



Report of the Executive for Administration

Statement of purpose

The *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* describes the responsibilities of the executive for administration as [continuing resolution 15.12.A10.]:

The executive for administration shall be accountable to the presiding bishop and shall serve as chief administrator of the churchwide organization. The executive for administration shall be elected by the Church Council upon nomination of the presiding bishop and shall serve coterminous with the term of the presiding bishop. At the direction of the presiding bishop, the executive for administration shall:

- a. supervise the day-to-day functioning of the churchwide organization and coordinate the work of churchwide units;*
- b. coordinate the strategic planning and day-to-day staff activities within the Office of the Presiding Bishop and the functioning of the administrative team;*
- c. facilitate the interdependent functioning of churchwide units in the fulfillment of the responsibilities assigned to them;*
- d. develop the budget for the churchwide organization and report to the Church Council and the Churchwide Assembly through the Budget and Finance Committee of the Church Council with regard to the preparation of the budget; and*
- e. provide staff services and documentation to the Planning and Evaluation Committee and the Board Development Committee of the Church Council.*

The following is a report of the churchwide organization's work during 2014-2016. See other reports provided in Section III of the *Pre-Assembly Report* for more information regarding the work of the churchwide organization.

Strategic planning

A time of transition: In 2013 the Churchwide Assembly elected the Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton as presiding bishop and the Rev. Wm Chris Boerger as secretary. The churchwide organization welcomed these new colleagues and said goodbye to the former presiding bishop, the Rev. Mark S. Hanson, and former secretary, Mr. David D. Swartling.

Presiding Bishop Eaton's four emphases set the frame for the organization's planning for the triennium.

- **We are church.**
- **We are Lutheran.**
- **We are church together.**
- **We are church for the sake of the world.**

The 2014-2016 Operational Plan has guided the churchwide organization's work for the past three years. Overall responsibility for implementing the plan rests with the administrative team, in consultation with the Planning and Evaluation Committee of the Church Council. The administrative team consists of the presiding bishop, secretary, treasurer, unit executive directors and the executive for administration. The Operational Plan has six goals.

We are church

Goal 1: Congregations are growing, vibrant in their worship life and diverse, and worshipers increase their engagement in and support for God's mission, locally and globally.

We are church together

Goal 2: Members of this church are better connected with who we are as church, and relationships across this church's wider ecology are deepened and strengthened for evangelical witness and service in the world.

We are church for the sake of the world

Goal 3: Impoverished and vulnerable people, locally and globally, achieve sufficient, sustainable lives and are accompanied and empowered in addressing the challenges of poverty, injustice and emergencies in their communities.

We are Lutheran

Goal 4: Lay and rostered leaders are grounded in Lutheran theology and competent to serve the church we are becoming, and the leadership profile reflects this church's aspiration for cultural, generational and socioeconomic diversity.

We are church together

Goal 5: Leaders across this church are working together on strategies to address future sustainability of the ELCA, and the churchwide organization has a growing and sustainable revenue base for mission.

We are church. We are Lutheran. We are church together. We are church for the sake of the world.

Goal 6: The churchwide organization is effective in its mandated roles and characterized by a culture strong in worship and spiritual discernment, leadership, accountability, staff competence, systems improvement and continuous learning.

The Operational Plan contains four cross-cutting commitments.

- **Theological discernment and formation** — ensuring our evolving identity and self-understanding, our worship and our practice of mission continue to be grounded in Lutheran theology.
- **Gender justice** — embedding gender analysis in all aspects of the churchwide organization's work and making gender equity a commitment in its work within the ELCA and through the programs we manage.
- **Racial justice and ethnic diversity** — living out the commitment to being a multicultural church, in the churchwide organization and throughout this church, and working against racial discrimination within the church and society.
- **Youth and young adults** — embracing youth and young adults as vital to the worship life, mission and future sustainability of this church and raising them up as leaders in all its expressions.

The Church Council has received regular reports on the Operational Plan through its Planning and Evaluation Committee. The council also received two Operational Plan annual reports this past triennium. What follows is an **executive summary** of the 2015 report.

2015 was an exciting and demanding year for your churchwide organization. There were major achievements, such as exceeding the ELCA Malaria Campaign goal. There were also challenges, such as implementing new operational systems and setting baselines and metrics for the organization's work. In addition, staff engaged partners in new ways and were given new opportunities for mission.

Your churchwide staff is the organization's greatest asset. As they work together and with partners on the Operational Plan, staff continue to discover the importance of relationships and how they tend to them. Staff is also learning to work more collaboratively within and across units. The objectives set for the organization require an enterprise-wide view and commitment. Staff capacity continued to be stretched during 2015. The organization was especially challenged in its information technology and accounting areas. Program staff also carried more work than anticipated in several ministry areas.

Staff support for major initiatives was significant and well done. These include the Theological Educational Advisory Council; Word and Service Task Force; the social message on gender-based violence; Lilly grant — Resourceful Servants; AMMPARO (Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities); a new Lutheran Center in Juba, South Sudan; "The Declaration on the Way," a Lutheran-Roman Catholic document; the observance of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation; planning for the 2016 Churchwide Assembly and Grace Gathering; addressing issues of racism in this country; and implementing such major events as the ELCA Youth Gathering, the Multicultural Youth Leadership Event, the Definitely Abled Leadership Event and the Worship Jubilee.

While the above events and projects unfolded, *Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA* completed its second year with a strong performance thanks to the generosity of ELCA members. Campaign funds are designated

to areas of mission approved by the 2013 Churchwide Assembly, not to the general operating budget of the churchwide organization. In 2015 the churchwide organization continued to experience a decrease in mission support, the primary source of income for the budget. As a result, staff members have started an experiment with five synods regarding how mission support from their congregations is shared with the churchwide organization.

During 2015 key adjustments were made in the Mission Advancement unit related to *The Lutheran* magazine and Strategic Communications staff. There were also key staffing transitions in the other units and offices. Whenever staff transitions occur, some lag time is seen in programs and projects. We have managed these transitions with good planning and other staff stepping up to cover areas as needed. There was movement of some of the directors for evangelical mission in the churchwide organization's partnership with synods. The directors are key in how we live out church together on synod territories.

In 2015 the strength of churchwide staff was increased through a leadership development program. Fifteen staff members were in the first cohort and another 15 began in the latter part of 2015. Participants of the first group have shown growth and a greater contribution to the life of the organization. Several have been promoted or given increased leadership responsibilities.

Work with partners, ecumenically and globally, continues to be strong. This church engaged in more than 244 companion projects in more than 62 countries and supported 65 women for degree programs through the International Women Leaders initiative. Lutheran Disaster Response work was also strong in 2015. ELCA World Hunger and Lutheran Disaster Response (domestic and international) are working closer together to fulfill this church's commitment to being in crisis communities for the long haul and to assist them with sustainable development.

Sixty-two new starts were approved, representing all nine regions. Staff worked with synods to provide 146 congregations with renewal grants. ELCA World Hunger grants were awarded to congregations and institutions. Churchwide efforts continue in the areas of advocacy and community organizing. Staff worked to strengthen this church's ethnic-specific and multicultural reach, including identifying and preparing church leaders.

The organization remains committed to gender and racial justice, theological discernment and formation, and youth and young adults. The Young Adults in Global Mission program has grown ahead of its goal.

At its November 2015 meeting, The ELCA Church Council called upon the presiding bishop to address racial and ethnic diversity and the dismantling of racism in this church. To date Presiding Bishop Eaton has hosted two webcasts and is working closely with staff assigned on plans that can be implemented from the churchwide organization. The presiding bishop has also engaged the Conference of Bishops in this effort.

Churchwide staff gave many hours to working with synodical, congregational, institutional and other partners during 2015 to strengthen relationships for mission with and on behalf of this church. Organizational environments are changing along with the business environment in this country and worldwide. Staff is committed to establishing, maintaining and deepening relationships for the sake of mission.

Moving into the next triennium, some of the opportunities and challenges ahead of the organization are to continue to strengthen relationships with partners in changing contexts and more clearly identify measurements for objectives that help staff hold each other accountable. Staff will also focus on strengthening work related to mission support through implementation of a comprehensive strategy, improve the implementation of workflow and management tools and address staff capacity concerns.

The organization anticipates the work of the Future Directions Table through the Called Forward Together in Christ process to set priorities and give direction to the next operational plan.

Churchwide organization budget

The churchwide organization's budget supports local and global ministries. It is a symbol of trust and expectation placed in the churchwide organization. The Office of the Presiding Bishop, along with the Office of the Treasurer, works with the Budget and Finance Committee of the Church Council to present a budget for the organization to churchwide assemblies. The primary source of income for the budget is mission support, providing a way for each ELCA congregation to extend its impact in the world.

At the beginning of 2014, mission support to the churchwide organization was decreased from the amount adopted at the 2013 Churchwide Assembly by \$800,000 to \$48 million. Mission support from congregations through synods in 2014 totaled \$48.4 million. This represented a favorable amount to the revised budget. In 2015 the mission support budget was \$47.25 million. Final mission support for 2015 was \$47.1 million, resulting in a 2.4 percent decrease

compared to 2014. As the churchwide organization plans for ministry, these decreases are very concerning. The good stewardship of churchwide units has resulted in underspending over the triennium, which allowed partnerships and programs to continue as well as support for new initiatives.

Mission support projections continue to be flat or declining. The way resources of congregations, synods and the churchwide organization are currently shared needs ongoing attention. A Comprehensive Mission Support Strategy has been implemented with affirmation from the Conference of Bishops and the Church Council. This strategy, along with the anticipated work of the Future Directions Table, will give guidance for the priorities and funding of this church's ministries for the future.

The 2017-2019 churchwide organization triennial budget presented at the 2016 Churchwide Assembly includes current vacancies, attrition and strategic use of designated funds. See the Report of the Treasurer in Section II of the *Pre-Assembly Report* and, in Section V, see the 2017-2019 Budget Proposal.

General administration

On Dec. 6, 2013, Ms. Else Thompson, executive for human resources, retired after 15 years of service. The ELCA welcomed Ms. Rhondean Johnson as the new executive for human resources on Feb. 10, 2014.

The worship ministry team moved from the Domestic Mission (formerly Congregational and Synodical Mission) unit to the Office of the Presiding Bishop on Sept. 1, 2015.

In 2015 the Lutheran Center, your churchwide office building in Chicago, was awarded the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Gold Certification. Churchwide staff has worked hard to make the building green.

Two key operational audits occurred during the past triennium: the Office of the Treasurer Accounting and Information Technology. The results indicate that we are working at capacity in these areas. Increasing complexities of information technology systems and the need for higher service levels to support daily operations are straining current systems and staff. The Office of the Presiding Bishop continues to work with the Office of the Treasurer and the administrative team to address these challenges.

ELCA Credit Union

The ELCA Credit Union was launched in April 2016. The offices are located on the sixth floor of the Lutheran Center. The credit union offers consumer lending and insured deposit products to the members, congregations, synods and institutions of the ELCA. Because the credit union is a financial cooperative, any earnings are returned to the members in the form of lower rates on loans, higher rates on savings, reduced fees and enhanced services. ELCA leadership is thankful for the partnership of the Mission Investment Fund of the ELCA in this effort.

Conclusion

I have had the privilege to serve as staff resource to several major initiatives this past triennium, including the Theological Education Advisory Council and the Future Directions Table. I have also represented this church as a member of the Augusta Victoria Hospital Board, appointed by The Lutheran World Federation. I am thankful to work with your churchwide staff and for the opportunity to serve with Presiding Bishop Eaton as one of her executive assistants with and on behalf of this church.

The Rev. M. Wyvetta Bullock, *executive for administration*