for institutional changes that support*
1590 *and encourage men and boys to participate in all family roles associated with the home,*
1591 *caregiving, parenting, and nurturing.*

1592 This church continues to affirm the goodness of marriage and family but also recognizes
1593 that patriarchy has affected these relationships in harmful ways. The family is "an indispensable
1594 social institution because of its role in establishing conditions of trust and protection of the
1595 vulnerable."⁶⁷ We teach that families are formed in various configurations; the primary concern
1596 is how well they meet their intended purpose of helping all family members flourish.

1597 Historically, in this society men have assumed the "headship" of their households and
1598 women have been expected to be subordinate and to fulfill roles with lower social status, such as
1599 nurturing and caring for others. In justification, Christians in the past, and many today, cite the
1600 so-called "Household Codes" (Ephesians 5:22-6:9; Colossians 3:18-4:1). Indeed, some point to
1601 gender-based rules presented as a form of works righteousness (1 Timothy 2:15).⁶⁸

1602 By contrast, this church holds that God intends the leadership of families to be shared in
1603 full and equitable partnerships, which can be arranged in various ways. Social science research
1604 indicates that families and households benefit most when roles are adjusted according to the
1605 personalities and circumstances involved rather than fixed according to gender, insisting on the
1606 male as sole head of the house.⁶⁹

1607 Such adjustments empower those who raise or care for children to share authority and
1608 household roles, which allows everyone to thrive. Flexibility permits shared responsibility for all
1609 caring relationships in a household, from infant care to elder care. This necessarily means
1610 balancing demands of work and income, individual strengths and interests, and the particular
1611 needs of the family or household.

1612 Society's economic and social arrangements should provide generously in support of
1613 families. For instance, the one who gives birth needs adequate paid leave, but so do other

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 22 and following.

⁶⁸ Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive*. These social stipulations were borrowed from the pagan social order of the first century and adapted by some New Testament writers. Despite their pagan origin, they have been treated as matters of revelation because they appear in the Scriptures.

⁶⁹ Don S. Browning, *Equality and the Family: A Fundamental, Practical Theology of Children, Mothers, and Fathers, in Modern Societies* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 285ff.

1614 caregivers. Every caregiver needs the opportunity to bond with a newborn and, in relevant cases,
1615 to support a partner’s recovery from labor and delivery. U.S. society must find ways to increase
1616 paid family leave for parents and primary caregivers and to strengthen support for child care.
1617 Those returning to work after raising children also need profession-specific support for
1618 reentering the work force.

1619
1620 *38) Advocate for and support legal reforms, humane policies, and adequate services for*
1621 *migrants, immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, especially those who experience*
1622 *intersecting forms of oppression. (See the ELCA’s social message “Immigration,”*
1623 www.ELCA.org/socialmessages.)

1624 This statement affirms previous ELCA teaching and policy that stress fairness and
1625 generosity in responding to newcomers in the United States. The ELCA’s commitment to U.S.
1626 legal and policy reform includes several social-policy resolutions anchored by compassion,
1627 justice, and wisdom.⁷⁰ Those resolutions prioritize addressing the root causes of mass migration,
1628 the unification of families, and just, humane enforcement.

1629 Migrants, immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers often suffer more when they are
1630 women, girls, or **gender non-conforming** people. At every point in their journey, and even when
1631 living and working in the U.S., they are especially vulnerable to degradation, rape, and other
1632 forms of violence. Their immigration status must not compromise their safety and well-being.
1633 On the contrary, their status as sojourners in this society invokes biblical injunctions for special
1634 care and concern (Leviticus 19:34).

1635
1636 *39) Advocate for and support portrayals in entertainment, media, and advertising that do not*
1637 *objectify or stereotype people but rather show all people as capable of the wide variety of human*
1638 *characteristics and roles.*

1639 The power of entertainment and media to shape individual thought and cultural beliefs is
1640 immense and often underestimated. This church expects that entertainment and media should
1641 seek to be gender just. The gender-based stereotypes and sexist attitudes in film, print,
1642 advertisements, and social media are many and require serious efforts for reform.

1643 The purpose of entertainment is to provide release and enjoyment, while art offers an
1644 interpretation of human experience that probes our understanding. This church encourages
1645 entertainment and media decision-makers to portray gender diversity and to show that
1646 individuals are capable of a wide variety of human characteristics and status. Consumers are
1647 encouraged to think critically about both the production and their own consumption of these
1648 media. Those who raise or educate children and youth are especially encouraged to seek greater
1649 media literacy.

1650
1651 *40) Advocate for and support means for increasing women’s participation in local, state, and*
1652 *national politics, with special attention to the proportionate advocacy and support needed by*
1653 *those who face intersecting forms of oppression.*

1654 The Lutheran theological heritage teaches that God intends governing authorities to serve
1655 the good of society. When women are underrepresented in this country’s political offices and

⁷⁰ Since 2009, actions include: “Toward Compassionate, Just, and Wise Reform” (ELCA social policy resolution (SPR), 2008); “AMMPARO Strategy” (ELCA SPR, 2016); “Dream Act” (ELCA SPR, 2011); “Uniting American Families Act” (ELCA SPR, 2013); and “Welcoming and Advocating for Refugees” (ELCA SPR, 2016). These can be viewed at ELCA.org/Resources/Faith-and-Society .

1656 public leadership, the common good and the vocations of women are not fully served. This
1657 church encourages change in social beliefs and attitudes about women that often inform their
1658 exclusion from political life and public leadership. This church likewise calls for mentoring,
1659 education, and equitable practices toward political leadership, and for services for families and
1660 households that enable women to serve. Especially acute is the need to encourage and support
1661 women of color and others in marginalized groups to serve in political and leadership roles at
1662 local, state, and national levels.

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1664

**A Shared Challenge:
Living in hope, we are called to action.**

1665

1666

1667 We of the ELCA acknowledge the inspiring and yet challenging vision expressed in the
1668 rich convictions and significant commitments of this statement addressing justice for women and
1669 girls. We recognize that this requires the difficult and critical work of confronting and
1670 dismantling patriarchy, sexism, and male privilege. We accept this summons with confidence in
1671 the triune God—revealed in the Scriptures and celebrated in Word and Sacrament—who
1672 lovingly intends that all people flourish.

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We recognize as God's gifts the society and the church of which we are part, even while
analysis reveals how patriarchy and sexism pervade our lives within them. We give thanks for
the social advances made in this society against systemic and personal harm. Yet we affirm this
statement's convictions and commitments as a summons to seek even greater justice and equity
for all.

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We are grateful that God grants us in faith both the freedom and the obligation for
neighbor justice, a commitment to seek equity and equality for all. We celebrate the Holy Spirit's
work in our church and pray she will empower us to live in hope and into action, because
through Jesus Christ we trust that God's promises ultimately will prevail.

End Notes

The footnotes in this proposed statement will be converted to endnotes upon adoption by the Churchwide Assembly, per standard format in ELCA social teaching documents. They are left in footnote format at this point for easy reference.

Glossary

Androcentric: Male-centered, focused on men.

Binary (Gender Binary): The concept that there are only two genders, which are distinctly different in inherent and often “opposite” ways.

Complementarity: The belief that God gave men and women inherently different roles and purposes that complement each other to mutual benefit. Men’s roles have often related to leadership and decision-making; women’s roles have included obeying males and caring for others. These roles are informed by the structural dynamic of dominance (male) and submission (female). The imbalance of power in the relationship contributes to male privilege.

Domestic violence: See entry for “Gender-based violence.”

Equality: The idea that people have the same rights and should receive the same resources. Equality can refer to the equal worth of all people or to people having equal experiences of their rights and their potential in life.

Equity: Fair treatment of people according to their needs. The principle of equity takes into account that people exist on inherently uneven playing fields due to poverty, sexism, racism, etc. Because of these different contexts, individuals or groups may require different resources and support to ensure that they have the same rights and abilities to make choices as others do (such as having a choice of quality doctors, careers, neighborhoods, etc.). The goal of equity is to ensure each person receives what they need to flourish and is not disadvantaged.

Ex. A simple example of equality in public restrooms would be having changing tables in all restrooms, because male caregivers may also need a space to change diapers. A simple example of equity in public restrooms would be putting more stalls in women’s restrooms in order to serve the specific needs women have.

Expansive language: Language (or imagery) referring to God that is not limited to humanity or human categories: water, a rock, a hiding place, a mighty fortress, etc. See “inclusive language.”

Gender: Identities, roles, behaviors, and attributes that cultures, societies, and individuals shape. Most often, gender is linked to femininity and masculinity. The most common gender identities are woman/girl and man/boy, but other identities exist. For more, see “gender non-conforming.”

Gender identity: How a person understands their gender; one’s internal sense of one’s gender.

Gender justice: Gender justice means that people of all genders having equal power to live into their individual callings. Gender justice is sought by eliminating power imbalances among people at individual and societal levels, as well as eliminating discrimination against women and people who do not adhere to stereotypes associated with men and women.

Gender non-conforming, Non-binary, Genderqueer: Words that people who do not identify as “men” or “women” use to describe their gender (not sexuality). Their gender identity and/or biological characteristics may not completely fit with the dominant and expected ways of acting as, or being, a man or woman or a boy or girl. Each term might be used differently by different people, as an umbrella term or as a specific label for their gender identity. This document uses all three terms in an effort to be inclusive. (Terminology will change over time. Readers are referred to contemporary communities for up-to-date language.) *For more, see “gender,” “intersex,” “transgender,” and “queer.”*

Gender-based violence: Physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, or other personal harm inflicted on someone for gender-based reasons, including but not limited to intimate partner violence and domestic violence. This can include such things as catcalling women or bullying boys who are not perceived as “man enough.” Perpetrators commit gender-based violence to assert power over someone.

Genderqueer: See “*Gender non-conforming, Non-binary, Genderqueer.*”

Hierarchy: A system in which groups are ranked and certain groups have power over other groups. Sometimes this power over others leads to more value being assigned to the group or individuals with dominance.

Human trafficking: Coercion, abduction, and/or imprisonment of people for forced labor, often of a sexual nature. This problem is pervasive around the world, including in the U.S. Also known as modern-day slavery.

Inclusive language: Language that includes all genders when referring to humanity or God, for instance, using *humans* or *humankind* to talk about humanity, rather than *man* or *mankind*. See “*expansive language.*”

Intersecting, intersectionality: Humans have multiple aspects to their identities, including gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, age, social class, etc. These aspects of human identities are tied to systemic privilege and oppression; gender is tied to sexism, ethnicity is tied to racism, etc. Intersectionality describes the ways different forms of discrimination and systemic oppression affect each other and shape the lives of individuals and communities in distinct ways. All human identities and all forms of privilege and oppression are made up of many intersections.

Ex. A woman of African descent may have a Ph.D. and make a healthy salary, but she will still suffer from racism and sexism. However, she would experience that racism and sexism differently from how a man of African descent, a white woman, or an impoverished person might experience them. The injustices she faces, therefore, may have solutions different from those for other people.

Intersex: As described by the Intersex Society of North America, a term for a variety of conditions people are born with: physical characteristics, anatomy, and/or genes that vary from standards set by doctors' expectations for being "female" or "male." The term refers to the fact of biological variation among humans. Some people identify as intersex, rather than using the term solely to refer to a condition; others may also identify as gender non-conforming or a similar term.

Justice: Generally, justice refers to an underlying sense of fairness, right treatment, and reciprocity. This statement emphasizes the aspects of justice that include fair and equal treatment under the law, ending oppression based on power differences, and, as emphasized in the Bible, a right relationship with God and within community.

Neighbor justice: A term proposed in this social statement rooted in the biblical directive to "love your neighbor as yourself." This term expresses the idea that faith is active in love and love necessarily calls for justice in relationships and in the structures of society. Neighbor justice is meeting neighbors' needs across the globe and in our local communities.

Non-binary: See "Gender non-conforming, Non-binary, Genderqueer."

Objectification: Thinking of or portraying people as objects, erasing their humanity, emotions, and rights.

Ex. Catcalling, advertisements that use sexualized images to sell merchandise, and stories in which female characters exist only as props for male characters.

Patriarchy: A social system that enables men to have more power than, and power over, women and people who do not conform to socially accepted gender roles. A patriarchal social system is dominated by men, identified with men, and centered on men's actions, voices, and authority. In various ways, this kind of social system operates to control women, girls, and people who do not fit society's predominant ideas of maleness and masculinity.

Privilege: The advantage or special treatment of a person or group that is unearned, resulting from how their identity is perceived as "normal" or "better." Privilege is lived out on an individual and societal scale. Privilege is not something a person deliberately opts into or out of, nor is it experienced by everyone in the same ways.

Ex. A man benefits from male privilege when his opinion is subconsciously valued more highly in a meeting, when he is paid more for equal work, or when he walks down a street without harassment or fear of sexual assault. A white person benefits from white privilege when they can shop without being followed or monitored by staff who think they may shoplift, or when the majority of heroes in textbooks and movies look like them. For a white male, the combination of white privilege and male privilege can work together. A white man may have fewer risk factors for some stress-related illnesses such as Type 2 diabetes, while his complaints of pain are more likely to be taken seriously by his doctor. For more, see "intersectionality."

Queer: Umbrella term regarding sex, gender, and sexual orientation, often used by individuals who identify as somehow “other” from society’s sexual, romantic, or gender norms. Although historically used in a derogatory manner, the term has since been reclaimed as a positive label by some members within that community.

Rape culture: An environment in which the objectification of and assault on human bodies, particularly in a sexual way, is normalized and tolerated. Rape culture primarily harms women and girls. Blaming rape victims for their assaults and maintaining a biased justice system are both parts of rape culture and how it is propagated.

Reproductive health care: Health services related to the reproductive system at all stages of life for all genders, including the menstrual cycle, fertility, and cancer.

Sex (biological): A scientific label assigned at birth that describes an individual’s reproductive organs and whether they have XX chromosomes (female) or XY chromosomes (male). People whose biology varies from standards set by doctors’ expectations of being “female” or “male” are typically called “intersex.” Biological sex characteristics and traits of people who are said to be female or male are also variable.

Sexism: Refers to what supports male privilege and reinforces prejudice and discrimination against women and girls due to their gender and against people who do not conform to socially accepted gender roles. Human actions and speech can be sexist, as can institutions, policies, and practices.

Sexuality: A complex individual and social concept. Individually, sexuality includes the romantic and/or sexual feelings and desires that a person experiences. A person’s sexuality is also influenced by the social and cultural forces in which they find themselves.

Toxic masculinity: Refers to forms of masculinity that emphasize aggression, power, and control and sometimes violent or unhealthy sexuality. It deemphasizes weakness, caring, and vulnerability. Masculinity itself is not harmful; however, it is described as toxic when these forms of masculinity cultivate harm to self, others, and society; toxic masculinity limits the humanity and compassion of men.

Transgender: Describes a person whose gender is different from the sex assigned or identified at birth. Some transgender individuals identify as men or as women; others don't identify with one of those words. Some people use this term to describe their identity; for others it serves as an umbrella term. Over time its meaning may change as language evolves. *See “gender non-conforming.”*

White privilege: *See “privilege.”*

1683 **Implementing resolutions for Proposed Social Statement**

1684 ***Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Lutheran Call to Action***

1685 (CWA 2019.xx.xx)

1686
1687

1688 **Resolved:**

- 1689 1. To urge members, congregations, synods, churchwide ministries, social ministry
1690 organizations, church-related institutions, ecumenical partners, and all people of good
1691 will to be guided by this statement’s convictions and commitments to resist and dismantle
1692 patriarchy and sexism, and to transform life in the church and in society;
- 1693 2. To call upon members of this church to pray, work, and advocate for justice for all those
1694 affected by sexism and patriarchy and to draw upon this statement in forming their
1695 judgments and actions in daily life;
- 1696 3. To encourage members to be guided by the ELCA social message on “Gender-based
1697 Violence (2015) in taking action, such as urging their congregations to implement
1698 policies and to become intentional sites of advocacy and support for local efforts that
1699 serve those affected by such violence;
- 1700 4. To call upon all members of this church to reflect on how mass media (films, video
1701 games, etc.) and social media distort sex, gender, and sexuality and to address this
1702 problem in their own actions (especially their care for children);
- 1703 5. To call upon congregational leaders, rostered and lay, to encourage women and girls to
1704 pursue leadership roles within congregations and in discernment toward rostered
1705 ministry;
- 1706 6. To encourage ELCA congregations to present positive gender roles in their educational
1707 activities, preschools, and day care, and to urge youth-related ministries within this
1708 church to adopt positive modeling of gender equity in all leadership, programs and
1709 educational events;
- 1710 7. To urge congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization (CWO) to address
1711 inequities (in pay, senior leadership, availability of second and third calls, etc.) for
1712 rostered and lay women of various backgrounds, identities, and personal experiences;
- 1713 8. To call upon the Conference of Bishops, synods, and the churchwide organization to use
1714 gender-inclusive and expansive language for God, and to direct the ELCA worship team
1715 a) to use such language whenever it commissions, curates, or develops new liturgical and
1716 related educational resources, and (b) to supplement existing resources toward that end.
- 1717 9. To direct the Mission Advancement unit of the CWO to collaborate with the Office of the
1718 Bishop in creating a single page at ELCA.org where readers can access the existing
1719 resources of the ELCA and the Lutheran World Federation related to the concerns of this
1720 statement and to work to make those resources available in languages other than English;
- 1721 10. To call upon this church’s advocacy and related ministries, such as the Washington office
1722 and ELCA World Hunger, to support and advocate for measures, policies, and laws
1723 consistent with this social statement and to give sustained attention to its convictions and
1724 commitments in the creation of programs and projects;
- 1725 11. To recognize past and present CWO efforts to address institutional sexism and foster
1726 gender justice in this church, and to urge sustained devotion of resources, such as support
1727 for the CWO’s Justice for Women program;

- 1728 12. To commend the ongoing ministries of Women of the ELCA and Lutheran Men in
1729 Mission, and to encourage participation in their work, especially as they address the
1730 issues identified in this social statement;
- 1731 13. To call upon those engaged in publishing activities throughout the ELCA to continue and
1732 extend their support for gender equity in ELCA resources and communications through
1733 such dimensions as language, images, stories, themes, and representation of contributors;
- 1734 14. To urge faculty, staff, and administrators of ELCA-related colleges, universities, and
1735 seminaries to renew their efforts to develop syllabi and best practices that affirm and
1736 promote the gifts of women from varied identities and backgrounds;
- 1737 15. To call upon rostered and lay congregational leaders, synodical and CWO staff, social
1738 ministry organizations, and faculty and staff at ELCA colleges, seminaries, and
1739 universities to renew their efforts to welcome, care for, and support the lives and gifts of
1740 LGBTQIA persons and to oppose discrimination against these persons so that they may
1741 live into the promise of gender justice envisioned in this social statement;
- 1742 16. To call for the church in all its expressions and related agencies, organizations, and
1743 institutions to embed and incorporate anti-sexism training and protocols in their ongoing
1744 work;
- 1745 17. To call upon the Office of the Bishop, in collaboration with appropriate units in the
1746 CWO, to establish and oversee processes for implementation of and accountability for
1747 these resolutions and to report to the fall meeting of ELCA Church Council in 2021.

Report of the Task Force to Consider Future Campaign and Income Strategies

Submitted by Joe Nolte, Task Force Chair

The Task Force to Consider Future Campaign and Income Strategies, empaneled by the Church Council at its November 2018 meeting, met on November 7, 2018 and on February 26, 2019.

The task force members are: Joe Nolte (chair), Sylvia Black, Steve Delzer, Suzanne Dillahunt, Elizabeth Eaton, Lori Fedyk, Ron Glusenkamp, Richard Graham, Christina Jackson-Skelton, Ingrid Stafford, Michael Ward and Sonja Wolfe. Resource staff are Wyvetta Bullock, Victoria Flood, Jessica Hacker and Doug Mason.

The charge to the task force was to evaluate how the churchwide office (CWO) can best continue to expand the resource base required by the ELCA to fulfill its missions, and specifically to achieve the outcomes of its strategic plan, *Future Directions 2025*.

This entire church – congregations, synods, and CWO – continues to be challenged as its membership declines and changes how it engages with congregational life. The ELCA membership is also aging, and needs to attract new diverse and faithful members who will join us in our calling to share the good news of God’s love and grace in Christ Jesus. The ELCA needs new congregational leaders as the number of individuals seeking to become pastors is less than the number of pastors retiring – and the ability to meet the cost of preparing individuals for ministry is too great for many. Further, there are many faithful lay leaders who feel called to serve this church, but lack resources for training and service. The ability to provide a sustainable living wage for pastoral leaders in many of our most under-resourced communities is at great risk.

In order to better understand how we can best meet these challenges from a resource development standpoint, the Task Force received briefings regarding the current campaign, *The Campaign for the ELCA*, trends in Mission Support, the current revenue contributions from all sources, and the organizational structure of fund raising within the CWO and the ELCA Foundation.

We observe that *The Campaign for the ELCA* has laid a very strong foundation for future resource development by raising the mission visibility and needs of this church across the nation and will meet its goal of \$200 million by the conclusion of the campaign in June 2019. We will celebrate this success in Milwaukee at the 2019 Churchwide Assembly. The goals of the campaign that have resonated most with members of this church have been those priorities that are recognized as being the central responsibility of the CWO: the global expressions of its mission, the development of leaders here and abroad, and the response to human needs in our global and national communities.

We further observe that the challenges occurring in annual Mission Support are inherently tied to the priority of local congregational and synod needs, and less understanding of how the respective roles and responsibilities of congregation, synods and the CWO relate to each other. We also note that the campaign objectives that have been more aligned with synod and congregational efforts have been less successful in the national campaign. The presiding bishop’s initiative to review and assess the relative roles and responsibilities through the exercise of “what must be done,” “what can be done,” and “what will be done” by what expression of the church is a critical input to this effort. This review should also result in concrete recommendations for changes in organizational alignment where appropriate between CWO, synods and congregations.

In consideration of the totality of what we have learned and reviewed as part of our work, we believe it is essential that the CWO sustain its resource development efforts upon the conclusion of the current campaign. There is both urgent need as well as untapped capacity and opportunity to help this church bring its unique voice to those seeking to hear the Good News of Jesus Christ. It is also critical that we continue the hard work of rationalizing our organizational structures and clarifying where resources are best invested to assure that our work is done most effectively and efficiently. To this end, we recommend to the Church Council:

- that the CWO lead broad fundraising efforts throughout the ELCA focused around the strategic priorities as outlined in *Future Directions 2025*, using its major foci to shape efforts;
- approve continuing fundraising for programs that have proven donor interest and where the CWO has an ongoing obligation: ELCA World Hunger, ELCA Fund for Leaders, International Women Leaders, Young Adults in Global Mission, Missionary Sponsorship and Lutheran Disaster Response;
- support the completion of the specific appeals for Disability Ministries, New and Renewing Congregations, Youth and Young Adults, and Global Ministries as specific focus areas after the conclusion of *The Campaign for the ELCA*. This does not preclude the CWO from accepting or distributing funds that may be offered by donors after the campaign; and
- affirm the continuation of the task force to consider how to grow resources to support the priorities of the CWO, as outlined in the *Future Directions 2025*.



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

March 25, 2019

Dear Church Council Member,

I am pleased to share with you a printed copy of the newly revised “Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns” (fall 2018). As you may recall, this revision was authorized and then adopted by the ELCA Church Council after a six-month development process. The process followed standard protocol, with review by the Conference of Bishops and the Church Council, working with a consulting group. Serving in that group were Bishop Julian Gordy of the Southeastern Synod and ELCA Secretary Chris Boerger, among others. The revision has been posted at www.ELCA.org since December 2018, but our standard practice is to make a printed version available for synod offices. Additional copies can be ordered online as well.

The revision sketches out the means of moral deliberation used by the ELCA as a public church among its three expressions and elaborates on the character and practice of ELCA social teaching and policy. For further explanation, I am enclosing an FAQ sheet that provides background and summarizes the revisions. “Policies and Procedures” and the FAQs may be found at <https://elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Addressing-Social-Concerns>. I think that, when questions regarding these matters come up, both the FAQs and the printed document will come in handy. As always, I welcome comments or questions.

In good faith,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Roger D. Willer".

Rev. Dr. Roger Willer
Director for Theological Ethics
Theological Discernment Team
Office of the Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
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Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns

The 1997 Churchwide Assembly affirmed the adoption by the ELCA Church Council of “Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns” as a substantial modification of its predecessor, “Social Statements in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America: Principles and Procedures” (adopted by the 1989 assembly). The 1997 assembly also authorized the ELCA Church Council to make appropriate adjustments in these policies and procedures as further experience of this church would indicate (CA97.5.21). Adjustments were made in 2006, titles were updated in 2011, and this revision was approved by the Church Council at its meeting Nov. 11, 2018.

I. PURPOSE AND CONTENT OF THIS DOCUMENT

Purpose

Faithful participation in society is integral and vital to the mission of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) to serve the triune God revealed in the Scriptures. As individual members, congregations, synods, the churchwide organization, and across the many connections in Christ, this church lives out Christian faith as a publicly engaged church. It is a church that seeks to exercise responsibility in and witness to God's just and loving intention for all of creation. The call to God's people to care for human society is unmistakable in the Christian Scriptures (Amos 5:22-24; Luke 4:16-22) and is given direction in the ELCA constitution.

The ELCA's first social statement, “The Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective,” formulates this responsibility and witness in three overarching commitments:¹

- “To sustain and support its members in their baptismal vocation to serve God and neighbor in daily life” (6).
- “To serve God and neighbor in its life and work as an institution” (7).
- “To foster moral deliberation on social questions” (7).

Practically speaking, these commitments are woven on the frame of four distinct but interrelated spheres of activity:²

1. Nurturing and Equipping Members.
2. Encouraging Learning, Conversation and Discernment.
3. Developing and Enacting Social Teaching and Policy.
4. Interpreting and Applying.

Attentive to these commitments and within these spheres, this document sets forth the policies and procedures of the ELCA for addressing social concerns. It gives extended attention to the procedural elements of “Sphere Three” even while charting the multiple means through which we together as a church carry out this calling in responsibility and witness. The rationale and procedural description established here are intended to clarify, order and facilitate the life and mission of the ELCA as a networked church.

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II. GOD'S CALL TO SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND WITNESS IN SOCIETY: CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURES AND THE ELCA CONSTITUTION

1. The ELCA is called to address social concerns

The ELCA addresses social concerns as a public church in grateful response to God's saving grace in Jesus Christ. Through faith in the gospel, Christ's church is freed to love the neighbor and seek justice in society, as it hopes and prays for "a new heaven and a new earth" (Revelation 21:1). While this world is corrupted by sin, it also belongs to the triune God, who promises ultimate fulfillment of purpose and continues to sustain it. In this world, the church is called to live its faith, love and hope by caring for and transforming the structures of society, working for justice and preserving the earth. For "what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8).

This recognition of God's call is expressed clearly in the constitution of the ELCA. Fundamentally, it confesses the gospel to be "the power of God to create and sustain the Church for God's mission in the world" (ELCA 2.07.).³

Likewise, it signifies that this church shall:

- Serve in response to God's love to meet human needs, caring for the sick and the aged, advocating dignity and

justice for all people, working for peace and reconciliation among the nations, and standing with the poor and powerless and committing itself to their needs. (ELCA 4.02.c).

- Nurture its members in the Word of God to grow in faith and hope and love, to see daily life as the primary setting for the exercise of their Christian calling, and to use the gifts of the Spirit for their life together and for their calling in the world (ELCA 4.02.e).

To fulfill these purposes, this church shall:

- Encourage and equip all members to worship, learn, serve and witness; to fulfill their calling to serve God in the world; and to be stewards of the earth, their lives and the Gospel (ELCA 4.03.b).
- Lift its voice in concord and work in concert with forces for good, to serve humanity, cooperating with church and other groups participating in activities that promote justice, relieve misery and reconcile the estranged (ELCA 4.03.g).
- Study social issues and trends, work to discover the causes of oppression and injustice, and develop programs of ministry and advocacy to further human dignity, freedom, justice and peace in the world (ELCA 4.03.l).
- Work with civil authorities in areas of mutual endeavor, maintaining institutional separation of church and state in a relation of functional interaction (ELCA 4.03.n).

2. Constitutional directives

The constitution articulates that:

- The congregations, synods and churchwide organization of this church are interdependent partners sharing responsibly in God's mission. In an interdependent relationship, primary responsibility for particular functions will vary among the partners (ELCA 5.01.c).
- This church shall seek to function as people of God through congregations, synods and the churchwide organization, all of which shall be interdependent. Each part lives in a partnership relationship with the others (ELCA 8.11.).

- This church shall seek to meet human needs through encouragement of its people to individual and corporate action, and through establishing, developing, recognizing, and supporting institutions and agencies that minister to people in their spiritual and temporal needs (ELCA 8.23).

In fulfillment of the purposes of this church, the churchwide organization shall:

- Provide resources to equip members to worship, learn, serve and witness in their ministry in daily life (ELCA 11.21.b.). Witness to the Word of God in Christ by united efforts in proclaiming the gospel, responding to human need, caring for the sick and suffering, working for justice and peace, and providing guidance to members on social matters (ELCA 11.21.d.). Develop and administer policies for this church's relationship to social ministry organizations and cooperate with public and private agencies that enhance human dignity and justice (ELCA 11.21.i.). Determine and implement policy for this church's relationship to governments (ELCA 11.21.j.).
- The Office of the Presiding Bishop shall serve “the Church's theological work by promoting, coordinating, and facilitating theological discernment of the Church's message and its theological foundations in collaboration with all who share in the responsibilities to be teachers of the faith in the Church” (ELCA 15.12.G16).
- The Domestic Mission unit shall use this church's foundational and theological statements and messages “in creating coalitions and networks to promote justice and peace” and in “facilitating the engagement of this church in advocacy” (ELCA 16.12.A16).

In fulfillment of that same purpose, each synod, as an interdependent expression of this church, has responsibilities.

- In planning for, facilitating, and nurturing the mission of this church through congregations, synods shall:
 - a. Assist members of its congregations in carrying out their ministries in the world.
 - b. Encourage congregations to respond to human need,

work for justice and peace, care for the sick and the suffering, and participate responsibly in society.

- c. Provide resources for congregational life (ELCA 10.21.02.).
- In interpreting the work of this church on the territory of the synod, synods shall:
 - a. Interpret social statements in a manner consistent with the interpretation given by the churchwide unit or office that assisted in the development of the statement, and suggestion of social study issues (ELCA 10.21.04.).

Among its purposes, the congregation shall:

- Respond to human need, work for justice and peace, care for the sick and the suffering, and participate responsibly in society (ELCA 9.41.f.).

The ELCA's identity, expressed through the three commitments and the activity in the four spheres as described in this document, is to be consistent with these directives of the "Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America."

III. FOUR INTERRELATED SPHERES IN SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND WITNESS

The framework expressed through these four interrelated spheres of activity signify a comprehensive approach to social responsibility and witness. Each sphere of activity contains distinct initiatives and varied responsibilities or procedures for the three expressions of a networked church serving together to address social concerns. Each sphere is necessary and depends



on the others if the ELCA is to make a robust witness in society. The initiatives and responsibilities, especially in spheres One and Two, represent challenging ideals to achieve within the expressions of this church. While challenging, they do express this church's salutary aspirations for living faithfully into the identity it has accepted in response to God's call.

1. Sphere One: Nurturing and Equipping Members

Description

The first sphere of activity involves nurturing and equipping members in the covenant God makes in baptism with each person, a covenant that is lived out in everyday callings as part of different communities. All expressions and ministries of this church participate in this ongoing task to form faithful individuals and communities of disciples for daily life in society. This sphere of activity is rooted in and expands the catechetical work of this church.

The development of capacity for faithful daily life and social responsibility requires constant attentiveness to the Scriptures and effective familiarity with the Lutheran Confessions. It requires nurturing of attitudes and values, behaviors and practices that foster good character and conscience. Such nurturing also includes attention to the meaning of discipleship, the place of experience and reason in moral decision-making, and skills for moral discernment and deliberation. Equipping and nurturing is a long-term task that involves all expressions of the ELCA.

Initiatives and responsibilities

1. Ultimately, the equipping and nurturing of God's people for their callings in the world are grounded in word and sacrament and centered typically in the activity of the worshiping community. The moral formation of disciples requires intentional resources – preaching and teaching, practices and conversation – directed toward that purpose.
2. Synod attention to matters of formation and discipleship aid vitality in this sphere through collaborative efforts that may be synod-wide or occur among networks of congregations.

3. The Domestic Mission unit of the churchwide organization, in collaboration with the Office of the Presiding Bishop and other appropriate churchwide unit(s), has primary responsibility for coordinating churchwide resources in support of this sphere of activity.

2. Sphere Two: Encouraging Learning, Conversation and Discernment

Description

The second sphere of activity encourages learning and conversation among members around social concerns. The ELCA's identity as a community of moral deliberation is much broader and deeper than the ELCA-wide deliberation that results in social documents adopted by legislative bodies of the ELCA. This sphere of activity seeks open-ended learning and discernment of the mind of Christ (Romans 12:2) on specific contemporary social concerns without the pressure of legislative decisions or community consensus.⁴ Routine practices in moral reflection, conversation and discernment within congregations, homes, campus ministries, social ministry organizations and other settings build the content and context for when this church discerns a need to deliberate toward normative corporate conclusions.

Activity in this sphere is rooted in the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions and draws upon the rich Lutheran theological heritage. It also uses resources that encompass analysis of particular social concerns within the framework of basic Christian theology and morality. It includes educational resources of many types, as well as the development of models for and networks of resource people to support conversation and discernment. The needs and approach will vary from issue to issue and group to group, but all approaches shall aim to encourage an inclusive, in-depth process of learning and reflection.

Activity in this sphere registers the importance of the ELCA's official social teaching even as it employs multiple types of educational materials, exploratory studies, continuing education events, conferences and conversation experiences. Resources for this sphere of activity should be regularly under development for widespread use throughout this church.

Initiatives and responsibilities

1. Attention to learning, moral conversation and discernment about social concerns within congregations and synod settings need to be integrated with other activities such as the study of the Scriptures or practical decision-making. At the same time, this sphere depends on resources dedicated to social questions. Media and written resources here should seek to nurture lively conversation and consideration from a diversity of perspectives. Efforts should be made to frame and foster discussion using ELCA social teaching whenever relevant.
2. Synods and other church-related entities, such as seminaries and church-related colleges, may support efforts in this sphere by providing resource materials, leadership, or networks dedicated to learning and conversation.
3. The Office of the Presiding Bishop, because of its responsibility for this church's teaching office, shall have oversight for churchwide activities in collaboration with appropriate churchwide units. However, it often will be the case that program units will take the lead for developing resources and carrying out activities in accord with the principle of interdependence.
4. In developing resources or establishing conversational groups, efforts should be made to draw upon the wealth of expertise and interest throughout this church and to develop materials and programs through wide-ranging consultation with relevant members and groups. Churchwide efforts are expected to bring together people from congregations, synods, institutions and agencies of this church in accord with this church's principles of representation.

3. Sphere Three: Developing and Enacting Social Teaching and Policy

Description

The third sphere of activity comprises procedures for developing official documents that articulate this church's teaching and

policy. Both social statements and social messages serve as teaching documents, although statements are primary, and messages may have a more deliberative character. ELCA social policy resolutions set focused and explicit directives and so serve as the main form of policy expression, although teaching documents often carry policy implications.

In these three documents, the ELCA's activity in spheres One and Two become the context for bringing Lutheran theology into conversation with broad social institutions and concerns or specific topics seeking corporate conclusions. These conclusions always are open to further testing in the Spirit, but they set forth this church's theological and ethical understanding and establish policy regarding individual and corporate Christian responsibility in the world. Together, they articulate church teaching, govern institutional action, provide for communal and personal discernment, and project moral vision.

Guiding perspectives for social teaching and policy

The perspectives outlined below summarize key elements for the ELCA's understanding, development, consideration and use of these documents.

1. Social teaching is theological. ELCA social teaching and policy arise from and address the changing circumstances of the world in light of God's living word of law and gospel. With the aid of contemporary experience and knowledge, they bring this church's understanding of its faith to bear on social questions. Because they view and express these matters from the perspective of the church's faith, social teaching documents are to be clearly rooted in the biblical and confessional witness of the ELCA. They are subject to the testing of whether they are faithful to the Scriptures as "the authoritative source and norm of [this church's] proclamation, faith, and life" (ELCA 2.03.) and to its creeds and confessions (ELCA 2.04., 2.05., and 2.06.). They themselves are not new creeds or confessions.

2. Social statements and messages are teaching documents. In their preparation, content and use, these teaching documents bring into dialogue the convictions of faith with the realities of the world and the experience of Christians living out their baptismal vocation.

They give voice to the prophetic mandate of this church, its calling to care for God's world, and its commitment to reason together on social concerns. In so doing, they inform, guide and challenge this church and its members. They present teaching intended "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12).

Church members are called on to give the ELCA's social teaching careful consideration as they form their own judgments. Their teaching function, however, is persuasive rather than coercive, building upon and seeking to nurture the freedom of Christians to discern and act responsibly. Social teaching helps shape moral vision and the conscience of Christians by appealing to faith, character, moral convictions and reason. The respect they evoke comes from the truth and wisdom they embody, which has been subject to widespread assessment by various forums within this church during their development. Their effective teaching significance is determined by the intrinsic quality of their content and by their use in this church.

3. Social teaching involves this church in the ongoing task of theological ethics. In these teaching documents, this church addresses the question: "What ought we as Christians and the church think and do about this social question?" Social teaching documents seek to discern God's will for today, offering insight and direction on how people should view an issue and act justly in relation to it. Their focus is most commonly on ethical material that mediate between broad moral principles and detailed reasoning in a particular situation.

Social teaching documents seek to reflect the qualities of a community of forgiven sinners called to do God's will. They probe for shared convictions and the boundaries of faithful action; within this framework, they acknowledge diversity. These documents recognize the complexity of society and the power of sin, as well as the calling of this church to speak and to act with hope and boldness. They appeal to theology, ethics, secular knowledge and analysis, history, and contemporary experience to offer coherent and plausible reasons for their judgments. As the work of a community that stands under God's judgment and grace, social teaching exhibits openness to the Holy Spirit's further guidance.

They are meant to raise a moral vision for discipleship and to frame and foster the art of moral conversation and discernment in congregations and other expressions of this church. As a body, they chart connections across ELCA social thinking, especially in a time of cultural upheaval and moral quandary. Their use both depends on and expresses the identity of the church as a community of moral deliberation in which serious communication on matters of society and faith is vital to its being. United in baptism, members are free to discuss and disagree, knowing that they are ultimately bound together in the body of Christ by the gospel and not by their moral judgments.

4. Social teaching and policy result from extensive, inclusive and accepted processes of deliberation throughout this church.

Social teaching and policy documents are shaped by careful and critical listening to this church and to society, as well as to other church bodies and ecumenical organizations in this country and around the world. The development of social teaching embodies the justice principle of participation⁵ and is guided by the constitutional mandate to “provide structures and decision-making processes for this church that foster mutuality and interdependence and that involve people in making decisions that affect them” (ELCA 4.03.o.).

The theological ethics portfolio within the Theological Discernment Team in the Office of the Presiding Bishop has lead responsibility here as a function of the teaching office of this church. The processes of development, however, call on those with specialized knowledge, representative concerns and diverse experiences through robust research, study and deliberation. Broad participation by congregations and synods, as well as by other churchwide units, is to be encouraged and facilitated. The Church Council and the Conference of Bishops (ELCA 10.81.A16.f.) provide essential forums.

5. Social teaching and policy documents govern the institutional life of this church. They set forth the principles, parameters and directives that the ELCA considers necessary to govern the internal and external policy and practices of its social responsibility in accordance with its understanding of God’s will. They express mutual expectations and provide for mutual accountability in this church.

Social teaching governs the establishment of policy and directions for the ELCA's work in the areas of advocacy and corporate social responsibility (ELCA 11.21.i. and j; ELCA 14.21.14.), enabling, limiting and directing these activities. It is expected that ELCA-affiliated agencies and institutions will develop policies and practices consistent with the principles and directives of ELCA social teaching.

Social teaching also establishes the stance of ELCA Ecumenical and Inter-religious Relations. Teaching documents represent an ecumenical contribution to the body of Christ, which has ongoing responsibility to discern on pressing social matters. They undergird the means for common decision-making on critical issues of faith and life, especially with regard to our full communion partners. They are a primary means to aid all our partners in understanding us, holding us accountable, and identifying possible areas of collaboration and joint advocacy.

Those on the rosters of public ministry are expected to present the teaching and policy positions as those of the ELCA. This expectation recognizes their freedom to disagree with these positions in their personal convictions.

6. Social teaching documents are intended to be used widely in the life and mission of this church and to reflect awareness of the various audiences and ministries that they are to serve.

They are informed by expertise and data as they address the broader society in ways fitting for public discussion of and speaking to social questions. They are critical resources for bishops, rostered ministers, teaching theologians, and other teachers and leaders in this church. To help stimulate consideration of social issues in congregations, their language is to be clear and appropriate for congregational life. Social teaching documents offer individual members guidance and support for their callings and participation in society.

A. SOCIAL STATEMENTS

Description

Social statements are the ELCA's primary teaching documents; they bring the Christian Scriptures and Lutheran theology into

dialogue with social analysis regarding broad social institutions and questions or the most controversial social topics. Typically, they provide analysis, set forth basic theological and ethical perspectives, offer vocational insight, and provide guidance for the corporate witness of the ELCA and its members.

Social statements are documents of the highest quality even as they vary in scope, length, frequency and form of moral discourse, according to the needs of their subject matter. In all cases, social statements are the product of the most extensive, participatory and inclusive discernment and deliberation within this church, using procedures that are an integral part of their educational and formative purpose. They require adoption at a churchwide assembly by a two-thirds vote.

This church invests this considerable rigor and the necessary resources in their development because social statements represent the most authoritative form of articulated social teaching and policy. In questions of a conflict of interpretation or application, social statements have priority.

Procedures

Selection and oversight

1. Synods may propose the need for development of a social statement “through (a) Synod Assembly memorials to the Churchwide Assembly or (b) resolutions for referral from the Synod Assembly through the Synod Council to the Church Council and (c) Synod Council resolutions addressed to the Church Council” (CC88.11.124). The Church Council may recommend topics for social statement development to a churchwide assembly.
2. A churchwide assembly shall approve issues for development.
3. The Church Council shall exercise oversight of the development process, in consultation with the Office of the Presiding Bishop. This oversight includes the capacity to authorize when a social statement process should begin and when hiatus is warranted. It also includes the capacity to determine that an issue would be handled

more appropriately through a social message process rather than one of social statement development. Examples of need for wise management or for use of the social message process include matters of churchwide staff capacity, subject content overlap with existing social teaching, budgetary concerns, and ELCA-wide capacity for the intensive process of social statement development. Such matters cannot be assessed adequately during a churchwide assembly but need thorough consideration.

Development

1. The Theological Discernment Team in the Office of the Presiding Bishop, in consultation with the Church Council, shall direct the processes of social statement development in accordance with the principle of interdependence. The process shall ensure that:
 - A task force is identified to develop a proposed social statement that includes members with specialized knowledge and those directly affected by the issue. Membership in the task force is approved by the Church Council or its Executive Committee.
 - Ways are found to encourage broad participation throughout the whole church.
 - The development of a social statement includes preparation of preliminary resources as appropriate and shall be preceded by the issuance of a draft. Decisions about preliminary documents shall be made on a case-by-case basis according to the scope of concerns that the proposed social statement involves and the extent of this church's previous engagement with the questions. A draft, with a format designed for response, shall be available at least 18 months before a proposed social statement is to be considered at a churchwide assembly.
2. Synods and congregations shall receive multiple announcements about and means to participate in

learning, discussion and discernment using preliminary studies and drafts. Synods shall cooperate in the discernment around social statements by encouraging study of and response to preliminary documents by congregations, individuals and synod committees, and through synod forums or hearings.

3. The Church Council and the Conference of Bishops shall be consulted as forums for review and discernment regarding drafts.
4. The ELCA task force responsible for developing a proposed statement (see No. 1 above) also may develop a proposed set of implementing resolutions to accompany the statement. If developed, these indicate how basic principles and policy direction shall or may be carried out by various expressions of this church. Extreme care should be exercised in their development, a care sensitive to realistic capacity and financial implications. Aspirational resolutions should be clearly indicated in contrast to directives. Implementing resolutions, if any, accompany the proposed statement but are considered independently for adoption.

Adoption

1. The Church Council shall receive a proposed social statement, and any implementing resolutions, from the statement's task force through the Theological Discernment Team in the Office of the Presiding Bishop. The Conference of Bishops shall review and may offer recommendations to the Church Council. By a reasonable and announced date prior to a meeting of the Church Council, any bishop or voting member of the council may submit suggestions for amendments to the director for theological ethics. A collected list of proposed amendments, with recommendation by the director, shall be discussed by the council's Program and Services Committee. The Program and Services Committee shall share its recommended textual changes with the Church Council during plenary consideration. The Church Council shall send a recommended proposed social statement to a churchwide

assembly (ELCA 12.12.01.). A set of recommended implementing resolutions may accompany it.

2. The text of the recommended proposed social statement and accompanying implementing resolutions shall be posted within 10 days after action by the Church Council. Synod assemblies may act to memorialize their support, concern or objection to the whole or to certain portions of the recommended documents.
3. Only a churchwide assembly shall adopt ELCA social statements (ELCA 12.21.d.).
 - a. Amendments offered at a churchwide assembly to the recommended proposed social statement or the accompanying implementing resolutions must be submitted in writing to the secretary of this church prior to a published deadline.
 - b. An ad hoc committee shall be seated by the chair, with the consent of the assembly, for the express task of providing recommendations to the assembly regarding proposed amendments. The ad hoc committee shall be chaired by a member(s) of the Church Council and be composed of the chair(s) of the task force, the bishop(s) from the task force, the director for theological ethics and the assistant to the presiding bishop for theological discernment. Other individuals may be appointed by the chair of the assembly if appropriate, but additional individuals normally are invited as consultants, without vote, to support the work of the ad hoc committee.

Voting members who submit amendments may be requested to meet with this committee. If a voting member wishes to offer an amendment that was not submitted prior to the deadline or was not recommended by the ad hoc committee, the assembly, by a majority vote, may consent to the consideration of such an amendment (adapted from Churchwide Assembly “Rules of Organization and Procedure,” Part Ten).

- c. “A proposed social statement shall require for adoption a vote of two-thirds of those voting members present and voting in a Churchwide Assembly” (ELCA 12.12.01.); the vote tally shall be recorded on the printed statement.
- d. An addendum of amendments that elicited significant division in a churchwide assembly shall be included in the statement’s published forms.
- e. Implementing resolutions also shall be adopted by a two-thirds vote and shall be printed within the social statement document.⁶

Use

1. All expressions of this church are expected to encourage use of social statements and implement the resolutions as appropriate. The Office of the Presiding Bishop, through the Theological Discernment Team, shall provide counsel when questions of interpretation or application arise.
2. The Office of the Presiding Bishop, through the Theological Discernment Team, shall cooperate with other churchwide units and synods to develop accompanying resources (e.g., study guides, short videos, case studies, “tool kits,” etc.) and encourage the use of social statements in this church.
3. Synods shall interpret social statements in a manner consistent with the interpretation of the Office of the Presiding Bishop (ELCA 10.21.04.c.), including those resolutions adopted by a synod assembly that address social issues raised on the territory of the synod.
4. The Office of the Presiding Bishop or other churchwide offices and units shall provide reports upon request to the Church Council on the use and implementation of social teaching.

Reconsideration

1. Churchwide assemblies may authorize reconsideration of previously adopted social statements by a two-thirds vote.

2. As the interim legislative body, the Church Council also may authorize a provisional process to begin reconsideration of an existing social statement. If so authorized, reconsideration procedures may begin, but the question shall be added to the agenda of the subsequent churchwide assembly. Provisional authorization becomes final when supported by a two-thirds vote. If not sustained by the assembly, the process shall be terminated.
3. Alternately, the Church Council by a majority vote may place on a churchwide assembly agenda the question of reconsideration.
4. Forms of reconsideration include:
 - a. *Edit*, the update of particular wording for the sake of accuracy and relevance to a contemporary social context but involving no change in substantive meaning.
 - b. *Revise*, changes to designated portions of a statement involving substantive change.
 - c. *Archive*, assigning the whole to the category of historical documents as an archive of the ELCA.

Reconsideration procedures

1. The action of a churchwide assembly for – or of a Church Council for provisional initiation of – reconsideration of a social statement shall specify which of the three are indicated. In the case of an edit, this requires designation of which wording would be reconsidered. In the case of a revision, this requires designation of which paragraphs or sections would be reconsidered. A resolution to archive shall not be combined with the other two.
2. When reconsideration, or provisional reconsideration, is authorized, notice shall be referred to the Office of the Presiding Bishop to form a task force to re-study and address the specific concerns indicated.
3. The reconsideration cycle shall reflect standard protocol for the development of a social statement, including

commitments such as the presence on the task force of diverse perspectives and review by the Conference of Bishops. The listening and study phases necessarily will be constrained by time, but the process shall include at least a brief period of public comment on a draft of any proposed changes or on the recommendation to archive. In the case of revision or archive, the period of public comment shall begin no later than 15 months before the churchwide assembly at which recommended changes to the social statement will be considered.

4. When the proposed changes involve matters of editing alone, the ELCA Church Council, as the interim governing body, may choose to act upon the recommendation of the task force and finalize them. Adoption of editorial amendments shall require two-thirds support. If two-thirds is not received, or if the Church Council considers it wise, recommended edits shall be referred to the subsequent churchwide assembly.
5. Recommended proposed revisions adopted by the Church Council or its recommendation for archive shall be posted within 10 days following the Church Council meeting. Official notice of proposed actions shall be sent to the synods by the secretary of this church.
6. A two-thirds vote of an assembly shall be required to edit, revise or archive a social statement.

B. SOCIAL MESSAGES⁷

Description

Social messages are teaching documents that address social topics narrower in scope and complexity or of less controversy than social statements and are, therefore, generally briefer. Like social statements, messages address the contemporary situation in light of the prophetic and compassionate traditions of the Scriptures. They point to human suffering, grave injustice, pending danger, social perplexity or hopeful developments, and urge that evil be resisted, justice done, and commitment renewed.⁸ They provide this church flexibility

to respond to pressing questions that arise from the ELCA's mission in the world.

Social messages are secondary teaching documents in the sense that they depend on and are to be consistent with this church's social statements. They also may be more deliberative in character, calling the church to additional discernment about specific aspects of a topic. In the case of conflict, social statement teaching shall prevail. Insofar as they are not inconsistent with social statements, messages do provide institutional rationale and policy direction for their topic within the corporate body, especially in the areas of advocacy and corporate social responsibility. As social teaching their authority for the conscience of members is persuasive, not coercive.

Social messages provide this church the opportunity to expand theological and pastoral address and analysis. The development of social messages shall reflect the participatory principles undergirding social statement development, but the process is intended to provide a timely response and involve significantly fewer resources. As such, social messages normally are adopted by the Church Council.

Procedures

Selection

1. The procedures for receiving proposals for a social message reflect those for social statements, but a churchwide assembly, the Conference of Bishops or churchwide units may submit requests to the Church Council to consider authorizing development of a social message. The Church Council shall ask the Theological Discernment Team in the Office of the Presiding Bishop to review all proposals and bring a recommendation on how to address the social questions entailed in these requests. This review shall consider financial implications and alternative means for addressing the social topic, such as development of a study resource, yearlong ELCA-wide emphasis or others.
2. The Office of the Presiding Bishop shall be guided by the following criteria in its recommendations:

- a. Relevance and implications for this church's ongoing mission.
 - b. Significance in society.
 - c. Timeliness and urgency.
 - d. Need for address in light of existing social teaching or policy.
 - e. Capacity issues affecting adequate address including ELCA-wide constraints, churchwide staff and finances.
3. The authorization of a message process, normally, rests with the Church Council. Normally, no more than one message shall be considered in each meeting.

Development

1. The Theological Discernment Team in the Office of the Presiding Bishop shall direct the development and implementation of social messages in accordance with the principle of interdependence. The process elements reflect those of social statement development, but under normal circumstances should require nor more than a year from authorization to adoption. The process shall ensure that:
 - An appropriate team of consultants be identified to aid staff in development.
 - A draft shall be made available (typically online) during a public comment period.
 - The Church Council and the Conference of Bishops are forums for review and discernment regarding drafts.
 - Means for communication to and participation by congregations, ELCA-related institutions and members of this church are considered.
2. After a comment period on a draft, the director for theological discernment shall bring a proposed social message to the Church Council for final consideration. Under unusual circumstances, the Church Council may refer a proposed message to a churchwide assembly for

its adoption. This referral shall carry the Church Council's recommendation for or against adoption.

3. Because messages depend on social statements and are adopted by a Church Council, social messages shall not be accompanied by a set of implementing resolutions.⁹
4. Under extraordinary circumstances, the Theological Discernment Team, at the direction of the Church Council, may abbreviate the procedural cycle to respond to an especially urgent situation.
5. The titles of social messages shall indicate the topics they address.

Adoption

1. The Church Council shall act upon the recommendations from the Office of the Presiding Bishop regarding adopting a proposed social message as a teaching document of the ELCA.
2. Social messages shall be adopted by a two-thirds vote.

Use

The use of social messages as teaching documents of this church reflect what is said about social teaching above.

Reconsideration

1. The Church Council, by a two-thirds vote, may call for reconsideration of an existing social message.
2. Such a call may request one of the following actions:
 - a. *Edit*, the update of particular wording for the sake of accuracy and relevance to the contemporary social context involving no change in substantive meaning.
 - b. *Revise*, changes to designated paragraphs or sections of a message involving substantive alteration.
 - c. *Archive*, assigning the whole to the category of historical documents as an archive of the ELCA.

Reconsideration procedures:

1. After authorization by the Church Council, the action for reconsideration shall be referred to the Office of the Presiding Bishop for attention through a cycle not to exceed the next Church Council meeting in the case of an edit, or one year in other cases. Revision or archival consideration shall include a reasonable period for public comment.
2. The proposed revision or archive, along with the reasons for the proposed action, shall be reviewed by the Conference of Bishops prior to the subsequent Church Council meeting at which a vote to edit, revise or archive is to be taken.
3. A two-thirds vote of the Church Council shall be required to edit, revise or archive the social message.
4. In the case of reconsideration for an edit only, the Church Council shall have the prerogative to receive recommendations for update from the Office of the Bishop and to act at that same meeting. If the Church Council determines that the request is a matter of substance rather than an edit, appropriate reconsideration procedures shall be followed.

C. SOCIAL POLICY RESOLUTIONS

Description

Social policy resolutions refer to actions, other than social statements or messages, of a churchwide assembly or Church Council that establish specific policy-related directives on matters of social concern. Normally, social policy resolutions shall rely on or be consistent with the teachings of this church expressed in statements and messages.

Procedures

Proposal and adoption

1. The Church Council, synods and voting members of a churchwide assembly may propose the adoption of social policy resolutions. Such proposals shall be managed

according to the established rules and procedures of the Church Council, synods, and churchwide assembly.

2. All social policy resolutions must be approved by a churchwide assembly, or, in the interim, by the Church Council. Normally, a majority vote is sufficient for adoption.
3. In exceptional cases where proposed social policy resolutions are not expressly grounded in existing teaching or other policy and yet are not contradictory, a two-thirds majority of the assembly or council shall be required for adoption. The chair of the voting body, in consultation with the Theological Discernment Team in the Office of the Presiding Bishop, may be called upon to make this determination. The Theological Discernment Team shall have the responsibility to develop rationale and supporting foundational theological material to accompany the proposed resolution.

Review and archive

Social policy resolutions serve as this church's policy directives until a) replaced by subsequent resolutions, b) rendered mute by subsequent social teaching documents, or c) sent to archive by a churchwide assembly. A review for relevance shall be initiated 25 years after adoption. Social policy resolutions are adopted in a particular social context, and this planned review of their continued relevance enables subsequent generations of church leaders to consider whether a resolution should continue to represent the policy of this church.

Review procedure:

1. Approximately a year prior to a churchwide assembly, the director for theological ethics shall compile into one document all resolutions that will be 25 years or older at the time of the next assembly. This list shall be made available for a reasonable period, generally three months, of public comment regarding their continued relevance and suitability as policy directives of the ELCA. Notification regarding the list and request for comment shall be given to churchwide units, the Conference of

Bishops, the Church Council, social ministry organizations and others whose activities or policies are related to the resolutions under review.

2. The director for theological ethics shall bring a recommendation to the Church Council regarding which resolutions should remain in force and those that should be archived in the category of historical documents.

The recommendation should be guided by comments from those consulted and the following criteria:

- Relevance to the ELCA's contemporary mission.
 - Continued significance for society.
 - Congruence with ELCA social teaching.
3. The Church Council shall vote to recommend archive for resolutions it deems no longer of service to this church's mission by a majority vote. Those deemed relevant to the church's continued mission in society shall be reviewed thereafter every 10 years. All social policy resolutions recommended by the Church Council for archive shall be placed on the en bloc agenda of the pending churchwide assembly for final action. Only a majority vote is required.

D. HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS

The category of historical documents includes those of the ELCA's predecessor bodies¹⁰ as well as those previously serving as ELCA teaching and social policy that have been archived by vote of a legislative body. As historical documents, they no longer carry institutional authority. The Office of the Presiding Bishop, in cooperation with the Office of the Secretary, will arrange for historical documents to be available for the sake of reference and research.

4. Sphere Four: Interpreting and Applying

Description

The fourth sphere of activity is that of interpreting and applying the social teaching and policy of the ELCA. While distinct in character, scope and longevity, all ELCA teaching and ELCA social

policy documents need careful interpretation and application for the sake of robust social responsibility and witness.

The procedures described here spotlight formalized institutional means of this activity. It should be stressed, however, that lay members, rostered ministers, bishops, leaders of social ministry organizations, ELCA-related entities and others engage in significant and wide-ranging interpretation and application of ELCA social teaching and policy as well. Examples include articles in congregational newsletters, public communications by deacons, the submission of letters to the editor by laypeople, the framing of organizational policies and many more. These are to be encouraged even though not given extensive attention here.

The work of *institutional* interpretation and application typically is expressed in communications and narratives, practices and actions that are expository or directive in nature. These employ ELCA social teaching and policy to illuminate, comment on, critique, and urge action in relation to events and developments in both church and in society.

Procedures

1. The Office of the Presiding Bishop, in collaboration with churchwide units, carries oversight responsibility for churchwide activity in this sphere.
2. The Conference of Bishops, as an essential leadership body of this church, addresses public issues through various means. Procedures for presenting the Conference of Bishops' voice or its individuals' voices are established by that body in its responsibility to assist bishops in their role as teachers of the church (10.81.A16.f.).
3. ELCA advocacy work is governed by this church's social documents as it strives to provide education, generate conversation, encourage networks of advocates, and give voice to public policy consistent with ELCA teaching and policy.
4. The work of Corporate Social Responsibility in the ELCA entails the creation of issue papers and screens and other instruments that provide bridges from teaching and

policy to socially responsible action in economic sectors of society. It facilitates a moral spotlight on investment holdings, corporate dialogue and economic decisions. It is especially significant in connection with Portico's activity that is guided by ELCA teaching and policy.

5. ELCA strategies depend on existing teaching and policy of this church to create comprehensive designs for sustained address to designated crises. They guide churchwide staff in a comprehensive use of resources for education, programmatic action, advocacy and more. Dependent on the commitments and scope entailed, strategies may need churchwide assembly authorization, and, in all cases, the Church Council has oversight responsibility. Strategies shall not establish new ELCA teaching or policy.
6. The employment of social teaching and policy by ELCA-related entities (social ministry organizations, colleges, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, etc.) enable address to social concerns in ways that reach multiple audiences beyond those directly affected by the three expressions of this church.
7. The decisions, most often coordinated by churchwide office units or offices, regarding development of interpretative material (e.g., summaries, video clips, study guides and other educational resources) should be guided by criteria such as timeliness, urgency, expressed need, and relevance for ecumenical or interreligious coalitions.
8. The interpretation and application of this church's teaching and policy advance this church's responsibility for faithfully addressing social concerns. All activity in this sphere may be subject to review by the Office of the Presiding Bishop, with the option for review by the Church Council or, ultimately, a churchwide assembly.

IV. CONCLUSION: ABIDING ATTITUDES AND AIMS

It is in grateful response to God's saving grace in Jesus Christ that the ELCA participates in God's just and loving intention for all

of creation by addressing social concerns. This church sets forth these policies and procedures in order to enable faithful social responsibility and effective social witness. Throughout the four spheres of activity and guided by the three commitments from “Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective,” may God empower this church to instantiate salutary attitudes and aims in which:

- The theological gifts of the Christian church for social life as witnessed in the Lutheran theological heritage are used faithfully.
- Postures are self-critical, modest and authentic.
- Conversations are characterized by accurate information as well as respect for participants and others.
- Discernment and deliberation are based upon careful attention to the Scriptures and social analysis.
- Engagement with complex issues does not simplify those issues or accept easy answers to difficult problems.
- All activity uses the rich resources of members, agencies and institutions, as well as engaging those of other churches and ecumenical bodies.
- This church together lives in the Spirit to “discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Romans 12:2).

ENDNOTES

1 For more, go to ELCA.org/socialstatements.

2 These four spheres were first identified in the 1997 document; they are revised here consistent with the experience of this church.

3 All these references are taken from the ELCA constitution as it stands in April 2018.

4 Such conversation and the related practice of discernment is a contemporary expression of the fourth mark of the church: “The mutual conversation and consolation of brothers and sisters.” See Smalcald Articles, Part III, Article IV, on the Gospel, p. 319.[4:] (*The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*; Fortress Press, 2000).

5 See the social statements *Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope and Justice*, *Sustainable Livelihood for All*, and *Genetics, Faith and Responsibility* (ELCA.org/socialstatements).

6 “Significant division” has been interpreted to mean any amendment receiving substantive discussion that was ultimately defeated yet received over 33 percent of assembly support. Each of these, if any, is indicated by a superscripted capital letter inserted at the point of contention in the text and is summarized in full on a list in the addendum.

7 A description of “Messages on Social Issues” was approved initially by the board of the ELCA Commission for Church in Society, Oct. 7, 1989, and adopted by the Church Council, Nov. 19, 1989. However, the character and purpose of social messages as described here adjusts ELCA policies and procedures consistent with the emerging need for social messages as a form of social teaching focused on specific topics.

8 See ELCA 4.03.g, 4.03.l, 11.21.d.

9 It is possible, however, for the Church Council at any time to call for or adopt social policy resolutions that are related to statements and messages.

10 In 1987, the constituting convention of the ELCA resolved to “receive the social statements of the existing churches as historical documents” (ELCA 87.30.13). The board of the Commission for Church in Society in 1987 voted “that the term ‘historical documents’ in the resolution of the constituting convention to the Commission for Church in Society regarding AELC, ALC, and LCA social statements be interpreted to mean that common elements of the former statements be utilized as the interim contextual basis and guiding principles for present advocacy work until such time as the ELCA develops and adopts new social statements” (minutes of Commission for Church in Society board meeting, Sept. 17-19, 1987, ELCA.org/archives). Since that time, the ELCA has developed its own relatively comprehensive body of social teaching. Predecessor body documents no longer continue to have this interim status, and the category of historical documents now includes those of the ELCA that have been archived according to the procedures described above.

Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns

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Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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Policies and Procedures of the ELCA for Addressing Social Concerns

Frequently Asked Questions

What is “Policies and Procedures of the ELCA for Addressing Social Concerns,” and why is it important?

The ELCA understands itself as a church responding to God’s call to exercise responsibility in society and to bear witness to God’s just and loving intention for all of creation. This happens through individual members, congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization, and across many connections within the body of Christ. The ELCA constitution provides the foundational articulation of this calling, but “Policies and Procedures of the ELCA for Addressing Social Concerns” outlines the commitments, multiple spheres, and procedures of a networked and publicly engaged church. It serves to clarify, order and facilitate the life and mission of the ELCA as a networked church.

How can I get a printed copy of this document?

Go to <https://elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Addressing-Social-Concerns> to view the online version and to find information about ordering printed copies.

Why was revision necessary?

The last revision occurred in 2006, and the last major revision in 1997. Further, the Addressing Social Concerns Review Committee, specially appointed in 2013, urged that some of the recommendations from its report be worked into the ELCA’s official protocol. This latest revision expresses what we have learned over the past decade and anticipates the changing needs and demands of a church addressing social concerns. The changes are described below, but please note that this revision was guided by three elements:

- o the guiding principles established in 1997/2006,
- o the operative experience of the last 12 years, and
- o the three aspirational commitments established in *Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective* (vocation, corporate witness, and community of moral deliberation).

How was this revision undertaken?

A consulting group met in May 2018 after the process was authorized by the ELCA Church Council. Members were drawn from the Conference of Bishops, the Church Council, the churchwide organization, and alumni of the former Addressing Social Concerns Review Committee. Roger Willer, director for theological ethics, served as convener and then as primary drafter in consultation with the group and, in particular, Rev. Chris Boerger, secretary of the ELCA. During the fall of 2018, the Theological & Ethical Concerns Committee (TECC) of the Conference of Bishops reviewed the draft and made suggestions. The Program and Services Committee of the ELCA Church Council reviewed the final text, and it was approved by the Church Council at its meeting Nov. 11, 2018. (*Note: The 1997 Churchwide Assembly authorized the Church Council to make appropriate adjustments in these policies and procedures as further experience of this church would indicate; see CA97.5.21*)

Besides updated wording, what are the notable revisions to the 1997/2006 Policies and Procedures?

1. The major elements, principles, and structure of the 1997/2006 P&P remain, but the rationale and description have been refreshed and refined.
2. The 1997/2006 P&P spotlighted the churchwide organization as a center for addressing social concerns. In contrast, the 2018 revision outlines a methodology of shared and dispersed responsibility involving the three expressions of the ELCA. The whole document is permeated with the aspiration of a networked church addressing social concerns, as especially evident in the revised descriptions of nurturing members and encouraging moral conversation. (See document.)
3. The 1997/2006 P&P established the aspiration of a participatory process for the development of social teaching and policy and it provided the general elements of that process. The 2018 revision builds on this with a fuller mid-level description of the process that has been evolving over the last 12 years.
4. The 1997/2006 P&P described a process for developing social statements that was bookended by the churchwide assembly's initial authorization and final adoption, but the P&P were largely silent regarding the role of the Church Council in that development. The 2018 revision clarifies the council's role in managing the development process even though adoption remains the purview of a church assembly.
5. In the 1997/2006 P&P, social messages were described as deliberative social documents expressing the convictions of church leadership. The 2018 revision designates them as ELCA social teaching, which is, in fact, how they have functioned. The 1997/2006 P&P's guiding perspectives regarding social statements have been adapted into a description of ELCA social teaching that clarifies the character, relationship, and scope of statements, messages, and social policy resolutions.
6. The 1997/2006 P&P included a bare-bones description of how social statements would be reconsidered but failed to specify how and when social documents become dated or need editing. The 2018 revision introduces robust procedures for reconsidering statements, messages and social policy resolutions in the forms of *edit*, *revision*, and *archive*. It also formally designates a new category of record, *historical documents*.
7. The 1997/2006 P&P described minimally the elements for interpretation and application of social teaching. The 2018 revision identifies more institutional actors and outlines more procedures that have evolved over the last 12 years to apply social teaching and policy. These include new references to ecumenical partners, the Conference of Bishops' voice, advocacy within the ELCA, and corporate social responsibility, among others.
8. As might be expected, the 2018 revision uses up-to-date references from the constitution, contemporary ethical terminology, and churchwide organization titles. It also clarifies lines of duty and responsibility for various actors.

Responses to Churchwide Assembly Actions

A. American Indian and Alaska Native Strategic Plan (Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery)

2016 Churchwide Assembly action [CA16.02.04]

.... To direct the Domestic Mission unit to develop a strategy with the American Indian and Alaska Native community during the next triennium to be referred to the Church Council for action, including a mechanism to grow the Native American Ministry Fund of the ELCA;....

Response from the Domestic Mission unit (November 2016)

...The assembly action also requested the development of a strategy with the American Indian Alaska Native community. There is a strategic plan for the American Indian and Alaska Native ministry that was adopted by the 1997 Churchwide Assembly. Updating the strategy will include the work of developing strategic implementation for the repudiation of the doctrine of discovery. During the next triennium, we will use this time for discernment and conversations with communities as well as ecumenical partners to develop an overall strategy. In addition to updating the strategy, the Program Director for American Indian Alaska Native Ministries will establish a process with the community to review the Native American Ministry Endowment Fund, including its guidelines, priorities and philanthropy structure for growth and implementation. A draft strategy will be prepared for the Church Council's consideration at its April 2019 meeting to be forwarded to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly.

We will provide a progress report on the work of this memorial at the November 2018 meeting of the Church Council.

November 2016 Church Council Action [CC16.11.46ii]

To receive with appreciation the response from the Domestic Mission unit regarding the work underway to implement the repudiation of the doctrine of discovery;

To commend the American Indian Alaska Native Ministries in its work with synods and congregations to educate people about the doctrine of discovery and its continuing effects on indigenous nations and peoples;

To anticipate a progress report on the work at the November 2018 Church Council meeting; and

To request a revised American Indian and Alaska Native Strategic Plan be presented at the April 2019 Church Council meeting.

Response from the Domestic Mission unit (April 2019)

The American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) community representatives together with the AIAN Program Director is assessing the Strategic Plan in light of current ministry dynamics and demographics relative to the AIAN community. Initial findings do not indicate a need for a "new" strategic plan. More time is needed to develop an accompanying implementation plan and for charting progress of the strategy.

CC ACTION [En Bloc]

Recommended:

To receive the response from the Domestic Mission unit regarding a revision to the American Indian and Alaska Native Strategic Plan;

To thank the American Indian and Alaska Native Ministry community representatives and the program director for their continued work in implementing and charting progress of the strategy; and

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

B. African Descent Lutherans

2016 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, Northeastern Pennsylvania, Southeastern Pennsylvania, Metropolitan Washington, D.C., 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.

Regarding a review and report on current governing documents

The director for ethnic specific multicultural ministries and the staff of the Office of the Secretary have met on multiple occasions to discuss a process to review the current governing documents.

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

In consultation with the program director for seminaries, the seminary presidents designated Dr. David C. Ratke and Dr. Theresa F. Latini to represent the seminaries in facilitating action called for by the 2016 Churchwide Assembly. Dr. Quentin L. Robertson (United Lutheran Seminary) and Dr. James R. Thomas (Lenoir-Rhyne University) have been identified as seminary staff for work with Domestic Mission staff in response to the 2016 Churchwide Assembly action.

The seminary network provided support and was represented by staff at the African descent young adult discernment/leadership development event in October (Elisha's Call 2017). The African descent ministries desk

and strategy team will collaborate with seminary representation to design and convene in 2018 a series of two-to-three similar relationship building events aimed at increasing the number of African descent leaders and communities served by 1) deepening relationships between seminaries and African descent community in the ELCA, 2) identifying barriers to African descent candidates entering and successfully navigating seminary process, and 3) equipping African descent young adult leaders for engaging their own circles of influence to identify, encourage and engage candidates for seminary and rostered leadership.

November 2017 Church Council Action [CC17.11.33bb]

To receive the progress report from the Domestic Mission unit regarding African descent Lutherans;

To affirm the recommendations adopted at the African Descent Lutheran Association biennial gathering related to a process for relationship building and systematic analysis in response to a public apology;

To urge the Office of the Secretary and the Domestic Mission unit to continue its work in reviewing current governing documents to address contributions to racial harassment and discrimination against people of African descent;

To request a further response be brought to the April 2019 meeting of the Church Council; and

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

Response from the Domestic Mission unit (April 2019)

For the past three years, Church Council has received progress reports on the various ways staff have worked on implementing the requests identified in the African Descent Lutherans Memorial.

As was previously reported, Domestic Mission unit staff and the Office of the Secretary met to review current governing documents. At its November 2018 meeting, the council forwarded amendments to the ELCA Constitution that were, in part, recommended to address how the current governing documents contributed to racial harassment and discrimination against people of African descent through corporate action, policy and practices.

Also, at the November 2018 Church Council meeting, a working group was created to develop a draft declaration of "this church's bondage to the sins of slavery, racism, discrimination, white supremacy, and quietism" (CC18.11.21). The working group began that work and will be bringing a draft declaration to the April 2019 Church Council meeting for feedback. Once approved by the Church Council, the declaration will be presented at the 2019 Churchwide Assembly.

Another request in the memorial was 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. Planning and Evaluation Committee will be reviewing a revised African Descent Strategic Plan at its April 2019 meeting. The ELCA African Descent Strategic Plan approved by the 2005 Churchwide Assembly continues to be a solid assessment and overarching plan for mission and ministry with and among people of African descent ancestry in the ELCA. The key mission opportunity areas remain primarily unchanged. However, critical evaluation of the strategic plan revealed the need for more careful and consistent monitoring of progress, or lack thereof, toward stated goals and objectives. The update addresses and aligns with the ELCA Future Directions 2025 focus of congregational vitality and leadership while attending to the unique dynamics of mission and ministry with and among people of African descent. The fuller implementation of this strategy calls for three critical manners of relational attentiveness with people of African descent in congregations, synods, and churchwide expressions of the ELCA. Engagement, involvement, and investment are critical to the implementation of this strategic plan.

The Domestic Mission unit will continue its work towards "an inviting and welcoming church that reflects and embraces the diversity of our communities and the gifts and opportunities that diversity brings." (Goal 3, Future Directions 2025)

CC ACTION [En Bloc]

Recommended:

To receive with gratitude the final response from the Domestic Mission unit regarding the implementation of the actions in the African Descent Lutherans Memorial [CA16.05.17];

To encourage the continuation of this intentional work of renewing this church's commitments to create, sustain, reinvest in and support African Descent leaders, congregations and communities; and

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

Responses to Synod Resolutions

A. Parental leave policy

North Carolina Synod (9B) [2018]

WHEREAS, the Churchwide Organization Personnel Policies of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) currently provide the following parental leave policy on the occasion of the birth or adoption of a child: “Four consecutive weeks of paid maternity leave is available to a new mother and four consecutive weeks of paid paternity leave is available to a new father following the birth [adoption] of her or his child”; and

WHEREAS, the 2018 Approved Compensation Guidelines for rostered ministers in the North Carolina Synod recommend the following parental leave following the birth or adoption of a child: “Eight weeks of parental leave should be available to the parent primarily responsible for childcare. Four weeks of paid parental leave is recommended for the second parent. The needs of each rostered leader and congregation may vary. It is recommended that the congregation pay full salary and benefits during this time”; and

WHEREAS, of the 65 synods in the ELCA, at least 53 of them recommend a length of paid parental leave for primary caregivers that is greater than what the ELCA allows in its personnel policies for full-time ELCA employees; and

WHEREAS, ELCA employees are deployed across the ELCA and in various synods, including the North Carolina Synod; and

WHEREAS, The National Partnership on Women and Families reports that “parental leave allows new parents time to care for their children--giving them the best chance at a healthy start on life”; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA Task Force on Women and Justice: One in Christ has recently published the “Draft of a Social Statement on Women and Justice”; and

WHEREAS, the “Draft of a Social Statement on Women and Justice” suggests: “Society’s economic and social structures should provide generously for parents’ needs in order to support [arrangements that balance personal strengths and interests with both the needs of work and income and the need to care for children and others in the extended family or household]. This includes, for example, parental leave for parents who do not give birth, as well as adequate leave for parents who do give birth. It is critical in U.S. society that we find ways to increase paid parental leave for the care of family members and increased support for child care. Additionally, parents returning to work after raising children need profession-specific attention for support and advancement”; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the North Carolina Synod request that the ELCA Church Council review its current policy on parental leave; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the North Carolina Synod request that the ELCA Church Council increase paid parental leave from four weeks to eight weeks for primary caregivers who are full-time ELCA employees and maintain four weeks for secondary caregivers who are full-time ELCA employees; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the North Carolina Synod encourage the ELCA Church Council to consider changing, in its parental leave policy, the words “mother” and “father” to “primary caregiver” and “secondary caregiver” and “maternity leave” and “paternity leave” to “parental leave” to reflect a diversity of family structures; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the North Carolina Synod encourage the ELCA Church Council to make comparable changes in its parental leave policy for part-time ELCA employees; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the North Carolina Synod Assembly direct the Synod Council to forward this resolution to the Church Council for consideration and possible action.

Executive Committee action [EC18.08.21]

To receive the resolution from the North Carolina Synod on “Parental leave policy”;

To refer the resolution to the Office of the Presiding Bishop, in consultation with the Office of the Secretary, for a report or a timeline on when this resolution will receive further action; and

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

Response from the Office of the Presiding Bishop in consultation with the Office of the Secretary (November 2018)

In response to the resolution from the North Carolina Synod regarding the churchwide organization’s parental leave policy, Human Resources in the Office of the Presiding Bishop will work with the Administrative Team and the Office of the Treasurer to assess potential workflow impact and cost analyses. Based on those results, human resources will prepare recommendations to present to the Church Council in April 2019.

Church Council Action [CC18.11.23v]

To receive the timeline response from the Office of the Presiding Bishop on “Parental Leave Policy”;
To anticipate a further response by the April 2019 meeting of the Church Council; and
To request that the secretary of this church inform the synod of this action.

*Response from the Office of the Presiding Bishop in consultation with the Office of the Secretary
legal counsel and Office of the Treasurer (April 2019)*

The Office of the Presiding Bishop is continuing its work on research and the impact of the parental leave policy including consultation with the Conference of Bishops. The “Parental Leave Policy” will be considered in the annual review of the ELCA Personnel Policies. Church Council can expect to review revisions to the Personnel Policies at its November 2019 meeting.

CC ACTION [En Bloc]

Recommended:

To receive the response from the Office of the Presiding Bishop on “Parental Leave Policy;” and

To expect a further response when the ELCA Personnel Policies are considered at the November 2019 Church Council meeting.

Report of the Theological Education Advisory Committee (TEAC)

Since our report in November 2018, Theological Education Advisory Committee (TEAC) met as a whole in February and continues to further focus its efforts on those initiatives that will have the highest impact on theological education as a catalyst to ensure the development of effective leaders of the future, and to assist in ensuring congregational vitality.

To that end, we will focus the next nine months on the following:

- **Partnership with the Theological Roundtable/Asset Map Pilot** – a focus for our work has been to figure out how to enhance access to and use of innovative and impactful theological education programs, resources and opportunities through the development of networks and with a focus on more intentionally engaging with and incorporating perspectives of ethnic-specific communities and young adults. Through a partnership with the Theological Roundtable, TEAC is exploring opportunities to enhance access to a diversity of perspectives and variety of materials for theological education. Mutual goals for the pilot have been set and we are working on the specifics of execution of this network.
- **Learning Platform** – initially the focus for TEAC's work in this area was on development of a learning platform between seminaries. We have since recognized the much broader benefit of creating a platform for use by all to share innovative and impactful theological education programs, course content, and academic research in an open source model format so that effective approaches and ideas can be shared broadly with all responsible for or benefiting from theological education offerings (e.g., seminaries, lay programs, congregational education, colleges and universities, 1517 Media). A subgroup of TEAC is currently testing the capabilities of the www.Selectlearning.org platform and further exploring additional ideal capabilities with our partners. The hope is that a platform can eventually support lifelong learning of all the baptized and continuing education for rostered leaders per the original TEAC recommendations.
- **Seminary Manual** – a subgroup of TEAC is working on a manual that will define common elements for the theological education enterprise - that is the ELCA seminaries. This manual will offer direction across a variety of topics and is intended to provide clarity relative to relationships, guidelines of candidacy, governance, financial support, rostering of seminary personnel, common projects and networks, non-ELCA theological education partnerships, and procedural guidelines/clarifications.

TEAC will report to Church Council in Fall 2019 on the progress of its work relative to the charge made in April 2016 (CC16.04.05; CC16.04.06) and provide any transition recommendations for those initiatives that need to be moved to other tables or ministries of this church.

TOWARDS A

FAITHFUL AND MULTIDIMENSIONAL UNDERSTANDING OF SUSTAINABILITY



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

Dear Conference of Bishops, Church Council and Administrative Team:

We are pleased to share with you a thought document, including recommendations, that advances the aspiration expressed in goal five of Future Directions 2025 for “a well-governed, connected and sustainable church.”

In 2018, the joint leadership table of the Conference of Bishops Executive Committee, the Church Council Executive Committee, and the Administrative Team of the churchwide organization collaborated to arrive at a shared understanding of sustainability in the context of this church:

“As Christians, we believe that the church will always exist until Christ comes again in glory. ... As long as Christ ordains, the ELCA exists as part of the Christian witness and we are entrusted to be faithful stewards, tending to the sustainability of this church. In the context of Christ’s church, sustainability starts with God’s grace and sustaining love. For the ELCA this is a matter of both faith and ecclesiology.”

The paper’s introduction describes its *purpose, background and process*. There are four recommendations at the end.

This paper is not the vehicle for communicating with the wider church on this topic; it is an internal document for use by the Conference of Bishops, Church Council, and churchwide organization as we move forward with Future Directions 2025 and the two foci of leadership and congregational vitality.

We pray that you will find the paper helpful as you consider and discuss the elements and markers of sustainability in the context of being church.

In Christ,



Elizabeth A. Eaton
THE REV. ELIZABETH A. EATON
 ELCA, PRESIDING BISHOP



William O. Gafken
THE REV. WILLIAM O. GAFKEN
 INDIANA-KENTUCKY SYNOD BISHOP
 CHAIR, CONFERENCE OF BISHOPS



William B. Horne II
WILLIAM B. HORNE II
 ELCA, VICE PRESIDENT

January 25, 2019

PURPOSE

This paper aims to assist the ELCA's three leadership tables – the Conference of Bishops (CoB) executive committee, the Church Council executive committee, and the churchwide organization administrative team – to arrive at a shared understanding of sustainability that is consistent with the ELCA's identity and missional purpose and the many contexts in which this church lives and journeys every day. It is directed toward framing sustainability of this church in its three expressions – congregations, synods and the churchwide organization.

Goal five of Future Directions 2025 expresses the ELCA's aspiration to be a *well-governed, connected and sustainable church*. Implementation of this goal across the ELCA will be better directed by a shared understanding of sustainability in the context of the ELCA as church, as Lutheran, as church together and as church for the sake of the world. This paper aims to stimulate discussion on sustainability that will ultimately help the three leadership tables inspire a positive discourse and develop clearer strategies for sustainability across the ELCA.

The paper was developed as an internal document for ELCA's three leadership tables as they advance Future Directions 2025.

BACKGROUND AND PROCESS

At its spring 2018 meeting, the ELCA Church Council endorsed a proposal from the Church Council executive committee and future directions table to develop a paper on church sustainability.

The Called Forward Together in Christ process, which led to the adoption of Future Directions 2025 in November 2016, revealed different understandings of sustainability. This made it difficult at times to identify and reach consensus on strategies that would support future sustainability of the ELCA.

The paper was drafted by Lyla Rogan in consultation with a reference group of Bishop Tracie Bartholomew, Bill Horne, Christina Jackson-Skelton, Kathryn Lohre and Wyvetta Bullock. It was informed by the work of the future directions table and discussions of the joint leadership table over the course of 2017-18 and is framed to support implementation of Future Directions 2025.

In 2018 the Church Council executive committee took ownership of the paper through a process of joint and separate discussions of the Church Council, the Conference of Bishops, the churchwide organization administrative team and senior leaders of the churchwide organization.

The Lutheran World Federation has explored what sustainability means in its context of being the global communion of Lutheran churches, and this paper draws on some of that thinking and work.

Sustainability — a faithful and positive aspiration

As Christians, we believe the church will exist until Christ comes again in glory. As church, we are “created by God in Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit, called and sent to bear witness to God’s creative, redeeming, and sanctifying activity in the world” (ELCA Constitution 4.01).

So long as Christ ordains, the ELCA exists as part of the Christian witness and we are entrusted to be faithful stewards, tending to the sustainability of this church.

In the context of Christ’s church, sustainability starts with God’s grace and sustaining love. For the ELCA this is a matter of both faith and ecclesiology – it is about our living faith, our care for what has been entrusted to us by God and our good stewardship of the way the church is led, organized and given resources so that, as church together, we can realize God’s mission over time.

With this understanding, sustainability is both a faithful and a positive aspiration for this church. This paper focuses on how this aspiration is expressed and championed by ELCA leaders and what can make it challenging. The main premise is that by identifying the dimensions and markers of a sustainable church we can more easily speak with one voice about sustainability and explore how it can be fostered. Church leaders must avoid getting distracted in trying to identify or promote a narrow definition.

This church has a complex ecology, with multiple organizational and ministry settings and numerous pathways for participation and engagement. One of the challenges in promoting sustainability in this ecology is bridging the gap between different understandings of sustainability. Just as this church exists to serve God’s mission in the world, its institutional arrangements – the ways it plans, organizes, develops leaders, and gathers and uses its many gifts and resources – are vessels through which God’s mission is served. An important and perennial question for the ELCA’s leadership tables is whether and how these institutional arrangements can evolve to better realize the ELCA’s shared purpose in serving God.

Kenneth Inskeep’s background paper for the future directions table, *Priorities in Context – Sustainability and Membership Growth*, concluded that sustainability is contingent on a **shared set of sensibilities** between members, rostered ministers and leaders of the wider church. The paper emphasizes the need for greater clarity and more accessible communication on Lutheran theology and what it has to offer the world. It also lifts up shared values, an exchange of learning and cooperative endeavor. Inskeep’s paper highlights the importance of continuing to explore and find shared meaning on what it means to be church, to be Lutheran, to be church together and to be church for the sake of the world. However, the paper goes on to argue that shared theology and values may not be enough to build institutional connectedness. Becoming a more sustainable church will require the ELCA to present its values in ways that connect with the interests of the whole church and have meaning across generations, among people of color, across urban and rural communities, among its new and older members, and across ethnic and cultural groups. It also requires more intentionality in reaching out to, engaging and listening to lay members and both lay leaders and rostered ministers of different expressions and ministries.

Through its analysis of church and societal trends and comparisons over time of participation and the way resources for mission are used, the paper points to a **multidimensional view of sustainability – with attention to theological, ecclesial, spiritual and institutional elements**. This analysis has been considered, together with themes from leadership table discussions, to capture what sustainability means for this church and to identify, in more tangible terms, markers of a sustainable ELCA.

Elements of sustainability in the context of being church

Sustainability is first and foremost a **theological, ecclesial and spiritual matter**. It begins with a focus on living faith, as it is God's word that calls the church into being. Freed by God's grace, the ELCA exists to live faithfully, witness boldly, proclaim the gospel and serve the neighbor (*Shared purpose in Future Directions 2025*). Hence, sustainability is intrinsically tied to the ELCA's shared confessional identity and communion, to faithful discipleship, to capacities for witness and service, and a passion for God's mission in the world.

Sustainability is necessarily **future-oriented and hopeful**. It is about **abundance and regeneration**, not mere survival or preservation of the status quo. For the ELCA, it is always connected to a **missional purpose** and not an institutional or corporate end in itself. Sustainability is built as the ELCA becomes *a thriving church spreading the gospel and deepening faith for all people and a welcoming, visible and ecumenical church committed to justice, peace and reconciliation* (Future Directions 2025 goals).

A sustainable church is shaped by and responsive to its many contexts and communities of faith – in identity, theology, faith practices, worship, ministries, leadership and relationships. Without **contextual relevance and legitimacy**, the church cannot be sustainable in today's world or into the future, nor can it influence the well-being of communities, social processes and public policy.

In the context of God's call for being church, sustainability is about **connectedness, mutuality and relationships** with God, as people of God and as different expressions and ministries of the ELCA. Shared purpose and identity, connectedness and relationships as one church comprising many different parts is a critical measure of sustainability.

A sustainable church in today's world cannot journey alone. Sustainability is built through our **accompaniment and communion with other Lutheran churches**, church-to-church and through the Lutheran World Federation, and in the depth and mutuality of our ecumenical and interreligious relationships. Sustainability is also helped by **strategic alliances and partnerships with secular institutions and other nonprofit organizations** that share some of our goals and can link us to networks, ideas and technologies with great potential for the ELCA.

The conservation and environment movement offers a definition of sustainable development that has remained relevant and has gained traction since the 1990s: *development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*. This has elements of responsible stewardship and management of resources – both now and as caretakers for future generations and creation. This seems highly relevant for the church.

As church together, sustainability is about our **vocation as responsible and accountable stewards of God-given gifts and resources** – for God's mission now and into the future. In this vein, it is about having clear goals and priorities; developing leaders across the church; creating effective governance; developing good communication and relational processes; providing well managed and efficient organizations and ministries; using knowledge and technologies effectively; securing resources for mission; and maximizing available resources and assets.

The markers of a sustainable church

Embracing a multidimensional view of sustainability allows us to identify more tangible markers of a sustainable church. In turn, these markers provide church leaders (individually and collectively) a more holistic way to assess, discern and decide what needs attention to build this sustainability. Church leaders in particular need to be able to understand and describe the markers of a sustainable ELCA if they are to promote and work on this as a goal for this church.

The markers of a sustainable ELCA are:

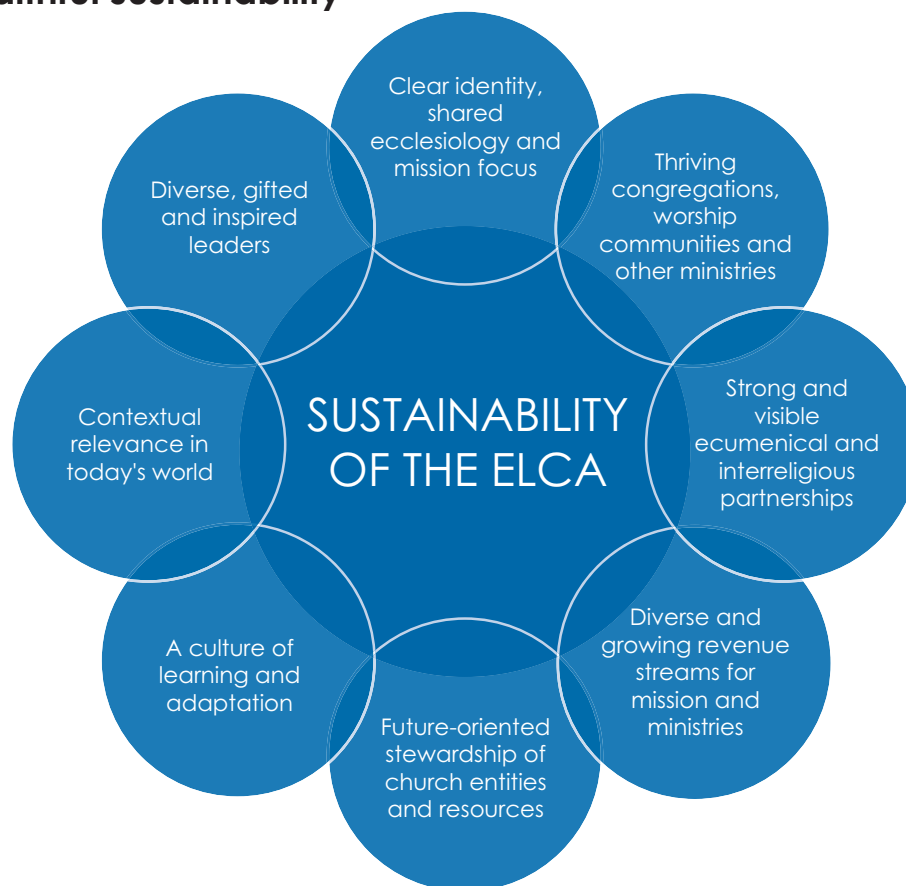
- Clear identity, shared ecclesiology and mission focus.
- Thriving congregations, worship communities and other ministries.
- Contextual relevance – in the lives of ELCA members, communities and today’s world.
- Diverse, gifted and inspired leaders.
- Strong and visible ecumenical and interreligious partnerships.
- Diverse and growing revenue streams for mission and ministries.
- Future-oriented stewardship of church entities and resources.
- A culture of learning and adaptation.

A multidimensional view requires leaders to see the different elements of sustainability as important and mutually reinforcing. Put simply, in the context of being church, sustainability is about much more than financial resources.

However, in this church’s complex ecology and the current religious landscape, it needs to be acknowledged that conversation and planning on some dimensions of sustainability are difficult, especially around money, growing participation, roles and structures, and responsible and accountable stewardship of change. There can be a tendency for leaders to focus on one or a few dimensions of sustainability or choose not to engage in hard discussions and decisions around this issue.

The diagram below represents the multidimensional understanding and the interconnectedness of the markers of sustainability. Framing faithful sustainability as multidimensional reinforces the interplay between the goals in Future Directions 2025 and shows them to be highly relevant foundations for a sustainable church.

Markers of faithful sustainability



Promoting faithful sustainability as an aspiration for this church

A strategy that builds ELCA sustainability is helped by leaders and agents of change being better able to speak consistently, loudly and hopefully about sustainability as a faithful and important aspiration in the life of the church. It means equipping them to see bridges between the theological, ecclesial and institutional dimensions of sustainability. Church leaders and members need to become more comfortable talking about revitalization, growth and change as critical matters for church sustainability and to project these discussions as being both faithful and serving God's mission.

The discourse will be stronger when, as church together, leaders can experience and project to others a shared identity, a vital living faith and a sustainable future. Trusting that the ELCA's future is ultimately in God's hands, the question is how to find new solutions to long-standing challenges that the whole church can understand, back and be inspired by over time. This means being clearer on how to create a shared sense that the interests of congregations and other ministries are furthered by this church's cooperative work.

The difficulties

Sustainability in most other contexts is seen as an essential and admirable goal that is rarely associated with deficit, although securing resources is an ever-present issue for faith-based and nonprofit organizations. So what makes the discussion on finding new ways forward on growth and sustainability as a church difficult?

Living in the tension that Christ's church will always exist. Our central Christian belief is the church universal will exist until Christ comes again. The ELCA is one temporal part of Christ's church. Attending to the effectiveness and cost-efficiency of denominational structures and decision-making can feel in tension with our belief that the church will always exist. The ELCA's ecology, structures, networks and ministries, which we also refer to as "the church," must be given careful consideration as part of responsible stewardship of God's abundant gifts.

The church is complex. It is difficult for formal leaders and change influencers to hold the whole picture in view. At any one time, myriad initiatives and strategies are in place or under development. It is difficult to convey how the various strategies for revitalization, leadership development and sustainability are linked or mutually reinforcing, driven as they may be by individual congregations, synods or the churchwide organization, or mobilized through collaborative effort across expressions and within networks or groups tasked with leading work in different areas.

The ELCA finds it difficult to express a desire to be a growing church in Christ inside and alongside important developments relating to congregational vitality, leadership development, faith formation, and Mission Support and fundraising. There is a fear of failure and a natural belief in some parts of the ELCA that we are OK the way we are. While it is never just about filling the pews or counting the money, a vision of increased participation in the church and growing resources for mission should invoke a positive image and narrative, not a fearful one. Only through growth will there be an increase in people, communities and ministries following and witnessing Jesus, serving the neighbor and spreading the gospel.

Conversations on church vitality sometimes cast a negative spin on the concern with sustainability. This happens where sustainability is understood narrowly, confused with "financial sustainability" or taken to mean addressing a decline in membership and funding for the church. There is a pressing need to reverse unhelpful reaction or shutting down of discussion that seeks to examine data, analyze trends and evaluate outcomes that help this church together envision new ways to become more sustainable. This means investing in creating a culture and mindset more open to learning, adaptation, change and risk. As in most settings, this is a task of leadership.

Living into the ELCA's governance structures can impede a shared vision, common discourse and integrated strategy. Under the constitution, the ELCA's expressions are autonomous entities with separate governance structures that coexist within the overarching governance framework of a churchwide assembly and the Church Council. A clear hierarchy exists within each expression and ministry, but for the ELCA as church together, decision-making, planning and strategy development is largely decentralized. In addition, a range of consultative, peer learning, and advisory structures and networks play a role in shaping strategy and promoting learning. In a structure that is both hierarchical and decentralized, some reassessment of the decisions that should be made centrally in the interests of vitality and sustainability of the whole church may be needed. The three leadership tables have begun this discussion and have a role in imagining, recommending and deciding strategies that can impact the

whole church, especially in areas that involve roles and structures, church finances and assets, and the ELCA's future leadership profile. In a largely decentralized structure, change leadership and management become key to facilitate acceptance of the decisions that can only be taken centrally.

Decision-making, adaptation and change is slow. Forward planning, evaluation of initiatives and strategy, and change management are not yet intrinsic to the ELCA's culture and ways of working. Methodologies and thinking about good practice in these areas are not always embraced as relevant for the church. As the ELCA embraces and implements Future Directions 2025, clear strategy development, evaluation and knowledge exchange, and change management become key. Change management means leaders should be able to voice the case for change in positive terms, engage stakeholders in shaping options and decisions, take and communicate decisions, and follow through with implementation. It requires acceptance that there will be loss and attrition through change, as well as growth and forward momentum. There is growing recognition that change efforts in most settings require a blend of top-down and bottom-up strategies if successful and lasting change is to be achieved.

The ELCA's structure and its complexity make **communication and clear messaging across the church a constant challenge.** Today there is clearly the technology and mediums to communicate consistently and with one voice to the wider church. However, the autonomy and independence of congregations, synods and other ministries means those messages may not be heard, used or embraced. Further, positive messaging about Lutheran theology, identity and congregational vitality mean little if people's experience on the ground is different from the messages they seek to convey. The ELCA's structures and ways of relating can also make it difficult for formal leadership tables to tap into and respond to the experience of members, rostered ministers and lay leaders, church networks and social ministries.

Lastly, **the current reality IS challenging** and the ELCA is not alone. In the U.S and globally, disruptive trends are impacting participation in organized religion and the role and impact of churches. Finding solutions and new ways to respond to these realities will require bold leadership and an investment of time, resources and processes that support, acknowledge and share learnings and experience across the church.

One of the largest challenges will be **finding new ways to raise, share and distribute financial support for the ELCA's three expressions and their ministries and programs.** The ELCA has been successful in raising funds to support many of its local, national and global ministries. But in the long run, growing membership and participation in this church will be critical to increasing revenue. Leaders need to be able to discuss "financial sustainability" without it becoming separated from other dimensions of sustainability.

Integrated change leadership

Successful and enduring change combines advantages of top-down and bottom-up approaches where:

- Top down is used to break up traditional patterns and implement difficult economic or structural adjustments.
- Bottom up provides contextually relevant responses to opportunities and challenges and builds sustainable change and capacity for learning.

The above list of factors is not presented to discourage efforts toward building sustainability. Sometimes hardness can become an excuse for remaining with the status quo or justifying inaction or lack of engagement. Failure to discuss and address some of the above challenges will be damaging for the church over time. It will undermine the ELCA's efforts to become a vital, growing, diverse, welcoming and public-facing church witnessing and serving Jesus and making a difference in neighborhoods and the world.

The challenges also point to the importance of building connectedness and capacities as church together and a collaborative church leadership through the ELCA's three leadership tables to:

- Convey in positive terms why sustainability matters.
- Name and tackle the hardness and minimize its effects.
- Take decisions and implement changes in the interests of the whole church.
- Continue to develop an integrated mix of top-down and bottom-up strategies for church vitality, leadership and sustainability.

The next steps in building sustainability

The first consideration arising from the discussion and analysis above is whether the three leadership tables (full Church Council, Conference of Bishops and administrative team) will embrace sustainability, as defined in this paper, as a positive term and aspiration, and promote understanding of why a focus on sustainability is both faithful and important for ELCA's future.

In some ways this question has already been resolved. Goal five of Future Directions 2025 expresses a commitment to the ELCA being a well-governed, connected and sustainable church. Just as it was important to give meaning to the term congregational vitality, the leadership tables need to be able to speak with one voice on what sustainability means in the ELCA's context and play their part in facilitating a positive discourse on sustainability across the church. So the question is not whether this should happen but how to do it. In the framing of sustainability, it will be important to establish that this is not just about church finances, assets and structures.

The second consideration is communication and messaging to help the wider church embrace the meaning of sustainability and see that church vitality and sustainability go hand in hand.

This does not mean a preoccupation with defining sustainability as a term. Rather, it means representatives of the three leadership tables need to challenge narrow and negative interpretations of sustainability. It means promoting a view that vitality and leadership are markers of a sustainable church, together with more effective approaches and new models in relation to governance, roles and structures in the church, resources for mission and connectedness as church, with communication a key to all of these.

More than ever, the ELCA has the means and opportunity to adopt more consistent messaging on the ideas and terms that matter for the life of the whole church. Clear and consistent messaging is a key to shifting hearts, minds and understandings. Hopefully this paper will help find new messaging that reinforces the interconnectedness and necessity of a focus on church vitality, leadership and sustainability.

The third consideration is for the leadership tables to note that progress on priority action areas under goal five relies on their strategic leadership and collaboration, and an appetite for embracing and leading change. They will need to model a willingness to find, test and take forward new ways to build future sustainability of the whole church and to more clearly differentiate the roles of synods and the churchwide organization, and the important part the leadership tables play in development and implementation of strategy, decision-making and leadership of change efforts. This whole-of-church leadership is unlikely to come from anywhere else.

A balanced strategy on sustainability in the short term could envisage a three-prong approach – congregational vitality, leadership development and church connectedness, and resources and structures. While congregational vitality and leadership have been widely embraced as strategic foci, there may be some ambivalence about lifting up other sustainability priorities to a similarly important and urgent level. This includes work on future funding models and the stewardship of resources, revisiting roles and structures, and strengthening connectedness and accountability as church together.

A specific area identified in the Called Forward Together in Christ consultations and in discussions by the leadership tables is the sustainability of synods in their current roles, model and configuration.

Building on what is already happening

The three leadership tables, collectively and independently, have settled on several strategic commitments and initiatives that fit with the markers of sustainability identified above. There will be much more happening within synods, congregations, the churchwide organization and other ministries that will contribute to the ELCA's sustainability. Some of the important areas under development are included in Attachment A.

The ELCA can also be proud of a range of self-sustaining churchwide ministries that are valued and recognized across the church, including ELCA World Hunger, ELCA Fund for Leaders, ELCA Youth Gathering, the ELCA Mission Investment Fund, ELCA Foundation and ELCA Federal Credit Union.

A question to be addressed as part of any wider communication strategy around sustainability is how to raise awareness of what is already happening, lifting up good examples for others to see and showing existing strategies as interconnected and directly relevant to the ELCA's future sustainability – and do this in ways that build connectivity and the understanding and experience of being church together.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations will be presented to the Church Council by its executive committee. This paper will not be the communication vehicle to the wider church. As stated at the beginning, its purpose was to help move the leadership tables to an agreed understanding of sustainability and a commitment to further action around church sustainability.

1. The churchwide organization and the Conference of Bishops should give priority to developing messaging to the wider church that emphasizes the two foci of congregational vitality and leadership and encourages a positive dialogue on sustainability.
 - a. Building on work underway to determine appropriate ways to measure and assess progress on congregational vitality, the ELCA should develop ways to monitor trends and assess progress on the markers of sustainability.
2. The three leadership tables should embrace/adopt the multidimensional understanding of sustainability as a first step in demonstrating a shared understanding of sustainability for the ELCA; the Church Council should affirm its use in further communication, planning and decision-making for the whole church.
3. The Church Council executive committee and the Joint Leadership Table should reassess whether current actions to grow resources for Mission Support and church ministries are adequate and what other action could be considered over the next two years.
4. Discussions on roles and structures of synods and the churchwide organization should be accelerated as a priority action under goal five of Future Directions 2025, under the leadership of the Conference of Bishops. A plan and timeframe are to be established for decisions that need to be made within two years and how consultation with church leaders and members will be conducted.

ATTACHMENT A: Important initiatives and actions under development

- Implementation of Future Directions 2025 and a joint leadership commitment to take the goals and priority areas forward.
- Work on communicating and embracing the ELCA's identity – we are church, we are Lutheran, we are church together, and we are church for the sake of the world.
- Adoption of congregational vitality and leadership as critical foci for action across the ELCA.
- Growing cooperation and collaborative leadership by the ELCA's three leadership tables.
- The Congregational vitality project (churchwide organization) and a number of synods are experimenting with new ways to support vital congregations.
- Planning and realignment of the churchwide organization with Future Directions 2025.
- Discussion on future roles and structures of synods and the churchwide organization by joint leadership tables.
- Success of *Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA* (major gift infrastructure, new revenue sources and increased income) and resulting new and expanded ministries.
- Building on *The Campaign for the ELCA's* success, the Church Council has appointed a task force to consider a future ELCA campaign.
- Discussions by the Theological Education Advisory Committee on theological education for rostered ministers and lay leaders and sustainability of seminaries. The committee is made up of Church Council members, seminary leaders and churchwide organization staff.
- Seminaries – new models and curriculum for Master of Divinity are being developed.
- Separate incorporation of the ELCA Foundation was established to strengthen governance and position it for future growth.
- Strengthening governance by the Church Council through the Ad Hoc Church Council Working Group on Governance Policy.

ATTACHMENT B:

Excerpted from the

ELCA Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions

Current as of April 9, 2018

Chapter 8. Relationships

- 8.10 RELATIONSHIP OF CONGREGATIONS, SYNODS, AND THE CHURCHWIDE ORGANIZATION.
- 8.11. This church shall seek to function as people of God through congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization, all of which shall be interdependent. Each part, while fully the church, recognized that it is not the whole church and therefore lives in a partnership relationship with the others.
- 8.12. The congregation shall include in its mission a life of worship and nurture for its members, and outreach in witness and service to its community.
- 8.13. The synod shall provide for pastoral care of the congregations, ministers of Word and Sacrament, and ministers of Word and Service within its boundaries. It shall plan for, facilitate, and nurture the life and mission of its people and shall enlarge the ministries and extend the outreach into society on behalf of and in connection with the congregations and the churchwide organization. Conferences, clusters, coalitions, other area subdivisions, or networks shall serve to assist the congregations and synods in exercising their mutual responsibilities.
- 8.14. The churchwide organization shall implement the extended mission of the Church, developing churchwide policies in consultation with the synods and congregations, entering into relationship with the synods and congregations, entering into relationship with governmental, ecumenical, and societal agencies in accordance with accepted resolutions and/or in response to specific agreed-upon areas of responsibility.
- 8.15. Since congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization are partners that share in God's mission, all share in the responsibility to develop, implement, and strengthen the financial support program of this church.
- 8.16. In faithful participation in the mission of God in and through this church, congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization – as interdependent expressions of this church – shall be guided by the biblical and confessional commitments of this church. Each shall recognize that mission efforts must be shaped by both local needs and global awareness, by both individual witness and corporate endeavor, and by both distinctly Lutheran emphases and growing ecumenical cooperation.
- 8.17. References herein to the nature of the relationship between the three expressions of this church – congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization – as being interdependent or as being in a partnership relationship describe the mutual responsibility of these expressions in God's mission, and the fulfillment of the purposes of this church as described in Chapter 4, and do not imply or describe the creation of partnerships, co-ventures, agencies, or other legal relationships recognized in civil law.

Trustworthy Servants of the People of God

*Think of us in this way, as servants of Christ and stewards of God's mysteries.
Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy.
I Corinthians 4:1-2 (NRSV)*

Pastors and Deacons of the Evangelical
Lutheran Church in America



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

Office of the Presiding Bishop

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

[Letter from the Presiding Bishop will go here]

1 **Trustworthy Servants of the People of God**

2 Every church has hopes and expectations for its leaders. The constitutions of the ELCA clearly state the
3 expectations of rostered ministers.¹ Another policy document, *Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline*,
4 describes consequences for unacceptable behaviors.² The ELCA's constitution outlines the importance
5 of the office of ministry and the requirements for serving the church in that role.³ Expectations are also
6 outlined for the calling body, understanding the call of pastors and deacons to be one of mutual
7 accountability.⁴ The responsibilities for pastors and deacons are outlined below.

8 This document, *Trustworthy Servants*, is different. It is intended as a guide, both for pastors and deacons,
9 and for candidates seeking entry onto those rosters. As such, it will be used as part of the candidacy
10 process, both for the candidates and for the candidacy committee.

11 *Trustworthy Servants* affirms the high value that pastors and deacons have in the life of the ELCA. It
12 presents aspirations for integrity in professional life and faithfulness to the calling that all rostered
13 ministers share.

14 These aspirations are not simply for individuals. They are for the whole church, corporately. As a people
15 united in Christ, we respect and honor the diversity of histories, traditions, cultures, languages, and
16 experiences in the ELCA and the larger Christian community. We seek full participation of all in the
17 life and work of this church and will strenuously avoid and repent when the culture of any one group
18 becomes the norm for all in the ELCA. It is a blessing when pastors and deacons live their lives

¹ *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* (Updated November 2016). In the remainder of this document citations from this church's governing documents are codified variously as "ELCA 3.04." (a churchwide provision), "ELCA 7.31.01." (a churchwide bylaw), and "ELCA 5.01.A16." (a churchwide continuing resolution).

² *Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline*, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (Printed May 2010).

³ ELCA 7.21-7.22; 7.51-7.52.

⁴ These expectations are outlined in documents accompanying a letter of call and in provisions for mutual ministry committees.

19 advocating against all of the ways that racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of prejudice and
20 injustice limit participation, and harm individuals, communities and the whole body of Christ.

21

22 As outlined in the ELCA's constitution, the specific responsibilities of pastors and deacons include those
23 named here.

24 **Ministry of Word and Sacrament (Pastor)**

25 Consistent with the faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, every
26 minister of Word and Sacrament shall:

- 27 1) preach the Word;
- 28 2) administer the sacraments;
- 29 3) conduct public worship;
- 30 4) provide pastoral care;
- 31 5) seek out and encourage qualified persons to prepare for the ministry of the Gospel;
- 32 6) impart knowledge of this church and its wider ministry through distribution of its
33 periodicals and other publications;
- 34 7) witness to the Kingdom of God in the community, in the nation, and abroad; and
- 35 8) speak publicly to the world in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, calling for justice
36 and proclaiming God's love for the world.

37

38 Each pastor with a congregational call shall, within the congregation:

- 39 1) offer instruction, confirm, marry, visit the sick and distressed, and bury the dead;
- 40 2) relate to all schools and organizations of the congregation;
- 41 3) install regularly elected members of the Congregation Council;
- 42 4) with the council, administer discipline; and

43 5) endeavor to increase the support given by the congregation to the work of the ELCA
44 churchwide organization and its synod.⁵

45 **Ministry of Word and Service (Deacon)**

46 Consistent with the faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, every minister of
47 Word and Service shall:

- 48 1) Be rooted in the Word of God, for proclamation and service;
- 49 2) Advocate a prophetic diakonia that commits itself to risk-taking and innovative
50 service on the frontiers of the Church's outreach, giving attention to the suffering
51 places in God's world;
- 52 3) Speak publicly to the world in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, calling for
53 justice and proclaiming God's love for the world, witnessing to the realm of God in
54 the community, the nation, and abroad;
- 55 4) Equip the baptized for ministry in God's world that affirms the gifts of all people;
- 56 5) Encourage mutual relationships that invite participation and accompaniment of others
57 in God's mission;
- 58 6) Practice stewardship that respects God's gift of time, talents, and resources;
- 59 7) Be grounded in a gathered community for ongoing diaconal formation;
- 60 8) Share knowledge of the ELCA and its wider ministry of the gospel, and advocate for
61 the work of all expressions of this church; and
- 62 9) Identify and encourage qualified persons to prepare for the ministry of the gospel⁶

63

64 **Trust is the Foundation of Relationships**

⁵ ELCA 7.31.02.

⁶ ELCA 7.61.02.

65 From Scripture we learn of God’s love for humankind and all of Creation, revealed most powerfully
66 through God’s self-revelation in Jesus Christ, who lived, died, and rose again to give new life to all. Our
67 Lutheran tradition puts a special emphasis on God’s mercy: a kind of love that breaks through human
68 categories of deserving and undeserving, and embraces all.⁷

69
70 It is this all-encompassing and merciful love that allows us to trust in God’s favor toward us; trust, in turn,
71 is the foundation of our human relationships. Marriage, friendship, community and even government all
72 depend on levels of trust between humans. Our ultimate trust is in God, but we also must be able to trust
73 one another to be faithful to the promises we have each made, and to live faithfully within the
74 responsibilities we each bear.⁸

75

76 **A Trustworthy Life in Rostered Ministry**

77 In a broken world and among imperfect people, trust is both precious and fragile. It is particularly
78 challenging, for those who are called to be speakers of God’s word and bearers of God’s sacramental
79 promises, to live out their callings in ways that both acknowledge their own imperfection and yet stay fully
80 deserving of their people’s trust. This is the tension in which those called to public ministry in the church
81 must live: to be both true to themselves *and* at the same time a model to others.⁹

82

83 With all Christians, pastors and deacons are called to lead a “life in a manner worthy of the gospel of
84 Christ” (Philippians 1:27, NRSV). Christ’s own self-giving in life and unto death on the cross is the
85 example for Christian life for all believers. Because pastors and deacons are also recipients of God’s
86 gracious gift in Christ Jesus, they are called to use their gifts and abilities to enable others to understand
87 themselves as recipients of that same grace and to live as God’s people in the world. In their life and

⁷ Examples of this inclusive mercy are found in Psalm 86:5; Luke 6:36; Romans 5:8.

⁸ The crucial role of trust is made clear in passages like Luke 16:10-12; 1 Cor 4:1-2; 1 Peter 5:3.

⁹ This paradoxical role is illustrated in passages like Matt 23:11; Mark 10:45; Gal 5:13.

88 conduct, pastors and deacons are to witness to the crucified and risen Jesus Christ and aspire to use their
89 gifts in lives worthy of the gospel of Christ and equip others to do the same.¹⁰

90

91 Pastors and deacons fulfill their calling not only in what they do by carrying out certain tasks, but also in
92 who they are. The expectations and hopes placed on them, from their congregations and their communities,
93 ask that their very lives proclaim and witness to the gospel of Christ. Even as we confess that as part of a
94 broken humanity, the life of a rostered minister cannot be one of moral or spiritual perfection, yet the hope
95 remains that pastors and deacons strive for daily living that witnesses to the good news that we are justified
96 by God's grace and called to live out that grace in daily life.

97

98 The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has high expectations for those who serve in public
99 ministry as pastors and deacons of this church. Those who publicly profess to be witnesses to the gospel
100 of Jesus Christ also aspire to maintain integrity and character so that their lives give authentic witness to
101 their trustworthiness for the sake of effective ministry. The public nature of the church's ministries
102 makes the character of its ministers central to the church's own trustworthiness. The negative impact of a
103 pastor or deacon breaking trust often results in an inability to carry out public ministry effectively.

104

105 **When Trust Is Broken**

106 When effective ministry depends upon a relationship of trust, the vulnerability of those in that
107 relationship is acute. And when that trust is broken, the wounds are that much deeper and wider,
108 impacting more than just the parties involved, but the whole sphere of ministry influence in the
109 community. Since the possibility for harm is great, the need to hold that trust is all the more imperative.

110

¹⁰ Matthew 28:16-20.

111 Sin and brokenness are realities in the lives of all persons, including those who serve as pastors and
112 deacons. But when there is failure in the lives of those who serve in public ministry, this church seeks to
113 provide counsel and understanding, while emphasizing that though repentance and forgiveness are
114 always part of the life of faith, they may not be sufficient for restoration to rostered ministry. Rostered
115 ministry is a privilege granted by the community of faith, not the right of any individual. Forgiveness for
116 a break of trust is the hope, but it cannot be assumed that forgiveness results in the removing of
117 consequences. The consequences of such a broken trust may well remain.

118

119 **Leadership Rooted in Faith**

120 First and foremost, pastors and deacons are people of faith: people who find their identity and meaning in
121 a deep and trusting belief in the God who created, sustains, judges, and loves them, and is known most
122 perfectly in the life and work of Jesus Christ, God's Word made flesh. This commitment to faith shapes
123 every part of the lives of pastors and deacons and draws them ever toward God's Word proclaimed, the
124 sacramental means of grace, and the Spirit's presence in beloved community. Pastors and deacons are
125 expected to be people of prayer and personal devotion, to avail themselves of opportunities for confession
126 and forgiveness and sharing of Holy Communion, and to join with the people of God in daily intercession
127 for the church and for the world. They should cultivate in themselves the spiritual disciplines and gifts
128 they promote in those they serve.

129

130 Pastors and deacons are members of the congregations to which they are called. If they are called to
131 ministry in a setting other than an ELCA congregation (including full communion partners and institutional
132 ministries), they are to maintain membership in an ELCA congregation whenever possible, and to consult
133 with their synod bishop if that is impossible because of relational boundaries or geographical or physical
134 limitations.

135

136 Pastors and deacons of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America are leaders not only in the
137 congregation or setting to which they are called, they are an integral part of the ministry of the whole
138 church. Recognizing the church's call as God's call, and in response to their promise to work in harmony
139 with the ELCA, pastors and deacons are expected to be bridge-builders between their own congregations
140 and the other expressions of the church. They are also expected to be trustworthy and engaged colleagues
141 of the other pastors and deacons of this church, to be accountable to those under whose oversight they
142 serve, and to share in responsibility for the whole church's mission. They also have a particular
143 responsibility to help identify other qualified and gifted persons who might be suited to public ministry
144 in this church and encourage them to consider candidacy for rostered ministry.

145
146 Pastors and deacons of our church should also be lifelong learners, eager for growth in knowledge and
147 insight into the Scriptures, the teachings and history of the church, and the world around them. The work
148 of ministry in a complex and changing society requires intelligence, mental agility, and curiosity, and
149 pastors and deacons are expected to take advantage both of structured opportunities for expected
150 continuing education, but also to keep themselves aware of current events and the world around them.
151 Pastors and deacons are expected to make personal study and reflection a priority in their lives, and also
152 to study when possible in the company of other pastors and deacons in collegium or other gatherings. They
153 are also encouraged to take advantage of sabbatical or other programs for extended study, and to take
154 advantage of resources made available to them for these. Congregations and ministry settings are also
155 expected to help their pastors and deacons with time and resources to do this. The ELCA expects fifty
156 contact hours of continuing education annually.

157

158 **Faithfulness in Health and Self-Care**

159 Physical health is central to well-being, vital to relationships, and makes it possible to live out vocations
160 in church, family, and community. Pastors and deacons are expected to make their own health a priority

161 in their lives, and to express their care for others by a concern for others' health as well. Congregations
162 and ministry settings are likewise to respect the needs of pastors and deacons for rest and self-care. If a
163 pastor or deacon is faced with the challenge of serious illness, then it is important that the rostered minister
164 inform both the synod bishop and congregation so that the leader's and congregation's needs may be met
165 and compassionate care extended.

166
167 Awareness of and care for one's own physical condition, reasonable and regular physical and mental health
168 care, nutrition and exercise are all parts of the responsibility given to pastors and deacons for self-care,
169 being alert to health care challenges presented by stress and overwork. Pastors and deacons are to be
170 particularly aware of the possible challenges to their health, wellbeing, and professional judgment
171 presented by the overuse of alcohol or other addictive substances or practices.

172

173 **Trustworthiness in All Dimensions of Life**

174 Pastors and deacons are to be examples of holy living so that their life and conduct do not become an
175 impediment to the hearing of the gospel or a scandal to the congregation or to the surrounding
176 community. The qualities of such a life include developing and maintaining a public reputation of
177 personal integrity and trustworthiness in all relationships.

178

179 Pastors and deacons are expected to be honest and forthright in dealings with others while protecting
180 privileged communications. They are to avoid conduct that is dishonest, deceptive, duplicitous or
181 manipulative of others for personal benefit or gain.

182

183 **Trustworthiness in Relationships and Friendships**

184 In all relationships, pastors and deacons are to seek to build up the body of Christ. In public ministry and
185 in private life, pastors and deacons are expected to develop and nurture appropriate relationships, behaving
186 in ways that build and sustain trust.

187

188 Friendships are both essential and complicated for those who serve in rostered ministry. On one hand,
189 pastors and deacons will respect the ties of friendships among others and will welcome and nurture
190 friendships for themselves. On the other hand, they will avoid compromising their role as ministers in such
191 relationships, maintaining appropriate boundaries and remaining alert to the dangers of acting out of
192 multiple roles in a single relationship. Wisdom and care are needed to define friendships without
193 inappropriate closeness or over-sharing in communities with a smaller number of peers or when a rostered
194 minister leaves a call or moves into retirement.

195

196 **Trustworthiness in Family Life**

197 Pastors and deacons will strive to serve others and nurture trust by faithfulness within their own family
198 life. Within the family, forgiveness, reconciliation, healing, and mutual care are to be expressed. Children,
199 if any, will be regarded with love, respect and commitment. It is also expected that pastors and deacons
200 will maintain responsible relationships with their parents and other immediate relatives wherever that is
201 possible, recognizing that brokenness within family structures is a human reality. Neglect, abuse, desertion,
202 or abandonment of spouse and children, or failure to meet legally determined family support obligations,
203 are all inconsistent with serving as a rostered minister in the ELCA.

204

205 **Trustworthiness in Finances and Use of Intellectual Property of Others**

206 Pastors and deacons who are faithful stewards of time, talents, and possessions are examples of generous
207 living and earn trust within their community. Pastors and deacons are expected to conduct personal fiscal
208 affairs in accordance with ethical and legal requirements. Included among those fiscal activities considered

209 incompatible with the character and role of a rostered minister are indifference to or avoidance of legitimate
210 and personal debts, embezzlement of money, or improper appropriation of the property of others. The
211 ministerial office is not to be used for personal financial advantage.

212

213 Where indebtedness creates a significant burden for pastors and deacons (and their families) consultation
214 with the synod bishop's office and work with a financial counselor is to be approached without shame and
215 with confidence that a solid foundation can be created for managing financial obligations.

216

217 Care is also to be given to the thoughts and writings of others when they are used to illustrate, support or
218 enhance the thoughts, presentations, sermons and writings of pastors and deacons. When the intellectual
219 property of others is used, the source must be identified and referenced. This includes proper use of
220 copyrighted materials in worship.

221

222 **Communications**

223 The social teachings of the church guide the public advocacy of pastors and deacons, whether from the
224 pulpit or social media, the state house or the local restaurant. It is important, especially when using social
225 media, to distinguish between one's personal convictions and the teachings of the church, if they diverge.
226 Pastoral sensitivity, respect and common sense are important in using social media and in ordinary
227 conversations. Citing sources and using intentional, thoughtful speech in posts can help insure clarity of
228 position. A public figure page, separate from one's personal page, also aids the separation of official and
229 personal positions.

230

231 **Human Sexuality and Gender**

232 Sexuality is a rich and universal aspect of human life. In the teachings of the ELCA, human sexuality is
233 understood as a gift and trust from God.¹¹ Those who serve as pastors and deacons reflect a variety of
234 sexual orientations and diverse gender identities. Whether single or married, the personal attitudes and
235 conduct of pastors and deacons are to honor this understanding of sexuality as a good gift and trust from
236 God in the lives of all people.

237

238 **Trustworthiness in Sexual Conduct and Speech**

239 In a cultural context in which sexuality is often objectified and used for commercial purposes, pastors
240 and deacons are called to a counter-cultural ethic.¹² Whether single or married, they embrace a holistic
241 understanding of sexuality that counters a rigid or shame-filled attitude about the human body. It is
242 useful to remember Martin Luther's view of vocation. For Luther the celibate life is not intrinsically
243 holier than the life of those who marry nor is marriage itself a life-saving sacrament.¹³ God hates nothing
244 that God has made, and sexual desire and procreation are parts of God's good intention for humankind.
245 Like every other aspect of human life, our dual "saint and sinner" nature makes the most powerful human
246 impulses also the most challenging ones. With this in mind, pastors and deacons are to reject sexual
247 promiscuity in their own lives and are never to use their role in the church to manipulate, exploit or
248 abuse another person sexually or emotionally. To prevent such abuse and exploitation, pastors and
249 deacons should refrain from emotional or sexual intimacy with those among whom they serve, such as
250 congregation members, staff, and other active participants in the ministry.

251

252

¹¹ A detailed theology of human sexuality can be found in *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (2009).

¹² See "Social Trust and the Common Good" in *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*. Pages 12-13.

¹³ *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* (1520), in *LW* 36:92-106 and 114-115. (Pelikan and Lehman, eds. 55 vols. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959).

253 In the entrance rites for pastors and for deacons prayers are offered, calling for them to “serve without
254 reproach” and to live in such a way as “to reflect God’s grace so that many may come to know and love
255 God”.¹⁴ This exemplary role is meant to give joy, as well as responsibility, to those serving in the public
256 ministries of the church. Aligning this with the ELCA’s understanding of the deeply significant, lifelong
257 nature of marriage, the expectations upon sexual expression by pastors and deacons may well run against
258 the grain of contemporary culture.

259
260 This church teaches¹⁵ that degrees of physical intimacy should be carefully matched to degrees of
261 growing affection and commitment and that the greatest sexual intimacies should be matched with
262 marriage. Pastors and deacons, as public witnesses to this church’s respect for marriage, are therefore
263 to live in accordance with the understanding that deepening degrees of sexual intimacy are aligned with
264 deepening levels of commitment to one another and the relationship. Such relationships are to be
265 exclusive, monogamous, consensual, and in the ELCA, require marriage before cohabitation for those
266 serving as pastors and deacons.

267
268 In speech and in action, pastors and deacons are to refrain from sexual harassment and to address such
269 behaviors within their ministries. Ignoring or excusing language and behaviors that belittle, bully or harm
270 others undermines the responsibility of pastors and deacons to uphold a safe and supportive climate for all
271 within the congregation or ministry site.

272

273 **Trustworthiness in Marriage**

274 This church does not permit its pastors or deacons to marry or to be married without a valid civil marriage
275 license. This church recognizes the legality of divorce to end a marriage.

¹⁴ *Evangelical Lutheran Worship: Occasional Services for the Assembly*, Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2009. Pages 191 and 205, respectively.

¹⁵ *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*, pages 31-33.

276 It expects all pastors and deacons in committed relationships to enter into (or be expecting to enter into) a
277 legally-recognized marriage. It also encourages them whenever possible to participate within a
278 congregation in a public marriage or service affirming the relationship.¹⁶ Should unmarried pastors or
279 deacons seek to marry, the counsel and guidance of their bishop is to be sought and the rostered minister
280 will make the decision known among those they serve.

281

282 All married pastors or deacons are expected to live within a marriage relationship that is mutual and faithful
283 to their spouse. Pastors or deacons, who are married, are expected to keep their marriage promises until
284 death, to cultivate love and respect for their spouse, and to seek marital counseling whenever it is needed.

285

286 Because of sin and brokenness, some marriages may dissolve. Pastors and deacons who seek to separate
287 or divorce will enlist the counsel and guidance of the synod bishop. Similarly, a pastor or deacon
288 planning to remarry following a divorce will seek the counsel and guidance of their bishop.

289

290 **Trustworthiness with Creation**

291 Together with all Christians, pastors and deacons are called to respect the integrity of God's creation and
292 to live in a way that acknowledges the special role of humans in stewarding this gift.¹⁷ Such trustworthy
293 stewardship involves the temperate use of resources as individuals and the work of promoting care of
294 creation in congregations and ministry settings. As leaders in the congregation and in the community,
295 pastors and deacons are in a unique position to raise awareness of the human impact on the environment
296 and lead people towards behavior and practices that minimize damage to natural resources. Personal,

¹⁶ The 2009 Churchwide Assembly acted to allow congregations that choose to do so to recognize and support same-gendered couples and to hold their relationships publicly accountable. (*Gift and Trust*, pages 20-21). The ELCA has not created a separate liturgy for the marriage of same-gendered persons. At the recommendation of the "Ministry to and with Same Gender Couples and Families" work group, authorized by the 2013 Churchwide Assembly, supplemental resources were created that both same-gendered couples and all couples could use.

¹⁷ *Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice*, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (1993), 2.

297 congregational, and community-wide efforts toward recycling, reusing, and energy conservation witness
298 to the care of God's creation.

299 **Conclusion**

300 Ministers of Word and Sacrament and ministers of Word and Service have been chosen by God and this
301 church to lead the people of the ELCA and equip them as they bear witness to God and serve this world.
302 Each pastor and deacon has both the privilege and the responsibility of guiding this church into God's
303 future.

304

305 The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America prays for the guidance and empowerment of the Holy Spirit
306 for those who serve this church in the ministry of Word and Sacrament and in the ministry of Word and
307 Service.

308

309 *Almighty God, by grace alone you call us and accept us in your service. Strengthen us by your Spirit, and*
310 *make us worthy of your call, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.*¹⁸

311

¹⁸ Prayer for the Third Sunday after Epiphany. *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006.