



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

**Freed & RENEWED**  
**in Christ** 500 YEARS OF GOD'S  
GRACE IN ACTION

## **2016 Churchwide Assembly Report of the Reference and Counsel Committee**

**Thursday, August 11, 2016**

### **Motion A**

#### **Resolution on Racial Justice**

Submitted by: The Reverend Lee M. Miller II

Whereas, systemic and institutionalized racism is an acute illness infecting North American culture, and

Whereas, the church is the body of Christ, and when one member of the body hurts, we all hurt, and

Whereas, currently rostered leaders are strongly encouraged to receive appropriate training including boundaries training; therefore,

Be it resolved, that the ELCA in assembly strongly encourage all rostered leaders to receive anti-racism training, and

Be it further resolved that the ELCA in assembly strongly encourage every synod to develop or maintain resources for anti-racism training for rostered leaders and congregations.

#### **Recommendation of the Reference and Counsel Committee**

We recommend approval.

### **Motion B**

#### **Resolution for a Strategy Toward Authentic Diversity within the ELCA**

Submitted by: Rev. Priscilla Paris-Austin

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

WHEREAS the Women of the ELCA has developed a wealth of resources and curriculum for racial justice from a Biblical and historical perspective and the Ethnic Specific Ministry Associations along with the Ethnic Specific,

Multicultural and Racial Justice team have developed strategies for engaging and involving people of color in every aspect of the life of our church; and

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

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

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

- consulting with WELCA, the Ethnic Specific Ministry Associations, the Multicultural and Racial Justice Team, the Conference of Bishops and ecumenical partners;
- collecting existing resources such as those available from WELCA and the Ethnic Specific Ministry Associations and beyond the ELCA;
- identifying needs for additional resources;
- supporting synods in identifying their specific opportunities for growth;
- assessing the effectiveness of diversity strategies across the three expressions church in order to identify strategies that have yielded authentic diversity; and be it further

RESOLVED that the Task Force be composed of one person from each of the nine regions and one Bishop who will serve as co-chair. The composition of the Task Force shall conform with the representational principles in section 5.01.f of the ELCA Constitution except that persons of Color and/or persons whose Primary Language is other than English shall comprise 100% of the Task Force and the Task Force shall be ethnically diverse. The members of the Task Force shall be appointed by the Church Council in consultation with the ELCA Director of Ethnic Specific and Multicultural Ministries; and be it further

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

RESOLVED that the Task Force submit a report and recommendations to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly that includes:

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

#### **Recommendation of the Reference and Counsel Committee**

We recommend approval.

## **Motion C**

### **Resolution Urging Stewardship of the Gift of Water**

Submitted by: Reverend Christine E. Chiles

Whereas, Holy Scripture reminds us that “the Holy Habitation of the Most High” includes “a river whose streams make glad the city of God,” and that “waters of the sea may become fresh, so everything will live where the river goes,” and that “the Holy Spirit descended on [Jesus] in bodily form like a dove” when he was baptized in the River Jordan, and

Whereas, a watershed is the ground that water flows within as it moves toward a stream, river or lake, and is a natural boundary within God’s creation, unlike arbitrary and haphazard geopolitical boundaries, and all of God’s creatures live in a watershed, and

Whereas, many of the watersheds in this country are degraded, and this environmental damage leads to water shortages and a crisis that disproportionately affects people of color and people with lower incomes, and

Whereas, the ELCA social statement “Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope and Justice” states that “We see the despoiling of the environment as nothing less than the degradation of God’s precious gift of creation,” and the social statement also reminds us that “congregations have various opportunities during the year to focus on creation...Thanksgiving, harvest festivals, and blessings of field, water, and plants and animals,” and encourages us to “observe Earth Day or Soil and Water Stewardship Week,” so as to protect and restore “natural and human habitats, including seas, wetlands, forests, wilderness, and urban areas,” and

Whereas, “watershed discipleship” requires that Christians acknowledge that water lies both at the center of our Christian rite of baptism and our current ecological and climate crisis, thus deserving deep theological treatment, therefore, let it be

Resolved, that the ELCA, in Assembly, requests the Church Council to direct the appropriate churchwide unit to provide every active rostered leader with resources to locate each congregation within its watershed district, so that waters may be named and known in worship and intercessory prayers, and that theological and biblical themes may build awareness, care and thanksgiving for the gift of these waters; and let it be further

Resolved, that the ELCA, in Assembly, requests the Church Council to direct the appropriate churchwide unit to provide resources to congregations and individual members to encourage and support conservation and prayerful stewardship of water resources, and let it be further

Resolved, that the ELCA, in Assembly, requests the Church Council to direct the appropriate churchwide unit to continue to develop strategies and provide resources to support areas struggling with natural or human-caused disasters that impact access to clean water, such as water contamination, drought and floods, with an awareness that the impact of our environmental actions have disproportionate implication for communities of color with lower incomes, and let it be further

Resolved, that the ELCA, in Assembly, encourages congregations to plan events outside their doors and within their watersheds, utilizing the many biblical themes of renewal and liberation that water affords.

## **Recommendation of the Reference and Counsel Committee**

We recommend approval.

## **Motion D**

### **Resolution on Gender Identity**

Submitted by Cristina Forshay

## **Rational of the Reference & Counsel Committee**

The committee thanks the author for reminding us of the importance of inclusivity and our commitment to be a welcoming church. Since the 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly has already approved Memorial D1, Gender Identity, for consideration and action; and

Since this resolution can be addressed by the above approved Memorial; it is the

## **Recommendation of the Reference and Counsel Committee**

We recommend this resolution be referred to the Church Council and that the Church Council use the resolution to help inform the study of gender identity and the review of existing ELCA definitions and policies regarding gender identity as referenced in the above approved Memorial, and urge all three expressions of our church, whenever possible, and when not otherwise guided by current constitution and/or policy, consider using event registration and other forms that:

- 1) Include additional options for gender, for transgender, non-binary and/or gender non-conforming people; and
- 2) When asking for a person's personal information, include asking for the person's pronouns; and
- 3) When asking for a person's honorific or title, include a gender neutral option.

## **Motion E**

### **Resolution on Compensation for the Council Vice President**

Submitted by: Rev Emily E. Ewing

Whereas Bylaw 1332.02 of the ELCA Constitution States, "The vice president shall serve without salary."

Whereas Bylaw 13.31 of the ELCA Constitution states, "The vice president shall be a lay person."

Whereas the level of commitment without any stipend, salary or compensation creates economic barriers to service for people living in situations of economic poverty, people dependent on full-time income or work, people working jobs without paid vacation, and people who are sole caregivers to children or elders.

Whereas the ELCA's social statement, "Sufficient, sustainable livelihood for all calls as a denomination to access economic activities in terms of how they affect all especially people living in poverty. (p 4) and calls us to support and encourage one another as we live out our vocation in ways that serve the neighbor and contribute to family and community vitality (p 8). And commits to develop mutual face to face, empowering relationships between people who have enough and people living in poverty, especially through congregational and synodical partnerships (p 12).

Be it resolved that the Churchwide Assembly requests the Church Council study the removal of constitutional bylaw 13.32.02, which prohibits compensation for the vice president except for reimbursements.

Be if further resolved that the Churchwide Assembly requests the Church Council study compensation or reimbursement for child or elder care and salary or stipend for service related to the duties of the vice president.

Be if further resolved that the Church Council bring a report and recommendation to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly

**Recommendation of the Reference and Counsel Committee**

We recommend approval.