



## Report of the Memorials Committee

### Consideration of Synod Memorials

The proposed Rules of Organization and Procedure (2022 *Pre-Assembly Report*, Section I) define memorials as “proposals for action involving broad policy issues submitted by Synod Assemblies to the churchwide organization.” To assist the Churchwide Assembly in its task of responding to these proposals, its Memorials Committee reviews all memorials and proposes recommendations for assembly action.

The process for consideration of memorials outlined in this report is intended to assist the assembly in responding to a large number of memorials and will facilitate the scheduling of discussion. It also will make it possible to reproduce substitute motions for distribution to assembly members prior to debate.

The Memorials Committee may recommend that the 2022 Churchwide Assembly:

- vote separately on the proposed responses to certain synod memorials, allowing the co-chairs to determine the order in which the recommendations are considered; and
- vote on the recommended responses to the remaining synod memorials as a group (*en bloc*). Note that some memorials are included in this *en bloc* action because the subject matter will come to the floor of the assembly for discussion elsewhere on the agenda.

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### Recommendation of the Memorials Committee

To approve *en bloc*, with the exception of those memorials considered separately, the following responses to 2019, 2021, and 2022 synod memorials printed in the Report of the Memorials Committee (2022 *Pre-Assembly Report*, Section VII, pages as listed):

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**For separate consideration**

The Memorials Committee recommends that the Churchwide Assembly consider separately the following responses to 2019, 2021, and 2022 synod memorials:

**Category A8: Land Back.....33**  
**Category B4: Restructure the Governance of the ELCA.....48**  
**Category C3: “Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust” Revision .....75**

If a voting member desires the assembly to discuss a synod memorial or the Memorials Committee’s response that is proposed for *en bloc* consideration, the voting member may request that it be removed from the proposed *en bloc* resolution, provided the member’s request is supported by 10 other voting members. The voting member must submit notification electronically or on a paper form to the secretary of this church or the secretary’s assistant no later than **11:45 a.m., Tuesday, Aug. 9, 2022**, on the memorials form. The form is available in the ELCA Churchwide Assembly Guide, and paper forms are available from the secretary’s assistant. The assembly then will consider separately the proposed response of the Memorials Committee.

A voting member who desires to offer an amendment or a substitute to a recommendation of the Memorials Committee must submit the memorials form electronically or as a paper form. The text of the proposed amendment or substitute also must be submitted on the motion form electronically or on a paper form to the secretary or the secretary’s assistant. Copies of the paper motion form may be requested from the secretary’s assistant. Amendments and substitute recommendations must be submitted to the secretary of this church or the secretary’s assistant no later than **11:45 a.m., Tuesday, Aug. 9, 2022**, as established in the Rules of Organization and Procedure for this assembly.

Consultation with at least one of the co-chairs of the Memorials Committee is required when a substitute to the response recommended by the Memorials Committee will be proposed. Consultation with one of the co-chairs is recommended when proposing an amendment.

Ms. Cheryl T. Chatman, *co-chair*  
Mr. Joseph T. Nolte, *co-chair*

## Synod memorials: A word of explanation

According to the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, the Churchwide Assembly shall “receive and consider proposals from synod assemblies” (ELCA 12.21.c.). To assist the assembly in carrying out this task, “A Memorials Committee, appointed by the Church Council, shall review memorials from synod assemblies and make appropriate recommendations for assembly action” (ELCA 12.51.02.).

A memorial is understood to mean an action of a Synod Assembly specifically addressed to the Churchwide Assembly, requesting that a particular action be taken by that body.

Meeting in late June 2022, the Memorials Committee reviewed the 78 memorials received from 2019, 2021, and 2022 synod assemblies. Note that the single memorial from 2019 was addressed to the 2022 Churchwide Assembly rather than to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly. No memorials were received in 2020, primarily due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The committee has grouped those memorials that address the same topic or related concerns in order to facilitate the assembly’s consideration. In each part of this Report of the Memorials Committee you will find three components:

### 1. Memorials adopted by 2019, 2021, and 2022 Synod Assemblies

Memorials are listed by region and synod number, according to their constitutional designation. The year in which each memorial was adopted is listed in brackets. Where more than one synod approved the same or a similar memorial, the synods taking such action are listed together.

The memorials are reproduced here in the form in which they were submitted to the secretary of this church, without edits or corrections. The preamble (the “WHEREAS” clauses) provides information to assist readers in understanding the context of the synod’s discussion of the memorial. Attention should be focused, however, on the resolutions (the “RESOLVED” clauses), which make the actual request for action by the Churchwide Assembly. The resolved clauses are what inform the proposed action the assembly will vote on.

### 2. Background information provided by the Memorials Committee

The Memorials Committee received information and advice from churchwide staff and separately incorporated ministry staff on the subjects addressed in the various synod memorials. In reporting its recommendations, the committee provides this background information, which voting members may find helpful in making decisions related to the memorials. The Memorials Committee may provide a rationale for its recommendations to the Churchwide Assembly where appropriate.

### 3. Recommendation of the Memorials Committee for action by the Churchwide Assembly

In each section, the committee’s recommendation for assembly action is printed in boldface type. In certain instances, the proposed action may be to affirm or to decline to approve the action proposed by the synod. In other instances, the committee may recommend referral to the Church Council or to a churchwide office or unit. In yet other instances, the recommendation may be to convey to the synod the material provided to the assembly as “background” as the assembly’s response to the memorial.

A synod memorial may address an issue that already is scheduled to be discussed by the assembly at an identified point on its agenda. Rather than suggesting that the Churchwide Assembly discuss an issue twice, the committee recommends that the assembly’s separate action on that issue also serve as the assembly’s response to the synod memorial on that topic.

The Memorials Committee will recommend that some memorials be considered *en bloc*. Action will be taken upon all of the memorials contained in the *en bloc* section by a single vote, without floor debate.

By **11:45 a.m., Tuesday, Aug. 9, 2022**, voting members who wish to remove from the *en bloc* action the Memorial Committee’s response to a synod memorial must notify the secretary of this church or the secretary’s assistant. Likewise, persons intending to offer an amendment or substitution for the committee’s response must notify the secretary and submit a motion form with the text of the proposed amendment.

The Order of Business will indicate the times when the recommendations of the Memorials Committee are scheduled to be brought to the floor of the assembly.

**NOTE:** Synod assemblies also may adopt resolutions on churchwide issues that are not considered memorials since they do not address broad policy matters or the Churchwide Assembly directly. For example, a Synod Assembly may adopt a resolution addressed to a particular churchwide unit; the appropriate route for this action is through the Synod Council to the Church Council’s Executive Committee for appropriate referral to churchwide units. Those resolutions addressed to the Church Council will be considered by the Church Council at subsequent meetings. The reader, therefore, may not find in this report all Synod Assembly actions related to churchwide issues, since some are addressed through other channels.

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## Section A Social justice and diversity

### Category A1: Diversity

#### 1. Metropolitan New York Synod (7C) [2021]

WHEREAS, the power to uplift the marginalized was demonstrated in Acts 8 with the conversation with and subsequent baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch, a believer of color excluded from full participation under the traditional law; and

WHEREAS, 1 John 3:18 teaches, “Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action;”

WHEREAS, Lutherans are called to testify to the presence of God’s gifted people throughout history, many of whom have been/are overlooked and dismissed, yet remain and persevere as witnesses to gospel love;

WHEREAS, oftentimes the unique perspective of Women, particularly Black and Brown Women, Women of Color, members of the LGBTQIA+ community, and people seeking sanctuary and refugee status, bring a fuller depth and breadth of perspective as a whole church in Jesus;

WHEREAS, the creation of safe, respectful spaces allows open communication for followers of Christ to have a voice for their trauma when empathy is lacking and violence is perpetuated against marginalized people;

WHEREAS, honoring Christ’s call to embrace the marginalized in increasingly authentic, respectful, and responsive manners calls Lutherans to resist undercutting one another and validate all persons, as lifted in Christ’s prayer from John 17 “protect them in your name...so that they may be one, as we are one;”

WHEREAS, a community of faith becomes stronger and further aligned with the teachings of the gospel when all acknowledge diversity and intersectionality within the body of Christ;

WHEREAS, this diversity and inclusion is vital for believers to model the ultimate value of all people that the Lord so graciously gives; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan New York Synod memorialize the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to commit to create discussion programs, including but not limited to coordinated church-wide discussion groups, to address the intersection of issues of racial justice and faith; and be it further

RESOLVED, the life and ministries of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America be empowered to use resources to work together to incorporate these issues into a cohesive message of inclusion and acceptance.

### Background

God’s grace is the root of all ELCA commitments to justice, which was reflected in the commitments of this church when it was formed in 1988. In 1993, racial justice formally became a commitment of this whole church when it adopted *Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture* (1993). The ELCA’s commitment to racial justice is “inclusive, not exclusive” in creating a climate of peace, justice, freedom, and dignity that embraces all people, a climate that provides opportunities for growth, leadership, empowerment, and advocating for policies and programs that are socially and racially just. In addition to race, people of color live at the intersections and complexity of identities (age, gender, sexual orientation, ability, socio-economic status, etc.). This church’s commitment to lead with race is not at the exclusion of the fullness of identities.

From this commitment, the ELCA churchwide organization has produced and continues to produce educational resources that address the intersections of racial justice and faith. Many of these resources can be found at <https://www.elca.org/resources/racial-justice> such as, “Troubling the Waters,” a journey for white Christians from privilege to partnership; “One Body Many Members,” a journey for Christians across race, culture, and class; and most recently, [a study guide](#) for *Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Call to Action* (2019) and “Now is the Time,” [a study guide](#) to accompany the “Declaration of the ELCA to People of African Descent.”

The recently created [ELCA Justice Portal](#) provides information on the justice issues this church is engaged in, such as LGBTQIA+, economic, disability, and environmental justice and the intersections. The portal provides links to resources and ways to engage in work and learn more.

The ELCA continues to work collectively with the ethnic specific desk directors and the ELCA’s ethnic ministry associations to approach this church’s justice work using an intersectional framework. A recent example of this intentional work was the writing of “[How Strategic and Authentic is Our Diversity: A Call for Confession, Reflection, and Healing Action](#)” and the ongoing work of the Strategy Towards Authentic Diversity Advisory Team.

Another example is the ongoing work with the European Descent Lutheran Association for Racial Justice in offering webinars on ways to work together across the church on racial justice.

### Recommended for assembly action

**To receive with gratitude the memorial on “To Empower and Educate Believers on Diversity and Inclusion” from the Metropolitan New York Synod;**

**To commend the ELCA educational resources on justice for use across this church; and**

**To encourage all three expressions of this church to coordinate discussions that address the intersecting issues of racial justice and faith.**

## **Category A2: Nuclear Weapons**

### **1. Minneapolis Area Synod (3G) [2021]**

WHEREAS, *Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective*, an ELCA social statement (1991), calls for the church to engage in moral deliberations regarding governmental policy, and “discern when to support and when to confront society’s cultural patterns, values, and powers”; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA social statement *For Peace in God’s World* (1995) calls for the church to engage actively in making peace not war, naming and resisting “idols that lead to false security, injustice, and war, and [calling] for repentance;” and

WHEREAS, nuclear weapons programs potentially divert public funds and expertise from health care, education, repair of the infrastructure, disaster relief, and other vital services; and

WHEREAS, the entire life cycle of nuclear weapons (from mining to disposal) causes harm for generations, even if the weapons are never exploded; and

WHEREAS, the risk of a nuclear war and global annihilation has been greatly increased due to recent circumstances; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Minneapolis Area Synod acting in assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly to engage the Lutheran Office for World Community and ELCA Advocacy to take a leadership role in current opportunities to bring together the nine nuclear nations to work toward the implementation of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Office of the Presiding Bishop communicate the intent of the Lutheran Office for World Community and ELCA Advocacy to take such a leadership role to the appropriate federal officials; and be it finally

RESOLVED, that the Minneapolis Area Synod acting in assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly to urge Portico Benefits, the ELCA Foundation, and other ELCA-related entities to divest from the companies that are involved in producing nuclear weapons if the companies do not stop making the weaponry.

### **2. Minneapolis Area Synod (3G) [2022]**

WHEREAS, *Church in Society: a Lutheran Perspective*, an ELCA social statement (1991), calls for the church to engage in moral deliberations regarding governmental policy, and “discern when to support and when to confront society’s cultural patterns, values, and powers”; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA social statement *For Peace in God’s World* (1995) calls for the church to engage actively in making peace not war, naming and resisting “idols that lead to false security, injustice, and war, and [calling] for repentance;” and

WHEREAS, nuclear weapons programs divert public funds and expertise from health care, education, repair of the infrastructure, disaster relief, and other vital services; and

WHEREAS, the entire life cycle of nuclear weapons (from mining to disposal) causes harm for generations, even if the weapons are never exploded; and

WHEREAS, the risk of a nuclear war/omnicide has been greatly increased by recent circumstances; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Minneapolis Area Synod in assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly to engage the Lutheran Office for World Community and ELCA Witnessing in Society (Advocacy) offices to take a leadership role in current opportunities (such as the Back from the Brink campaign) to bring together the nine nuclear nations to work toward the implementation of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons; and be it further,

RESOLVED, that the Minneapolis Area Synod in assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly to engage the Lutheran Office for World Community and ELCA Witnessing in Society (Advocacy) offices in urging federal officials to lead a global effort to avert catastrophe and prevent nuclear war by changing United States policy to: renounce the option of using nuclear weapons first again; end the sole, unchecked authority of any president to launch a nuclear attack; take U.S. nuclear weapons off hair-trigger alert; cancel the plan to replace the entire U.S. arsenal with enhanced weapons measures; pursue a verifiable agreement among nuclear-armed states to eliminate their nuclear arsenals; and sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, now international law; and be it further,

RESOLVED, that this synod assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly to ask the Office of the Presiding Bishop to communicate the intent of the 2022 Churchwide Assembly to the appropriate federal officials.

## **Background**

Two of the three Lutheran churches in the United States that came together to form the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) in 1987, as along with The Lutheran World Federation in 1984, stated their opposition to nuclear war and the use of nuclear weapons. The predecessor church bodies (the American Lutheran Church and the Lutheran Church in America) in their social statements referred to nuclear war as “immoral” and “contrary to the good and gracious will of God for the creation.” Nonetheless, one current estimate of the world’s nuclear warheads is 12,700.

[\*For Peace in God’s World\*](#) (1995) stated “our church’s unequivocal rejection of nuclear war ...” (p. 12) It devoted a section of the statement to arms control and arms reduction:

**“Give high priority to arms control and reduction.** We particularly urge a sharp reduction in the number of weapons of mass destruction. We call for arms control agreements that are substantial, equitable, verifiable, and

progressive. We support mutual confidence-building measures to improve mutually assured security. In particular, we give priority to:

- agreements among the leading nuclear powers to reduce their nuclear stockpiles and to decrease the possibility of nuclear confrontation or accident;
- the successful negotiation of a renewed Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, the strengthening of mechanisms to monitor and enforce nuclear treaties, and efforts that move toward the elimination of nuclear weapons; ...” (p. 18)

This mandate has guided the ELCA’s advocacy in support of nuclear arms control agreements, such as extension of the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START, 2010). In January 2019, ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton joined 21 other U.S. religious leaders in a statement to President-elect Biden’s transition team calling for an extension of the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) agreement. This nuclear arms reduction treaty, jointly agreed to by the United States and the Russian Federation in 2010 would have automatically expired in early February 2021, unless the two parties agreed to extend it. The Global Priorities Campaign, an international inter-religious initiative to change budget priorities and facilitate dialogue and concrete measures to combat nuclear dangers and poverty, supported this action. The campaign, in which the ELCA has participated since 1999, was endorsed by the Lutheran World Federation in 2010 and, with Vatican and ELCA participation, held several meetings in 2019 in Rome, Italy, involving arms control experts from the United State and Russia. The on-going objective of those talks has been to lay the groundwork for renewed nuclear arms reduction talks between those two countries.

Pursuit of the proposal in the two memorials to bring together the nine nuclear nations with the objective of having them sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) would require a major effort since, at the time of this writing, none have taken action on it nor agreed to attend the first meeting of states-parties to the TPNW, scheduled for late June 2022 in Vienna, Austria. On the positive side, in January 2022 a “Joint Statement of the Leaders of the Five Nuclear-Weapon States [U.S., Russia, France, China, and the United Kingdom] on Preventing Nuclear War and Avoiding Arms Races” was signed with the ... “affirm[ation] that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.” Still, to date, only one of these states, China, has adopted a no-first-use policy.

The proposal to end the sole, unchecked authority of any president to launch a nuclear attack, however worthy, could be understood as restricting the president’s authority as commander-in-chief. Advocating such a proposal would also be time-consuming and, if Congress passed such a proposal, could lead to a lengthy court challenge.

The proposal to take U.S. nuclear weapons off hair-trigger alert has generated a debate between those who assert that it is currently the practice and those who say that this is not currently the case.

For several years, the non-partisan U.S. Congressional Budget Office (CBO) has issued various estimates on the costs of nuclear weapons modernization. Their May 2021 assessment was that “... the Department of Defense’s (DoD’s) and the Department of Energy’s (DoE’s) fiscal year 2021 budget requests, submitted in February 2020, would cost a total of \$634 billion over the 2021–2030 period, for an average of just over \$60 billion a year ...” That 10-year estimate, they said, “... is 28% higher than CBO’s most recent previous estimate of the 10-year costs of nuclear forces ...”

While Article VI of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT, 1970) commits states-parties to “pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control,” its verification provisions apply only to non-nuclear states. Even so, there have been proposals to strengthen the treaty’s verification provision. By contrast, the bilateral New START has verification provisions.

At the time of this writing, there were 86 signatories and 60 states-parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), which entered into force in January 2021.

Regarding companies that are involved in producing nuclear weapons, Portico Benefit Services is already screening for nuclear weapons in its Social Purpose funds and portfolios. This means that Social Purpose investors, including organizations like the ELCA Foundation, that utilize Portico portfolios are benefiting from this screening. The screening is guided by the ELCA Military Weapons social criteria screen which was first approved by the ELCA Church Council in 1988. The screen calls for no investment in firms that are contributors to nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons research and development or certain conventional weapons which may be deemed to be excessively injurious or to have indiscriminate effects. It also calls for no investment in firms that contribute to the production of key components for such weapons or the management of U.S. government-owned facilities for such weapons. The military weapons screen was last reviewed in 2007 and 2014. It is anticipated to be reviewed by the Corporate Social Responsibility Review Team again in 2022. The ELCA (and Portico) follow a policy of screening that provides ongoing guidance and a framework to make decisions that provides for fiduciary responsibility.

In addition to the 76% of the ELCA Foundation’s Ministry Growth Fund invested with Portico, the fund is invested with alternative investment advisors Hamilton Lane (Reformation Fund–Private Markets), JP Morgan (IIF–

Private Infrastructure), and Grosvenor (Evangelical Lutheran Absolute Return–Hedge Funds) as well as cash. All three alternative investment advisors are aware of the social screens adopted by the ELCA, including the ELCA Military Weapons social criteria screen. Hamilton Lane and Grosvenor actively review their portfolios for the Ministry Growth Fund to ensure to the extent practicable that there are no investments with military or defense contractors. While JP Morgan does not actively screen, they have assured the ELCA Foundation that their fund does not nor will it ever have exposure to military or defense contractors.

### **Financial Impact**

If this memorial were to be implemented as written it would entail considerable staff time and increased financial costs to take on the outlined tasks.

### **Recommended for assembly action**

**To receive with gratitude the memorials from the Minneapolis Area Synod concerning the ban of nuclear weapons;**

**To re-affirm this church’s unequivocal rejection of nuclear war;**

**To strongly support the ELCA’s continued advocacy for:**

- a. **agreements among the leading nuclear powers to reduce their strategic and tactical nuclear stockpiles and to decrease the possibility of nuclear confrontation;**
- b. **the successful negotiation of a renewed Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, and the strengthening of mechanisms to monitor and enforce nuclear treaties; and**
- c. **efforts that move toward the elimination of nuclear weapons; and**

**To affirm the continued use of the ELCA Military Weapons social criteria investment screen by Portico Benefit Services, the ELCA Foundation, and other ELCA-related entities.**

### **Category A3: Voting Rights and D.C. Statehood**

#### **1. Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod (8G) [2021]**

WHEREAS, social teaching of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) holds that all residents of the United States have a responsibility to make government function well—not to abandon our democracy but to engage it in a spirit of robust civic duty. For Lutherans, this responsibility is lived out as a calling from God, expressed in the discipleship described in our baptismal promises. It is based on our understanding of how God governs human society; and

WHEREAS, ELCA teaching about the nature of government and public service names “consent of the governed” as a primary guide for assessing the performance of government. U.S. Lutherans have learned that their neighbors are best served by a government in which supreme earthly power is held publicly by the people (a democracy), and they are governed by representatives chosen in fair elections in which each person is assured of their vote (a republic); and

WHEREAS, this church acknowledges a “shameful history in which so many, such as African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinx Peoples, Native Peoples, and women, have been denied the right to vote, and so were governed without consent. Even today many people cannot vote on matters that affect them directly.” Each case is complex and varied, but examples include Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the District of Columbia; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA is committed to “work to further democratic processes throughout the territory of this church and the world, and to redress the persisting social and economic inequalities that prevent many from participating effectively in those processes;” and

WHEREAS, the ELCA is committed to supporting “legislation, ordinances, and resolutions that guarantee to all persons equally. . .civil rights, including full protection of the law and redress under the law of discriminatory practices; and to all citizens, the right to vote;” and

WHEREAS, in 1846 Congress retroceded parts of the District of Columbia to Virginia to maintain the local slave trade; and in the Compromise of 1850 abolished slave trading in the District of Columbia, while the trade continued in both Maryland and Virginia; and by 1860 the number of free Blacks outnumbered enslaved Blacks three to one; and in 1862, Congress and the president enacted the D.C. Emancipation Act which abolished slavery in the District, compensated loyal Unionists, and encouraged freed Blacks to immigrate to Africa or other places outside the United States; and

WHEREAS, Congress and the president took away local government control from D.C. residents when African American men won the right to vote after the Civil War and limited “Home Rule” was granted in 1973 after decades of African American human rights struggle; and

WHEREAS, the residents of the District of Columbia pay federal taxes and serve in the military and on federal juries, yet are unable to control their own local government budget, their own local laws, and have no voting representation in Congress; and

WHEREAS, in 2016 the residents of the District of Columbia voted overwhelmingly to support a referendum calling for D.C. Statehood (244,134 yes votes; 40,779 no votes); therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod Assembly memorialize the 2022 ELCA Churchwide Assembly in Columbus, Ohio, to fully support the United States Congress and the president of the United States in granting statehood for the District of Columbia, including proportional voting representation in both legislative houses; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA Presiding Bishop and the synod bishops of this church publicly support statehood for the District of Columbia and advocate for the full democratic rights of the citizens of the District of Columbia; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA pledge to listen to and support calls from ELCA members and their neighbors in Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Alaska Native and American Indian nations for self-determination; and be it further

RESOLVED, that appropriate churchwide staff identify and publicize resources for members, congregations, and synods of this church to advocate for D.C. statehood and full democratic rights for all in the United States of America.

### **Background**

When the framers of the Constitution empowered Congress to establish the federal capital district that became Washington, D.C., they failed to establish a means for representation for the district's residents. The 23rd Amendment, ratified in 1960, allowed District of Columbia citizens to vote in presidential elections. The nearly 700,000 residents of Washington, D.C., still lack full voting representation in Congress even though they are American citizens, pay federal taxes, and serve in the military. The District of Columbia has more people than some states and, historically, a large African-descent population effectively disenfranchising voters of color through this lack of political representation. Congress continues to exercise extensive authority over Washington, D.C.'s government and budget. In 2021 the United States House of Representatives passed [H.R. 51](#), the Washington, D.C., Admission Act, a bill that provides for admission into the United States of the state of Washington, Douglass Commonwealth, composed of most of the territory of the District of Columbia, on an equal footing with the other states.

### **ELCA Social Teaching Supports the Right to Vote**

As a church body, the ELCA uses its voice to address important policy issues that affect the well-being of people and communities, including promotion of civic engagement and the right to vote. The ELCA has consistently expressed its support for full representation of all people in political processes and decision making as a matter of fairness and civil rights.

- “Along with all citizens, Christians have the responsibility to defend human rights and to work for freedom, justice, peace, environmental well-being, and good order in public life. They are to recognize the vital role of law in protecting life and liberty and in upholding the common good. Christians need to be concerned for the methods and the content of public deliberation. They should be critical when groups of people are inadequately represented in political processes and decisions that affect their lives.” ([The Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective](#), 1991, p. 5)
- “This church will support legislation, ordinances, and resolutions that guarantee to all persons equally: civil rights, including full protection of the law and redress under the law of discriminatory practices; and to all citizens, the right to vote.” ([Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity and Culture](#), 1993, p. 7)

The ELCA social message on “[Government and Civic Engagement in the United States: Discipleship in a Democracy](#),” includes these guides for evaluating the functioning of government:

- “To evaluate how well agencies of government are doing their proper work of providing for the safety and well-being of those within the country's borders and/or jurisdiction, Lutherans ask one simple but all-encompassing question: Is the neighbor being served?...U.S. Lutherans have learned that their neighbors are best served by a government in which supreme earthly power is held publicly by the people (a democracy) and they are governed by representatives chosen in fair elections in which each person is assured of their vote (a republic). Such consent requires government to allow the neighbors it serves to pursue their lives in a spirit of freedom. The importance of this point is illustrated by the shameful history in which so many, such as African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinx Peoples, Native Peoples, and women, have been denied the right to vote, and so were governed without consent. Even today many people cannot vote on matters that affect them directly.” (pp. 9–10)
- “Unrestricted participation. The political health of our nation still suffers from the stain of antidemocratic exclusion. Efforts to restrict access to voting should be condemned and resisted. Examples include requiring voters to show identification without issuing identification to all eligible voters, purging voter rolls of those who have not voted recently, denying access to voting by mail, or closing polling places so that voting becomes more difficult for eligible voters. Active suppression robs voters of a key means of participation.” (p. 10)

The social policy resolution “[Voting Rights to All Citizens](#),” adopted in August 2013, includes:

- RESOLVED, that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America call upon local, state, and federal governments to guarantee the right to vote to all citizens and to discourage or eliminate all laws, ordinances, or regulations that would have the effect of racial and ethnic discrimination in the exercise of that right; and be it further
- RESOLVED, that the Presiding Bishop and synodical bishops of this church be urged to support publicly and stand as an advocate to proposed local, state, or federal legislation and regulations that, consistent with this church’s social teaching, seek to guarantee to all citizens the right to vote;

The churchwide assembly has spoken to representation for Washington, D.C., once before. In 2001 it adopted social policy resolution CA01.07.62 “[Congressional Voting Representation for the District of Columbia](#).” This resolution affirms the memorial by the Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod concerning congressional voting representation for the citizens of the District of Columbia and directed ELCA Advocacy and members of the ELCA to advocate for full voting rights of the people of the District of Columbia.

### **Financial Impact**

Provisions of this memorial can be implemented without increased financial cost in staffing or resources.

### **Recommended for assembly action**

**To receive with gratitude the memorial on “Voting Rights and D.C. Statehood” from the Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod;**

**To request that the presiding bishop communicate this church’s support for statehood for the District of Columbia to the United States Congress;**

**To direct the ELCA Witness in Society team in the Service and Justice home area to promote opportunities for education and advocacy regarding statehood for Washington, D.C.;**

**To direct the ELCA Witness in Society team to listen to and support calls for self-determination for American Indian and Alaska Native Tribal Nations, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and other U.S. territories and to act on requests related to these matters from the Caribbean Synod and the ELCA director for Indigenous Ministries and Tribal Relations; and**

**To encourage all ELCA synods, congregations, and members to inform and educate themselves about ELCA social teaching and witness in society on voting access and voting rights.**

### **Category A4: Greenhouse Gas Reduction**

#### **1. Oregon Synod (1E) [2022]**

WHEREAS, our faith commands us to love “your neighbors as yourselves” (see Luke 10:27); and

WHEREAS, “made in the image of God, we are called to care for the earth as God cares for the earth;” and

WHEREAS, “the global environment with its finite resources is a common concern of all peoples. The protection of Earth’s vitality, diversity, and beauty is a sacred trust”; and

WHEREAS, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reported that in order to avoid catastrophic consequences of climate change, global warming needs to be limited to 1.5 degrees Celsius; and

WHEREAS, the planet has already warmed 1.1 degree Celsius since pre-industrial times, causing record-smashing wildfires, hurricanes, heat waves, droughts, ocean acidification, and species loss; and

WHEREAS, climate change is already leading to the destruction and displacement of people’s homes, food sources, and well-being (leading to at least 30.7 million climate displaced persons in 2020 according to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC)); and

WHEREAS, Indigenous, Black, People of Color, and communities impacted by poverty have contributed the least to climate change and are the most impacted by it; and

WHEREAS, the United States has contributed more greenhouse gas to the atmosphere historically than any other country; and

WHEREAS, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50% by 2030 the United States will need a World War II sized mobilization that includes government investment, public-private partnerships, binding emission reduction targets, and possibly a carbon fee and dividend; and

WHEREAS, a just transition from a fossil-fuel based economy will lead to better health, family-sustaining jobs, clean air and water for communities historically left behind, and a safer, more sustainable future for children and future generations; therefore, be it,

RESOLVED, that the Oregon Synod memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct the churchwide organization continue to call upon the leadership of the United States of America to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50% by 2030, generate 100% of its power from clean renewable sources by 2035, and achieve net zero emissions by 2050; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the churchwide organization will continue to equip and encourage congregations, synods, and associated ministries to advocate that the United States of America reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50% by 2030, generate 100% of its power from clean renewable sources by 2035, and achieve net zero emissions by 2050; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the churchwide organization encourage congregations and synods to advocate for a just transition away from greenhouse gasses where at least 40% of public funding goes towards projects that directly benefit Indigenous, Black, People of Color, and communities impacted by poverty that bear a disproportionate cost of pollution and climate change already; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the churchwide organization support these actions through continuing its investments in staff, education, tools, and resources that equip congregations and synods to accomplish this goal and leverage knowledge, skills and experience across the church; and be it further

RESOLVED, that congregants, rostered leaders, and bishops be encouraged to further educate themselves to the urgency of the climate emergency both locally and globally, as well as to the local and global opportunities a just transition will create; and be it further

RESOLVED, that rostered leaders and bishops be encouraged to lift up loving our neighbor in response to the climate emergency through their preaching at least once a month; and be it further

RESOLVED, that this synod and the churchwide organization will encourage and cooperate with Lutherans Restoring Creation and other faith-based and secular organizations that share the commitment to the protection and restoration of the natural world while doing justice for all.

## **2. Southwest California Synod (2B) [2022]**

WHEREAS, our faith commands us to love “your neighbors as yourselves” (see Luke 10:27) and that humans are made in the image of God, we are called to care for the earth as God cares for the earth;” and

WHEREAS, in the 2016 ELCA social policy resolution, “Repudiating the Doctrine of Discovery.” (CA16.02.04) this denomination committed to “acknowledge and repent from this church’s complicity in the evils of colonialism in the Americas, which continue to harm tribal governments and individual tribal members,” and Indigenous communities are disproportionately impacted by pipelines, mines, waste incinerators, and other polluting industries that poison the air and water; and

WHEREAS, Indigenous, Black, People of Color and communities impacted by poverty have contributed the least to climate change and are the most impacted by it, and the United States has contributed more greenhouse gas to the atmosphere historically than any other country; and

WHEREAS, in the Earth Charter, adopted by the 2019 ELCA Churchwide Assembly, it states that “the global environment with its finite resources is a common concern of all peoples. The protection of Earth’s vitality, diversity, and beauty is a sacred trust;” and

WHEREAS, climate change is already leading to the destruction and displacement of people’s homes, food sources, and well-being (leading to at least 30.7 million climate displaced persons in 2020 according to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC)); and

WHEREAS, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reported that in order to avoid catastrophic consequences of climate change, global warming needs to be limited to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit); and

WHEREAS, the planet has already warmed 1.1 degrees Celsius (2.1 degrees Fahrenheit) since preindustrial times, causing record-smashing wildfires, hurricanes, heat waves, droughts, ocean acidification, and species loss; and

WHEREAS, to have a realistic chance of not exceeding 1.5 degrees Celsius of warming the United States must reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50% by 2030 and reach equitable net zero emissions by 2050, and the United States will need action similar to that of its mobilization during World War II that includes government investment, public-private partnerships, binding emission reduction targets, and possibly a carbon fee and dividend; and

WHEREAS, a just transition from a fossil-fuel based economy will lead to better health, family sustaining jobs, clean air and water for communities historically left behind, and a safer, more sustainable future for children and future generations; therefore, be it,

RESOLVED, that the Southwest California Synod Assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct the ELCA churchwide organization to call upon the leadership of the United States of America to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50% by 2030, generate 100% of its power from clean renewable sources by 2035, and achieve net zero emissions by 2050; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA churchwide organization continue to equip and encourage congregations, synods, and associated ministries to advocate that the United States of America reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50% by 2030, generate 100% of its power from clean renewable sources by 2035, and achieve net zero emissions by 2050; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA churchwide organization will encourage congregations and synods to advocate for 40% of the public funding for this transition to benefit Indigenous, Black, and People of Color, and communities that have been impacted by the disproportionate effects of pollution and climate change; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA churchwide organization will support these actions through continuing its investments in staff, education, tools, and resources that equip congregations and synods to accomplish this goal and leverage knowledge, skills, and experience across the church; and be it further

RESOLVED, that congregants, rostered ministers, and bishops be encouraged to further educate themselves to the urgency of the climate emergency both locally and globally as well as to the local and global opportunities a just transition will create; and be it further

RESOLVED, that rostered leaders and bishops be encouraged to lift up loving our neighbor in response to the climate emergency through their preaching or other liturgical expression at least once a month; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the synod and ELCA churchwide organization encourage and cooperate with Lutherans Restoring Creation and other faith-based and secular organizations that share the commitment to the protection and restoration of the natural world while doing justice for all.

### **3. Northeastern Minnesota Synod (3E) [2022]**

WHEREAS, our faith commands us to love “(our) neighbors as (our)selves” [see Luke 10:27]; and

WHEREAS, “made in the image of God, we are called to care for the earth as God cares for the earth;” and

WHEREAS, this synod acknowledges that Indigenous Peoples, whose ancestors originally cared for the land that feeds us, make up less than 5% of the global population and protect over 80% of the biodiversity that sustains all people; and

WHEREAS, “the global environment with its finite resources is a common concern of all peoples. The protection of Earth’s vitality, diversity, and beauty is a sacred trust;” and

WHEREAS, the Northeastern Minnesota Synod in its 2008 assembly established a synod creation care task force (now called EcoFaith Network) and “pledged to grow ... as individuals and congregations within the synod by:

- Worshiping in ways that celebrate and foster care for creation,
- Educating adults and children about ecological issues and energy conservation,
- Improving energy conservation efforts in church buildings and on their grounds,
- Promoting earth-friendly practices of members at home and work,
- Demonstrating the care of creation in their communities, and
- Advocating for energy policies at the state and national levels that will foster cleaner, renewable, and more efficient energy use in all sectors of society;” and

WHEREAS, the Northeastern Minnesota Synod in its 2009 assembly strongly urged “all of its member congregations to actively engage in reducing their carbon footprints,” conduct energy audits “for all church owned properties,” and form congregation creation care teams; and

WHEREAS, the Northeastern Minnesota Synod in its 2014 assembly recognized “Creation Care as integral to each faith practice, lived out in worship, service, study, and witness as a vital component of the church’s identity and vocation today;” and

WHEREAS, the Northeastern Minnesota Synod in its 2017 assembly established Together Here Ministries and committed itself to “intercultural resources, educational opportunities, and strategic initiatives so that the Northeastern Minnesota Synod might join in the work to bridge cultural divides between Native and non-Native residents in our congregations and communities;” and

WHEREAS, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reported that in order to avoid catastrophic consequences of climate change, global warming needs to be limited to 1.5 degrees [centigrade]; and

WHEREAS, the planet has already warmed 1.1 degree [centigrade] since pre-industrial times, causing record-smashing wildfires, hurricanes, heat waves, droughts, ocean acidification, and species loss; and

WHEREAS, climate change is already leading to the destruction and displacement of people’s homes, food sources, and well-being (leading to at least 30.7 million climate displaced persons in 2020 according to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC)); and

WHEREAS, Indigenous, Black, People of Color, and communities impacted by poverty have contributed the least to climate change and are the most impacted by it; and

WHEREAS, the United States has contributed more greenhouse gas to the atmosphere historically than any other country; and

WHEREAS, we have a realistic chance of meeting the goal of not exceeding 1.5 degrees [centigrade] of warming if the United States reaches at least a 50% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and equitable net zero emissions by 2050; and

WHEREAS, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50% by 2030 the United States will need a World War II sized mobilization that includes government investment, public-private partnerships, binding emission reduction targets, and possibly a carbon fee and dividend; and

WHEREAS, a just transition from a fossil-fuel based economy will lead to better health, family-sustaining jobs, clean air, and water for communities historically left behind, and a safer, more sustainable future for children and future generations; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Minnesota Synod, meeting in assembly, memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America that the ELCA churchwide organization continue to call upon the leadership of the United States of America to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50% by 2030, generate 100% of its power from clean renewable sources by 2035, and achieve net zero emissions by 2050; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA churchwide organization will continue to equip and encourage congregations, synods, and associated ministries to advocate that the United States of America reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50% by 2030, generate 100% of its power from clean renewable sources by 2035, and achieve net zero emissions by 2050; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA churchwide organization encourage congregations and synods to advocate for a just transition away from greenhouse gasses where at least 40% of public funding goes towards projects that directly benefit Indigenous, Black, People of Color, and communities impacted by poverty that bear a disproportionate cost of pollution and climate change already; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA churchwide organization will support these actions through investments in staff, education, tools, and resources that equip congregations and synods to accomplish this goal and leverage knowledge, skills, and experience across the church; and be it further

RESOLVED, that congregants, synod authorized ministers, rostered ministers, and bishops be encouraged to further educate themselves to the urgency of the climate emergency both locally and globally as well as to the local and global opportunities a just transition will create; and be it further

RESOLVED, that synod authorized ministers, rostered ministers, and bishops be encouraged to lift up loving our neighbor in response to the climate emergency through their preaching at least once a month; and be it further

RESOLVED, the synods and the ELCA churchwide organization encourage and cooperate with Lutherans Restoring Creation and other faith-based and secular organizations that share this commitment to the protection and restoration of the natural world while doing justice for all.

#### **4. Minneapolis Area Synod (3G) [2022]**

WHEREAS, our faith commands us to love “your neighbor as yourself” (see Luke 10:27); and

WHEREAS, in the 1993 social statement *Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice*, the ELCA declares humans are “made in the image of God, we are called to care for the earth as God cares for the earth;” and

WHEREAS, this synod acknowledges that Indigenous Peoples, whose ancestors originally cared for the land that feeds us, make up less than 5% of the global population and protect over 80% of the biodiversity that sustains us all; and

WHEREAS, in 2019 the ELCA Churchwide Assembly adopted the Earth Charter, which declares that “the global environment with its finite resources is a common concern of all peoples. The protection of Earth’s vitality, diversity, and beauty is a sacred trust;” and

WHEREAS, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50% by 2030 the United States will need a World War II sized mobilization that includes government investment, public-private partnerships, binding emission reduction targets, and possibly a carbon fee and dividend; and

WHEREAS, a just transition from a fossil-fuel based economy will lead to better health, family-sustaining jobs, clean air and water for communities historically left behind, and a safer, more sustainable future for children and future generations; therefore, be it,

RESOLVED, that the 2022 Minneapolis Area Synod, meeting in assembly, memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to urge the agencies of the ELCA to continue to call upon the leadership of the United States of America to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50% by 2030, generate 100% of its power from clean renewable sources by 2035, and achieve net zero emissions by 2050; and be it further

RESOLVED, that this synod assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly to urge the churchwide organization to continue to equip and encourage congregations, synods, and associated ministries to advocate that the United States of America reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50% by 2030, generate 100% of its power from clean renewable sources by 2035, and achieve net zero emissions by 2050; and be it further

RESOLVED, that this synod assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly to encourage congregations and synods to advocate for a just transition away from greenhouse gasses where at least 40% of the funding goes towards projects that directly benefit Indigenous, Black, people of color, and communities impacted by poverty that bear a disproportionate cost of pollution and climate change already; and be it further

RESOLVED, that this synod assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly to urge the churchwide organization to support these actions through investments in staff, education, tools and resources that equip congregations and synods to accomplish this goal and leverage knowledge, skills and experience across the church

RESOLVED, that this synod assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly to encourage ELCA members, rostered ministers, and bishops to further educate themselves to the urgency of the climate emergency both locally and globally as well as to the local and global opportunities a just transition will create; and be it further

RESOLVED, that this synod assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly to encourage ELCA rostered ministers and bishops to lift up loving our neighbor in response to the climate emergency through their preaching at least once a month; and be it further

RESOLVED, that this synod assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly to urge the churchwide organization to encourage and cooperate with Lutherans Restoring Creation and other faith-based and secular organizations that share the commitment to the protection and restoration of the natural world while doing justice for all.

#### **5. Saint Paul Area Synod (3H) [2022]**

WHEREAS, our faith commands to love “your neighbors as yourselves” (see Luke 10:27); and

WHEREAS, “made in the image of God, we are called to care for the earth as God cares for the earth;” and

WHEREAS, this synod acknowledges that Indigenous Peoples, whose ancestors originally cared for the land that feeds us, make up less than 5% of the global population and protect over 80% of the biodiversity that sustains us all; and

WHEREAS, “the global environment with its finite resources is a common concern of all peoples. The protection of Earth’s vitality, diversity, and beauty is a sacred trust;” and

WHEREAS, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reported that in order to avoid catastrophic consequences of climate change, global warming needs to be limited to 1.5 degrees; and

WHEREAS, the planet has already warmed 1.1 degrees since pre-industrial times, causing record-smashing wildfires, hurricanes, heat waves, droughts, ocean acidification, and species loss; and

WHEREAS, climate change is already leading to the destruction and displacement of people's homes, food sources, and well-being (leading to at least 30.7 million climate displaced persons in 2020 according to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC)); and

WHEREAS, Indigenous, Black, People of Color and communities impacted by poverty have contributed the least to climate change and are the most impacted by it; and

WHEREAS, the United States has contributed more greenhouse gas to the atmosphere historically than any other country; and

WHEREAS, the United States has a realistic chance of meeting the goal of not exceeding 1.5 degrees of warming if the United States reaches at least a 50% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and equitable net zero emissions by 2050; and

WHEREAS, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50% by 2030 the United States will need a World War II sized mobilization that includes government investment, public-private partnerships, binding emission reduction targets, and possibly a carbon fee and dividend; and

WHEREAS, a just transition from a fossil-fuel based economy will lead to better health, family-sustaining jobs, clean air and water for communities historically left behind, and a safer, more sustainable future for children and future generations; therefore, be it,

RESOLVED, that the Saint Paul Area Synod, in assembly, May 13–14, 2022, memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America that the ELCA churchwide organization continue to call upon the leadership of the United States of America to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50% by 2030, generate 100% of its power from clean renewable sources by 2035, and achieve net zero emissions by 2050; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA churchwide organization will continue to equip and encourage congregations, synods, and associated ministries to advocate that the United States of America reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50% by 2030, generate 100% of its power from clean renewable sources by 2035, and achieve net zero emissions by 2050; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the churchwide organization encourage congregations and synods to advocate, for a just transition away from greenhouse gasses where at least 40% of the funding goes towards projects that directly benefit Indigenous, Black, People of Color, and communities impacted by poverty that bear a disproportionate cost of pollution and climate change already; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA churchwide organization will support these actions through investments in staff, education, tools, and resources that equip congregations and synods to accomplish this goal and leverage knowledge, skills, and experience across the church; and be it further

RESOLVED, that congregants, rostered leaders, and bishops be encouraged to further educate themselves to the urgency of the climate emergency both locally and globally as well as to the local and global opportunities a just transition will create; and be it further

RESOLVED, that this synod and ELCA churchwide organization will encourage and cooperate with Lutherans Restoring Creation and other faith-based and secular organizations that share the commitment to the protection and restoration of the natural world while doing justice for all.

## **6. Central States Synod (4B) [2022]**

RESOLVED, that the Central States Synod Assembly takes the following actions:

- Memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA to call upon the leadership of the United States to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50% by 2030, generate 100% of its power from clean renewable sources by 2035, and achieve net zero emissions by 2050.
- Encourages this synod and congregations to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions in line with the above timetable
- Supports investment and education of this synod and congregations about the urgency of the climate crisis both locally and globally and equip our leaders to accomplish our goals to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions.
- Develops partnerships and projects in ELCA synods and congregations that work with communities of color that are disproportionately impacted by the cost of pollution and climate change and advocate that churchwide, in consultation with the ELCA Witnessing in Society, designate up to 40% of their mission funds designated for environmental concerns for this purpose.
- Seeks that congregations in this synod include prayers for the environment and those effected at least once a month and that congregations regularly include in worship awareness around stewardship of creation.

## **7. Southwestern Texas Synod (4E) [2022]**

WHEREAS, our faith commands us to love “your neighbors as yourselves” (see Luke 10:27); and

WHEREAS, “made in the image of God, we are called to care for the earth as God cares for the earth;” and

WHEREAS, the protection of Earth's vitality, diversity, and beauty is a sacred trust;” and

WHEREAS, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reported that in order to avoid catastrophic consequences due to damage to the climate, global warming needs to be limited to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degree Fahrenheit); and

WHEREAS, the planet has already warmed 1.1 degrees Celsius (2 degrees Fahrenheit) since pre-industrial times, causing record-breaking wildfires, hurricanes, heat waves, droughts, ocean acidification, and species loss; and

WHEREAS, damage to the climate is already harmfully impacting people's homes, food sources, and well-being (leading to at least 40.5 million climate displaced persons in 2020 according to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC)); and

WHEREAS, the United States has contributed more greenhouse gas to the atmosphere historically than any other country; and

WHEREAS, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50% by 2030 the United States will need a unified and collected mobilization that includes government investment, public-private partnerships, binding emission reduction targets, and possibly a carbon fee and dividend; and

WHEREAS, a just transition from a fossil-fuel based economy will lead to better health, family-sustaining jobs, clean air and water for communities historically left behind, and a safer, more sustainable future for our children and future generations; therefore, be it,

RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Texas Synod Assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct the churchwide organization to continue to call upon the leadership of the United States of America to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50% by 2030, generate 100% of its power from clean renewable sources by 2035, and achieve net zero emissions by 2050; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Texas Synod Assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct the churchwide organization to continue to equip and encourage congregations, synods, and associated ministries to advocate that the United States of America reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50% by 2030, generate 100% of its power from clean renewable sources by 2035, and achieve net zero emissions by 2050; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Texas Synod Assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct the churchwide organization to encourage congregations and synods to advocate for a just transition away from greenhouse gasses where at least 40% of public funding goes towards projects that directly benefit Indigenous, Black, people of color, and communities impacted by poverty that bear a disproportionate cost of pollution and climate change already; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Texas Synod Assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct the churchwide organization to support these actions through continuing its investments in staff, education, tools, and resources that equip congregations and synods to accomplish this goal and leverage knowledge, skills, and experience across the church, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Texas Synod Assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to encourage congregants, rostered leaders, and bishops to further educate themselves to the urgency of the climate emergency both locally and globally as well as to the local and global opportunities a just transition will create; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Texas Synod Assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to encourage rostered leaders and bishops to lift up loving our neighbor in response to the climate emergency through their preaching; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Texas Synod Assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct the churchwide organization to encourage and cooperate with Lutherans Restoring Creation and other faith-based and secular organizations that share our commitment to the protection and restoration of the natural world while doing justice for all.

## **8. Southwestern Texas Synod (4E) [2022]**

WHEREAS, our faith commands us to "take care of [creation]" (Genesis 2:15); and

WHEREAS, *Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice*, calls this church, "as congregations and other expressions of this church...to incorporate the principles of sufficiency and sustainability in our life" and that "we will, in our budgeting and investment of church funds, demonstrate our care for creation;" and

WHEREAS, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reported that in order to avoid catastrophic consequences due to damage to the climate, global warming needs to be limited to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit); and

WHEREAS, to have a realistic chance of meeting the goal of not exceeding 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) of warming, the world needs at least a 50% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and equitable net zero emissions by 2050; and

WHEREAS, the planet has already warmed 1.1 degrees Celsius (2 degrees Fahrenheit) (since pre-industrial times, causing record-breaking wildfires, hurricanes, heat waves, droughts, ocean acidification, and species loss; and

WHEREAS, current damage to the climate has been recognized as a "threat multiplier" by scientists, the U.S. military, and the United Nations Security Council, where damage to the climate is supersizing many of our weather events, making them stronger, longer, and more destructive, which leads to increased poverty, hunger, human displacement and migration, and loss of ecosystems, and

WHEREAS, the changing climate impacts every aspect of mission and ministry in being church together, impacting the very DNA of what it looks like to be church; and

WHEREAS, Christian climate scientist Katherine Hayhoe says the collective responsibility on climate action is to, “add your hand to that boulder, get it rolling just a little bit faster down the hill and the faster it goes, the more we look around and we see other people beside us pushing in the same direction, the more that gives us hope. Taking that first little step is so important;” and

WHEREAS, reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the ELCA will save financial resources in the long term that can be redirected for mission; therefore, be it,

RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Texas Synod Assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to encourage the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, across all three expressions, to set the goal of reducing its 2020 greenhouse gas emissions 50% by 2030 and 100% by 2050; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Texas Synod Assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct the churchwide organization, in partnership with ELCA colleges and universities, to create a tool to calculate the total greenhouse gas emissions from both ELCA Churchwide headquarters as well as the rest of the ELCA; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Texas Synod Assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct the churchwide organization to reduce its greenhouse gasses by 50% by 2030, or sooner, by making the necessary energy efficiency improvements to buildings and travel, sourcing electricity from renewable sources, incentivizing remote participation and collaboration when possible, and working on partnerships to offset emissions generated from flights and vehicles; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Texas Synod Assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct the churchwide organization to incentivize congregations and synods in reducing their greenhouse gas emissions by creating an Energy Stewardship Loan Fund that will provide very low interest loans to congregations and synods to invest in energy efficiency improvements, electrifying gas-powered equipment, and installing solar panels; and be it further

RESOLVED, the Southwestern Texas Synod Assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct the churchwide organization to support congregations in communities of color, communities impacted by poverty, and communities that have historically borne the brunt of pollution and climate change by creating an Energy Stewardship Grant Fund that will provide grants to these congregations so they can reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by making energy efficiency improvements, electrifying gas-powered equipment, and installing solar panels; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Texas Synod Assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct the churchwide organization to implement a DNA level assessment, investment, and transition in staffing and other resources to assist congregations and synods on how to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Texas Synod Assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct the churchwide organization to provide a report to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly and subsequent assemblies, assessing the progress in reducing greenhouse gas emissions across all three expressions, and apply lessons learned to help meet reduction goals.

## **9. Northern Illinois Synod (5B) [2022]**

WHEREAS, our faith commands us to love “your neighbors as yourselves” (see Luke 10:27); and

WHEREAS, “made in the image of God, we are called to care for the earth as God cares for the earth;” and

WHEREAS, we acknowledge that Indigenous peoples, whose ancestors originally cared for the land that feeds us, make up less than 5% of the global population and protect over 80% of the biodiversity that sustains us all; and

WHEREAS, “the global environment with its finite resources is a common concern of all peoples. The protection of Earth’s vitality, diversity, and beauty is a sacred trust;” and

WHEREAS, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reported that in order to avoid catastrophic consequences of climate change, global warming needs to be limited to 1.5 degrees Celsius; and

WHEREAS, the planet has already warmed 1.1 degree Celsius since pre-industrial times, causing record-smashing wildfires, hurricanes, heat waves, droughts, ocean acidification, and species loss; and

WHEREAS, climate change is already leading to the destruction and displacement of peoples’ homes, food sources, and well-being (leading to at least 30.7 million climate displaced persons in 2020 according to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC)); and

WHEREAS, Indigenous, Black, People of Color and communities impacted by poverty have contributed the least to climate change and are the most impacted by it; and

WHEREAS, the United States has contributed more greenhouse gas to the atmosphere historically than any other country; and

WHEREAS, we have a realistic chance of meeting the goal of not exceeding 1.5 degrees Celsius of warming if the United States reaches at least a 50% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and equitable net zero emissions by 2050; and

WHEREAS, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50% by 2030 the United States will need a World War II-sized mobilization that includes government investment, public-private partnerships, binding emission reduction targets, and possibly a carbon fee and dividend; and

WHEREAS, a just transition from a fossil-fuel based economy will lead to better health, family-sustaining jobs, clean air, and water for communities historically left behind and a safer, more sustainable future for our children and future generations; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Northern Illinois Synod memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America that the ELCA churchwide organization continues to call upon the leadership of the United States of America to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50% by 2030, generate 100% of its power from clean renewable sources by 2035, and achieve net zero emissions by 2050; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA churchwide organization continue to equip and encourage congregations, synods, and associated ministries to advocate that the United States of America reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50% by 2030, generate 100% of its power from clean renewable sources by 2035, and achieve net zero emissions by 2050; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA churchwide organization encourages congregations and synods to advocate for a just transition away from greenhouse gasses where at least 40% of the funding goes towards projects that directly benefit communities made up of Indigenous, Black, people of color, and those impacted by poverty, who bear a disproportionate cost of pollution and climate change already; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA churchwide organization will support these actions through investments in staff, education, tools, and resources that equip congregations, synods, and associated ministries to accomplish this goal and leverage knowledge, skills, and experience across the church; and

RESOLVED, that congregants, rostered ministers, and bishops be encouraged to further educate themselves to the urgency of the climate emergency both locally and globally as well as to the local and global opportunities a just transition will create; and be it further

RESOLVED, that rostered ministers and bishops will be encouraged to lift up loving our neighbor in response to the climate emergency through their preaching at least once a month; and be it further

RESOLVED that the Northern Illinois Synod and the ELCA Churchwide Organization will encourage and cooperate with Lutherans Restoring Creation and other faith-based and secular organizations that share our commitment to the protection and restoration of the natural world while doing justice for all.

## **10. Northeastern Iowa Synod (5F) [2022]**

WHEREAS, “[m]ade in the image of God, we are called to care for the earth as God cares for the earth;” and

WHEREAS, “the global environment with its finite resources is a common concern of all peoples. The protection of Earth’s vitality, diversity, and beauty is a sacred trust;” and

WHEREAS, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has reported that in order to avoid catastrophic consequences of climate change, global warming needs to be limited to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit); and

WHEREAS, the planet has already warmed 1.1 degrees Celsius (2 degrees Fahrenheit) since preindustrial times, causing record-breaking wildfires, hurricanes, heat waves, droughts, ocean acidification, and species loss; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Global Change Research Program in its most recent report to Congress finds that “[i]mpacts from climate change on extreme weather and climate-related events, air quality, and the transmission of disease through insects and pests, food, and water increasingly threaten the health and well-being of the American people, particularly populations that are already vulnerable;” and

WHEREAS, the IPCC concludes in its most recent assessment report, *Climate Change 2022: Mitigation of Climate Change*, that “[w]e have options in all sectors to at least halve emissions by 2030;” and

WHEREAS, the ELCA, via its official membership and participation in the America Is All In campaign, successfully persuaded the Biden administration to announce in November 2021 that the United States was committed to reducing its national greenhouse gas emissions 50–52% from 2005 levels by 2030 to get the nation on track to reach net-zero emissions by 2050; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA’s 1993 social statement *Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice* calls members, “as congregations and other expressions of this church... to incorporate the principles of sufficiency and sustainability in our life” and that “we will, in our budgeting and investment of church funds, demonstrate our care for creation;” and

WHEREAS, the Northeastern Iowa Synod expressed concern about the dangers posed by climate change when it adopted Resolution 7-21, “ELCA Advocacy Support for the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act,” during its 2021 Synod Assembly; therefore, be it,

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Iowa Synod Assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, across all three expressions, “walk the talk” and set the goal of reducing its greenhouse gas emissions 50% by 2030 and 100% by 2050; and be it further

RESOLVED, that in coordination with ELCA colleges and universities that have carbon neutrality goals, the churchwide organization will create a tool to calculate the total greenhouse gas emissions from both the ELCA churchwide organization as well as the other expressions of the ELCA; and be it further

RESOLVED, that ELCA churchwide organization will reduce its greenhouse gasses 50% by 2030, or sooner, by making the necessary energy efficiency improvements to buildings, reducing travel, sourcing electricity from

renewable sources, incentivizing remote participation and collaboration when possible, and working on opportunities to offset emissions generated from flights and vehicles through certified sources; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA churchwide organization incentivize congregations and synods in reducing their greenhouse gas emissions by creating an Energy Stewardship Loan Fund that will provide very low-interest loans to congregations and synods to invest in energy efficiency improvements, electrifying gas-powered equipment, and installing solar panels; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA churchwide organization support congregations in communities of color, communities impacted by poverty, and communities that have historically borne the brunt of pollution and climate change by creating an Energy Stewardship Grant Fund that will provide grants to these congregations so they can reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by making energy efficiency improvements, electrifying gas-powered equipment, and installing solar panels; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA churchwide organization provide staffing and other resources to assist congregations and synods on how to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA churchwide organization provide a report to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly and subsequent assemblies, assessing the progress in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and evaluating if a more aggressive greenhouse gas reduction target should be set.

#### **11. East-Central Synod of Wisconsin (51) [2022]**

WHEREAS, our faith commands us to love “your neighbors as yourselves” (see Luke 10:27); And

WHEREAS, “made in the image of God, we are called to care for the earth as God cares for the earth;” and

WHEREAS, this synod acknowledges that Indigenous Peoples, whose ancestors originally cared for the land that feeds us, make up less than 5% of the global population, and protect over 80% of the biodiversity that sustains us all; and

WHEREAS, “the global environment with its finite resources is a common concern of all peoples. The protection of Earth’s vitality, diversity, and beauty is a sacred trust;” and

WHEREAS, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reported that in order to avoid catastrophic consequences of climate change, global warming needs to be limited to 1.5 degrees; and

WHEREAS, the planet has already warmed 1.1 degree since pre-industrial times, causing record-smashing wildfires, hurricanes, heat waves, droughts, ocean acidification, and species loss; and

WHEREAS, climate change is already leading to the destruction and displacement of people’s homes, food sources, and well-being (leading to at least 30.7 million climate displaced persons in 2020 according to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC)); and

WHEREAS, Indigenous, Black, People of Color, and communities impacted by poverty have contributed the least to climate change and are the most impacted by it; and

WHEREAS, the United States has contributed more greenhouse gas to the atmosphere historically than any other country; and

WHEREAS, the United States has a realistic chance of meeting the goal of not exceeding 1.5 degrees of warming if the United States reaches at least a 50% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and equitable net zero emissions by 2050; and

WHEREAS, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50% by 2030 the United States will need a World War II sized mobilization that includes government investment, public-private partnerships, binding emission reduction targets, and possibly a carbon fee and dividend; and

WHEREAS, a just transition from a fossil-fuel based economy will lead to better health, family-sustaining jobs, clean air and water for communities historically left behind, and a safer, more sustainable future for children and future generations; therefore, be it,

RESOLVED, that the East-Central Synod of Wisconsin Assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America that the ELCA churchwide organization continue to call upon the leadership of the United States of America to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50% by 2030; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA churchwide organization will continue to equip and encourage congregations, synods, and associated ministries to advocate that the United States of America reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50% by 2030; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the churchwide organization encourage congregations and synods to advocate for a just transition away from greenhouse gasses where at least 40% of the funding goes towards projects that directly benefit Indigenous, Black, People of Color, and communities impacted by poverty that bear a disproportionate cost of pollution and climate change already; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA churchwide organization will support these actions through investments in staff, education, tools, and resources that equip congregations and synods to accomplish this goal and leverage knowledge, skills, and experience across the church; and be it further

RESOLVED, that congregants, rostered ministers, and bishops be encouraged to further educate themselves to the urgency of the climate emergency both locally and globally as well as to the local and global opportunities a just transition will create; and be it further

RESOLVED, that rostered ministers and bishops will be encouraged to lift up loving our neighbor in response to the climate emergency through their preaching; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA churchwide organization will encourage and cooperate with Lutherans Restoring Creation and other faith-based and secular organizations that share our commitment to the protection and restoration of the natural world while doing justice for all.

## **12. Greater Milwaukee Synod (5J) [2022]**

WHEREAS, our faith commands us to love “your neighbors as yourselves” (see Luke 10:27); and

WHEREAS, “made in the image of God, we are called to care for the earth as God cares for the earth;” and

WHEREAS, we acknowledge that Indigenous Peoples, whose ancestors originally cared for the land that feeds us, make up less than 5% of the global population and protect over 80% of the biodiversity that sustains all people; and

WHEREAS, “the global environment with its finite resources is a common concern of all peoples. The protection of Earth’s vitality, diversity, and beauty is a sacred trust;” and

WHEREAS, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reported that in order to avoid catastrophic consequences of climate change, global warming needs to be limited to 1.5 degrees; and

WHEREAS, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has reported that it is, “now or never” to take action on climate change; and

WHEREAS, the planet has already warmed 1.1 degree since pre-industrial times, causing record-smashing wildfires, hurricanes, heat waves, droughts, ocean acidification, and species loss; and

WHEREAS, climate change is already leading to the destruction and displacement of people’s homes, food sources, and well-being (leading to at least 30.7 million climate displaced persons in 2020 according to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC)); and

WHEREAS, Indigenous, Black, People of Color and communities impacted by poverty have contributed the least to climate change and are the most impacted by it; and

WHEREAS, the United States has contributed more greenhouse gas to the atmosphere historically than any other country; and

WHEREAS, the United States has a realistic chance of meeting the goal of not exceeding 1.5 degrees of warming if the United States reaches at least a 50% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and equitable net zero emissions by 2050; and

WHEREAS, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50% by 2030, the United States will need a World War II sized mobilization that includes government investment, public-private partnerships, binding emission reduction targets, and possibly a carbon fee and dividend; and

WHEREAS, a just transition from a fossil-fuel based economy will lead to better health, family sustaining jobs, clean air and water for communities historically left behind, and a safer, more sustainable future for our children and future generations; therefore, be it,

RESOLVED, that the Greater Milwaukee Synod Assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to instruct Witnessing in Society (ELCA Advocacy) to continue to call upon the United States of America to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50% by 2030, to generate 100% of its power from clean renewable sources by 2035, and to achieve net zero emissions by 2050; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Greater Milwaukee Synod Assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct the ELCA churchwide organization to equip and encourage congregations, synods, and associated ministries to advocate that the United States of America reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50% by 2030, generate 100% of its power from clean renewable sources by 2035, and achieve net zero emissions by 2050; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Greater Milwaukee Synod Assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to request the ELCA Churchwide organization encourage congregations and synods to advocate for a just transition away from greenhouse gasses where at least 40% of the funding goes towards projects that directly benefit Indigenous, Black, People of Color, and communities impacted by poverty that bear a disproportionate cost of pollution and climate change already; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Greater Milwaukee Synod Assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to encourage congregants, rostered ministers, and bishops to further educate themselves to the urgency of the climate emergency both locally and globally as well as to the local and global opportunities a just transition will create; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Greater Milwaukee Synod Assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to encourage rostered ministers and bishops to lift up loving our neighbor in response to the climate emergency through their preaching at least once a month; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Greater Milwaukee Synod memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to invite the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, across all three expressions, to set the goal of reducing its greenhouse gas emissions by 50% by 2030 and 100% by 2050; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Greater Milwaukee Synod Assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct the ELCA Churchwide organization to make a plan to reduce its greenhouse gasses by 2030, or sooner, by making the necessary energy efficiency improvements to their building, sourcing electricity from clean sources, incentivizing the electrification of the vehicles they reimburse mileage for, and working on partnerships to offset emissions generated from flights with providers of righteous offsets; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Greater Milwaukee Synod Assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct the ELCA Church Council to authorize the development of resources and the hiring of staff to educate the ELCA church body about the importance of reducing their greenhouse gas emissions and to help ELCA ministries achieve these goals; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Greater Milwaukee Synod Assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to instruct the Mission Investment Fund to prioritize supporting congregations seeking assistance in reducing their greenhouse gas emissions and to encourage the Mission Investment Fund to create resources to help congregations in communities disproportionately bearing the cost of pollution and climate change to make such investments; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Greater Milwaukee Synod Assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct the ELCA Churchwide Organization to provide a report to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly and subsequent assemblies, assessing the progress in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

### **13. North/West Lower Michigan Synod (6B) [2022]**

WHEREAS, humans, made in the image of God, are called to care for the earth as God cares for the earth, and to love our neighbors as ourselves (Luke 10:27); and

WHEREAS, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reported that in order to avoid further catastrophic consequences of climate change, such as wildfires, hurricanes, heat waves, droughts, ocean acidification, flooding, and species loss, global warming needs to be limited to 1.5 degrees by reducing by 50% the greenhouse gas emissions by 2030; and

WHEREAS, poverty-stricken communities of Indigenous, Black, and other People of Color have contributed the least to climate change but worldwide are the most impacted by it; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the North/West Lower Michigan Synod memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct the churchwide organization of the ELCA to continue to call upon corporate and governmental leaders of the United States to enact policies aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50% by 2030, generating 100% of its power from clean renewable sources by 2035, and achieving net zero emissions by 2050; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the churchwide organization of the ELCA encourage congregations and synods to advocate for a just transition away from greenhouse gases with at least 40% of the governmental funding in the energy sector going towards projects that directly benefit poverty stricken Indigenous, Black, and other People of Color communities that bear a disproportionate cost of pollution and climate change; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the churchwide organization support these actions through investments in staff, education, tools, and resources that equip congregations and synods to accomplish these goals and leverage knowledge, skills, and experience across the church, encouraging both rostered ministers and non-rostered leaders, in response to the climate emergency, to lift up the urgency of expressing God's love in Christ for the earth and for our neighbors through story-telling, prayers, and preaching.

### **14. New England Synod (7B) [2022]**

RESOLVED, that the New England Synod memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America that the ELCA churchwide organization continue to call upon the leadership of the United States of America to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions as recorded in the year 2020 by at least 50% by 2030, generate 100% of its power from clean renewable sources by 2035, and achieve net zero emissions by 2050; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA churchwide organization continue to equip and encourage congregations, synods, and associated ministries to advocate that the United States of America reduce its greenhouse gas emissions as recorded in the year 2020 by at least 50% by 2030, generate 100% of its power from clean renewable sources by 2035, and achieve net zero emissions by 2050; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA churchwide organization encourage congregations and synods to advocate for a just transition away from greenhouse gasses in which at least 40% of the funding goes towards projects that directly benefit the Indigenous, Black, people of color, and communities impacted by poverty that bear a disproportionate cost of pollution and climate change already; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA churchwide organization support these actions through investments in staff, education, tools, and resources to equip congregations and synods toward this goal and leverage knowledge, skills, and experience across the church; and be it further

RESOLVED, that congregants, rostered ministers, and bishops commit themselves to education about the urgency of the climate emergency and to the local and global opportunities a just transition will create; and be it further

RESOLVED, that rostered ministers and bishops be encouraged to lift up loving our neighbor in response to the climate emergency through their preaching; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA churchwide organization and synods work in cooperation with Lutherans Restoring Creation and those other faith-based and secular organizations that share a commitment to the protection and restoration of the natural world while doing justice for all.

#### **15. Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod (7E) [2022]**

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America that the ELCA churchwide organization continue to call upon the leadership of the United States of America to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50% by 2030, generate 100% of its power from clean renewable sources by 2035, and achieve net zero emissions by 2050; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA churchwide organization continue to equip and encourage congregations, synods, and associated ministries to advocate that the United States of America reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50% by 2030, generate 100% of its power from clean renewable sources by 2035, and achieve net zero emissions by 2050; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA churchwide organization encourage congregations and synods to advocate for a just transition away from greenhouse gasses, with emphasis on supporting projects that directly benefit Indigenous, Black, people of color, and communities impacted by poverty that bear a disproportionate cost of pollution and climate change already; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA churchwide organization support these actions through investments in staff, education, tools, and resources that equip congregations and synods to accomplish this goal and leverage knowledge, skills, and experience across the church; and be it further

RESOLVED, that congregants and rostered ministers be encouraged to further educate themselves to the urgency of the climate emergency both locally and globally as well as to the local and global opportunities that a just transition will create; and be it further

RESOLVED, that rostered ministers and bishops be encouraged to lift up loving our neighbor in response to the climate emergency through their preaching, teaching, and congregational action as often as possible; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod and the ELCA churchwide organization encourage and cooperate with Lutheran, ecumenical, faith-based, and secular organizations that share the commitment to the protection and restoration of the natural world while doing justice for all.

#### **16. Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod (8A) [2022]**

WHEREAS, our faith commands us to love “your neighbors as yourselves” (see Luke 10:27); and

WHEREAS, “made in the image of God, we are called to care for the earth as God cares for the earth;” and

WHEREAS, this synod acknowledges that Indigenous Peoples, whose ancestors originally cared for the land that feeds us, make up less than 5% of the global population and protect over 80% of the biodiversity that sustains all people; and

WHEREAS, “the global environment with its finite resources is a common concern of all peoples. The protection of Earth’s vitality, diversity, and beauty is a sacred trust;” and

WHEREAS, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reported that in order to avoid catastrophic consequences of climate change, global warming needs to be limited to 1.5 degrees; and

WHEREAS, the planet has already warmed 1.1 degree since pre-industrial times, causing record-smashing wildfires, hurricanes, heat waves, droughts, ocean acidification, and species loss; and

WHEREAS, climate change is already leading to the destruction and displacement of people’s homes, food sources, and well-being (leading to at least 30.7 million climate displaced persons in 2020 according to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC)); and

WHEREAS, Indigenous, Black, people of color, and communities impacted by poverty have contributed the least to climate change and are the most impacted by it ; and

WHEREAS, the United States has contributed more greenhouse gas to the atmosphere historically than any other country; and

WHEREAS, the United States has a realistic chance of meeting the goal of not exceeding 1.5 degrees of warming if the United States reaches at least a 50% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and equitable net zero emissions by 2050; and

WHEREAS, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50% by 2030 the United States will need a World War II sized mobilization that includes government investment, public-private partnerships, binding emission reduction targets, and possibly a carbon fee and dividend; and

WHEREAS, a just transition from a fossil-fuel based economy will lead to better health, family-sustaining jobs, clean air and water for communities historically left behind, and a safer, more sustainable future for children and future generations; therefore, be it,

RESOLVED, that the Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct the appropriate ELCA churchwide offices and units continue to call upon the leadership of the United States of America to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50% by 2030, generate 100% of its power from clean renewable sources by 2035, and achieve net zero emissions by 2050; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the appropriate ELCA churchwide offices and units continue to equip and encourage congregations, synods, and associated ministries to advocate that the United States of America reduce its greenhouse

gas emissions by at least 50% by 2030, generate 100% of its power from clean renewable sources by 2035, and achieve net zero emissions by 2050; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the appropriate ELCA churchwide offices and units encourage congregations and synods to advocate for a just transition away from greenhouse gasses where at least 40% of the funding goes towards projects that directly benefit Indigenous, Black, people of color, and communities impacted by poverty that bear a disproportionate cost of pollution and climate change already; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the appropriate ELCA churchwide offices and units support these actions through investments in staff, education, tools, and resources that equip congregations and synods to accomplish this goal and leverage knowledge, skills, and experience across the church

RESOLVED, that congregants, rostered leaders, and bishops be encouraged to further educate themselves to the urgency of the climate emergency both locally and globally as well as to the local and global opportunities a just transition will create; and be it further

RESOLVED, that rostered ministers and bishops be encouraged to lift up loving our neighbor in response to the climate emergency through their preaching at least once a month; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the synods and the appropriate ELCA churchwide offices and units encourage and cooperate with Lutherans Restoring Creation and other faith-based and secular organizations that share the commitment to the protection and restoration of the natural world while doing justice for all.

### **17. Delaware-Maryland Synod (8F) [2022]**

WHEREAS, our faith commands us to love “your neighbors as yourselves” (see Luke 10:27, NRSV); and

WHEREAS, “made in the image of God, we are called to care for the earth as God cares for the earth;” and

WHEREAS, this synod acknowledges that Indigenous Peoples, whose ancestors originally cared for the land that feeds us, make up less than 5% of the global population and protect over 80% of the biodiversity that sustains us all; and

WHEREAS, “the global environment with its finite resources is a common concern of all peoples. The protection of Earth’s vitality, diversity, and beauty is a sacred trust;” and

WHEREAS, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reported that in order to avoid catastrophic consequences of climate change, global warming needs to be limited to 1.5 degrees; and

WHEREAS, the planet has already warmed 1.1 degree since pre-industrial times, causing record-smashing wildfires, hurricanes, heat waves, droughts, ocean acidification, and species loss; and

WHEREAS, climate change is already leading to the destruction and displacement of people’s homes, food sources, and well-being (leading to at least 30.7 million climate displaced persons in 2020 according to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC)); and

WHEREAS, Indigenous, Black, People of Color and communities impacted by poverty have contributed the least to climate change and are the most impacted by it; and

WHEREAS, the United States has contributed more greenhouse gas to the atmosphere historically than any other country; and

WHEREAS, the United States has a realistic chance of meeting the goal of not exceeding 1.5 degrees of warming if the United States reaches at least a 50% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and equitable net zero emissions by 2050; and

WHEREAS, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50% by 2030 the United States will need a World War II sized mobilization that includes government investment, public-private partnerships, binding emission reduction targets, and possibly a carbon fee and dividend; and

WHEREAS, a just transition from a fossil-fuel based economy will lead to better health, family-sustaining jobs, clean air and water for communities historically left behind, and a safer, more sustainable future for our children and future generations; therefore, be it

RESOLVED that the Delaware-Maryland Synod of the ELCA memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA to direct the ELCA churchwide organization to call upon the leadership of the United States of America to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50% by 2030, generate 100% of its power from clean renewable sources by 2035, and achieve net zero emissions by 2050; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA churchwide organization will equip and encourage congregations, synods, and associated ministries to advocate that the United States of America reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50% by 2030, generate 100% of its power from clean renewable sources by 2035, and achieve net zero emissions by 2050; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA churchwide organization will encourage congregations and synods to advocate for a just transition away from greenhouse gasses; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA churchwide organization will support these actions through investments in staff, education, tools and resources that equip congregations and Synods to accomplish this goal and leverage knowledge, skills and experience across the church; and be it further

RESOLVED, that congregants, rostered ministers, and bishops be encouraged to further educate themselves to the urgency of the climate emergency both locally and globally as well as to the local and global opportunities a just transition will create; and be it further

RESOLVED, that rostered leaders and bishops be encouraged to lift up loving our neighbor in response to the climate emergency through their preaching at least once a month; and be it further

RESOLVED, the ELCA churchwide organization will encourage and cooperate with Lutherans Restoring Creation and other faith-based and secular organizations that share the commitment to the protection and restoration of the natural world while doing justice for all.

### **Background**

Climate change is one of the most pressing issues facing all of God’s creation. Leading scientists from around the world have confirmed that global average temperatures are growing warmer due to increasing levels of carbon dioxide and other heat-trapping gases in the Earth’s atmosphere. Human use of fossil fuels that release carbon dioxide and other “greenhouse” gases (GHGs) into the air is the main source of the increase in these gases. As levels of carbon dioxide and other GHGs increase, more and more of the sun’s heat is trapped by the atmosphere and less escapes back into space. The increase in trapped heat changes the climate, causing altered weather patterns, including multi-year droughts, extreme storms, flooding, and rising sea levels.

### **Emission Targets and Leadership**

The memorials reference targets for the leadership of the United States to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions “by at least 50% by 2030, and generate its power from clean renewable sources by 2035, and achieve net-zero emissions by 2050.” This target is consistent with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 2018 [report](#) which states that, in order to prevent the worst climate damages, global net human-caused emissions of carbon dioxide (CO2) need to fall by about 45% from 2010 levels by 2030, reaching net zero around 2050. This target is also consistent with the ELCA’s advocacy priorities.

The memorials ask the ELCA to “continue to call upon the leadership of the United States to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions.” In 2021, U.S. President Joseph R. Biden [announced](#) the target for the U.S. to achieve a 50–52% reduction from 2005 levels in economy-wide net greenhouse gas pollution by 2030. The Biden administration officially [committed](#) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to reach net-zero emissions by 2050. In December 2021, President Biden signed an [executive order](#) that set zero emission targets for the federal government.

### **Just Transition**

The memorials articulate the need to “advocate for a just transition away from greenhouse gases...” According to the Just Transition Alliance, just transition is a principle, a process, and a practice. A just transition is a healthy economy and a clean environment that is achieved without costing workers or communities their health, environment, jobs, or economic assets. Losses incurred during the transition to a clean energy economy should be fairly compensated and frontline workers and communities should lead in crafting policy solutions. Just Transition Alliance principles can be found [here](#). See the ELCA resource “[Just Transition to a Sustainable Future](#)” for additional information.

### **Justice40**

The memorials articulate the need for just transition advocacy “where at least 40% of the funding goes towards projects that directly benefit Indigenous, Black, people of color, and communities impacted by poverty that bear a disproportionate cost of pollution and climate change already.” The 40% goal reflects [Justice40](#), a whole-of-government effort to see that federal agencies work with states and local communities to ensure that 40% of the overall benefits from federal investments in climate and clean energy go to “disadvantaged communities.” The memorials do not define a funding source. The Justice40 initiative focuses on “benefits” rather than “funding.”

### **ELCA Social Teaching Basis and Climate Action**

The 1993 ELCA Churchwide Assembly adopted the social statement [Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice](#). Here the ELCA acknowledged the potential threat of global warming at a time when many scientists were just beginning to recognize that the earth’s climate was changing, and humans were playing a role in that change. “Even more widespread and serious, according to the preponderance of evidence from scientists worldwide, are ... dangerous global warming, caused by the buildup of greenhouse gases, especially carbon dioxide.” (p. 4) It recognizes the relationship between a degraded environment and the spread of hunger, disease, and conflict around the globe. The social statement focuses on the need for action in the face of this environmental crisis. It commits the resources of this church to education, action, and advocacy to address threats to God’s creation.

ELCA advocacy ministries have worked over the past three decades to encourage actions that address climate change, including national legislation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as well as support for 50% reduction from 2005 levels in economy-wide net greenhouse gas pollution by 2030. The ELCA Corporate Social Responsibility program continues to call for measuring greenhouse gases, setting reduction goals, reporting on such goals, developing low fossil fuel alternatives, and asking for corporate support of legislation to address climate change.

The ELCA is engaged in work to support lowering of GHGs at ministry sites. An ELCA sustainability table (now called the Creation Care Network) was created in 2020 as a network to share sustainability ministries and climate initiatives across the ecology of the ELCA. In 2021 ELCA Witness in Society (formerly ELCA Advocacy) hired a part-time sustainability coordinator to support that work, and staff a Witness in Society Net Zero project in Pennsylvania with the goal of developing a long-term plan for reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, thereby reducing the carbon footprint at each ELCA facility and putting the ELCA on a path to reducing GHG emissions by 50% below 2005 levels by 2030 and targeting net-zero emissions by 2050. Working with the synods in Pennsylvania as the pilot geographical region, the goal is to develop a Carbon Footprint Reduction Plan (Plan) for different types of ministry facilities, including church buildings, college, seminary, and university campuses, camps, and farms. The 30 pilot sites are completing the facility environmental assessment using the Energy Star Portfolio Manager after which each will receive a facility-specific plan that consists of ways to mitigate or reduce GHGs in the areas of energy efficiency, water conservation, transportation efficiency, and waste reduction. In addition to mitigation efforts, the plan remedies will include nature-based solutions and ways to help the vulnerable and marginalized communities. The results from this pilot, alongside another initiative in developing science-based targets for GHG emissions in faith communities, will inform and guide efforts in other regions.

### **Mission Investment Fund**

The Mission Investment Fund (MIF), the lending ministry of the ELCA, has been encouraging environmentally sound building practices for its congregational and ministry borrowers for decades. MIF is committed to helping congregations and ministry organizations build, repair, and renovate churches and ministry buildings that incorporate sustainable features to minimize impact on the environment. MIF's regional managers and specialized lending team are equipped to be trusted resources in guiding borrowers through planning processes to add sustainable features to building projects of all sizes. MIF's website also offers "Green Building Tips" and useful resources on the topic of energy conservation and sustainability.

### **Financial Impact**

The memorials specify "that the churchwide organization support these actions through investments in staff, education, tools, and resources." The expansive requests in the memorials submitted by the synods imply commitments of finances and time of varying amounts. As part of this work is already an advocacy priority for this church, some funding is currently dedicated to this work. The amount of churchwide organization staff time dedicated to any specific advocacy action is difficult to determine in advance but certainly involves a significant portion of the work of the program director for environmental policy. More funding would be needed to fully implement the intent of these memorials. Program costs could include assembling a task force and hiring at least part-time contract staff to assist with the development of relevant tools and educational resources to equip congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization for greater sustainability. Costs could range from \$25,000–\$100,000, which includes program costs plus the hiring of contract staff, possibly in a full-time contract. The churchwide staff recommend referral to the relevant home areas for further deliberation on staffing and budgetary implications to fully implement the memorials.

### **Recommended for assembly action**

**To receive with gratitude the memorials from the Oregon Synod, Southwest California Synod, Northeastern Minnesota Synod, Minneapolis Area Synod, Saint Paul Area Synod, Southwestern Texas Synod, Northern Illinois Synod, Northeastern Iowa Synod, East-Central Synod of Wisconsin, Greater Milwaukee Synod, North/West Lower Michigan Synod, New England Synod, Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod, Central States Synod, and Delaware-Maryland Synod concerning greenhouse gas reduction;**

**To reaffirm the commitment of this church to engage in creation care and advocacy based on the principles of sufficiency, sustainability, participation, and solidarity;**

**To reaffirm the commitment of this church to advocacy and action in support of 50% reduction from 2005 levels in United States economy-wide net greenhouse gas pollution by 2030 and achieve net-zero emissions by 2050;**

**To urge the churchwide organization to continue its network ministry through the Creation Care Network to inform and guide this church in its efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions;**

**To encourage congregants, rostered ministers, and bishops to commit themselves to education about the urgency of the climate emergency, the global opportunities of a just transition and to lift up loving our neighbor in response to the climate emergency through their preaching;**

**To affirm the Mission Investments Fund's "Green Building" initiative and resources, and to encourage continued commitment to supporting ministries in caring for creation and addressing climate change;**

**To refer to the Service and Justice home area, Office of the Treasurer, Office of the Secretary, and Office of the Presiding Bishop, for implementation consistent with the memorials; and**

**To request the churchwide organization provide a report to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly assessing the progress in reducing greenhouse gas emissions across all three expressions and sharing lessons learned to help meet reduction goals.**

### ***Category A5: Fortifying Urban Ministries***

#### **1. Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod (7F) [2022]**

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod in assembly memorializes the ELCA to create an “Urban Ministry Task Force” to study the inequalities experienced by urban congregations, build a strategy to address those inequalities, and report on its work to be presented at the next Churchwide Assembly (2025); and be it further,

RESOLVED, that such a task force shall consider as part of its strategy (1) evaluating whether urban rostered ministers are adequately compensated, (2) examining the condition of urban church facilities, and (3) training future leaders for success in urban ministry contexts by reviving urban internships. The task force may consider additional topics as revealed during their study phase; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod in assembly memorializes “the churchwide organization [to] 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. [And] 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.”

### ***Background***

The churchwide staff receives this memorial with gratitude and with full affirmation of its intent.

The ELCA Congregational Vitality Training and Development Team (CV Team) is deeply engaged in supporting new and existing ministries in the urban context, primarily among communities of color. This includes about 70% of new ministries and 60% of supported congregations. Over the last decade, a Homeless and Justice Network was formed with leaders ministering in primarily underserved urban areas. These practitioners develop resources, training opportunities, and serve as coaches to many other leaders. The recent COVID pandemic unveiled the vulnerability of many congregations, especially in urban areas, among ethnic communities, and among those affected by economic poverty. Under the direction of the Office of the Presiding Bishop and with the participation of most ELCA synods, more than 600 congregations were supported and encouraged in their courageous work. The CV Team continues to accompany these ministries with a Vulnerable Congregations initiative.

The CV Team has developed resources on the revitalization of ministries, mergers, and consolidation of churches. Recently, a set of six videos and accompanying materials were produced to resource congregations going through a grieving process leading to the “closing of a congregation with a missional legacy.”

The CV Team encourages the revitalization of congregations through a collaborative approach. The Synod Vitality Strategies and the Anchor Church initiatives provide additional options to synod leadership in responding to urban churches at critical points. The available resource “Area Mission Strategies” builds on the experience gained from prior cooperative efforts like Urban Coalitions, Urban Guilds, the New City Parish, as well as materials and learnings from the ELCA’s “In the City for Good” urban emphasis decade, which ended in 2008.

Beginning in 2022, the ELCA Fund for Leaders is reserving a minimum of 10% of the available funds to distribute each year for TEEM (Theological Education for Emerging Ministries) candidates (with TEEM students also eligible for the specific Mission Development and synod/congregation scholarships as well). It is anticipated that Fund for Leaders will be able to cover over half the tuition costs for all TEEM students in 2022–2023. Students who already have tuition assistance from their congregations or other sources can use Fund for Leaders scholarships for travel, lodging, and other costs associated with their education. Additionally, Fund for Leaders has removed restrictions on Synod Fund for Leaders scholarships, allowing synods to support students while on internship. This has allowed some urban synods (provided they have a large synod Fund for Leaders endowment to draw from) to support urban interns with additional compensation.

Churchwide staff recommends this memorial be referred to the ELCA Christian Community and Leadership home area to create a churchwide Urban Ministry group in partnership with the leaders in the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, who prepared this memorial. This Urban Ministry group will convene selected urban ministry practitioners, synod staff, Directors for Evangelical Mission, and other churchwide staff whose portfolios align with the areas identified in the memorial. By using the existing dialogue mechanisms and programs in place rather than creating a separate task force, there will be no additional implications for staffing or the budget as there are provisions for the study available through existing programs.

This group's primary role will be to accompany ELCA synods in their urban strategies that lead to the enhancement of congregational vitality and ministry sustainability in the urban context. The group will give priority to the study of inequalities experienced in urban congregations, especially the compensation of rostered ministers with primary attention to leaders of color. The group will work in collaboration with other leaders addressing this matter due to other similar memorials directed to the 2022 Churchwide Assembly and with other ongoing studies like the ELCA Quality of Call Initiative for Women in Ministry and the task force to study educational debt.

The group will also accompany and resource synods by gathering best practices in urban ministry and emerging ideas in the care and creative use of church facilities. The group will identify supportive networks within the ELCA and among ecumenical partners and encourage piloting innovative ways to address the realities and complexities of urban ministry, including enhancing urban internship opportunities.

By the 2025 Churchwide Assembly, the group will report on the results of its study and on new urban initiatives, and will propose ways for this whole church to take responsibility for fortifying its witness and service among people and communities in underserved urban areas.

### **Recommended for assembly action**

**To receive with gratitude the memorial on “Fortifying Ministries in Underserved Urban Areas” from the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod;**

**To affirm the strategic direction of the ELCA Fund for Leaders ministry to enhance the capacity of people of color through its disbursement of scholarships to Theological Education for Emerging Ministries candidates;**

**To refer this memorial to the Congregational Vitality Training and Development Team in the Christian Community and Leadership home area to create a churchwide Urban Ministry group, in partnership with the appropriate leaders in the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, to accompany ELCA synods in their urban strategies that lead to the enhancement of congregational vitality and ministry sustainability in the urban context. The group will 1) collaborate with other studies already underway, 2) resource synods by gathering best practices in urban ministry and emerging ideas in the care and creative use of church facilities, 3) identify supportive networks within this church and among ecumenical partners, and 4) encourage piloting innovative ways to address the realities and complexities of urban ministry, including enhancing urban internship opportunities. The group may consider additional topics as needed;**

**To request that the churchwide Urban Ministry group consult with and provide regular reports to the Church Council to ensure that the purposes and objectives of this memorial are being fulfilled; and**

**To provide a final report to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly on the results of its study, new urban initiatives, and ways for this church to fortify the witness and service among people and communities in underserved urban areas.**

### **Category A6: Advance Salary Equity**

#### **1. Delaware-Maryland Synod (8F) [2022]**

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) holds “justice,” and “diversity and inclusion” as values; and commit to “recognize and...challenge dynamics of power and privilege that create barriers to participation and equity in this church and society—for women, people of color, minority ethnic groups, people with disabilities, people who are marginalized or living in poverty, and the LGBTQ community;” and

WHEREAS, people who experience discrimination, including, but not limited to women, people of color, LGBTQ+ people, and people with disabilities, experience gaps in pay in comparison with those who do not experience discrimination; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported in 2020 that cisgender women made, on average, 82 cents for every dollar a cisgender man makes, and African Americans made 76 cents and Hispanic people made 73 cents for every dollar a white worker makes; and

WHEREAS, the Human Rights Campaign reported in 2021 that median earnings for LGBTQ+ full time workers were 90 cents for every dollar non-LGBTQ+ workers made and that transgender men made 70 cents, transgender women made 60 cents, and nonbinary people made 70 cents for every dollar a white cisgender man worker makes; and

WHEREAS, the United States Census Bureau reported in 2019 that disabled people made 87 cents for every dollar a non-disabled person makes; and

WHEREAS, *Religion News Service* reported in 2016 that cisgender women clergy made 76 cents for every dollar a cisgender man makes, and that the clergy pay gap is “worse” than for similar occupations; and

WHEREAS, *Church Executive* reported in 2020 that full-time cisgender women clergy in the ELCA make \$8,000 less than full-time clergy men; and

WHEREAS, a 2017 study by the *Sociology of Religion* showed that cisgender woman clergy who are married or have children at home earn 73 cents for every dollar a cisgender man earns; and

WHEREAS, knowledge of a rostered leader's previous compensation contributes to decision making regarding suitable placements for a rostered minister's appropriate future compensation on the part of synod leaders; and

WHEREAS, at least 14 states have banned asking about salary history in interviews; and

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated many of these pay gaps, especially with the burden of childcare falling disproportionately on mothers; therefore, be it

RESOLVED that the Delaware-Maryland Synod of the ELCA memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Church in America to direct the Church Council to:

- a) remove the “Current gross compensation” question from the Rostered Minister Profile;
- b) amend the “Current Health Benefits” question to read “Needed Health Benefits;”
- c) remove the “Current Retirement Contribution” question;
- d) arrange for a study on the above pay gaps in the ELCA to be conducted and the results communicated to congregational leaders.

### **Background**

As this memorial points out in the “Whereas” clauses, there is significant evidence that across society and in churches there exist pay gaps that affect equity for women, people of color, minority ethnic groups, people with disabilities, people who are marginalized or living in poverty, and the LGBTQIA+ community. One serious difficulty the ELCA faces in determining the extent to which inequity exists in compensation for rostered ministers, however, is that data on compensation has been extremely difficult to come by.

The churchwide organization holds no data on compensation for rostered ministers. While Portico Benefit Services has salary and retirement contribution data for those rostered ministers who are sponsored in its plans, there are structural challenges that have hindered sharing of data, including the fact that Portico is bound by federal privacy laws as a fiduciary agent, as well as the reality that it is bound by its own bylaws and policies that protect the privacy of plan participants. There is the additional complication that, while a large majority of rostered ministers are sponsored through Portico, it is likely that a number of those who serve smaller congregations or those with fewer financial resources are not sponsored, and thus would not be included in any information that Portico might be able to share.

Churchwide staff has also learned recently that Portico does not maintain ethnicity data on its members, and the current data in the churchwide database of rostered ministers is often incomplete concerning ethnicity. There are additional issues, including the following: Neither Portico nor the churchwide organization maintains information on rostered ministers’ status as LGBTQIA+; gender is recorded primarily on the binary with the possibility of a rostered minister to report gender only as “other”; and no information on disabilities is tracked by the churchwide organization for ministers on the active rosters.

Portico has indicated willingness to work with the churchwide organization to identify possible changes to Portico’s bylaws and policies that might allow for some sharing of data, and the churchwide organization is looking at changes to its data privacy policies that could allow for some sharing of data with Portico. However, as both organizations have substantial missing information in their existing data, sharing between the churchwide organization and Portico would still yield important deficiencies precisely in the areas that most need to be studied, other than pay gaps between gender binaries.

Consequently, any accurate study necessarily would require a full-scale survey of rostered ministers, a lengthier process involving multiple stakeholders. While this type of study would be lengthy and would require a more significant financial investment (see below), the information to be gained potentially could be beneficial in a number of areas, including the compensation survey called for in Memorial A5 “Fortifying Ministries in Underserved Urban Areas,” the work of the task force charged with studying educational debt, and the Quality of Call initiative. It would seem to make sense to combine research questions related to compensation and pay gap in a single comprehensive study. It must be pointed out, however, that self-reported data is less reliable and would be subject to the vagaries of response rates. On the other hand, a survey would allow for greater contextualization of the data.

Concerning the three “Resolved” clauses, it is important to note that the information on the Rostered Minister Profile (RMP) to which the memorial refers is confidential and visible only to the synod bishop and the bishop’s associates. The questions ask the rostered minister to identify both current and needed compensation and benefits and allow the bishop to take into consideration both the candidate’s needs and the financial capacity of the congregations in order to assist in identifying potential matches. It is recommended that the first three “Resolved” clauses be declined.

### **Financial Impact**

A comprehensive survey would involve considerable time from churchwide organization employees and, given that there is not currently a research staff, would necessarily require the use of outside researchers. It is estimated that this would involve at least 160–200 hours of professional labor for a total of somewhere between \$16,000–\$30,000, not including the in-house work of conceptualizing the survey, reviewing drafts, making comments, and reviewing the analysis and drafts of the deliverables. If the survey were designed to serve the needs of multiple stakeholders, the costs could be shared across projects.

### **Recommended for assembly action**

To receive with gratitude the memorial on “Salary Equity in the ELCA” from the Delaware-Maryland Synod;

To refer the memorial to the Church Council to consider commissioning a study of pay gaps for rostered ministers in the ELCA, particularly as they relate to women, people of color, minority ethnic groups, people with disabilities, and the LGBTQIA+ community, and to consider using such a study not only for the purposes described in this memorial but also for the study of inequitable compensation of clergy of color previously called for by the Church Council (CC19.06.23.), for the Quality of Call Initiative for Women in Ministry, for the study of educational debt, and for such other purposes as might serve the needs of this church;

To encourage Portico Benefit Services to work with the churchwide organization in making appropriate changes to its bylaws and data privacy policies in order to facilitate a deeper understanding of compensation patterns for rostered ministers; and

To respectfully decline to make changes to the confidential financial data reporting portion of the Rostered Minister Profile.

### **Category A7: Black Migrant Strategy**

#### **1. Delaware-Maryland Synod (8F) [2022]**

WHEREAS, the United Nations has recognized the International Decade for People of African Descent, 2015–2024 ; the United Nations reports details and summarizes how persons of African descent have become some of the most marginalized persons throughout the world today; the legacy of colonialism, the slave trade and human trafficking continue to create instability for people of African descent on the continent of Africa and globally; approximately 200 million people of African descent live outside of the African continent in the Americas and reside on six of the seven continents; and

WHEREAS, many refugees and internally displaced persons from the African continent are hosted by other African countries and communities within their own countries; often these hosting countries and communities do not receive the level of resources, i.e. funding they need to support those fleeing; increased and sustained resources are critically needed for those hosting; and

WHEREAS, discrimination against people of African descent is pervasive and assumes many forms; the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) social statement *The Church and Criminal Justice: Hearing the Cries* (2013) shares that the ELCA “has long recognized that racism pervasively infects and affects all aspects of U.S. society. Racism is central to the deep and abiding problems of the current criminal justice system even though often unacknowledged;” Black people may be targeted via racial profiling, police violence, and lack of legal recourse; people of African descent not only experience racial discrimination but other forms of intersecting identities such as age, gender, colorism, sexual orientation, language, religious beliefs, political views, social origin, and other factors; migration intersects with every facet of life both creating opportunities and crises; and

WHEREAS, humans have been migrating, voluntarily and/or involuntarily, since the recorded beginning of humankind whether to explore beyond borders, flee wars, famine, exploitation, or find opportunity—people of African descent are no exception; migration is a result of complex and interrelated set of factors such as insecurity, conflict, violence, environmental disaster, and more; whether nomadic peoples or well-educated persons, whether seeking economic opportunity or fleeing violence and political repression—individuals and families face can experience xenophobia, discrimination, and violations of their basic human rights; and

WHEREAS, people of the African diaspora in the U.S., Europe, and the Caribbean have made great contributions across societies; the infusion of diverse cultures and ethnicities enriches us all; all people deserve the same right to full protection, equal humanitarian aid, full inclusion access to justice, and due process under U.S. and international immigration laws; societies should invest in the full integration of all people—without the discrimination of racism, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, etc.; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Delaware-Maryland Synod of the ELCA memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA to more fully respond by creating, funding, and staffing a comprehensive strategy for equitable practices, policies, and laws related to Black migrants, refugees, and political asylum seekers; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA advocate through education, communication, and include Black migrants in advocacy efforts at the local, state, and federal levels; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA provide the necessary legal and financial resources to assist and support Black migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA expand the current AMMPARO strategy and other programs across the ELCA ecology in support of and assistance to Black migrants in transit (especially in Latin America and the Caribbean) through partnerships; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA engage the program director of African Descent Ministries, program director of African National Ministries, AMMPARO, Service and Justice home area, Witnessing in Society, and Lutheran Office for World Community to work collaboratively with Lutheran Immigration Refugee Service, Lutheran Services in America, and other agencies to support a comprehensive strategy for Black migrants; to encourage ELCA congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization to work with the African Descent Lutheran Association in partnership with the other ethnic associations to dismantle racism, address anti-Black bigotry, and work to welcome migrants of African descent; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA amplify, support, advocate, and create worship and prayer resources, that recognize international and national holidays, events, and activities that support solidarity with migrants—especially people of African descent; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA support national and international efforts of the Lutheran World Federation, World Council of Churches, National Council of Churches, and ecumenical and inter-religious partners in advancing the rights and protection of Black migrants; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA seek protection and better treatment of Black migrants in transit between and within countries through advocacy, partner churches, and partner organizations.

### **Background**

The ELCA has a long history of assisting and welcoming immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers choosing to settle and make their new home in the United States or otherwise outside of their country of origin. Standing for an indiscriminate policy of welcome rooted in hospitality and love, the ELCA advocates for the care and protection of vulnerable and at-risk migrants, seeks policies that promote family unity, and supports greater admission of refugees for resettlement. The ELCA advocates vigorously with faith-based organizations, in particular Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS), for just and humane migration policies that recognize the fundamental human rights and dignity of migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, especially the right to fairness in immigration proceedings, due process, and access to protection. Through the whole-church strategy for Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation, and Opportunities (AMMPARO) adopted in 2016, the ELCA works in a coordinated fashion across congregations and synods, with secular and religious partners, and local migrant community organizations in and across the U.S., Latin America, and the Caribbean to support and advocate for the protection and rights of migrant youth, women, and families that increasingly includes many Indigenous, Afro-Latino and Afro-Caribbean, and African people in situations of mobility. While the development of the AMMPARO strategy was specific to a moment-in-time increase in migration from Central America, from its inception, congregations and synods have accompanied migrants from all over the world, including Black migrants. Congregations continue their accompaniment of migrants from Haiti, Cameroon, the Congo, and Nigeria who are living in their communities, as they have done in the past.

The conditions of vulnerability to external factors like violence and environmental issues and socio-economic precarity have continued to worsen continentally and globally. This decade has seen a doubling of the number of forcibly displaced people from 41 million to over 84 million, with displacement from Afghanistan, Myanmar, South Sudan, Syria, and Venezuela making up the largest number of displaced, outside of the war in Ukraine that started in force in February 2022, and which, at the time of this writing, has internally displaced some 8 million and forced 6.5 million to flee abroad. ELCA AMMPARO companions throughout the Americas are serving these needs in a varied way.

The crisis in Ukraine has deepened the insecurity felt by refugees and asylum seekers, some foreign nationals, immigrants, and stateless others found in the country and Eastern Europe at the time of the war, particularly Black migrants who have faced discriminatory treatment while fleeing the same violent conflict. To keep pace with changes in global forced displacement and continuance of extracontinental migratory flows through the Central American corridor, the ELCA has renewed commitments to working alongside migrants, church partners, and companions, through the response of AMMPARO, LIRS, Lutheran World Federation, and Church World Service to these major humanitarian concerns. The ELCA made a public declaration of purpose to walk alongside all immigrants, regardless of country of origin, including those hosted in sanctuary, as a matter of faith by becoming the nation's first sanctuary denomination.

The ELCA has worked for just and humane policies that affect migrants in the U.S. and outside, having recently supported the framework for legislation, the U.S. Citizenship Act. Similarly, the ELCA supported the inclusion of permanent protections in the text of the Build Back Better Act and supported passage of the American Dream and Promise Act of 2019 (H.R.6) through the House of Representatives, a bill providing for a pathway to citizenship for undocumented youth “Dreamers,” Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), Temporary Protected Status (TPS), and Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) holders. This church has supported the NO BAN Act and advocated to end the deliberate misuse of Title 42 at U.S. borders, a public health order that fails to uphold to international and domestic obligations on humanitarian protection. The ELCA rigorously advocated for the Liberian Refugee Immigration Fairness Act (LRIF) with members of Congress, a program that has been extended at least once to allow for Liberians in the U.S. to adjust their status. The ELCA successfully campaigned for the designation of TPS for Cameroon and South Sudan and for others on a country-by-country basis. Through public statements, the ELCA has spoken strongly to the gross human rights abuses at a certain private detention facility accused of gender-based violence. It is important to name that in the U.S. a punitive criminal justice system interlocks with punitive immigration enforcement. One consequence is that noncitizen individuals serving a sentence for criminal conduct may be subject to additional immigration consequences. The legacy of tough-on-crime policies coupled with tough immigration enforcement of laws enacted in the 1990's and continued racial profiling and excessive policing in Black and other

communities of color are measured in their impact on disproportionate criminalization, incarceration, detention, and deportation of Black and other immigrants.

The ELCA continues to honor its immigrant heritage with vibrant multiethnic ministries and programs working to achieve greater integration and inclusion of immigrant communities coming from multi-cultural backgrounds and traditions. About 6 million U.S. adults identify as Afro-Latino, making up about 12% of the adult Latino population according to Pew Research, and 10% of the Black population according to census analysis. By 2060, the Census Bureau projects that 16.5% of the U.S. Black population will be foreign-born. ELCA congregations and worshiping communities worship in more than 30 languages. There are 43 ELCA congregations whose membership is more than 30% African National/African Caribbean. [\*All Creation Sings\*](#), the 2020 supplement to *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, includes new prayers for refugees, migrants, and immigrants (ACS, p. 51). Lastly, the African Descent Strategy (ADS), summarizing goals in the areas of congregational vitality, leadership, and justice, proposes to extend AMMPARO's work to include Black migrants ([ELCA ADS Implementation Plan 2020/2025](#)). While that has already happened as ELCA companions accompany Black migrants throughout the Americas and in the U.S., more coordinated work can take place.

These actions reflect priorities pursued by the ELCA not as part of one strategy but taking input from historical traditions and commitments by this church, as well as the evolving experiences and expectations of Lutheran ministries and partners on the ground. Their basis includes the "Message on Immigration" that calls for an ongoing "generous policy of welcome for refugees and immigrants" (p.7). This church's social statements, *Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture* (1993), *The Church and Criminal Justice: Hearing the Cries* (2013), and *Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Call to Action* (2019), are equally relevant guiding documents.

Immigrants are engines of growth for the economy and vibrant participants in society. Black immigrants, while less often recognized in immigration discourse, make significant contributions to the U.S. national fabric and within the ELCA.

### **Financial Impact**

The memorial specifies that the ELCA "more fully respond by creating, funding, and staffing a comprehensive strategy" for advocacy and to "amplify, support, advocate, and create worship and prayer resources," building solidarity with migrants. The expansive requests in the memorial submitted by the synod imply commitments of finances and time of varying amounts. As part of this work is already an advocacy priority for this church, some funding is currently dedicated to this work. The amount of churchwide organization staff time dedicated to drafting and implementing a targeted proposal is difficult to determine at this time but certainly involves a significant portion of the work of the program directors, in particular the program director for migration. Additional costs would be incurred for equipping Lutheran congregations with worship resources that meet the goals of this memorial.

### **Recommended for assembly action**

**To receive with gratitude the memorial on "ELCA Strategy Regarding Black Migrants" from the Delaware-Maryland Synod;**

**To direct the Service and Justice home area, in consultation with the program directors for African Descent Ministries, African Nationals, and Latino Ministries; African Descent Strategy Team; African Descent Lutheran Association; Association of Latino Ministries of the ELCA; and Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation, and Opportunities (AMMPARO), to prepare a proposal for the strengthening of advocacy, protection, and accompaniment of Black migrants, that includes cost estimates, for Church Council consideration by its Spring 2024 meeting;**

**To strengthen the current protection and accompaniment of Black migrants through AMMPARO in partnership with ecumenical and interfaith partners both domestically and internationally;**

**To recommit this church to advocating for Temporary Protected Status and just and humane immigration policy through the Witness in Society team within the Service and Justice home area; and**

**To encourage congregations to affirm the aims of the African Descent Strategy Implementation Plan for 2020–2025 and the United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent.**

### **Category A8: Land Back**

#### **1. Northwest Washington Synod (1B) [2022]**

RESOLVED, that the Northwest Washington Synod Assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to encourage all individual ELCA members, as well as congregations, synods, ministries, colleges, seminaries, camps, associated organizations, and partners, to "support creative programs resulting in reparations for stolen lands" in partnership with Indigenous peoples, including returning land (and any structures built on it) to Native tribes, and when direct return is not feasible or desirable by the tribes, to return the proceeds from the sale of the land to the ELCA Native American Ministry Fund or other local Native-led ministries or organizations.

## 2. Oregon Synod (1E) [2022]

WHEREAS, in 2016 the Churchwide Assembly repudiated the Doctrine of Discovery, “acknowledging and repenting from this church’s complicity in the evils of colonialism in the Americas, which continue to harm tribal governments and individual tribal members;” and

WHEREAS, such evils of colonialism include land theft and forced removal of Indigenous peoples from their ancestral homelands, silencing their stories and ancestral practices rooted in their sacred land; and

WHEREAS, in September 2021, the Church Council of the ELCA approved the “Declaration to American Indian and Alaska Native People,” which includes a commitment to “encourage and support wherever possible the buyback and return of tribal land and further commit to support creative programs resulting in reparations for stolen lands;” and

WHEREAS, every building owned by an ELCA congregation and organization, except those on reservations, is built on stolen tribal land which continues to rob each generation of sustenance, wealth, life ways, and the experience of familial relationships with the land itself, thus perpetuating historical inequity; and

WHEREAS, Indigenous peoples are calling for restoration, restitution, and reparation; and

WHEREAS, there is a growing reparations and “Land Back” movement in which families, churches, denominations, camps, universities, and other land-holding organizations are returning land or providing compensation for the use of land to Indigenous tribes and nations; and

WHEREAS, returning land to its original peoples is one significant and meaningful way for our church to demonstrate repentance, helping to move together toward collective healing and the restoration of Native sovereignty, opening the possibility for new life to come out of death; and

WHEREAS, there are a variety of ways that ELCA congregations, ministries, and associated organizations can participate in reparations and land return, including transferring land and closed ministry sites to tribal nations, or inviting tribal nations into conversations about land use when congregations are consolidated, etc.; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Oregon Synod Assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Church in America to encourage all ELCA members, congregations, synods, ministries, colleges, seminaries, camps, associated organizations, and partners to become educated about the Indigenous peoples who thrived, prior to European contact, on the land they currently inhabit; and to learn about, and learn from, the Indigenous peoples who currently live within at least 100 miles of that land; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Oregon Synod Assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Church in America to encourage all ELCA members, congregations, synods, ministries, colleges, seminaries, camps, associated organizations, and partners, to “support creative programs resulting in reparations for stolen lands” in partnership with Indigenous peoples, including returning land (and any structures built on it) to Native tribes, and when direct return is not feasible or desirable by the tribes, to return the proceeds from the sale of land to the Native American Ministry Fund or other local Native-led ministries or organizations.

## 3. Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod (8B) [2022]

WHEREAS, scripture teaches the Jubilee (Leviticus 25: 39–55), and Christ Jesus announced the year of the Lord’s favor (Luke 4: 18–19); and

WHEREAS, the confessions affirm that “I believe that God has created me together with all that exists. God has given me and still preserves my body and soul: eyes, ears, and all limbs and senses; reason and all mental faculties. In addition, God daily and abundantly provides shoes and clothing, food and drink, house and farm, spouse and children, fields, livestock, and all property—along with all the necessities and nourishment for this body and life” (*Small Catechism*); and

WHEREAS, this church repudiates the doctrine of discovery; and

WHEREAS, this church strives to be anti-racist, and

WHEREAS, we acknowledge land use whenever and wherever we gather as a synod; and

RESOLVED, that in the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA congregations and agencies, when their facilities no longer support their reason for existence, consider giving the building(s) and land to the descendants of those peoples, races, or nations that first lived on that land; and be it further

RESOLVED, that congregations and agencies, even in their prime, as well as in their sunset years, build relationships with congregations, faith communities, and agencies that trace their ancestry to indigenous populations and people who came to this land against their free will as slaves; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod memorializes the ELCA at the 2022 Churchwide Assembly to consider doing likewise.

### Background

It is safe to say that ELCA members, congregations, synods, ministries, colleges, seminaries, camps, associated organizations, and partners (ELCA and its affiliates) have made relatively little effort to become educated about Indigenous people generally, and even less effort has been made to become educated about the Indigenous peoples who currently live within the territory of the stolen lands that ELCA and its affiliates inhabit.

The few efforts that have been made in the recent history of this church, however, could make for a solid starting point in the movement to step the church closer to justice for Indigenous people and tribal nations.

Examples of educational work that has been done:

- Land acknowledgements have become normal at some ELCA colleges and universities. This is true also for a small number of congregations and synods. Many of the congregations that make land acknowledgements, however, are making big efforts to become more educated and taking actions beyond making a land acknowledgement.
- Few ELCA colleges and universities offer a course regarding Indigenous people or histories, though at least four universities who are a part of the Network of Colleges and Universities have made efforts to intentionally and/or responsibly support Indigenous students: Augsburg University, Concordia College (Moorhead, Minn.), Luther College (Regina, Sask.), and Lenoir-Rhyne University.
- In partnership with the Pete and Cheryl Pero Center for Intersectionality Studies and Other+Wise, the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (LSTC) serves as the host of the annual Vine Deloria Jr. Theological Symposium. In its 14th year, the symposium was created and is produced by Vance Blackfox, director for Indigenous Ministries and Tribal Relations for the ELCA.
- In recent years, at least two of the 119 camping ministries of the Lutheran Outdoor Ministries have been recognized for their work with appropriate tribal nations: Camp of the Cross Ministries (Garrison, N.D.) with the Three Affiliated Tribes and Camp Metigoshe (Bottineau, N.D.) with the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa.
- In 2021, representing Other+Wise and Blackfox Institute, Vance Blackfox served as a keynote speaker to the annual Lutheran Outdoor Ministries Conference, challenging outdoor ministry professionals to take the initiative to become acquainted with Indigenous people and the lands stolen from them.
- The ELCA's Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery Task Force, appointed by Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton, has begun and will continue to develop educational materials and opportunities for this church.

There is only one example of Land Back in the ELCA at the beginning of the ELCA, one ELCA camp (predecessor-church affiliated) in northern Minnesota closed and gave the land back—and all of the structures built on it—to the appropriate tribal nation, making it one of the first examples of responsible Land Back transactions in the history of the United States.

The proposed memorials related to education about land and Indigenous peoples and Land Back or reparations is a faithful and moral act in the movement toward justice for and right relations with Indigenous people and tribal nations. In effect, this means that ELCA members, congregations, synods, ministries, colleges, seminaries, camps, associated organizations, and partners that decide not to give land and property back to tribal nations upon the closing of church-affiliated institutions or congregations are culpable of further injustice and not being in right relationship with tribal nations.

In addition to supporting the Land Back movement, the Memorials Committee recommends this church's expressions explore the inclusion of land acknowledgements into public gatherings, if not already included as a practice. There is a helpful guide on the [ELCA website](#) for those who wish to begin a journey toward truth and healing by practicing land acknowledgements.

### **Financial Impact**

There is no budget implication for either the education effort or Land Back transaction. Education in this movement is the responsibility of each and all ELCA members, congregations, synods, ministries, colleges, campus ministries, seminaries, camps, associated organizations, and partners. The commitment of each to this educational effort will be witnessed in the programs or projects developed by each, as well as the monetary support for effective and responsible provision. The closing of congregations has been a part of the church's business since its beginning. The process for closing a congregation and the costs associated with such closings are already a part of standard operating procedures for synods or independently closing congregations.

### **Recommended for assembly action**

**To receive with gratitude the memorials from Northwest Washington Synod, Oregon Synod, and Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod concerning the Land Back movement;**

**To encourage all ELCA members, congregations, synods, ministries, colleges, campus ministries, seminaries, camps, associated organizations, and partners to explore including land acknowledgements as part of their public gatherings;**

**To encourage all ELCA members, congregations, synods, ministries, colleges, campus ministries, seminaries, camps, associated organizations, and partners to become educated about the Indigenous peoples who thrived, prior to European contact, on the land they currently inhabit; and to learn about, learn from, and be in deepening relationship with Indigenous people and tribal nations; and**

**To encourage all ELCA members, congregations, synods, ministries, colleges, campus ministries, seminaries, camps, associated organizations, and partners, to consider supporting the Land Back movement in**

**partnership with Indigenous peoples, including returning land (and any structures built on it) to Native tribes after having satisfied any financial obligations, and when direct return is not feasible or desirable by the tribes, to return the proceeds from the sale of the land to the ELCA Native American Ministry Fund or other local Native-led ministries or organizations.**

### ***Category A9: Russian Divestment***

#### **1. Lower Susquehanna Synod (8D) [2022]**

WHEREAS, “We should fear and love God, so that we do no bodily harm to our neighbor, but help and befriend them in every need,” as stated in the Small Catechism regarding the Fifth Commandment; and

WHEREAS, the 1999 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) social statement *Economic Life: Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All* acknowledges that, “While a market economy assumes people will act to maximize their own interests, we acknowledge that what is in our interest must be placed in the context of what is good for the neighbor;” and

WHEREAS, this statement calls for “shifts throughout the world from military expenditures to purposes that serve the needs of low-income people;” and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has historically divested during periods of great social and care of creation needs, including the movement to end apartheid in South Africa and consideration of fossil fuel investments; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has utilized its investment power through Portico Benefit Services, who are the managers of retirement funds and the ELCA Foundation’s Fund A, to influence company policies by enforcing its voice and vote in the stock market and world markets; and

WHEREAS, the world is at risk of engaging in global warfare instigated by the invasion by Russia into sovereign Ukraine, and worldwide markets are divesting of Russian assets; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Lower Susquehanna Synod memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA to request that, no later than December 31, 2022, all ELCA financial institutions including Portico Benefit Services, the ELCA Foundation, ELCA Credit Union, and the Mission Investment Fund divest of all real estate, hedge funds, infrastructure, and equity based in Russia.

### **Background**

The ELCA practices screening, not divestment, meaning that ELCA investors screen out companies from social purpose funds using the ELCA’s social criteria screens. The policy of screening provides ongoing guidance and a framework to make decisions that provides for fiduciary responsibility. The ELCA has created nine social criteria investment screens to help investors make decisions that align with ELCA social teachings and policies. The most relevant screen to the Ukraine invasion is the human rights screen, titled [Political and Civil Human Rights: Equal Access and Participation](#). Specifically, the screen “recommends not investing in corporations benefiting from the most egregious denial of the rights of humans as political and civic beings to have equal access and participation in legal and political decisions affecting them,” and adds that “investments might include screening companies supporting and benefitting from occupation.” If there are any Russian companies that fail this screen, they would be excluded from all of Portico Benefit Service’s Social Purpose portfolios, the ELCA Foundation, the Mission Investment Fund, and the ELCA Federal Credit Union.

Portico’s exposure to Russia in its funds can currently be considered near zero. In response to the sanctions placed on the Russian government and economy, Russian markets were closed to all trading after the invasion. Although some trading has resumed, foreign investors are still prohibited from selling Russian shares. In response, most market participants, including Portico, have marked Russian equity holdings to near zero value. In addition, major index providers removed Russia from their indexes, so most of Portico’s public investment managers plan to sell Russian securities; however, due to market closures and sanctions, it’s currently impossible to reduce any remaining Russian holdings. When and if liquidity returns, those securities would be sold, unless there is a change to the indexes.

If this memorial were to be implemented as written it would be counter to the ELCA’s long-established and effective use of social screens and it would not meaningfully change the actions already underway from those screens.

### **Recommended for assembly action**

**To receive with gratitude the memorial on “Divestment of Russian Assets Held by the ELCA” from the Lower Susquehanna Synod; and**

**To re-affirm this church’s continued use of social screens to support human rights and the rejection of companies benefitting from occupation.**

### ***Category A10: Right to Boycott***

#### **1. Metropolitan Chicago Synod (5A) [2022]**

WHEREAS, the ELCA, in its policy document “Boycott Policies and Procedures” defined boycott as “A collective effort to abstain from the purchase or use of products or services provided by a targeted firm, government or other agency;” and

WHEREAS, the ELCA, in “Boycott Policies and Procedures” further affirms that the “purpose of a boycott is to persuade the targeted entity to cease certain practices judged to be unjust and/or to perform certain practices deemed to be just;” and

WHEREAS, boycotts, as a nonviolent political action to oppose injustice have an honorable history from Americans' pre-Revolutionary boycott of tea to the boycott of South Africa during apartheid; and

WHEREAS, historically, Lutherans have been involved in social movements that used boycotts as a means of witness and reform in a wide range of areas, including the consumption of liquor and tobacco, business establishments open on Sunday, objectionable entertainment, goods produced with child or slave labor, gambling, and racial discrimination; and

WHEREAS, Martin Luther himself called for a boycott of the Fuggers, a merchant banking company; and

WHEREAS, Boycott, Divest, Sanctions [BDS] does not call for the end of Israel but rather seeks for Israel to comply with international law and respect human rights; and

WHEREAS, over 100 measures have been introduced in state and local legislatures and in the U.S. Congress to punish BDS supporters, including those who merely refuse to pledge never to boycott Israel; and

WHEREAS, whatever one's stance on specific boycotts, in view of the ongoing assault on the right to boycott, this resolution is rooted in defense of the First Amendment right to speak and to act nonviolently for the sake of the common good in accordance with one's convictions; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan Chicago Synod Assembly memorializes the ELCA Churchwide Assembly to oppose legislation penalizing or criminalizing support for nonviolent boycotts, divestment and/or sanctions on behalf of Palestinian human rights by requesting the Presiding Bishop call on the President of the United States and Congress to oppose the same and call upon synods, congregations, and members to oppose or overturn legislation penalizing or criminalizing support for nonviolent boycotts, divestment, and/or sanctions at their state and local jurisdictional levels.

## **2. New England Synod (7B) [2022]**

RESOLVED, that the New England Synod Assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton and to urge ELCA members to call on the president of the United States and the U.S. Congress to oppose legislation penalizing or criminalizing support for nonviolent boycotts, divestment, and/or sanctions on behalf of Palestinian human rights.

### **Background**

Previous churchwide assemblies have discussed boycotts, divestment, and sanctions with respect to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. These topics have been addressed in their several component parts rather than as a package. The resulting decisions and related actions were summarized in a [document](#) prepared in 2020. Background information, upon which much of the 2020 document is based, can be found in materials prepared for the Memorials Committees for the 2011 and 2016 Churchwide Assemblies.

The specific focus of the two memorials is on the matter of freedom of speech, a basic freedom outlined in the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. The memorials do not directly take a position on boycotts, divestment, or sanctions but rather call for opposition to legislative prohibitions or criminal penalties in relation to speech about them.

This has been addressed previously by the ELCA in two letters to Congress, the [first](#) of which was signed by Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton in November 2017 and the [second](#) signed by a number of organizations in September 2019. The 2017 letter said in part:

*We are troubled by the bills' [S.720 and H.R.1697] intent to penalize or criminalize the use of economic measures as a legitimate means of opposing policies that inhibit human rights, in this case, of the Palestinians.*

*We are concerned by any legislation that suppresses legitimate criticism of public policy, and that restricts freedom of expression and our ability to determine our own witness through investment and selective purchasing practices. While we may not be of one mind about which measures are most effective, we collectively affirm and defend the right of churches and organizations to use economic measures in the specific case of Israel-Palestine. This is consistent with how churches and church-related organizations have employed economic measures as nonviolent tactics in many instances of seeking justice and peace throughout history.*

As the ELCA has taken up advocacy previously on this matter as outlined and continues other advocacy in relation to Israel-Palestine, no additional costs are anticipated to occur should the churchwide assembly respond favorably to these memorials.

### **Recommended for assembly action**

**To receive with gratitude the memorials from the Metropolitan Chicago Synod and the New England Synod in relation to Palestinian human rights; and**

**To urge Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton and ELCA members to call on the president of the United States and the U.S. Congress to oppose legislation penalizing or criminalizing support for nonviolent boycotts, divestment, and/or sanctions on behalf of Palestinian human rights.**

## ***Category A11: Gun Violence***

### **1. Oregon Synod (1E) [2022]**

RESOLVED, that the Oregon Synod Memorializes the 2022 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to join in the call to ban the sale of assault style weapons and large capacity magazines, and call for a national background check database while equipping our congregations to act locally on this issue for the public safety of our youth and the well-being of all who reside in this land.

### **2. Northwestern Ohio Synod (6D) [2022]**

WHEREAS, since the beginning of 2022 there have been 18 and now 19 violent mass shootings; and

WHEREAS, these actions of violence have not discriminated in their creation of trauma, impacting schools, workplaces, health facilities, faith communities, and all manner of places; and

WHEREAS, just yesterday, the State of New York voted to tighten New York's gun ownership restrictions including raising the age from 18 to 21 for the purchase of semi-automatic rifles; and

WHEREAS, these acts of violence have not discriminated in geography and pose a threat to children of God throughout our country; therefore, be it

RESOLVED that the Northwestern Ohio Synod memorializes the ELCA Churchwide Assembly to oppose the sale of semi-automatic rifles through the creation of a policy statement to be forwarded to ELCA Witnessing in Society.

### **3. Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod (8A) [2022]**

WHEREAS, deliberate acts to harm or kill innocent people are not God's intention for human community, as commanded in Exodus 20:13, "You shall not kill;" and

WHEREAS, Jesus teaches in Matthew 5:38–39 to respond to violence in restorative ways: "If anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other one also...;" and

WHEREAS, gun violence in the United States has included recent mass shootings at Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland Florida, Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs, Texas, a music festival in Las Vegas, Nevada, Pulse Nightclub in Orlando, Florida; Tops grocery store in Buffalo, New York; Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas, and many other places where the innocent were murdered with assault rifles; and

WHEREAS, the 45,222 total gun deaths in 2020 were by far the most on record, representing a 14% increase from the year before, a 25% increase from five years earlier and a 43% increase from a decade prior; and

WHEREAS, regarding the second amendment, which states that "A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed;" the Supreme Court has declared that "The Court's opinion should not be taken to cast doubt on longstanding prohibitions on the possession of firearms by felons and the mentally ill, or laws forbidding the carrying of firearms in sensitive places such as schools and government buildings, or laws imposing conditions and qualifications on the commercial sale of arms;" therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod of the ELCA memorializes the 2022 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to equip the ELCA's national and state advocacy offices to continue advocacy to federal officials to adequately fund gun violence research by the Centers for Disease Control, and to advocate with lawmakers on a local and national level to create and pass gun laws that save lives, such as: banning semi-automatic weapons that fire high-velocity rounds, banning accessories that simulate automatic weapons, establishing a database of gun sales and universal background checks, closing gun show and secondhand sales loopholes, raising the firearm purchase age to 21, creating a waiting period for gun purchases, dedicating more funds to mental health research and professionals, increasing funding for school security, encouraging responsible gun ownership, and holding gun owners responsible when their weapons are used illegally due to their negligence.

## **Background**

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has been addressing the issue of violence in society—including gun violence—in multiple ways for many years.

The 1993 Churchwide Assembly adopted a social policy resolution [[CA93.06.10](#)] on community violence-gun control that calls upon all "congregations, synods, and appropriate agencies to work for the passage and strict enforcement of local, state, and national legislation as appropriate, that rigidly controls the manufacture, importation, exportation, sale, purchase, transfer, receipt, possession, or transportation of handguns, assault weapons, and assault-like weapons and their parts, excluding rifles and shotguns used for hunting and sporting purpose, for use other than law enforcement and military purposes."

Thereafter, a social message, "Message on Community Violence" was adopted by the Church Council in April 1994 and provides direction for the ELCA to confront a culture steeped in violence as a community of worship, a community of education and service, a community of advocacy, and a community of ongoing deliberation. This social message emphasizes the need for comprehensive action to address violence while also providing policy for advocacy in favor of gun safety.

Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson addressed the societal problem of gun violence in a video in January 2013. At its meeting in March 2013, the Conference of Bishops, in a [Pastoral Letter on Violence](#), renewed the call to ELCA congregations and members to engage the topic of violence “by listening: listening to God, to Scripture, and to each other.”

A memorial to the 2016 Churchwide Assembly called on the ELCA’s advocacy (now Witness in Society team) to act to “renew or replace the Federal Assault Weapons Ban from 1994 that expired in 2004 with the definition of assault weapons given in the renewal attempt of the Assault Weapons Ban bill of 2013—Senate Bill S.150.” This legislation bans the sale, transfer, manufacturing, and importation of 157 specifically-named semiautomatic firearms while excluding any weapon that is lawfully possessed at the date of the bill’s enactment. It strengthens the 1994 Assault Weapons Ban and state bans in a number of ways, including eliminating the 10-year sunset that allowed the original federal ban to expire. The legislation would address the millions of assault weapons and large-capacity magazines currently in existence by requiring a background check on all sales or transfers of a grandfathered assault weapon and requires that all of these weapons manufactured after the date of the bill’s enactment be engraved with the serial number and date of manufacture of the weapon.

On Mar. 16, 2018, Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton sent a [letter to all Members of Congress](#) that called for action on reauthorization of an assault weapons ban and strengthening background checks. This coincided with an ELCA advocacy action alert making the same requests, timed to coincide with the March For Our Lives on Mar. 24, a national event supported by the Conference of Bishops in their [Statement in Solidarity with Our Children and Youth](#).

Presiding Bishop Eaton also has addressed gun violence in [statements on the Charleston Shooting](#), the [statement on the Overland Park Shooting](#), a [statement on the Orlando Shooting](#), a [statement on shootings in Atlanta and Boulder](#), and on the [Pittsburgh synagogue shooting](#). The ELCA issued a statement following the [shooting in Buffalo](#) and the [shooting in Uvalde](#) that included that the ELCA reaffirms “our commitment in calling for greater gun safety, including preventing easy access to assault-style weapons and strengthening our federal system of background checks for all gun sales.” ELCA advocacy sent an alert in June 2022 [urging calls to the Senate](#) asking them to support bi-partisan legislation to stop gun violence in our nation.

ELCA State Public Policy office work includes legislative priorities that focus on managing gun purchases, including:

- Faith Action Network in Washington State supports gun responsibility legislation that includes the Dangerous Access Prevention Act, Enhanced Assault Weapon Background Checks, and action to prohibit sale of bump stocks.
- Virginia Interfaith Center supports legislation that will require background checks for all firearm sales and prohibit straw sales, making it illegal to purchase a firearm on behalf of anyone not lawfully allowed to purchase it themselves and to limit access to firearms for individuals who have been previously convicted of violent crimes.
- Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Pennsylvania works for legislation to make it more difficult for defendants in domestic abuse cases to gain access to firearms.
- Lutheran-Episcopal Advocacy Ministry in New Jersey organized advocacy that led to a ban on bump stocks in 2018. They advocated on bills that were signed into law to expand the types of crimes that bar someone from owning a gun in New Jersey, attempt to curtail gun trafficking from other states, make “smart guns” available in New Jersey, and aim to prevent suicide.

In 2022, U.S. House and Senate leaders came together in a bipartisan fashion to craft gun violence legislation that could pass a very partisan Congress. As shared in the [www.everytownforgunsafety.org](http://www.everytownforgunsafety.org) website, the “Bipartisan Safer Communities Act establishes an enhanced background check process for gun buyers under age 21, provides federal funding to implement state Red Flag laws, disarms domestic abusers by addressing the dating partner loophole, and funds community violence intervention programs, among other items.” The legislation passed by the U.S. Congress and signed by U.S. President Joseph R. Biden is the first substantive gun violence prevention legislation in a generation. The ELCA’s advocacy to address, reduce, and advocate for additional gun violence legislation does not stop with this very important movement of legislation and gun violence prevention. This church’s advocacy must continue to ensure gun ownership is responsible and communities are always safe, particularly prioritizing vulnerable communities of color and children.

### **Financial Impact**

As the ELCA has taken up advocacy previously on gun violence as outlined and continues other advocacy in relation to gun safety, no additional costs are anticipated to occur should the churchwide assembly respond favorably to these memorials.

### **Recommended for assembly action**

To receive with gratitude the memorials from the Oregon Synod, Northwestern Ohio Synod, and Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod concerning gun violence;

To reaffirm this church's social teaching to address the broad issues of violence in society as called for in "Message on Community Violence" (1994);

To reaffirm this church's sense of urgency for advocacy for the renewal or replacement of the Federal Assault Weapons Ban (expired in 2004), including a definition of assault weapons comparable to that in the renewal attempt of the Assault Weapons Ban bill of 2013 and expanded background checks and other measures to increase gun safety;

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

To refer to the Witness in Society team in the Service and Justice home area for implementation and a report of the continuing advocacy efforts related to gun violence and universal background checks to the Church Council at its Spring 2023 meeting.

### **Category A12: LGBTQIA+ Welcome**

#### **1. Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod (8G) [2022]**

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) adopted the social statement *Human Sexuality: A Gift and Trust* in 2009, providing guidance on how to live with our LGBTQIA+ neighbors; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA adopted in 1995 a social policy resolution that "gay and lesbian people, as individuals created by God, are welcome to participate fully in the life of the congregations" of the ELCA; and

WHEREAS, the cultural message that LGBTQ+ people hear from U.S. Christianity is that they are hated by God; and

WHEREAS, the Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod has welcomed LGBTQIA+ individuals into the synod's life since its affirmation as Reconciling in Christ in 1989, and

WHEREAS, not every member of the ELCA is able to attend a congregation that is affirming to LGBTQIA+ people and the LGBTQ+ community; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod memorializes the 2022 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to make an unequivocal public declaration that LGBTQIA+ individuals are beloved children of God and are welcome as they are into the life of the ELCA.

### **Background**

This memorial responds to one of several cultural messages in U.S. society today about people who identify as LGBTQIA+. This memorial expresses an objection to the message in word or practice that people who are LGBTQIA+ receive from some Christian sources in the United States—that God objects to them as persons because of their self-identity. The ELCA social statements *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* (*HS:G&T*, 2009), and *Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Call to Action* (2019) govern ELCA social teaching and express a contrary message, a message that God's love is for *all* of God's diverse creation. This church understands, therefore, that God's love embraces all people totally, including their sexuality.

That God does not hate persons who identify as LGBTQIA+ is the clear teaching of this church even while that social teaching recognizes that ELCA people of faith hold a four-fold range of different understandings and practices regarding ordination and same-sex marriage "within its life as it seeks to live out its mission and ministry in the world." (*HS:G&T*, p. 19) In addition, the two social statements express and sustain various social policy resolutions adopted since 1991 in which the ELCA affirms both civil rights and congregational participation for LGBTQIA+ persons (<https://www.elca.org/Resources/Faith-and-Society#Socialresolutions>). Numerous pastoral messages by ELCA presiding bishops, dependent on these social teaching and policy documents, have made public the ELCA's established position regarding God's love for all and the need for congregational welcome.

In light of these teaching and policy documents, it is clear the ELCA already is on record publicly with a biblically and theologically informed alternative message regarding God's love and congregational welcome. A social policy resolution consistent with ELCA social teaching, however, would reaffirm this stance as a timely contribution to public conversation.

### **Recommended for assembly action**

To receive with gratitude the memorial on "LGBTQIA+ Welcome" from the Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod;

To reaffirm the public teaching of this church that LGBTQIA+ individuals are beloved children of God as set forth in ELCA social statements *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* (2009) and *Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Call to Action* (2019); and

To reaffirm the public teaching of this church as set forth in ELCA social statements *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* and *Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Call to Action* that call for welcome in the means of grace and pastoral care.

## **Category A13: Substance Abuse**

### **1. Western North Dakota Synod (3A) [2022]**

WHEREAS, Jesus sends us forth to "heal the sick" (Matthew 10:8); and

WHEREAS, "Substance abuse is America's number one health problem, a problem that touches the life of every American child, family, congregation, and community" (Pre-Covid statement, "Faith Matters: Race/Ethnicity, Religion and Substance Abuse," Annie E. Casey Foundation 2004); and

WHEREAS, as Paul Gionfriddo of Mental Health America said, "As the pandemic relentlessly persists, we are seeing the highest levels of anxiety and depression reported since the pandemic hit the U.S. in March. This is a troubling trend being fueled by loneliness and isolation. We are also seeing alarming numbers of children reporting thoughts of suicide and self-harm. We already knew that not enough was being done to support people living with mental illness, but the State of Mental Health in America report confirms the trend that mental health in the U.S. continues to get worse;" and

WHEREAS, Christ calls us to work with forces for good, to serve humanity, cooperate with church and other groups participating in activities that promote justice, relieve misery, and reconcile the estranged; and

WHEREAS, predicted 2021 alcohol related deaths in the U.S. number 95,000; tobacco related deaths number 480,000; illegal drug-related deaths number 70,000 (Centers for Disease Control, March 2021); and

WHEREAS, there has been a nearly 300% increase in accidental overdose deaths in the state of North Dakota in the last decade (Office of Vital Statistics); and

WHEREAS, the cost of substance abuse in the U.S. includes \$249 billion for alcohol abuse; \$300 billion for tobacco abuse; \$271 billion for illegal drug abuse (Verywell Mind, 2020); and

WHEREAS, rates of anxiety and depression among U.S. adults were about 4 times higher between April 2020 and August 2021 than they were in 2019. (American Psychological Association) and 55.5% of N.D. middle school students and 61.2% of N.D. high school students reported that their mental health was not good (N.D. Department of Health); and

WHEREAS, North Dakota's suicide rate increased more than any other state, rising 58% from 1999 to 2020 (CDC 2018); therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Western North Dakota Synod Assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to consider this resolution and explore the formation of a churchwide task force on substance abuse and mental health that will provide information, support, educational materials, and networking for ministries dedicated to combating this crisis.

### **2. Northeastern Iowa Synod (5F) [2022]**

WHEREAS, Jesus sends people forth to "heal the sick" (Matthew 10:8) and calls all to work with forces for good, to serve humanity, cooperate with the church and other groups participating in activities that promote justice, relieve misery, and reconcile the estranged; and

WHEREAS, "Substance abuse is America's number one health problem, a problem that touches the lives of every American child, family, congregation, and community" (Pre-Covid statement from Annie E. Casey Foundation 2004); and in 2017 there were 131 opioid overdose deaths each day. The effects of the opioid crisis are cumulative and costly for society—an estimated \$504 billion a year in 2015—placing burdens on families, workplaces, the health care system, states, and communities; and

WHEREAS, in 2021 alcohol-related deaths in the U.S. numbered 95,000, tobacco-related deaths numbered 480,000, and illegal drug-related deaths numbered 70,000 (Centers for Disease Control, March 2021); therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Iowa Synod in assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly to consider this memorial and explore the formation of a churchwide task force on substance abuse and addiction that will provide information, support, educational materials, and networking for ministries dedicated to combating this crisis.

## **Background**

### **Substance Abuse in the U.S.**

[According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), since 1999 more than 932,000 people have died from a drug overdose. In 2020, 91,799 drug overdose deaths occurred in the United States, and 136 people die every day from an opioid overdose. Illicitly manufactured fentanyl, heroin, cocaine, or methamphetamine (alone or in combination) were involved in nearly 85% of drug overdose deaths in 24 states and the District of Columbia during January to June 2019. More than 3 out of 5 overdose deaths involved at least one potential opportunity to link people to care before an overdose or to implement life-saving actions when an overdose occurred.

The U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) [2020 National Survey](#) on Drug Use and Health reports that, based on data collected nationally from October to December 2020, it is estimated that 25.9 million past-year users of alcohol and 10.9 million past-year users of drugs other than alcohol reported they were using these substances "a little more or much more" than they did before the COVID-19 pandemic began. Other findings from the NSDUH revealed that among the 138.5 million people who were current alcohol users, 61.6 million were classified as binge drinkers and 17.7 million (28.8% of current binge drinkers and 12.8% of current alcohol users) were classified as heavy drinkers. More than 59.3 million people 12 or older used illicit drugs in the past year, including 49.6 million who used marijuana.

## **ELCA Response to Substance Abuse and Educational Materials**

The ELCA has addressed substance abuse through the Witness in Society team (formerly ELCA Advocacy) in the Service and Justice home area that monitors and engages with policy responses to opioid addiction. The Corporate Social Responsibility Program includes an [alcohol screen](#) that states that “the ELCA shall not knowingly make any investment in firms which are involved in (e.g., 10% or more of revenue is derived from) the production or marketing of alcohol products for human consumption” based on public health concerns of alcohol abuse and its inordinate effect on life expectancy.

ELCA social teaching at numerous points addresses the issues of substance abuse and addiction in the context of various social concerns and voice the need for individuals, congregations, social ministry organization, and other partners of this church to work for prevention and treatment. These include: *Caring for Health: Our Shared Endeavor* (2003) and *The Church and Criminal Justice: Hearing the Cries* (2013) as well as the social messages on “The Body of Christ and Mental Illness” (2012), “Commercial Sexual Exploitation” (2001), “Gender-Based Violence” (2015), and “Suicide Prevention (2021)” ([www.elca.org/socialstatements](http://www.elca.org/socialstatements)). Taken together, they provide information and analysis and point to means to combat the abuse and addiction crises present in society.

With tightened budgets and staff reductions, the ELCA churchwide organization does not have the resources to offer a program that specifically addresses addiction and substance abuse. Yet, there are resources available for faith communities.

The Department of Health and Human Services has resources for faith communities to address opioid addiction. Its “[Opioid Epidemic Practical Toolkit: Helping Faith and Community Leaders Bring Hope and Healing to Our Communities](#)” includes ideas for raising awareness, connecting and collaborating, and finding federal resources ([HHS.gov/Opioids: The Prescription Drug & Heroin Overdose Epidemic | HHS.gov](https://www.hhs.gov/opioids)). More resources are available at [hhs.gov/opioids](https://www.hhs.gov/opioids).

Synods and many congregations are involved in initiatives, including efforts in the [Northwest Synod of Wisconsin](#) and [synod and local ministries](#) highlighted in *Living Lutheran*. Some Lutheran social ministry organizations offer alcohol and substance abuse treatment and counseling. The Fellowship of Recovering Lutheran Clergy through the [Center of Addiction and Faith](#) provides resources for educating rostered ministers, faith communities, and caregivers about addiction and holds an annual conference.

### **Recommended for assembly action**

**To receive with gratitude the memorials from the Northeastern Iowa Synod and the Western North Dakota Synod concerning substance abuse and the addiction crisis; and**

**To encourage congregations and synods to become involved in initiatives to combat substance abuse and addiction and to engage in the vast array of available information, support, educational materials, and networks for ministries already dedicated to combating this crisis.**

### **Category A14: Roe v. Wade**

#### **1. Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod (7E) [2022]**

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to investigate and ascertain the impact that any overturning of Roe v. Wade and/or any legislation of any state or commonwealth of the United States will have upon pastoral counseling, the pastor-client relationship, and the rostered ministers and social ministry agencies and organizations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to offer support and legal referral to any rostered minister or affiliated counseling staff who may be affected by Roe v. Wade changes, state or commonwealth legislation, license revoking, fines, and/or imprisonment.

### **Background**

The intent of the memorial from the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod is understood to equip rostered ministers and social ministry agencies and organizations in their pastoral care to individuals and families impacted by changes to Roe v. Wade and any subsequent state legislation. However, the churchwide assembly as a legislative body is not able to investigate and ascertain the impact of such changes nor can the assembly offer support or legal referral. Since receiving the memorial, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled to overturn Roe v. Wade.

As an institutional church, the ELCA will need to rely on collaboration with other ecumenical and inter-religious communities that are in similar theological positions in how it will navigate laws in the midst of theological teaching that does not oppose abortion in all circumstances. The ELCA social statement [Abortion](#) (1991) was adopted when access to safe and legal abortion was federal law. Guidance in making decisions regarding unintended pregnancies is included in the social statement (p. 5).

In a June 24, 2022, [pastoral message](#) on the ruling, Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton wrote, “As we live into this new legal framework, we can respond to and minister in the current situation, for instance, by ministering to individuals who seek abortions; advocating for laws that provide free or affordable health care, child care, and education; providing and promoting sex education; continuing to be a community of discernment where thoughtful and diverse perspectives can be shared and heard; and advocating for state laws that provide legal, safe, and affordable abortions, and against legislation that would outlaw abortion in all circumstances (p. 9).”

Church-related social ministry organizations and ELCA specialized pastoral care ministries seek to extend the love of God in Jesus Christ to all people at the point of their deepest need. Counselors and ELCA chaplains do not encourage or discourage, affirm, or deny abortion rights. They hold people’s stories and struggles in sacred space to listen, discern, pray, and support the person in their choices, making them aware of God’s presence regardless of the choices they make.

### **Recommended for assembly action**

**To receive with gratitude the memorial on “A Change in Roe v. Wade and Its Effect Upon Pastoral Counseling” from the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod and to affirm the intent of the memorial;**

**To encourage support and prayer for all people affected by the overturning of Roe v. Wade, especially the most vulnerable;**

**To encourage bishops to amplify support for rostered ministers; and**

**To encourage synod and congregational conversation around this church’s teachings on abortion, gender justice, and related topics.**

## **Section B**

### **Ministry, structure, and the function of this church**

#### ***Category B1: Conflict Free Metals***

##### **1. Minneapolis Area Synod (3G) [2021]**

WHEREAS, armed militia conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has claimed nearly 6 million civilian lives since 1994; and  
WHEREAS, the DRC is one of the leading producers of tantalum which is found in 60% of computers and other electronics worldwide, and up to 30% of the global supply of tantalum is mined in the DRC; and

WHEREAS, 50% of the DRC mines are controlled by militias who fund their conflict by selling illicitly obtained minerals to world suppliers, exploiting the land and devastating local populations; and

WHEREAS, the conflict mineral funds contribute directly to the approximately 45,000 deaths per month due to violence inflicted by armed militias in order to maintain control of the mines and resources; and

WHEREAS, the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform Act of 2010 mandates that, if companies use minerals from the DRC, they must file a report with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) describing what they have done to ensure the source of the minerals; and

WHEREAS, Enough Project, a campaign to end genocide, has reviewed the major electronics companies’ SEC reports and rated them based on their proactive steps to trace and audit their supply chains, leadership in industry-wide efforts, and actions to help the DRC develop a clean minerals trade; and

WHEREAS, since the Minneapolis Area Synod and the ELCA purchase computers, printers, copiers, and phones made with tantalum, they can reduce the funding of DRC militias by encouraging companies to implement responsible supply-chain policies and practices; and

WHEREAS, to help resolve the conflict in the DRC, resolution and action by the Minneapolis Area Synod and the ELCA will add to the voices of concerned people for conflict-free products and further the social responsibility of electronics vendors; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Minneapolis Area Synod in assembly in 2021 memorializes the 2022 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to mandate that the Churchwide Office purchase any new electronics from companies only at 70 points or higher on the most current Enough Project Conflict Minerals Company Rankings and by making this action known throughout the ELCA and to the public at large.

### **Background**

The [Enough Project](#) supports peace and an end to mass atrocities in Africa’s deadliest conflict zones. Together with its investigative partner, [The Sentry](#), The Enough Project counters armed groups, violent kleptocratic regimes, and their commercial partners that are sustained and enriched by corruption, criminal activity, and the trafficking of natural resources. By helping to create consequences for the major perpetrators and facilitators of atrocities and corruption, The Enough Project seeks to build leverage in support of peace and good governance. The Enough Project conducts research in conflict zones, engages governments and the private sector on potential policy solutions, and mobilizes public campaigns focused on peace, human rights, and breaking the links between war and illicit profit.

The Enough Project's 2017 [conflict minerals company rankings](#) examine 20 of the largest companies, as defined by market capitalization, in two of the industries which consume the most tin, tungsten, tantalum, and gold: consumer electronics and jewelry retail.

Tantalum, which is named in this memorial, is one of several of what is labeled as “conflict minerals,” needed for commonly used electronics. These minerals are essential to the energy storage required for the move away from fossil fuels. Their mining has been used to finance armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo, prompting disclosure requirements (the Dodd-Frank Act referred to in the memorial) requiring corporations to carry out supply chain due diligence and report it to the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission. Corporations report on their supply chains on their websites.

For this 2017 report, companies were ranked on four categories of criteria:

1. Conducting conflict minerals sourcing due diligence and reporting
2. Developing a conflict-free minerals trade and sourcing conflict-free minerals from Congo, particularly gold
3. Supporting and improving livelihoods for artisanal mining communities in eastern Congo
4. Advocating conflict-free minerals

Here is the current list of ELCA churchwide organization purchases from four of the 20 vendors on the list; all are above the 70-point benchmark requested by the memorial:

- HP
- Microsoft
- Intel
- Apple

At this time, there would be no extra expense or staff time to continue to purchase from the four vendors with the 70-point benchmark and not purchase from the other 16 on the 2017 version of The Enough Project Conflict Minerals Company Rankings. Staff do not currently foresee the churchwide organization purchasing technology equipment from any of the vendors that are currently part of the rankings and below 70 points. There are other vendors that the churchwide organization currently purchases from that are not included in this list. Churchwide staff are unable to benchmark the vendors not included on this list.

Responses to conflict minerals are evolving fairly quickly, and The Enough Project has not issued a report in five years. The Enough Project has moved away from this kind of reporting and is moving towards more on-the-ground activism. The memorial makes its request based on “the most current Enough Project Conflict Minerals Company Rankings,” but the “most current” is already five years old, and it seems unlikely that The Enough Project will issue another report, as they have shifted focus.

The shifting of the focus of The Enough Project, and its change in funding from the Center for American Progress to the New Ventures Fund, known for its liberal “dark money” base, may mean The Enough Project's activities will raise concern.

If the memorial were to be implemented, there would be some implications. The memorial would mandate the churchwide organization to restrict its purchasing according to this report. The churchwide organization would not be able to limit its purchasing to only the 20 vendors on this list. Though the memorial does not use the language of “boycott,” such a mandate comes perilously close to requesting a boycott with publicity surrounding said boycotting actions based on a report that is half a decade old.

There is movement in the church community to address human rights abuses in the mining of minerals related to “just transition,” but this memorial does not tap into that movement.

The ELCA has several documents that could apply to the topic of conflict minerals. [Codes of Conduct](#) calls for companies to be attentive to adopting codes of conduct. [Extractive Industries](#) calls for disclosure about the impact of extractive industries. [Human Rights](#) names human rights standards for corporations. In addition, the ELCA has a [political and civil human rights social criteria investment screen](#). These are the basis to advance corporate social responsibility through environmental, social, and justice principles to create a just and sustainable society. Generally speaking, corporate social responsibility work seeks to influence the behavior of corporate actors through ongoing dialogue, shareholder resolutions, and possibly through investment screening.

### ***Recommended for assembly action***

**To receive with gratitude the memorial on “Conflict Free Metals” from the Minneapolis Area Synod;**

**To encourage the churchwide organization to purchase electronics with conflict free minerals, using an up-to-date measure such as The Enough Project Conflict Minerals Company Rankings;**

**To direct the corporate social responsibility program within the Service and Justice home area to continue monitoring human rights in the mining of minerals as part of its work in extractive industries tracking; and**

**To report its advocacy efforts on conflict minerals to the Church Council as may be requested.**

## ***Category B2: Remembrance of Armenian, Assyrian, and Greek Genocide***

### **1. Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod (8G) [2021]**

WHEREAS, the Ottoman Empire systematically killed Armenians, Assyrians, and Greeks throughout the first part of the 20th century; and

WHEREAS, the United Nations defines genocide as, “acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, such as:

- killing members of the group;
- causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; and
- forcibly transferring children of the group to another group;” and

WHEREAS, on October 29, 2019, the U.S. House of Representatives passed legislation recognizing the genocide committed by the Ottoman Empire against Armenians, Assyrians, and Greeks; and

WHEREAS, April 24th is recognized as Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod in Assembly memorialize the 2022 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) Churchwide Assembly to publicly recognize the systematic killings of Armenians, Assyrians, and Greeks perpetrated by the Ottoman Empire as a genocide and mark April 24 as an annual day of commemoration in mourning for those lost during the genocide committed against Armenians, Assyrians, and Greeks, including the addition of this day to the liturgical calendar; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA advocate for an end to all genocide throughout the world.

### **Background**

The ELCA has a significant policy basis for addressing genocide and has taken a number of actions to address the issue, including a recent letter from ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton concerning Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day.

[\*For Peace in God’s World\*](#) (1995) includes opposition to genocide:

“We therefore will continue to teach about human rights, protest their violation, advocate their international codification, and support effective ways to monitor and ensure compliance with them. Our priorities are to:

- oppose genocide and other grievous violations of human rights such as torture, religious and racial oppression, forced conscription (impressment), forced labor, and war crimes (including organized rape); ...” (p. 14)

The social message on “[Human Rights](#)” commits the ELCA to:

- “support the Responsibility to Protect movement when it anticipates and protects against serious rights violations; ...” (p. 13)

The message includes this footnote: “Responsibility to Protect (R2P) is a global political commitment to end genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. It is described in paragraphs 138 and 139 of the 2005 United Nations World Summit outcome. For more information visit [www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/about-responsibility-to-protect.shtml](http://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/about-responsibility-to-protect.shtml).

Over the years, the following actions have been taken concerning genocide:

In April 1997, the Church Council called for a churchwide response to “recurrent tragedies of the 20th century resulting from ethnic strife,” noting “instances of genocide throughout the world in the past 100 years” in Germany, Central Europe, the former Soviet Union, the former Yugoslavia, Cambodia, East Timor, Guatemala, and Rwanda.

In September 2005, the ELCA participated in the “A Day for Darfur: Stop the Genocide, Protect the People” rally and vigil in Washington, D.C. In November 2005, ELCA Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson joined five other religious leaders in calling on Congress to “co-sponsor and take all necessary action” to pass the Darfur Peace and Accountability Act, saying, “It is a ‘travesty’ for the United States to acknowledge genocide [in Darfur, Sudan] but not support such a declaration with the actions needed to stop it.” At the 2007 Churchwide Assembly, a memorial from the New England Synod entitled, “Genocide in Darfur” was adopted that encouraged ELCA congregations and members to advocate with their federal officials on behalf of Darfur.

In November 2009, the Church Council approved a revised social policy resolution, “[Toward Compassionate, Just, and Wise Immigration Reform](#),” which observed that “Refugees are among the most vulnerable people in the world. Their stories often are filled with fear, pain, and loss because of the forced separation of families, persecution, war, and genocide.” (p. 4) Therefore, the ELCA concluded that “In general, the United States, in concert with other nations, must address through policy and action the root causes of forced migration, such as extreme poverty, unemployment, political persecution, armed conflicts, genocide, environmental degradation, religious intolerance, trade policies, and other forms of injustice.” (p. 6)

“A Declaration of Inter-Religious Commitment,” a policy statement adopted by the 2019 Churchwide Assembly, says *inter alia* that “The ELCA, in dialogue with our partners, will seek to understand the religions of the world so as to enhance mutual understanding, as well as to be able to identify the misuse of any religion to justify oppression, such as violence, genocide, or terrorism.” (p. 13)

In observance of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on March 21, 2021, the ELCA joined The Episcopal Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, and the Anglican Church of Canada in a statement that expressed a commitment to dismantling racism, which said, “The institutional church shares in the complicity of the legacies of the Doctrine of Discovery colonization, forced removal and genocide of Indigenous peoples, the enslavement of African and Indigenous Peoples and injustices perpetrated against all people of color.”

In May 2021, Presiding Bishop Eaton wrote a letter to His Eminence Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, Ecumenical Director and Legate, Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern), expressing “the gratitude of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for President Biden’s recognition of the Armenian Genocide on April 24, 2021, Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day.” Presiding Bishop Eaton and other ELCA leaders also participated in the ecumenical service co-hosted by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA at the Washington National Cathedral to give witness on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide in 2015.

The church year calendar, including a list of commemorations, is generally updated as part of a major generational worship resource (such as *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* in 2006) following a process of study, evaluation, and the procedures for review of liturgical material. This process considers wholistically ecumenical calendars as well as other additions more specific to Lutherans. The published calendar is not thought to be the final word. Congregations and worshiping communities are encouraged to remember other Christians of the past for their lives and witness.

For further reference, see the “ELCA Worship Frequently Asked Questions:”

- [“What Is a Commemoration and How Do We Celebrate Them?”](#)
- [“How do congregations recognize secular occasions and holidays in the liturgy?”](#)
- [“How do we craft the Prayers of Intercession?”](#)

### **Recommended for assembly action**

**To receive with gratitude the memorial on “Remembrance of Armenian, Assyrian, and Greek Genocide” from the Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod;**

**To encourage congregations to find appropriate times in worship, such as a Sunday near April 24, to hold in remembrance those lives lost during the genocide committed against Armenians, Assyrians, and Greeks, and those whose lives have been severely damaged as a result of acts of genocide; and**

**To reaffirm the ELCA’s continued advocacy for an end to all genocide throughout the world.**

### **Category B3: Parental and Family Medical Leave**

#### **1. Southwestern Washington Synod (1C) [2019]**

WHEREAS, the standard compensation guideline recommendations for rostered ministers is currently “maternity leave of six weeks with full salary, housing, and benefits” and “paternity leave... for at least two weeks with full salary, housing, and benefits;” and

WHEREAS, there is no current recommendation for rostered ministers for family medical leave in order to care for family members due to medical issues; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA social statement on *Abortion* (1991) states, “Because parenthood is a vocation that women and men share, this church supports public and private initiatives to provide adequate maternity and paternity leaves, greater flexibility in the workplace, and efforts to correct the disparity between the incomes of men and women,” (p. 8); and

WHEREAS, the ELCA draft social statement on “Women and Justice” (2017) states that we: “Seek, support, and advocate for resources for families and communities that empower parents, whether single or coupled, to nurture, protect, and provide for their household in ways that do not reinforce gender-based stereotypes. In particular, advocate for men to participate in all family roles associated with the home, caregiving, parenting, and nurturing,” (p. 47); and

WHEREAS, Martin Luther calls parenthood “a special position of honor, higher than that of any other walk of life under it;” and

WHEREAS, our faith calls us to be good and generous stewards of our congregational resources, which includes the health, family wellness, and compensation of our rostered ministers;

WHEREAS, the International Labour Organization recommends 14 weeks of maternity leave, including 6 weeks of compulsory postnatal leave and concludes “maternity, paternity, and care responsibilities should become a normal fact of business life;”

WHEREAS, the Institute for Women’s Policy Research “Paid Parental Leave in the United States,” (2014) part of Scholars’ Papers sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor Women’s Bureau in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of *American Women: Report of the President’s Commission on the Status of Women*, 1963 states: “Family leave, both paid and unpaid, has been shown to have significant benefits for the health of individual family members and for the well-being of the family overall.” Therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Washington Synod Assembly memorialize the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to recommend to synod assemblies that synod councils insert the following paragraph into the Compensation Guidelines for Rostered Ministers:

“Parental and Family Leave: Parental Leave: Paid leave of up to twelve weeks is recommended upon the birth or adoption of a child to recover and/or care for a new baby. Family Medical Leave: Paid leave of up to twelve weeks is recommended to care for a family member with a serious health condition.”; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the congregations of our church follow these guidelines whenever possible, not only for rostered ministers, but also for lay professionals and support staff in our congregations; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the churchwide organization and synod offices provide resources such as: lists of and rates for potential supply pastors, rates for emergency coverage, contracts for short-term interim coverage, and other helpful practices in order to make providing such leave affordable and manageable for congregations.

### **Background**

Because synods and congregations are separately incorporated, self-governing entities, salary and compensation are entirely the prerogative of those entities. The churchwide assembly can recommend guidelines for compensation but cannot dictate to the other expressions of this church what they must do, just as the synods can make recommendations to congregations regarding guidelines but cannot require compliance.

The first “Resolved” clause is appropriate in that it makes a recommendation, not a mandate. However, the second and third “Resolved” clauses are problematic because they place a requirement on synods and congregations, which the churchwide assembly cannot do.

The first “Whereas” concerning the “standard compensation guidelines” apparently refers to a guideline published by the Southwestern Washington Synod and not to a guideline published by the churchwide organization.

The second “Resolved” clause could be edited to make it a statement of encouragement to congregations to offer the recommended leave for rostered ministers. However, the treatment of lay professionals and other staff is subject to the requirements of federal and state law, as well as local ordinance in some cases, and synods and congregations are obligated to follow the requirements of their own jurisdictions concerning such things as leave.

The third “Resolved” clause is more complicated because it assumes that the churchwide organization could make recommendations on such things as rates of pay for supply and short-term interim contracts. However, it is neither possible nor advisable for the churchwide organization to be involved in such compensation recommendations because what is reasonable pay in New York or San Francisco would not be reasonable in Peoria, and vice versa. It is much more appropriate for synods to create such guidelines. Again, however, the churchwide assembly cannot require that the resources listed be created, it can only suggest their usefulness. Furthermore, setting guidelines for pay for services is not necessarily relevant to the affordability of those services for congregations. The synods could, however, be encouraged to provide such resources in order to assist congregations in navigating those times when rostered ministers might need to take time off for these purposes.

[The 2021 report](#) on family and parental leave policies across the ELCA examines how the expressed values of the *Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Call to Action* (2019) social statement and the Quality of Call Initiative are put into practice in synod compensation guidelines and recommends support for the vocations of rostered ministers as parents and family members providing care.

### **Financial Impact**

There would be no financial impact on the churchwide organization. Should synods choose to provide the resources listed, there would be staff time required to draft and publish the information. Should congregations choose to follow the recommendation, they would incur costs based on the compensation they provide to supply or interim ministers.

### **Recommended for assembly action**

**To receive with gratitude the memorial on “Parental and Family Medical Leave” from the Southwestern Washington Synod;**

**To encourage the synods of this church to include the following in their compensation guidelines for rostered ministers: “Parental and Family Leave: *Parental Leave*: Paid leave of up to twelve weeks is recommended upon the birth or adoption of a child to recover and/or care for a new child. *Family Medical Leave*: Paid leave of up to twelve weeks is recommended to care for a family member with a serious health condition.”;**

**To encourage the congregations of this church to study the issues, explore their capacity and the needs of staff, and adopt these guidelines not only for rostered ministers but also, where possible, for other staff, not only as compensation guidelines but also as a justice issue; and**

**To recommend that synods make available to congregations resources such as lists of supply pastors and model short-term supply contracts and compensation rates that may encourage congregations to offer the parental and family medical leave described in this action.**

## **Category B4: Restructure the Governance of the ELCA**

### **1. Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana Synod (4D) [2022]**

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) was formed in 1988 from three Lutheran church bodies, i.e., the Lutheran Church in America (LCA), the American Lutheran Church (ALC), and the Association Evangelical Lutheran Churches (AELC), with 5.2 million members and 11,133 congregations; and

WHEREAS, the Commission for a New Lutheran Church, envisioning stability and anticipating growth, developed a structure and polity with three interdependent entities, i.e., the churchwide organization, 65 synods, and 11,133 congregations, organized for the realities of the time; and

WHEREAS, the leadership of the Commission for a New Lutheran Church expressed an eagerness to form “a new Lutheran church truly committed to the Gospel and organized for effective mission in today’s world; and

WHEREAS, over the last 34 years, the ELCA has decreased in size to 3.3 million members and 8,972 congregations; and

WHEREAS, the governing documents, *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA*, do not allow these interdependent entities to reorganize quickly to meet the changing realities for effective mission in today’s world; and

WHEREAS, the churchwide organization as well as many synods and many congregations, having decreased significantly in size and resources, struggle to meet the expected work as assigned by the governing documents; and

WHEREAS, the Church Council of the ELCA, through its adoption of Future Directions 2025, has called for a “well-governed, connected, and sustainable church;” and

WHEREAS, it is critical that the stated mission of the ELCA be not only consistent with Lutheran expectations for the institutional church but also realistic with respect to human and fiscal resources; and

WHEREAS, it is critical that the structure of the ELCA meet the needs of effective mission in today’s changing world; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana Synod in assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct the Church Council to establish a Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church that, working in consultation with the Conference of Bishops and the Church Council, shall reconsider the statements of purpose for each of the expressions of this church, the principles of organization, and all matters pertaining thereunto, presenting its findings to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly in preparation for a reconstituting convention to be called under the rules for a special meeting of the churchwide assembly.

### **2. Metropolitan Chicago Synod (5A) [2022]**

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) was formed in 1988 from three Lutheran church bodies, i.e., the Lutheran Church in America (LCA), the American Lutheran Church (ALC), and the Association Evangelical Lutheran Churches (AELC), with 5.3 million members and 11,133 congregations; and

WHEREAS, the Commission for a New Lutheran Church, envisioning stability and anticipating growth, developed a structure and polity with three interdependent entities, i.e., the churchwide organization, 65 synods, and 11,133 congregations, organized for the realities of the time; and

WHEREAS, the leadership of the Commission for a New Lutheran Church (CNLC) expressed an eagerness to form “a new Lutheran church truly committed to the Gospel and organized for effective mission in today’s world;” and

WHEREAS, over the last 34 years, the ELCA has decreased in size to 3.1 million members and 8,894 congregations; and

WHEREAS, the governing documents, *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA* do not allow these interdependent entities to reorganize quickly to meet the changing realities for effective mission in today’s world; and

WHEREAS, the churchwide organization as well as many synods and many congregations, having decreased significantly in size and resources, struggle to meet the expected work as assigned by the governing documents; and

WHEREAS, the Church Council of the ELCA, through its adoption of Future Directions 2025, has called for a “well-governed, connected, and sustainable church;”

WHEREAS, it is critical that the stated mission of the ELCA be not only consistent with Lutheran expectations for the institutional church but also realistic with respect to human and fiscal resources; and

WHEREAS, the social statements of the ELCA call ELCA members to be a better version of themselves including a commitment to actively dismantle racism in our systems; and

WHEREAS, the church has been complicit in trauma and harm through its current structures; and

WHEREAS, it is critical that the structure of the ELCA meet the needs of effective mission in today’s changing world; and

WHEREAS, a reconstituting convention for the ELCA, in the form of a special meeting of the Churchwide Assembly, would provide an opportunity for deliberation and action on these pressing matters of mission, ministry, and structure; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan Chicago Synod of the ELCA memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA to direct the Church Council to establish a Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church consisting of leaders from across the three expressions, including persons representing historically marginalized groups that, working in consultation with the Conference of Bishops and the Church Council, shall reconsider the statements of purpose for each of the expressions of this church, the principles of organization, and all matters pertaining thereunto, in light of the stated goals, ideals and purposes of this church to dismantle racism and engage the pressing matters of mission, structure, and ministry for these days, presenting its findings to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly.

### **3. Northeastern Ohio Synod (6E) [2022]**

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) was formed in 1988 from three Lutheran church bodies, i.e., the Lutheran Church in America (LCA), the American Lutheran Church (ALC), and the Association Evangelical Lutheran Churches (AELC), with 5.2 million members and 11,133 congregations; and

WHEREAS, the Commission for a New Lutheran Church, envisioning stability and anticipating growth, developed a structure and polity with three interdependent entities, i.e., the churchwide organization, 65 synods, and 11,133 congregations, organized for the realities of the time; and

WHEREAS, the leadership of the Commission for a New Lutheran Church expressed an eagerness to form “a new Lutheran church truly committed to the Gospel and organized for effective mission in today’s world;” and

WHEREAS, over the last 34 years, the ELCA has decreased in size to 3.3 million members and 8,972 congregations; and

WHEREAS, the governing documents, *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA* do not allow these interdependent entities to reorganize quickly to meet the changing realities for effective mission in today’s world; and

WHEREAS, the churchwide organization as well as many synods and many congregations, having decreased significantly in size and resources, struggle to meet the expected work as assigned by the governing documents; and

WHEREAS, the Church Council of the ELCA, through its adoption of Future Directions 2025, has called for a “well-governed, connected, and sustainable church;” and

WHEREAS, it is critical that the stated mission of the ELCA be not only consistent with Lutheran expectations for the institutional church but also realistic with respect to human and fiscal resources; and

WHEREAS, it is critical that the structure of the ELCA meet the needs of effective mission in today’s changing world; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that Northeastern Ohio Synod in assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Church in America to direct the Church Council to establish a Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church that, working in consultation with the Conference of Bishops and the Church Council, shall reconsider the statements of purpose for each of the expressions of this church, the principles of organization, and all matters pertaining thereunto, presenting its findings to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly in preparation for a reconstituting convention to be called under the rules for a special meeting of the churchwide assembly.

### **4. Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod (8A) [2022]**

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) was formed in 1988 from three Lutheran church bodies, i.e., the Lutheran Church in America (LCA), the American Lutheran Church (ALC), and the Association Evangelical Lutheran Churches (AELC), with 5.3 million members and 11,133 congregations; and

WHEREAS, the Commission for a New Lutheran Church, envisioning stability and anticipating growth, developed a structure and polity with three interdependent entities, i.e., the churchwide organization, 65 synods, and 11,133 congregations, organized for the realities of the time; and

WHEREAS, the leadership of the Commission for a New Lutheran Church (CNLC) expressed an eagerness to form “a new Lutheran church truly committed to the Gospel and organized for effective mission in today’s world;” and

WHEREAS, over the last 34 years, the ELCA has decreased in size to 3.1 million members and 8,894 congregations; and

WHEREAS, the governing documents, *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA* do not allow these interdependent entities to reorganize quickly to meet the changing realities for effective mission in today’s world; and

WHEREAS, the churchwide organization as well as many synods and many congregations, having decreased significantly in size and resources, struggle to meet the expected work as assigned by the governing documents; and

WHEREAS, the Church Council of the ELCA, through its adoption of Future Directions 2025, has called for a “well-governed, connected, and sustainable church;” and

WHEREAS, it is critical that the stated mission of the ELCA be not only consistent with Lutheran expectations for the institutional church but also realistic with respect to human and fiscal resources; and

WHEREAS, the social statements of the ELCA call this church’s members to be a better version of ourselves including a commitment to actively dismantle racism in our systems; and

WHEREAS, the church has been complicit in trauma and harm through our current structures; and

WHEREAS, it is critical that the structure of the ELCA meet the needs of effective mission in today’s changing world; and

WHEREAS, a reconstituting convention for the ELCA, in the form of a special meeting of the churchwide assembly, would provide an opportunity for deliberation and action on these pressing matters of mission, ministry, and structure; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod of the ELCA memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA to direct the Church Council to establish a Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church that, working in consultation with the Conference of Bishops and the Church Council, shall reconsider the statements of Purpose for each of the expressions of this church, the principles of organization, and all matters pertaining thereunto, presenting its findings to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly.

### **5. Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod (8B) [2022]**

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) was formed in 1988 from three Lutheran church bodies, i.e., the Lutheran Church in America (LCA), the American Lutheran Church (ALC), and the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches (AELC), with 5.2 million members and 11,133 congregations; and

WHEREAS, the Commission for a New Lutheran Church, envisioning stability and anticipating growth, developed a structure and polity with three interdependent entities, i.e., the churchwide organization, 65 synods, and 11,133 congregations, organized for the realities of the time; and

WHEREAS, the leadership of the Commission for a New Lutheran Church expressed an eagerness to form “a new Lutheran church truly committed to the Gospel and organized for effective mission in today's world;” and

WHEREAS, over the last 34 years, the ELCA has decreased in size to 3.3 million members and 8,972 congregations; and

WHEREAS, the governing documents, *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA* do not allow these interdependent entities to reorganize quickly to meet the changing realities for effective mission in today's world; and

WHEREAS, the churchwide organization as well as many synods and many congregations, having decreased significantly in size and resources, struggle to meet the expected work as assigned by the governing documents; and

WHEREAS, the Church Council of the ELCA, through its adoption of Future Directions 2025, has called for a “well-governed, connected, and sustainable church;” and

WHEREAS, it is critical that the stated mission of the ELCA be not only consistent with Lutheran expectations for the institutional church but also realistic with respect to human and fiscal resources; and

WHEREAS, it is critical that the structure of the ELCA meet the needs of effective mission in today's changing world; therefore, be it

**RESOLVED** that the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod in assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Church in America to direct the Church Council to establish a Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church that, working in consultation with the Conference of Bishops and the Church Council, shall reconsider the statements of purpose for each of the expressions of this church, the principles of organization, and all matters pertaining thereunto, presenting its findings to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly in preparation for a reconstituting convention to be called under the rules for a special meeting of the Churchwide Assembly.

## **6. Allegheny Synod (8C) [2022]**

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) was formed in 1988 from three Lutheran church bodies, i.e., the Lutheran Church in America (LCA), the American Lutheran Church (ALC), and the American Evangelical Lutheran Church (AELC), with 5.2 million members and 11,133 congregations; and

WHEREAS, the Commission for a New Lutheran Church, envisioning stability and anticipating growth, developed a structure and polity with three interdependent entities, i.e., the churchwide organization, 65 synods, and 11,133 congregations, organized for the realities of the time; and

WHEREAS, the leadership of the Commission for a New Lutheran Church expressed an eagerness to form “a new Lutheran church truly committed to the Gospel and organized for effective mission in today's world;” and

WHEREAS, over the last 34 years, the ELCA has decreased in size to 3.3 million members and 8,972 congregations; and

WHEREAS, the governing documents, *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA* do not allow these interdependent entities to reorganize quickly to meet the changing realities for effective mission in today's world; and

WHEREAS, the churchwide organization as well as many synods and many congregations, having decreased significantly in size and resources, struggle to meet the expected work as assigned by the governing documents; and

WHEREAS, the Church Council of the ELCA, through its adoption of Future Directions 2025, has called for a “well-governed, connected, and sustainable church;” and

WHEREAS, it is critical that the stated mission of the ELCA be not only consistent with Lutheran expectations for the institutional church but also realistic with respect to human and fiscal resources; and

WHEREAS, it is critical that the structure of the ELCA meet the needs of effective mission in today's changing world; therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**, that the Allegheny Synod in assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Church in America to direct the Church Council to establish a Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church that, working in consultation with the Conference of Bishops and the Church Council, shall reconsider the statements of purpose for each of the expressions of this church, the principles of organization, and all matters pertaining thereunto, presenting its findings to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly in preparation for a reconstituting convention to be called under the rules for a special meeting of the Churchwide Assembly.

## **7. Lower Susquehanna Synod (8D) [2022]**

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) was formed in 1988 from three Lutheran church bodies, i.e., the Lutheran Church in America (LCA), the American Lutheran Church (ALC), and the Association Evangelical Lutheran Churches (AELC), with 5.2 million members and 11,133 congregations; and

WHEREAS, the Commission for a New Lutheran Church, envisioning stability and anticipating growth, developed a structure and polity with three interdependent entities, i.e., the churchwide organization, 65 synods, and 11,133 congregations, organized for the realities of the time; and

WHEREAS, the leadership of the Commission for a New Lutheran Church expressed an eagerness to form “a new Lutheran church truly committed to the Gospel and organized for effective mission in today's world;” and

WHEREAS, over the last 34 years, the ELCA has decreased in size to 3.3 million members and 8,972 congregations; and

WHEREAS, the governing documents, *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA* do not allow these interdependent entities to reorganize quickly to meet the changing realities for effective mission in today's world; and

WHEREAS, the churchwide organization as well as many synods and many congregations, having decreased significantly in size and resources, struggle to meet the expected work as assigned by the governing documents; and

WHEREAS, the Church Council of the ELCA, through its adoption of Future Directions 2025, has called for a “well-governed, connected, and sustainable church;

WHEREAS, it is critical that the stated mission of the ELCA be not only consistent with Lutheran expectations for the institutional church but also realistic with respect to human and fiscal resources; and

WHEREAS, it is critical that the structure of the ELCA meet the needs of effective mission in today’s changing world; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Lower Susquehanna Synod in assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Church in America to direct the Church Council to establish a Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church that, working in consultation with the Conference of Bishops and the Church Council, shall reconsider the statements of purpose for each of the expressions of this church, the principles of organization, and all matters pertaining thereunto, presenting its findings to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly in preparation for a reconstituting convention to be called under the rules for a special meeting of the Churchwide Assembly.

#### **8. Delaware-Maryland Synod (8F) [2022]**

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) was formed in 1988 from three Lutheran church bodies, i.e., the Lutheran Church in America (LCA), the American Lutheran Church (ALC), and the Association Evangelical Lutheran Churches (AELC), with 5.3 million members and 11,133 congregations; and

WHEREAS, the Commission for a New Lutheran Church, envisioning stability and anticipating growth, developed a structure and polity with three interdependent entities, i.e., the churchwide organization, 65 synods, and 11,133 congregations, organized for the realities of the time; and

WHEREAS, the leadership of the Commission for a New Lutheran Church (CNLC) expressed an eagerness to form “a new Lutheran church truly committed to the Gospel and organized for effective mission in today’s world;” and

WHEREAS, over the last 34 years, the ELCA has decreased in size to 3.1 million members and 8,894 congregations; and

WHEREAS, the governing documents, *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA* do not allow these interdependent entities to reorganize quickly to meet the changing realities for effective mission in today’s world; and

WHEREAS, the churchwide organization as well as many synods and many congregations, having decreased significantly in size and resources, struggle to meet the expected work as assigned by the governing documents; and

WHEREAS, the Church Council of the ELCA, through its adoption of Strategic Directions 2025, has called for a “well-governed, connected, and sustainable church;”

WHEREAS, it is critical that the stated mission of the ELCA be not only consistent with Lutheran expectations for the institutional church but also realistic with respect to human and fiscal resources; and

WHEREAS, the social statements of the ELCA call this church to be a better version of itself including a commitment to actively dismantle racism in its systems; and

WHEREAS, the church has been complicit in trauma and harm through the current structures; and

WHEREAS, it is critical that the structure of the ELCA meet the needs of effective mission in today’s changing world; and

WHEREAS, a reconstituting convention for the ELCA, in the form of a special meeting of the Churchwide Assembly, would provide an opportunity for deliberation and action on these pressing matters of mission, ministry, and structure; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Delaware-Maryland Synod of the ELCA memorialize the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA to direct the Church Council to establish a Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church that, working in consultation with the Conference of Bishops and the Church Council, shall reconsider the statements of purpose for each of the expressions of this church, the principles of organization, and all matters pertaining thereunto, presenting its findings to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly.

#### **9. Metropolitan Washington, D.C., (8G) [2022]**

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) was formed in 1988 from three Lutheran church bodies, i.e., the Lutheran Church in America, the American Lutheran Church, and the Association Evangelical Lutheran Churches, with 5.3 million members and 11,133 congregations; and

WHEREAS, the Commission for a New Lutheran Church, envisioning stability and anticipating growth, developed a structure and polity with three interdependent entities, i.e., the churchwide organization, 65 synods, and 11,133 congregations, organized for the realities of the time; and

WHEREAS, the leadership of the Commission for a New Lutheran Church (CNLC) expressed an eagerness to form “a new Lutheran church truly committed to the Gospel and organized for effective mission in today’s world;” and

WHEREAS, over the last 34 years, the ELCA has decreased in size to 3.1 million members and 8,894 congregations; and

WHEREAS, the governing documents, *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA* do not allow these interdependent entities to reorganize quickly to meet the changing realities for effective mission in today’s world; and

WHEREAS, the churchwide organization as well as many synods and many congregations, having decreased significantly in size and resources, struggle to meet the expected work as assigned by the governing documents; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA Church Council, through its adoption of Future Directions 2025, has called for a “well-governed, connected, and sustainable church;” and

WHEREAS, it is critical that the stated mission of the ELCA be not only consistent with Lutheran expectations for the institutional church but also realistic with respect to human and fiscal resources; and

WHEREAS, the social statements of the ELCA call its members to be a better version of themselves including a commitment to actively dismantle racism in our systems; and

WHEREAS, the Metropolitan Washington D.C., Synod is leading by example by undergoing a racial equity audit, which includes a) reviewing this synod's internal systems for bias and inequitable outcomes, b) proposing changes that are more likely to yield equitable results, and c) identifying barriers to achieving equity, including instances in which our polity makes change more difficult, and

WHEREAS, the church has been complicit in trauma and harm through our current structures; and

WHEREAS, it is critical that the structure of the ELCA meet the needs of effective mission in today's changing world; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan Washington D.C., Synod in assembly memorializes the 2022 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to direct the ELCA Church Council to establish a Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church that, working in consultation with the Conference of Bishops and the Church Council, shall review and if appropriate, revise through the lens of diversity, equity and inclusion the statements of purpose for each of the expressions of this church, the principles of organization, and all matters pertaining thereunto, presenting its findings to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly. This effort will likely entail significant funding and devotion of personnel attention.

#### **10. West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod (8H) [2022]**

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) was formed in 1988 from three Lutheran church bodies, i.e., the Lutheran Church in America (LCA), the American Lutheran Church (ALC), and the Association Evangelical Lutheran Churches (AELC), with 5.2 million members and 11,133 congregations; and

WHEREAS, the Commission for a New Lutheran Church, envisioning stability and anticipating growth, developed a structure and polity with three interdependent entities, i.e., the churchwide organization, 65 synods, and 11,133 congregations, organized for the realities of the time; and

WHEREAS, the leadership of the Commission for a New Lutheran Church expressed an eagerness to form "a new Lutheran church truly committed to the Gospel and organized for effective mission in today's world;" and

WHEREAS, over the last 34 years, the ELCA has decreased in size to 3.1 million members and 8,894 congregations; and

WHEREAS, the governing documents, *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA* do not allow these interdependent entities to reorganize quickly to meet the changing realities for effective mission in today's world; and

WHEREAS, the churchwide organization as well as many synods and many congregations, having decreased significantly in size and resources, struggle to meet the expected work as assigned by the governing documents; and

WHEREAS, the Church Council of the ELCA, through its adoption of Future Directions 2025, has called for a "well-governed, connected, and sustainable church; and

WHEREAS, it is critical that the stated mission of the ELCA be not only consistent with Lutheran expectations for the institutional church but also realistic with respect to human and fiscal resources; and

WHEREAS, it is critical that the structure of the ELCA meet the needs of effective mission in today's changing world; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod in assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Church in America to direct the Church Council to establish a Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church that, working in consultation with the Conference of Bishops and the Church Council, shall reconsider the statements of purpose for each of the expressions of this church, the principles of organization, and all matters pertaining thereunto, presenting its findings to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly in preparation for a reconstituting convention to be called under the rules for a special meeting of the churchwide assembly.

#### **Background**

The Church Council, through its Legal and Constitutional Review Committee, takes suggested constitutional revisions into serious consideration every triennium, proposing amendments and providing official notice to the synods six months prior to the next regular meeting of the Churchwide Assembly.

The changes proposed in this memorial chiefly relate to Chapter 4 ("Statement of Purpose") and Chapter 5 ("Principles of Organization") of the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*. The goals possibly could be accomplished through a more thorough reconsideration process of those chapters.

The memorial as forwarded by several of the synods calls for a "reconstituting convention," while others request an audit of the constitutions through the lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Given these variations, it is recommended that these memorials be referred to the Church Council for further deliberation and clarification of the scope of the undertaking, specifically to determine the need for a Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church, and the goals and boundaries of any proposed changes to the constitution, with a target of making recommendations to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly.

#### **Financial Impact**

A Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church would require a challenging investment of time and financial resources on the parts of the churchwide organization, the Church Council, the Conference of Bishops, and the many committees and working groups that would need to be called together in order to deliberate. A conservative budget

estimate would be \$500,000. In addition, a special meeting of the Churchwide Assembly would cost up to \$3 million, based on the budget for the 2022 Churchwide Assembly.

### **Recommended for assembly action**

To receive with gratitude the memorials from the Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana Synod, Metropolitan Chicago Synod, Northeastern Ohio Synod, Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod, Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod, Allegheny Synod, Lower Susquehanna Synod, Delaware-Maryland Synod, Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod, and West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod concerning the restructure of the ELCA's governance; and

To refer the memorials to the Church Council for further deliberation and definition, specifically to determine the goals and boundaries of any proposed changes to the constitution, especially those related to Chapters 4 and 5; the need for a Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church; and the need and scope of any proposed reconstituting convention, with recommendations to be presented to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly.

### **Category B5: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Accessibility (DEIA) ELCA Governance Audit**

#### **1. Northwest Washington Synod (1B) [2022]**

RESOLVED, that the Northwest Washington Synod Assembly direct the 2022 Churchwide Assembly to empower the ELCA Church Council to conduct a comprehensive audit of the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA*, and related governance documents, examining how this church's three expressions work collaboratively; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the comprehensive audit examine unintentional gaps in checks and balances, particularly with regard to the autonomy of synod bishops; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA Church Council engage a third-party auditor specializing in diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility to interrogate the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions*, and related governance documents; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA Church Council model transparent leadership practices by sharing the results of the audit in a public statement to the ELCA.

### **Background**

The ELCA Church Council has worked over the past few years to clarify its governance policies, including the adoption of the [ELCA Church Council Governance Policy Manual](#) that is reviewed at least triennially (p. 23). The Legal and Constitutional Review Committee of the Church Council regularly reviews the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA* and related governance documents. Both the Church Council and Conference of Bishops incorporate anti-racism training into their meetings. This church is committed to incorporating anti-racism training into its work and recent events in this church have shown more action is needed.

ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton stated in her June 1, 2022, message to the church, "Let me state clearly—the ELCA is a church that will not tolerate racism in any way. We will hold ourselves as fully accountable as any other person or group, and we will condemn racism wherever it exists. We look to our allies in communities of color for help and accompaniment in this long journey, and we will need the prayers and partnership from all corners of the Church. I look forward to beginning that work in earnest with you."

This memorial asks the Church Council to live out these words, working in earnest to deepen its commitments to addressing institutional racism. Without predetermining the outcome, this memorial asks for an audit of the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA* and related governance documents to make sure that this church's basic policies and procedures are consistent with this church's commitments to anti-racism.

### **Financial Impact**

The cost of the audit is not yet known but could be approximately \$100,000; the churchwide organization will need to issue a request for proposal (RFP) from external qualified professionals. Because of this, the memorial response includes latitude for the Office of the Presiding Bishop and the Church Council to make adjustments in revenue and expenses to accomplish this important work.

### **Recommended for assembly action**

To receive with gratitude the memorial on "Audit of *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA*" from the Northwest Washington Synod;

To authorize the Church Council to determine the parameters and the expense budget of this process and identify the revenue source(s) to provide for this audit;

**To direct the Church Council to engage an external auditor to conduct a comprehensive audit for diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility of the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA* and related governance documents and present a report of the findings by the Fall 2023 Church Council meeting;**  
**To direct the Church Council to release the findings of the audit to this church; and**  
**To direct the Legal and Constitutional Review Committee to use the findings of this audit to recommend changes to the governing documents to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly.**

***Category B6: Structured Process for the Pre-Assembly Identification of Nominees for the Election of a Presiding Bishop***

**1. Saint Paul Area Synod (3H) [2022]**

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) elects a presiding bishop to serve a six-year term; and

WHEREAS, the responsibilities of the presiding bishop are extensive, as outlined in the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* in 13.21.; and

WHEREAS, these responsibilities are of singular importance in guiding the work of the ELCA as a vital and growing communion of faith with impact on the lives of many in this country and around the globe; and

WHEREAS, the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA* require the first ballot in the election of the presiding bishop to be an ecclesiastical ballot, but allow for a pre-assembly identification process for the election of officers including the vice president and secretary (19.01.A21.); and

WHEREAS, the next election of a presiding bishop is scheduled for the 2025 Churchwide Assembly; and

WHEREAS, many synods, including the Saint Paul Area Synod, have developed pre-assembly identification processes for nominees to the Office of Synod Bishop that allows persons to agree to stand for election, to complete a background check and other screening prior to the synod assembly, and to share an overview of gifts, experiences, and vision with voting members prior to the synod assembly at which the election will occur; and

WHEREAS, the Saint Paul Area Synod has found that a pre-assembly identification process provides meaningful additional time for candidates and voting members to prayerfully discern the needs of the synod and how each candidates' gifts, experiences, and vision would advance the ministry of the synod, all of which helps voting members cast a better informed first ballot; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Saint Paul Area Synod in assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA to direct the ELCA Church Council (Church Council) to establish a structured process for the pre-assembly identification of nominees for the Office of Presiding Bishop in a way that allows identified candidates to complete a background check and appropriate screening and become publicly known prior to the Churchwide Assembly; therefore, be it further

RESOLVED, that the Church Council be directed to create an advisory committee of both lay and rostered minister members to design such a pre-assembly identification process that includes several members of the Church Council, several bishops, and representatives of full communion partners that elect their presiding bishop or presiding officer through a different process of pre-identification, reporting the structure of that pre-assembly identification process to all synods by November 2023.

**2. Allegheny Synod (8C) [2022]**

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) elects a presiding bishop to serve a six-year term; and

WHEREAS, the responsibilities of the presiding bishop are extensive, as outlined in the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* in 13.21.; and

WHEREAS, these responsibilities are of singular importance in guiding the work of the ELCA as a vital and growing communion of faith with impact on the lives of many in this country and around the globe; and

WHEREAS, the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions* require the first ballot in the election of the presiding bishop to be an ecclesiastical ballot, but allow for a pre-assembly identification process for the election of officers including the vice president and secretary (19.01.A21.); and

WHEREAS, the next election of a presiding bishop is scheduled for the 2025 Churchwide Assembly; and

WHEREAS, many synods have developed pre-assembly identification processes for nominees to the Office of Synod Bishop that allows persons to agree to stand for election, to complete a background check, and other screening prior to the synod assembly and to share an overview of gifts, experiences, and vision with voting members prior to the synod assembly at which the election will occur; and

WHEREAS, many synods has found that a pre-assembly identification process provides meaningful additional time for candidates and voting members to prayerfully discern the needs of the synod and how each candidates' gifts, experiences, and vision would advance the ministry of the synod, all of which helps voting members cast a better informed first ballot; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Allegheny Synod in assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA to direct the ELCA Church Council (Church Council) to establish a structured process for the pre-assembly identification of nominees for the Office of Presiding Bishop in a way that allows identified candidates to complete a background check and appropriate screening and become publicly known prior to the Churchwide Assembly; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Church Council be directed to create an advisory committee of both lay and rostered minister members to design such a pre-assembly identification process that includes several members of the Church Council, several bishops, and representatives of full communion partners that elect their presiding bishop or presiding

officer through a different process of pre-identification, reporting the structure of that pre-assembly identification process to all synods by November 2023.

### **Background**

In 2018, the Church Council acted on a continuing resolution to establish a process for the election of the secretary and vice president of this church: “In a year when the vice president or secretary shall be elected, the voting members elected to serve at the Churchwide Assembly shall be invited to identify the names of up to three persons who might be considered for election as vice president or secretary.” (19.01.A18.) It must be pointed out that these are not nominations for the offices, as such, but are purely for purposes of identification of potential nominees in order to give voting members opportunity to read the biographies and to familiarize themselves with the potential nominees. When the ecclesiastical ballot begins for those two offices, however, any eligible person’s name may be put into nomination.

At that time, however, the Church Council made the decision not to adopt this process for the election of the presiding bishop and to continue to use an ecclesiastical ballot with no identification process prior.

Rather than creating an advisory committee, the recommendation would be to refer this to the Church Council for review by the council’s Legal and Constitutional Review Committee. The review could include conversation with The Episcopal Church USA, which is the only full communion partner that has a pre-identification process that would be comparable, given that they are the only partner with a presiding bishop.

Many synods have used varieties of pre-identification processes for their bishops’ elections. It might also be fruitful for the liaison bishops who relate to the Church Council to consult with the various synod bishops in their regions to learn the best practices being employed in those synods that have been using pre-identification processes for election of officers.

### **Financial Impact**

The financial impact of gathering information and developing a proposed structured process would be limited largely to churchwide organization staff time and the time volunteered by those with whom the advisory committee would be in conversation.

### **Recommended for assembly action**

**To receive with gratitude the memorials from the St. Paul Area Synod and the Allegheny Synod concerning a structured process for the pre-assembly identification of nominees for the election of a presiding bishop;**

**To refer the question to the Church Council to consider a process for the pre-assembly identification of nominees for the office of presiding bishop in a way that allows identified nominees to become publicly known prior to the Churchwide Assembly and to complete the necessary background checks;**

**To direct the Church Council to charge its Legal and Constitutional Review Committee with exploring such a process that would include conversation with The Episcopal Church USA about its process, and with the Church Council liaison bishops concerning processes used in the synods in their regions; and**

**To report recommendations to the Conference of Bishops and Church Council at their Fall 2023 meetings.**

### **Category B7: Churchwide Organization Directory**

#### **1. Delaware-Maryland Synod (8F) [2022]**

WHEREAS, open and effective communication and appropriate transparency are key to creating a culture of collaboration and trust in an organization; and

WHEREAS, open and effective communication and appropriate transparency are supported by accessible information; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Delaware-Maryland Synod in assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Church in America to direct the ELCA churchwide organization to create and maintain a directory of program and support staff on the ELCA website which will include their photographs, email addresses, phone numbers, and areas of responsibility, organized by category for ease of use; and therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that this directory shall be publicly available, kept up to date, and not require login so that this information might be easily accessible to leaders in the ELCA.

### **Background**

The ELCA churchwide organization is a large entity with over 500 dedicated staff working with all the ELCA’s various relationships, synods and congregations in particular, in addition to the general public to share the story of Jesus and the ELCA by engaging with one million new people as the ELCA grows the church together. Each person working at the churchwide organization brings specific talents and expertise to help with the collective goals.

Determining the right contact to help with specific initiatives can be daunting – particularly after large changes occurred within the organization as new home areas were rolled out with the Future Church design. There are

opportunities to guide a user to get to the right partner contact with the online tools as well as continually improve those experiences to make the process easier.

The ELCA Directory was launched in January 2018 to replace the printed version of the “ELCA Yearbook.” The goals of the project included, but was not limited to:

- Reducing the cost both financially and environmentally of printing a large manuscript.
- Providing an online resource that connected to the ECIS (ELCA Constituent Information System) database to ensure real-time accuracy.
- Giving minimal security to dissuade solicitors, spammers and others trying to obtain the data for illicit use while not putting the onus on the user.

Since launch, the directory has been used by more than 47,000 users viewing more than a million pageviews. The site has been lauded as very successful in achieving these goals while providing rich information about all expressions of the ELCA and its partners.

In addition, the “Find a Person” feature on the website is still made available providing basic information for general audiences (members and seekers) to find ELCA personnel as needed. This tool was viewed more than 433,000 times since the launch of the ELCA Directory.

With a presence on ELCA.org and the ELCA Directory, the intent of churchwide staff is to show a full church of all three expressions working as one. The ELCA makes a concerted effort to not appear churchwide-organization-centric. This also helps with having one interface displaying data from a single database.

While both tools display general contact information from name, title, phone, etc. based by home area; there is a recognition that a more robust search by function or definitions of functional areas would be helpful to the general user of these tools. The tools show mostly middle management and senior staff, with a reliance on specific title information. For example, a person may work in ELCA World Hunger, but their title may be “Education Manager.” Since “hunger” is not in the title, this person may not be displayed.

One of the primary goals of the ELCA Directory is to present information and data in a secure manner. This is something we take seriously and continue to improve, including recent efforts to examine the data points that are publicly displayed for rostered ministers, especially once they are retired or not serving in a call. Churchwide staff believe that while having the information available to those who need it is important, individuals listed in the directory also need their safety and privacy protected as well as the technology systems that support that information.

The churchwide organization currently does not have photos of churchwide organization personnel except for senior leaders who, as part of their role, are to be the public face of the organization. Given that the Lutheran Center is a known physical entity, it would not be advisable to have public photos which could compromise the physical safety of the individuals.

### ***Recommended for assembly action***

**To receive with gratitude the memorial on “ELCA Churchwide Organization Directory” from the Delaware-Maryland Synod;**

**To direct the Customer Service Information Technology team in the Office of the Treasurer to work with representatives from synods and congregations to determine improvements that can help users find public information about churchwide organization personnel and discern what information is public to everyone versus requiring a login public to this church;**

**To direct the Customer Service Information Technology team to collaborate more closely with the Directors for Evangelical Mission (DEM) within each synod to aid in facilitating information given their level of access to this data through the ELCA Constituent Information System database and other churchwide organization tools;**

**To direct the Customer Service Information Technology team to create opportunities for continuous improvement to the ELCA Directory for user experience while not compromising security; and**

**To provide a report to the Church Council at its Fall 2023 meeting.**

### ***Category B8: Separation Agreements***

#### **1. Southwest California Synod (2B) [2022]**

WHEREAS, the prophet Jeremiah writes, “This is what the Lord says: Administer justice and righteousness. Rescue the victim from the hand of the oppressor” (Jeremiah 22:3); and

WHEREAS, the psalmist writes “It is zeal for your house that has consumed me; the insults of those who insult you have fallen on me” (Psalm 69: 9); and

WHEREAS, the Gospel of John records, “But Jesus on his part would not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people and needed no one to testify about anyone; for he himself knew what was in everyone” (John 2:23-25); and

WHEREAS, Martin Luther's first of the 95 Thesis is "When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said "Repent," he intended that the entire life of believers should be repentance;" and

WHEREAS, Luther writes, "Now properly speaking, true repentance is nothing else than to have contrition and sorrow, or terror about sin, and yet at the same time to believe in the gospel and absolution that sin is forgiven and grace is obtained through Christ. Such faith, in turn, comforts the heart and puts it at peace" (*The Book of Concord*, p. 44); and

WHEREAS, the social statement *Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective* (1991) recognizes that "This church must participate in social structures critically, for sin also is at work in the world. Social structures and processes combine life-giving and life-destroying dynamics in complex mixtures and in varying degrees. This church, therefore, must unite realism and vision, wisdom and courage, in its social responsibility. It needs constantly to discern when to support and when to confront society's cultural patterns, values, and powers;" (p. 3); and

WHEREAS, some confidential agreements are necessary when employment ends to protect sensitive information; and

WHEREAS, the original purpose of Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs) was to protect intellectual property and personal data not protected elsewhere.

WHEREAS, NDAs almost always involve an imbalance of power dynamic (abuser/victim, employer/employee, etc.); and

WHEREAS, linking separation agreements and financial severance packages (often so that financial compensation is based on non-disclosure compliance) can hinder truth telling and institutional accountability; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA Churchwide Personnel Policies (effective since January 2020) do not specifically outline employee rights during a non-disclosure agreement negotiation; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA churchwide organization does not currently provide independent legal counsel for employees facing involuntary termination; and

WHEREAS, employment agreements in the churchwide organization prohibit disparaging remarks; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA's constitution states, "In keeping with the historic discipline and practice of the Lutheran church and to be true to a sacred trust inherent in the nature of the pastoral office, no minister of Word and Sacrament of this church shall divulge any confidential disclosure received in the course of the care of souls or otherwise in a professional capacity, nor testify concerning conduct observed by the minister of Word and Sacrament while working in a pastoral capacity, except with the express permission of the person who has given confidential information to the minister of Word and Sacrament or who was observed by the minister of Word and Sacrament, or if the person intends great harm to self or others" (CBCR 7.45.); and

WHEREAS, NDAs have been used by organizations associated with instances of spiritual, sexual, or other kinds of abuse; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA's *Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline* do not provide guidance about NDAs; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Southwest California Synod, in Assembly, memorializes the 2022 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to separate the satisfaction of severance packages from considerations outlined in separation agreements (non-disparagement agreements, non-disclosure agreements, and others); and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwest California Synod, in assembly, memorializes the 2022 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to adopt provisions in guiding documents that provide independent legal counsel to individuals from congregation, synod, and churchwide staff being asked to sign Non-Disclosure Agreements.

## **2. Northwestern Ohio Synod (6D) [2022]**

WHEREAS, being called to embody God's beloved community, all expressions (congregations, synods, and churchwide organization) of the ELCA should utilize human resource practices that reflect ELCA core beliefs and current mission; and

WHEREAS, some current practices that include a financial settlement contingent on an NDA prevent even fair critique of the employer; and

WHEREAS, any concern that information received through pastoral care could be shared is protected in the document *Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline*, "Ministers of Word and Sacrament must comply with 7.45.7 of this church's constitution and not disclose information protected by that provision unless expressly permitted by that provision. All rostered ministers must respect and protect other confidential information and not disclose it absent good cause. Good cause includes, but is not limited to, permission of those who shared the confidence, disclosure required by law, or disclosure necessary to prevent great harm" (p.7); therefore, be it

RESOLVED that the Northwestern Ohio Synod of the ELCA memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly to include in all constitutions (*Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA, Constitution for Synods, and Model Constitution for Congregations*) that the satisfaction of severance arrangements is to be separate from considerations outlined in an NDA (non-disparagement agreements, non-disclosure agreements) or any agreements that would prevent someone to speak freely about their previous employment situation; and be it further

RESOLVED that mutual consideration must be reflected in separation agreements through fair mediation.

### 3. Delaware-Maryland Synod (8F) [2022]

WHEREAS, to better align the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) with the values of God's beloved community, the ELCA should turn away from secrecy in favor of a just and mutually respectful transparency; and

WHEREAS, the prophet Jeremiah writes, "The Lord proclaims: Do what is just and right; rescue the oppressed from the power of the oppressor;" and

WHEREAS, the Lord Jesus urges people to lives of honesty, transparency, and accountability: "Let your word be 'Yes, Yes' or 'No, No;' anything more than this comes from the evil one;" and

WHEREAS, Martin Luther's first of the 95 Theses is "When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said "Repent," he intended that the entire life of believers should be repentance;" and

WHEREAS, the ELCA social statement *Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective* (1991) recognizes that "This church must participate in social structures critically, for sin also is at work in the world. Social structures and processes combine life-giving and life-destroying dynamics in complex mixtures and in varying degrees. This church, therefore, must unite realism and vision, wisdom and courage, in its social responsibility. It needs constantly to discern when to support and when to confront society's cultural patterns, values, and powers;" and

WHEREAS, some confidential agreements are necessary when employment ends to protect sensitive information and vulnerable people; and

WHEREAS, non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) and similar restrictive agreements almost always involve an imbalance of power dynamic; and

WHEREAS, linking separation agreements and financial severance packages (often so that financial compensation is contingent on non-disclosure compliance) can hinder truth telling and institutional accountability; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA Churchwide Personnel Policies (effective since January 2020) do not specifically outline employee rights related to non-disclosure agreements, separation agreements, and similar documents or situations; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA *Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline* do not provide guidance about NDAs; and

WHEREAS, NDAs and similar agreements have been used by the organizations associated with many prominent faith leaders accused of spiritual, sexual, or other kinds of abuse, often as a way of protecting the reputation of those key leaders and the narrowly-defined self-interest of the organization; and

WHEREAS, many former staff members throughout the expressions and agencies of the ELCA have been pressured to sign separation agreements which include the requirement to remain silent; employment agreements in the churchwide organization prohibit disparaging remarks; and

WHEREAS, to better align the ELCA with the values of God's beloved community, the ELCA must stop tying separation and employment agreements to requirements that prevent even fair critique of the ELCA and impede transparency; all ELCA human resource practices should reflect ELCA core beliefs and current mission; therefore, be it

RESOLVED that the Delaware-Maryland Synod of the ELCA memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Church in America to direct the churchwide organization of the ELCA to separate the payment or other satisfaction of severance packages from requirements in separation agreements which restrict in any way the ability of staff members to speak freely about their experiences as part of the ELCA; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Delaware-Maryland Synod of the ELCA memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly to urge synods, congregations, agencies, institutions, and other parts of the ELCA to similarly separate the payment or other satisfaction of severance packages from requirements in separation agreements which restrict in any way the ability of staff members to speak freely about their experiences as part of the Church and its institutions and expressions; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Delaware-Maryland Synod of the ELCA memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly to adjust the personnel policies of the churchwide organization of the ELCA so that mutual consideration be reflected in separation agreements through fair mediation.

#### **Background**

The use of non-disclosure agreements (NDA) has come under increasing scrutiny in American law and culture. Unfortunately, the term "NDA" is used to refer to several different types of provisions or agreements, often leading to confusion. Sometimes, it is used to refer to confidentiality provisions that merely prohibit the disclosure of the terms of an agreement. Such provisions are common, and typically unobjectionable, as they are often necessary to protect private financial or personal information. Other times, it may refer to a true non-disclosure agreement or provisions which prohibit the disclosure of any information related to the subject matter of the agreement. Still other times, the term may be used to mean a non-disparagement agreement or provision, typically prohibiting the disclosure of false, defamatory, or disparaging information. For purposes of this memorial, churchwide staff understands the term NDA to be referring to non-disclosure or non-disparagement provisions, not to mere confidentiality provisions.

The ELCA does not favor the use of true non-disclosure or non-disparagement provisions in the vast majority of severance agreements, and particularly in severance agreements for rostered ministers. As this church has seen in the broader culture, such provisions can be used to cover up abuse and misconduct. They abet a destructive culture of keeping secrets. They prevent congregations from addressing issues and make it much more difficult for an interim minister or the next called minister. They prevent other congregations from learning about prior misconduct, thereby

perpetuating misconduct. They interfere with rostered ministers' ability to get coaching. They interfere with the synod's ability to work with congregations and rostered ministers. And they are contrary to the third pillar of this church's strategy for addressing abuse and misconduct: The church does not cover up abuse and misconduct; the church tells the truth to the people who need to know.

For these reasons, the churchwide organization no longer uses non-disclosure or non-disparagement provisions in the majority of its severance agreements. In addition, although the churchwide organization cannot control the contracting and employment processes of synods and congregations, the churchwide organization has urged synods and congregations not to use non-disclosure and non-disparagement provisions in most severance agreements, particularly as they relate to rostered ministers.

At the same time, the churchwide organization reserves the right to use non-disclosure provisions in the limited number of cases where they are truly necessary to prevent disclosure of confidential information. For example, staff that have access to confidential donor, personnel, legal, or information technology materials may appropriately be required to sign agreements not to disclose that information. The churchwide organization has a legal, ethical, and moral obligation to safeguard this information, to prevent data breaches, and to limit cyber threats and attacks as much as possible.

The first proposed action is overly broad in two ways. First, it does not allow for the use of non-disclosure provisions in the limited cases in which they are necessary. Second, the attempt to separate payment of severance from non-disclosure obligations runs afoul of the legal doctrines of integration and consideration, which require all understandings to be expressed in a single document and that any contractual obligations be coupled with the payment received in exchange. Similarly, the second proposed action improperly attempts to separate mutual obligations into separate agreements. As for the third proposed action, the law requires separation agreements to have mutual consideration. It is certainly appropriate to ask the Church Council, which has constitutional oversight over the churchwide organization's personnel policies, to update those policies.

### ***Recommended for assembly action***

**To receive with gratitude the memorials from the Delaware-Maryland Synod, Southwest California Synod, and Northwestern Ohio Synod concerning separation agreements;**

**To affirm the commitment of the churchwide organization of the ELCA to limit the use of non-disclosure provisions to the small minority of cases in which they are truly necessary to protect confidential and sensitive materials related to donors, personnel, legal, information technology, and similar categories;**

**To urge synods, congregations, agencies, institutions, and other parts of the ELCA to limit the use of non-disclosure agreements to the small minority of cases in which they are truly necessary and not to use such agreements as a matter of course or in the termination of calls of rostered ministers; and**

**To direct the Church Council to update the "Churchwide Organization Personnel Policies" to appropriately limit the use to non-disclosure agreements consistent with these memorials.**

### ***Category B9: Mission Development Process***

#### **1. Delaware-Maryland Synod (8F) [2022]**

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is committed to diversity and has communicated a focus on "new, young, and diverse people" as communicated through the "Future Church" design; and

WHEREAS, the majority of ELCA Mission Developments founded in the last five years have been focused on "new, young, and diverse people," serving young adults, people of color, LGBTQ+ people, and immigrants; and

WHEREAS, Mission Developments, because they are not organized as congregations of the ELCA and have few of the legal rights and independent agency organized congregations enjoy; and

WHEREAS, Mission Developments rely on their synods to issue the calls of Mission Developers and have the ability to terminate those calls; and

WHEREAS, Mission Developments are often dependent on the synod and the churchwide organization of the ELCA for initial and sustaining funding; therefore, be it

RESOLVED that the Delaware-Maryland Synod of the ELCA memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA to direct the Church Council to adopt the following policies for all synods receiving funding from the ELCA churchwide organization:

"The synod body that conducts decision making regarding funding for Mission Developments shall invite the Mission Developer and 1–2 active participants of the Mission Development to attend a meeting of that synod body no more than three months prior to budget decisions being made (or make other mutually-agreeable arrangements for substantive conversation) for the purpose of presenting the work of the Mission Development over the last year and engaging in a collaborative conversation regarding needs for prayer, support, and financial resources;" and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Delaware-Maryland Synod of the ELCA memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA to direct the Church Council to adopt the following policies for all synods receiving funding from the ELCA churchwide organization:

In the event that 1) a Mission Developer is removed from their call; or 2) The funding for a Mission Development is cut by more than one-third, the Mission Development's active participants (defined as those who have attended worship in the last quarter and have made a donation of record in the last year) may call for an independent review of the decision, by a committee comprised of seven members:

- a) two leaders from the mission development (defined as those who have attended worship in the last quarter, have made a donation of record in the last year, and have served as a leader in some capacity in the Mission Development). These leaders will be selected by the Mission Developments' active participants.
- b) two members of the Synod's Consultation Committee;
- c) these four members will select three rostered ministers or lay leaders from other congregations who, as much as possible, reflect the demographic of the mission development to promote the cultural competency of the committee; and be it further

RESOLVED, that three or more members of the independent review committee shall present their findings during the meeting of the Synod Council following the completion of the independent committee's review; and be it further

RESOLVED, that Mission Development congregants must be informed of their right to call for an independent review at the time 1) the Mission Developer's call is dissolved, or 2) funding is cut by one-third or greater.

### **Background**

The ELCA has developed a New Ministry Review process, document, and protocol for engaging in ministry reviews within the first 18 months of the ministry and then annually after that. It is recommended that this review process be engaged when there is need for a ministry adjustment, shift in ministry direction, change of developer, or consultation toward a closure of a new ministry. If there is a particular issue or need, a Director for Evangelical Mission (DEM) can initiate a ministry review at any time. For this purpose, the DEM appoints a review team and organizes the process, which can include members of the ministry, ethnic leaders, members of the DEM's outreach team, local partners, the dean of the conference, and churchwide Congregational Vitality Training and Development Team leaders. This ELCA document contains the clear direction that, "A Ministry Review will be necessary before an evaluation can recommend a termination or changed direction" (p. 4). The full document for outlining and engaging this process is found [here](#).

The Congregational Vitality Training and Development Team developed an annual review process for all mission developers. This protocol equips every DEM annually with a guideline and process for completing an annual review with the mission developers. This serves as an opportunity to check-in with mission developers and ministries more deeply to assess if a New Ministry Review process should be engaged to resource the ministry and mission developer. The standard document can be found [here](#). In 2021, during the pandemic, staff used this simplified form found [here](#).

The Congregational Vitality Training and Development Team created the resource, "Expectations for Mission Developers and Mission Congregations," and trains all DEMs to use it. This resource includes a protocol for the DEM to set up at least monthly supervisory meetings with the mission developer. It also requires that the DEM provide coaching and an annual review for the Mission Developer. This document outlines many important ELCA resources available for ELCA mission developers and their new ministries. This document can be found [here](#).

The Congregational Vitality Training and Development Team provides training for all Directors for Evangelical Mission including orientation and weekly DEM meetings. This training and equipping of the DEMs includes how to utilize the "Expectations of Mission Developers," the annual review process, and Ministry Review Process. During all DEM orientations as well as the weekly sessions, the Service and Justice home area program directors for ethnic-specific ministries are invited. The Congregational Vitality Training and Development Team encourages all DEMs to network with these important colleagues as essential partners for Ministry Reviews and consultations.

The Congregational Vitality Training and Development Team has developed the resource, "Starting New Congregations in the ELCA: A Handbook for Directors for Evangelical Mission, Bishops, and Synod Leaders." All DEMs are trained and equipped to use this handbook for creating support systems for all ELCA new start ministries. This essential support is clearly outlined for DEMs to help connect every new start with the corresponding ELCA program directors for ethnic-specific ministries for ongoing partnership and consultations. This handbook also outlines important processes to follow for special situations, new starts including potential vacancy, change of developer, or closing of a ministry. This document can be found [here](#).

The staff is grateful for the memorial from the Delaware-Maryland Synod and recommends this memorial be referred to the ELCA Christian Community and Leadership home area and the Congregational Vitality Training and

Development Team to create a working group in partnership with the Delaware-Maryland Synod leaders who composed this memorial. The working group will determine partners for consultation in this process. This group will study and refine current ELCA guidelines and systems in place for appointment, calls, funding, and support mechanisms for Mission Developers and new ministries.

### **Recommended for assembly action**

**To receive with gratitude the memorial on “Equity and Clarity in the Mission Development Process” from the Delaware-Maryland Synod;**

**To refer this memorial to the Congregational Vitality Training and Development team in the Christian Community and Leadership home area to establish a working group in partnership with the appropriate leaders in the Delaware-Maryland Synod to study and refine current ELCA guidelines and systems for appointments, calls, funds, and support mechanisms for mission developers and new ministries; and**

**To request that the working group consult with and provide regular reports to the Church Council beginning by Fall 2023 to ensure that the purposes and objectives of this memorial are being fulfilled.**

### **Category B10: Holy Communion Practices**

#### **1. Pacifica Synod (2C) [2022]**

WHEREAS, Lutherans believe that Jesus Christ is truly present in the meal called Holy Communion, and that “This holy mystery calls for reverence, care and pastoral wisdom in the practices surrounding its distribution.” (Principle 45—“The Use of the Means of Grace”).

WHEREAS, Martin Luther said, “And we have, in the first place, the clear text in the very words of Christ: ‘Do this in remembrance of me.’ These are bidding and commanding words by which all who would be Christians are enjoined to partake of this Sacrament. Therefore, whoever would be a disciple of Christ, with whom He here speaks, must also consider and observe this, not from compulsion, as being forced by men, but in obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ, and to please Him” (*Large Catechism*).

WHEREAS, the common practice of gathering physically in person was prohibited for a time due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and given the ability to gather virtually, and given that many congregants desire to receive the sacrament regularly and not “fast” for a season (which is not a normative Lutheran practice); therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Pacifica Synod Assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to consider with great faith, flexibility, and theological reflection how to speak, write, and teach about Holy Communion concerning participants who are worshipping online remotely, and other alternative communion practices, and refer such consideration to the appropriate unit or office of the churchwide organization.

### **Background**

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, worshiping communities learned how to be flexible and adapt worship practices when gathering physically in person was not possible or advisable. In most communities, this included quickly pivoting to offering worship opportunities using videoconferencing or live-streaming technologies. Questions about how sacramental practice may or should be adapted for worship mediated through online technologies remain in front of the church.

*The Use of the Means of Grace: A Statement on the Practice of Word and Sacrament*, adopted by the 1997 Churchwide Assembly, continues to guide the practice of word and sacrament in the ELCA, but it and other church teachings, including the confessions, do not offer explicit guidance for these questions at hand.

In March 2020, the presiding bishop and the Worship team of the churchwide organization organized a meeting of liturgical experts. Based on that consultation, [a statement](#) was issued encouraging congregations to fast from the sacrament for what was thought would be a short time.

As the pandemic lengthened, many pastors (who, in conversation with their councils and under the supervision of their bishops, bear the ultimate responsibility for Word and Sacrament ministry) experimented with different ways to offer Holy Communion mediated by video technology. A variety of opinions, guidance, and disagreement among bishops and liturgical scholars often led to confusion and frustration for those desiring to make informed decisions while navigating unprecedented circumstances.

In the fall of 2021, the Conference of Bishops spent some time reviewing the ELCA’s Lutheran understanding of sacraments in these times of pandemic, social injustice, and climate crises. It was clear there continues to be a variety of opinions on the topic among bishops. Similar conversations have occurred, including those convened by seminaries, the Lutheran participants in the North American Academy of Liturgy, ecumenical partners, and other groups, which continue to raise important questions and acknowledge that this is a topic that will take some time to be settled.

The ELCA’s ecumenical partners, including those with whom this church shares full communion relationships, are having similar conversations and studies. There are also considerations related to the implications of the ELCA’s discernment on these matters for and with this church’s Catholic and Orthodox dialogue partners. All participants will continue to learn from each other in the future.

What is clear is that the study and conversation must continue and involve many partners, including the Conference of Bishops, the conference's Theological and Ethical Concerns Committee, this church's seminary faculty, liturgical scholars, ecumenical partners, and others. This memorial encourages accountability for such conversations to continue in the ELCA.

**Recommended for assembly action**

**To receive with gratitude the memorial on “Holy Communion Practices in Unusual Circumstances and in Pandemic Times” from the Pacifica Synod;**

**To request that the Worship team of the Christian Community and Leadership home area, in collaboration with the Conference of Bishops, the Office of the Presiding Bishop, and teaching theologians, facilitate continued conversation and study regarding Holy Communion practices; and**

**To request that a report be provided to the Church Council no later than its Fall 2024 meeting.**

**Category B11: Specialized Ministries and On Leave from Call Status**

**1. Southwest California Synod (2B) [2022]**

WHEREAS, the nature of church leadership, worship, and church community is changing rapidly; requiring creativity, innovation, and flexibility; and

WHEREAS, congregations are exploring alternatives to one or more full-time rostered minister on staff (ie. part-time ministry, multi-point parishes, contracts); and

WHEREAS, the number of congregations that can afford a full-time rostered minister is shrinking; and

WHEREAS, the Southwest California Synod is experiencing a shortage of supply preachers and interim/transition/bridge ministers; and

WHEREAS, the process for handling interim/transition clergy calls, specialized ministry calls, calls for deacons, and “On Leave From Call” status is inconsistent among synods in the ELCA; and

WHEREAS, deacons in general and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, and two spirit (LGBTQIA+2S), disabled, and/or female rostered ministers disproportionately experience extended time in “On Leave From Call” status; and

WHEREAS, removal from the roster due to exceeding “On Leave From Call” status time limits, missing deadlines, or unclear communication is not uncommon; and

WHEREAS, those removed from the roster have no way to effectively challenge their removal; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Southwest California Synod, in assembly, memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly to direct the Church Council and the Conference of Bishops to suspend removal from the roster due to anything other than formal disciplinary reasons; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwest California Synod, in assembly, memorializes 2022 Churchwide Assembly to direct the Church Council and Conference of Bishops to create a task force to establish national guidelines for handling interim/transition/bridge calls, specialized ministry calls, other non-parish based or innovative calls (with increased attention to calls for deacons), “On Leave From Call” status, removal from call protocols, removal from roster protocols, and communication protocols. The task force shall include members who are currently (or have recently been) involved in specialized ministries (interim/transition ministry, campus ministry, outdoor ministry, college or seminary professors, chaplains of all sorts, etc), as well as those currently “On Leave From Call” for a variety of reasons (family, personal, disability, between-calls, study, etc.), and to include a minimum of two deacons; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwest California Synod, in Assembly, memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly to refer to the Church Council consideration of constitutional amendments that establish a process for rostered leaders to challenge their removal from call and/or roster outside of the synod involved.

**2. South Dakota Synod (3C) [2022]**

WHEREAS, people in the United States increasingly consider themselves not religious, spiritual not religious, atheist, agnostic, or another variation of unchurched or dechurched and reaching them with the Gospel of Jesus Christ requires adjusting expectations and actions; and

WHEREAS, the nature of worship and church community is changing, requiring creativity, innovation, and flexibility; and

WHEREAS, congregations are exploring alternatives to one or more full-time clergy on staff (ie. part-time ministry, multi-point parishes, contracts); and

WHEREAS, multi-vocational ministry and unpaid ministry are increasingly encouraged for consideration by synod leadership and seminaries; and

WHEREAS, individuals, congregations, synods, and the ELCA as a whole invest a great deal of time, money, and energy into training rostered ministers; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA Churchwide organization and several ELCA synods have been expressing concerns about a clergy shortage for over 20 years

WHEREAS, many areas experience a shortage of interim/transition/bridge ministers and supply preachers; and

WHEREAS, synods and synod bishops handle interim/transition clergy calls, specialized ministry calls, calls for deacons, and on-leave-from call status inconsistently; and

WHEREAS, some rostered ministers experience toxic and/or abusive calls; and

WHEREAS, deacons in general and BIPOC, LGBTQIA+2S, disabled, and/or female rostered ministers disproportionately experience extended time in On Leave From Call status; and

WHEREAS, those removed from the roster have no way to effectively challenge their removal; and

WHEREAS, removal from the roster due to exceeding on-leave from call status, missing deadlines, or unclear communication is not uncommon, even when rostered leaders actively maintain a Rostered Minister Profile in the ELCA mobility system and/or are serving as an interim, transition, bridge, or other minister; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the South Dakota Synod memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct the appropriate churchwide unit to review the “Manual of Policies and Procedures for Management of the Rosters of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America;” and be it further

RESOLVED, that the review process to include, but not limited to: the time limits given for On-leave-from-Call, steps for requesting a roster status, and a process by which an action or lack of recommendation from a bishop may be appealed, including the possibility of an appeal in a synod other than the synod from which they were removed from the roster; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the review considers questions of specialized ministry such as interim and transition ministry, campus ministry, outdoor ministry, college and seminary professors, chaplains, innovative ministry, and others where practices are not uniform across the ELCA; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the review process include a diverse group representing both the roster of Word and Sacrament and the roster of Word and Service, those in specialized ministry, and on-leave-from-call for family, study, disability, and between calls; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2022 Churchwide Assembly urge bishops and synod councils to use sparingly any action by which a minister is removed from the roster for non-disciplinary reasons, unless the minister requests removal, until this review is complete; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the appropriate unit of the churchwide organization prepare a report and recommendations for consideration by the Fall 2024 meeting of the Church Council.

### **3. Metropolitan Chicago Synod (5A) [2022]**

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in its rites makes affirmative declarations concerning its rostered ministers; and

WHEREAS, these declarations and the affirmations of the rostered ministers which precede them are made without reference to time nor subject to periodic renewal; and

WHEREAS, continuance of rostered persons in the offices of the ministry is presumed barring death, incapacity, resignation, or disqualification through discipline; and

WHEREAS, removal of a rostered minister from the roster of this church is the highest, most severe form of discipline, and highest penalty which can be imposed; and

WHEREAS, the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions* of this church provide for definite procedures with regard to discipline, including assurances of due process and fundamental procedural fairness; and

WHEREAS, the removal of rostered ministers from the roster for reasons other than death, incapacity, resignation, or disqualification through discipline is fundamentally arbitrary and inconsistent with the affirmations made by church; and

WHEREAS, removal from the roster due to exceeding On Leave From Call Status time limits, missing deadlines, or unclear communication is not uncommon, even when rostered leaders actively maintain a Rostered Minister Profile in the ELCA mobility system and/or are serving as an interim, transition, bridge, or other minister; and

WHEREAS, synods and synod bishops handle interim, transition, specialized ministry, and diaconal calls and on-leave-from call status inconsistently; and

WHEREAS, some rostered ministers experience traumatic and/or abusive calls, and some rostered ministers experience this brokenness from the synod, including the synod bishop; and

WHEREAS, deacons in general and BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, disabled, and female rostered ministers disproportionately experience extended time of transition, including On Leave From Call status; and

WHEREAS, those removed from the roster have no way to effectively challenge their removal; therefore, be it

RESOLVED that the Metropolitan Chicago Synod Assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to create a task force to establish churchwide guidelines for handling interim, transition, bridge, specialized, non-parish based, and innovative calls (with increased attention to calls for deacons), on-leave from call status, removal from roster protocols, and communication protocols; and be it further

RESOLVED that said task force establish a process for rostered ministers to challenge their removal from the roster, including the possibility of an appeal in a synod other than the synod from which they were removed from the roster;

RESOLVED that said task force include members who are or have recently been involved in specialized ministries (e.g. interim, transition, campus, outdoor, college or seminary faculty, chaplains, etc.), as well as those

currently on-leave from call for a variety of reasons (e.g. family, personal, disability, between-calls, study, etc.), and include a minimum of two deacons; and be it further

RESOLVED that this task force present a report and recommendations for policy and procedure changes to the Church Council and Conference of Bishops prior to the Fall 2024 meeting of the Conference of Bishops for evaluation before presentation to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly for adoption; and be it further

RESOLVED that the Metropolitan Chicago Synod Assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to suggest, recommend, and urge the Conference of Bishops and all Synod Councils to suspend removal from the roster due to anything other than death, incapacity, resignation, or disqualification through formal disciplinary process until the report of the task force has been acted upon by the 2025 Churchwide Assembly; and be it further

RESOLVED that the Metropolitan Chicago Synod memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to remove the time limit on On Leave From Call Status immediately.

#### **4. Northern Illinois Synod (5B) [2022]**

WHEREAS, people in the United States increasingly consider themselves not religious, spiritual not religious, atheist, agnostic, or another variation of unchurched or dechurched and reaching them with the Gospel of Jesus Christ requires adjusting expectations and actions; and

WHEREAS, the nature of worship and church community is changing, requiring creativity, innovation, and flexibility; and

WHEREAS, congregations are exploring alternatives to one or more full-time clergy on staff (i.e., part-time ministry, multi-point parishes, contracts); and

WHEREAS, multi vocational ministry and unpaid ministry are increasingly encouraged for consideration by synod leadership and seminaries; and

WHEREAS, individuals, congregations, synods, and the ELCA as a whole invest a great deal of time, money, and energy into training rostered ministers; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA churchwide organization and several ELCA synods have been expressing concerns about a rostered minister shortage for 20+ years; and

WHEREAS, many areas experience a shortage of interim/transition/bridge ministers and supply preachers, and

WHEREAS, synods and synod bishops handle interim/transition clergy calls, specialized ministry calls, calls for deacons, and on-leave-from call status inconsistently; and

WHEREAS, some rostered ministers experience challenging calls; and

WHEREAS, deacons in general and BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color), LGBTQIA2S+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and/or questioning, intersex, asexual, and two-spirit), disabled, and/or female rostered ministers disproportionately experience extended time in On Leave from Call status; and

WHEREAS, removal from the roster due to exceeding on-leave from call status, missing deadlines, or unclear communication is not uncommon, even when rostered leaders actively maintain a Rostered Minister Profile in the ELCA mobility system and/or are serving as an interim/transition/bridge or other minister, and

WHEREAS, there is no appeal process provided for rostered ministers when on-leave-from-call status is denied by the Synod Council resulting in their removal from the roster; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Northern Illinois Synod memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly to direct the Conference of Bishops to suspend removal from the roster due to anything other than formal disciplinary reasons (i.e., no removal for exceeding maximum time periods for on-leave from call status, serving in ministry positions that don't offer a formal letter of call, or missing communication deadlines); and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northern Illinois Synod memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly to direct the Conference of Bishops to create a task force to establish national guidelines for handling interim/transition/bridge calls, specialized ministry calls, other non-parish based, or innovative calls (with increased attention to calls for our deacons), on-leave-from-call status, removal from call protocols, removal from roster protocols, and communication protocols; and be it further

RESOLVED, that said task force establish a process for the clergy to challenge their removal from call and/or roster outside of the synod involved; and be it further

RESOLVED, that said task force include members who are currently (or have recently been) involved in specialized ministries (interim/transition ministry, campus ministry, outdoor ministry, college or seminary professors, chaplains of all sorts, etc.), as well as those currently on leave from call for a variety of reasons (family, personal, disability, between-calls, study, etc.), and to include a minimum of two deacons; and be it further

RESOLVED, that this task force present a report and recommendations for policy changes to the ELCA Church Council and Conference of Bishops prior to the fall of 2024 meeting of the Conference of Bishops for evaluation before being presented for consideration for adoption at the 2025 Churchwide Assembly.

## **5. La Crosse Area Synod (5L) [2022]**

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in its rites makes affirmative declarations concerning its rostered ministers; and

WHEREAS, these declarations and the affirmations of the rostered ministers which precede them are made without reference to time nor subject to periodic renewal; and

WHEREAS, continuance of rostered ministers in the offices of the ministry is presumed barring death, incapacity, resignation, or disqualification through discipline; and

WHEREAS, removal of a rostered minister from the roster of this church is the highest, most severe form of discipline and highest penalty which can be imposed; and

WHEREAS, the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions* of this church provide for definite procedures with regard to discipline, including assurances of due process and fundamental procedural fairness; and

WHEREAS, the removal of rostered persons from the roster for reasons other than death, incapacity, resignation, or disqualification through discipline is fundamentally arbitrary and inconsistent with the affirmations made by church; and

WHEREAS, removal from the roster due to exceeding On Leave From Call Status time limits, missing deadlines, or unclear communication is not uncommon, even when rostered leaders actively maintain a Rostered Minister Profile in the ELCA mobility system and/or are serving as an interim, transition, bridge, or other minister; and

WHEREAS, synods and synod bishops handle interim, transition, specialized ministry, and diaconal calls, and on-leave-from call status inconsistently; and

WHEREAS, some rostered ministers experience toxic and/or abusive calls, and some rostered ministers experience this brokenness from the synod, including the synod bishop; and

WHEREAS, deacons in general and BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, disabled, and female rostered ministers disproportionately experience extended time in On Leave From Call status; and

WHEREAS, those removed from the roster have no way to effectively challenge their removal; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the La Crosse Area Synod Assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to create a task force to establish churchwide guidelines for handling interim, transition, bridge, specialized, non-parish based, and innovative calls (with increased attention to calls for deacons), on-leave from call status, removal from roster protocols, and communication protocols; and be it further

RESOLVED, that said task force establish a process for rostered ministers to challenge their removal from the roster, including the possibility of an appeal in a synod other than the synod from which they were removed from the roster; and be it further

RESOLVED, that said task force include members who are or have recently been involved in specialized ministries (e.g. interim, transition, campus, outdoor, college or seminary faculty, chaplains, etc.), as well as those currently on-leave from call for a variety of reasons (e.g. family, personal, between-calls, study, etc.), and to include a minimum of two deacons; and be it further

RESOLVED, that this task force present a report and recommendations for policy and procedure changes to the Church Council and Conference of Bishops prior to the Fall 2024 meeting of the Conference of Bishops for evaluation before presentation to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly for adoption; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the La Crosse Area Synod Assembly memorialize the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to suggest, recommend, and urge the Conference of Bishops and all Synod Councils to suspend removal from the roster due to anything other than death, incapacity, resignation, or disqualification through discipline until the report of the task force has been acted upon by the 2025 Churchwide Assembly.

## **6. Indiana-Kentucky Synod (6C) [2022]**

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in its rites makes affirmative declarations concerning its rostered ministers;

WHEREAS, the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions* of this church provide for definite procedures with regard to discipline, including assurances of due process and fundamental procedural fairness;

WHEREAS, removal from the roster due to exceeding On Leave From Call Status time limits, missing deadlines, or unclear communication is not uncommon, even when rostered leaders actively maintain a Rostered Minister Profile in the ELCA mobility system and/or are serving as an interim, transition, bridge, or other minister;

WHEREAS, synods and synod bishops handle interim, transition, specialized ministry, and diaconal calls and on-leave-from call status inconsistently;

WHEREAS, deacons in general and BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, disabled, and female rostered ministers disproportionately experience extended time in On Leave From Call status;

WHEREAS, abusive situations occur throughout the church, leading to rostered ministers being on leave from call;

WHEREAS, those removed from the roster have no way to effectively challenge their removal; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Indiana-Kentucky Synod Assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to create a task force to propose churchwide guidelines for handling interim, transition, bridge, specialized, non-parish based, and innovative calls (with increased attention to calls for deacons), on-leave from call status, removal from roster protocols, and communication protocols;

RESOLVED that said task force propose a process for rostered ministers to challenge their removal from the roster, including the possibility of an appeal in a synod other than the synod from which they were removed from the roster; and be it further

RESOLVED, that said task force include members who are or have recently been involved in specialized ministries (e.g. interim, transition, campus, outdoor, college or seminary faculty, chaplains, etc.), as well as those currently on-leave from call for a variety of reasons (e.g. family, personal, disability, between-calls, study, etc.), and to include a minimum of two deacons; and be it further

RESOLVED, that this task force present a report and recommendations for policy and procedure changes to the Church Council and Conference of Bishops prior to the Fall 2024 meeting of the Conference of Bishops for evaluation before presentation to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly for adoption; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Indiana-Kentucky Synod Assembly memorialize the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to suggest, recommend, and urge the Conference of Bishops and all Synod Councils to suspend removal from the roster due to anything other than death, incapacity, resignation, or disqualification through discipline until the report of the task force has been acted upon by the 2025 Churchwide Assembly.

#### **7. Northwestern Ohio Synod (6D) [2022]**

WHEREAS, individuals, congregations, synods, and the ELCA churchwide organization invest a great time of energy, time, and money into training rostered ministers; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA churchwide organization and many ELCA synods have been expressing concerns about a rostered minister shortage for at least 20 years; and

WHEREAS, the synods of the ELCA handle interim, transitional, term, specialized ministry calls, and On Leave From Call status differently; and

WHEREAS, the current policies and *Constitution of the ELCA* churchwide organization limit the duration of On Leave From Call Status and renewal of this status; and

WHEREAS, some rostered ministers experience toxic and/or abusive calls that are often terminated quickly; and

WHEREAS, some rostered ministers disproportionately experience extended time in On Leave From Call status; and

WHEREAS, those removed from the ELCA roster through their On Leave From Call Status not being approved or renewed, have no way to effectively challenge their removal (They may only apply for reinstatement, according to the ELCA constitution, 7.31.06 and 7.61.07); therefore, be it

RESOLVED that the Northwestern Ohio Synod Assembly memorializes the 2022 ELCA Churchwide Assembly direct the Church Council to make the necessary constitutional changes (ELCA Constitution, 7.31.07, 7.61.08) as expediently as possible, prohibiting removal from the ELCA roster by not approving or not renewing their On Leave From Call Status.

#### **8. Lower Susquehanna Synod (8D) [2022]**

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in its rites makes affirmative declarations concerning its rostered ministers; and

WHEREAS, these declarations and the affirmations of the rostered ministers which precede them are made without reference to time nor subject to periodic renewal; and

WHEREAS, continuance of rostered persons in the offices of the ministry is presumed barring death, incapacity, resignation, or disqualification through discipline; and

WHEREAS, removal of a rostered minister from the roster of this church is the highest, most severe form of discipline and highest penalty which can be imposed; and

WHEREAS, the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions* of this church provide for definite procedures with regard to discipline, including assurances of due process and fundamental procedural fairness; and

WHEREAS, the removal of rostered persons from the roster for reasons other than death, incapacity, resignation, or disqualification through discipline is fundamentally arbitrary and inconsistent with the affirmations made by this church; and

WHEREAS, removal from the roster due to exceeding On Leave From Call Status time limits, missing deadlines, or unclear communication is not uncommon, even when rostered leaders actively maintain a Rostered Minister Profile in the ELCA mobility system and/or are serving as an interim, transition, bridge, or other minister; and

WHEREAS, synods and synod bishops handle interim, transition, specialized ministry, and diaconal calls and on-leave-from call status inconsistently; and

WHEREAS, some rostered ministers experience toxic and/or abusive calls, and some rostered ministers experience this brokenness from the synod, including the synod bishop; and

WHEREAS, deacons in general and BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, disabled, and female rostered ministers disproportionately experience extended time in On Leave From Call status; and

WHEREAS, those removed from the roster have no way to effectively challenge their removal; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Lower Susquehanna Synod Assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct the Church Council to create a task force including members who are or have recently been involved in specialized ministries (e.g. interim, transition, campus, outdoor, college or

seminary faculty, chaplains, etc.), as well as those currently on-leave from call for a variety of reasons (e.g. family, personal, disability, between-calls, study, etc.), and to include a minimum of two deacons; to examine churchwide guidelines and policies as they relate to interim, transition, bridge, specialized, non-parish based, and innovative calls (with increased attention to calls for deacons), on-leave from call status, removal from roster protocols, and communication protocols; to consider recommending a process for such rostered ministers to challenge their removal from the roster, including the possibility of an appeal in a synod other than the synod from which they were removed from the roster; and to present a report and recommendations for policy and procedure changes to the Church Council and Conference of Bishops prior to the Fall 2024 meeting of the Conference of Bishops for evaluation before presentation to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly for adoption; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Lower Susquehanna Synod Assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to suggest, recommend, and urge the Conference of Bishops and all Synod Councils to suspend removal from the roster due to anything other than death, incapacity, resignation, or disqualification through discipline until the report of the task force has been acted upon by the 2025 Churchwide Assembly.

## **Background**

Starting with Martin Luther, Lutherans have had a functional understanding of ministry, that is, ministers are those who are called to do ministerial acts. This church does not believe that ordination is a sacrament or that ordination works an ontological change in the person being ordained. This church also requires that its rostered ministers be accountable for the sake of the gospel.

This church's governing documents reflect this functional understanding of ministry. The *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA* (CBCR) create On Leave from Call status as an exception to the general rule that one does not remain on the roster if one is not serving in a call.<sup>1</sup> As stated in CBCR 7.31.07 and 7.61.08, a minister, "serving under a regularly issued letter of call, who leaves the work of that ministry without accepting another regularly issued letter of call, *may be retained* on the roster . . . upon endorsement by the synod bishop, by action of the Synod Council . . ., under policy developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council."<sup>2</sup> On Leave from Call status is thus a method by which rostered ministers "may be retained on the roster" for the benefit of the church in appropriate circumstances. On Leave from Call status is typically limited to three years for regular leave and six years for study or family leave, although extensions may be granted by the Conference of Bishops in appropriate circumstances (CBCR 7.31.07 and 7.61.08).

Some of the memorials include "whereas" clauses that are inaccurate. One "whereas" clause incorrectly states that "continuance of rostered persons in the offices of the ministry is presumed barring death, incapacity, resignation, or disqualification through discipline." Continuance on the roster is not presumed for those who are not actively engaged in Word and Sacrament or Word and Service ministry. Such a presumption would create an expectation or entitlement of being on the roster for life that is inconsistent with Lutheran theology, polity, and practice.

Similarly, another "whereas" clause incorrectly states that "the removal of rostered persons from the roster for reasons other than death, incapacity, resignation, or disqualification through discipline is fundamentally arbitrary and inconsistent with the affirmations made by this church." Again, this church and its predecessors have consistently removed persons from the roster if they are no longer engaged in ministry.

Some rostered ministers choose not to continue in ministry and instead pursue other vocations without resigning from the roster. Allowing such ministers to stay on the roster indefinitely, even though their roster status is not advancing the mission of the church, would impose a significant burden on the synods, which would be required to maintain accountability (and potentially face liability exposure) for non-practicing ministers. Relatedly, it is unfortunately the case that a small percentage of rostered ministers are ineffective in ministry. As a result, they may be without call for extended periods of time. Creating a situation where ministers are entitled to lifetime roster status unless they resign or are disciplined means either that: 1) synods would have to keep ineffective ministers on their roster forever; or 2) this church would have to make lack of competence or effectiveness a disciplinary offense (it is not currently) and start holding disciplinary hearings on the competence of ministers.

Perhaps due to these misunderstandings, many of the proposed resolves are contrary to several current constitutional provisions without proposing specific constitutional changes:

- One proposed "resolved" would require the Church Council and Conference of Bishops to suspend removal from the roster for anything short of formal discipline. Neither the Churchwide Assembly, the Church

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<sup>1</sup> The other exceptions are Retired status and Disability status (CBCR 7.41.07, 7.41.08, 7.71.04 and 7.71.05).

<sup>2</sup> This set of policies is known as the Manual of Policies and Procedures for the Management of the Rosters of the ELCA, or Roster Manual for short.

Council, nor the Conference of Bishops have this power; authority for roster management rests solely with each synod.

- Many proposed “resolves” would give the 2025 Churchwide Assembly the authority to approve changes to the policies and procedures governing On Leave from Call Status contrary to CBCR 7.31.07 and 7.61.08, which expressly give the Church Council authority over these policies and procedures.
- One proposed “resolved” would require the immediate elimination of time limits on On Leave from Call Status, contrary to CBCR 7.31.07 and 7.61.08.
- Many proposed “resolves” also call for the creation of an appeal process. The constitution rests the authority for making determinations regarding On Leave from Call status solely with the synod bishop and the Synod Council, without making any provision for appeal (CBCR 7.31.07 and 7.61.08).
- Many proposed “resolves” include the possibility of an appeal in a synod other than the synod from which the minister was removed from the roster. The constitution expressly requires any reinstatement application to start in the synod of roster (CBCR 7.31.06 and 7.61.07).

At the same time, these memorials identify important concerns about the authority to grant or terminate On Leave from Call Status, the processes used for granting or terminating On Leave from Call status, the possibility and desirability of appeal processes, the impact of those processes on those serving in specialized ministries, and the possible disparate impact of those processes on a number of communities, including persons of color, LGBTQIA+ persons, and women. As noted, many of these concerns may need to be addressed by constitutional changes. Several of the memorials appropriately call for the Church Council to review these processes and constitutional provisions and propose changes. Policy changes could be approved the Church Council; constitutional changes would need to go to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly.

Given the constitutional nature of many of the changes necessary to achieve the goals of these memorials, as well as the existence of a separate group of memorials calling for a Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church, it would make sense to include these concerns in the charge given to the commission, if one is created.

In addition, this spring the ELCA Church Council authorized (CC22.04.04) the creation of a task force charged with reviewing the current process for discipline and its impact on persons of color and other historically marginalized groups, considering recommendations for staffing, community healing, and restoration. A report with possible recommendations will be provided to the Spring 2023 Church Council meeting. The work of this task force is likely to overlap with the issues raised by these memorials.

### **Financial Impact**

As drafted, these memorials would have a substantial financial impact. Creating and conducting the work of a task force, particularly of the size envisioned in the memorial, a 12-person task force meeting in person at least three times would be around \$45,000. In contrast, if this work were to be combined with the work of a Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church and the task force on Addressing Discipline Concerns of Rostered Ministers of Color, the additional cost, if any, would be minimal.

In addition, if rostered ministers were entitled to On Leave from Call status, and removals from the roster other than for death, resignation, or discipline were discontinued, this church would have to resort to many more discipline hearings. Discipline proceedings are expensive, costing synods and the churchwide organization well into the tens of thousands of dollars per hearing. Discipline hearings also impose large costs on human resources. This is not limited to staff time and resources, but also includes the time of the discipline panel members (who are largely congregational members and pastors) and volunteer hearing officers.

### **Recommended for assembly action**

**To receive with gratitude the memorials from the Southwest California Synod, South Dakota Synod, Metropolitan Chicago Synod, Northern Illinois Synod, La Crosse Area Synod, Indiana-Kentucky Synod, Northwestern Ohio Synod, and Lower Susquehanna Synod concerning specialized ministries and On Leave from Call status;**

**To direct the Church Council to establish a process for examining constitutional provisions and policies and procedures as they relate to interim, transition, bridge, specialized, non-parish-based, and innovative calls, as well as on-leave from call status, protocols for removal from the rosters, and communication protocols;**

**To ask that those involved in the review consult with rostered ministers who are or have recently been involved in specialized ministries (e.g., interim, transition, campus, outdoor, college or seminary faculty, chaplains, etc.), and those currently on leave from call for a variety of reasons (e.g., regular leave from call, family, disability, study, etc.).**

## **Category B12: Disability Status**

### **1. Northwest Washington Synod (1B) [2022]**

RESOLVED, that the Northwest Washington Synod Assembly memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly to ask Portico Services and the Conference of Bishops to review the requirements of the Portico disability program for persons suffering mental illness; and be it further

RESOLVED, that specific attention be given to the ways in which timing related to the rostered minister's resignation affects potential eligibility for coverage; and be it further

RESOLVED, that a report of this review be given to the Church Council by its 2023 fall meeting.

## **Background**

### **Information from Portico Benefit Services, plan administrator of the ELCA Disability Benefits Plan**

The ELCA Disability Benefits Plan ("Disability Plan") provides long-term disability benefits for members with physical and/or mental health conditions, supported by objective medical information, that prevent them from working. In addition to monthly benefits, the Disability Plan provides:

- Health benefits to the member and the member's spouse and dependent children.
- Contributions to the ELCA Retirement Plan.
- Survivor benefits.

The disability plan is self-funded, with member contributions held in trust for payment of benefits to disabled members. Portico Benefit Services (Portico) regularly reviews ELCA benefit offerings, considers member and employer feedback, and assesses best practices in the industry to ensure an appropriate balance between member contributions and member benefits. In response to this request, Portico invites a conversation with the Northwest Washington Synod about the requirements for disability benefits as they relate to members with mental health conditions. If desired, Portico will provide a report to the Church Council about this conversation and the results therefrom.

From the ELCA Disability Benefits Plan document, Section 5.01:

"A Sponsored Member shall be considered a Totally Disabled Member or to have a Total Disability if, as a direct result of injury or physical or mental disorder, substantiated by objective medical information from a Qualified Health Care Provider, s/he is unable to perform the material duties of her/his normal occupation for any employer. The normal occupation of a Sponsored Member is the occupation, job, or work s/he performed immediately prior to the onset of the disability. A Sponsored Member must be under the regular care of a Qualified Health Care Provider for the disabling condition and must have received such care from the Qualified Health Care Provider within the thirty-one (31) days preceding the date of application for benefits under this Plan...

A Totally Disabled Member must apply for Monthly Disability Benefits within three (3) months of becoming Totally Disabled. The disabling condition must have occurred while the Member was a Sponsored Member and the first day absent due to the disabling condition must occur while the Member is a Sponsored Member. A disability claimed for a date after the Member terminated employment or ends a call is not covered under this Plan and the Member will not be eligible for disability benefits."

Mental health illness and disorders are considered for benefits just as physical illness and injury under the ELCA Disability Benefits Plan. The Disability Plan does not have a more restrictive requirement for Total Disability if, as a direct result of mental disorder, substantiated by objective medical information from a qualified health care provider, members are unable to perform the material duties of their normal occupation for any employer. It should be noted that the Disability Plan doesn't limit the duration of disability benefits due to mental disorder as many plans do.

When members stop working due to a disabling condition and file for ELCA Disability Benefits within three months of the last day worked, their application for disability will be considered timely. This is the case, regardless of whether the sponsored member stopped working due to a physical or mental health condition. The member's sponsoring employer/organization is expected to provide salary and benefits during the two-month waiting period following the member's last day worked. If a member's sponsoring employer/organization fails to cover their salary and benefits during the two-month waiting period for disability benefits due to a mental health disorder or illness, the member is not denied benefits due to the sponsor's failure.

Synod offices and sponsoring organizations can assist members who are experiencing a disabling condition that results in inability to work by directing members to contact Portico for information about filing for disability. When members contact Portico, the Customer Care team will explain the process to members and transfer them to Portico's disability vendor partner, Lincoln Financial Group, to file a claim, if applicable.

### **Recommended for assembly action**

**To receive with gratitude the memorial on “Disability Status to Persons Experiencing Mental Illness” from the Northwest Washington Synod;**

**To receive the background information as an explanation of Portico Benefit Services’ disability process;**

**To ask Portico to present a primer to the Fall 2022 Conference of Bishops on the disability process, especially as it relates to disability stemming from mental illness; and**

**To ask Portico to include a review of mental-health-related disability claims in its next regular review of disability benefits and to report any findings and recommendations to the Conference of Bishops and the Church Council at its Fall 2023 meetings.**

### **Category B13: Committee on Appeals**

#### **1. Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod (8B) [2022]**

WHEREAS, the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* (ELCA) assigns primary responsibility for the discipline process to synods (20.11.); and

WHEREAS, it accordingly provides synod bishops with substantial discretion in the investigation of misconduct (20.22.04. through 20.22.06.); and

WHEREAS, a synod bishop’s investigation of misconduct under 20.22.04 is distinct and very different from the process of discipline when charges have been made; and

WHEREAS, Provision 20.21. of this church’s constitution specifically calls for the Committee on Appeals to “establish definitions and guidelines, subject to approval by the Church Council, to enable clear and uniform application of the grounds for discipline of officers, rostered ministers, congregations, and members of congregations;” therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod memorializes the 2022 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to direct the Church Council to direct the Committee on Appeals to establish a fair, transparent, and uniform process for the investigation of misconduct of officers, rostered ministers (including bishops), congregations, and members of congregations, across the synods of the ELCA with effort to ensure that any such processes take care as to not unfairly affect people of color, members of the LGBTQIA+ community, or members of other marginalized groups.

### **Background**

The *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA* (CBCR) assigns primary responsibility for the discipline process to synods (CBCR 20.11). Accordingly, it provides synod bishops with substantial discretion in the investigation of misconduct (CBCR 20.22.04–06). As a result, each synod has its own policy for investigating misconduct. This is consistent with the general principle of subsidiarity set forth at CBCR 5.01.c., which provides that, “[w]henever possible, the entity most directly affected by a decision shall be the principal party responsible for the decision and implementation, with the other entities facilitating and assisting.” As noted in CBCR 20.11, “[s]ince synods have responsibility for admittance of persons into the rostered ministries of this church and have oversight of pastoral and congregational relationships, the disciplinary process shall be a responsibility of the synod on behalf of this church.”

Contrary to this memorial, the Committee on Appeals does not have the authority to establish a process for the investigation of misconduct. CBCR 20.21 (quoted in the memorial) gives the Committee on Appeals the authority to establish definitions and guidelines to enable clear and uniform application of the *grounds* for discipline; it does not give the Committee on Appeals authority over the investigatory process (and any such authority would be inconsistent with CBCR 5.01.c and 20.11). Pursuant to CBCR 20.21, the Committee on Appeals has created, and the Church Council has approved, *Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline*, which clarifies what conduct may be grounds for discipline. Similarly, the Committee on Appeals recommends rules of procedure for disciplinary hearings (CBCR 20.22.14). But it does not have jurisdiction over the investigatory process used by synods.

In addition, the ELCA Church Council has already acted to address the concerns raised by this memorial. This spring, the Church Council authorized (CC22.04.04) the creation of a task force charged with reviewing the current process for discipline and its impact on persons of color and other historically marginalized groups, considering recommendations for staffing, community healing, and restoration. A report with possible recommendations will be provided to the Spring 2023 Church Council meeting. This memorial would be duplicative of the existing task force.

### **Recommended for assembly action**

**To receive with gratitude the memorial on “Committee on Appeals” from the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod; and**

**To affirm the decision of the ELCA Church Council to create a task force charged with reviewing the current process for discipline and its impact on persons of color and other historically marginalized groups, considering recommendations for staffing, community healing, and restoration.**

## Section C

### Social teaching documents

#### Category C1: Renew Social Statement on Creation Care

##### 1. Rocky Mountain Synod (2E) [2021]

WHEREAS, twenty-eight years have passed since the release of the ELCA's 1993 social statement *Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice*; and

WHEREAS, the human despoiling and destruction of the earth and its creatures continue to outstrip all efforts at restraint; and  
WHEREAS, ELCA social statements are to be reviewed every ten years; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the 2021 Rocky Mountain Synod memorializes the 2022 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to undertake a renewed social statement on creation and for special attention to be given to:

- updating the urgent facts related to the compromising of the media of earthly life and decimation of species;
- naming the persistent sin of anthropocentrism in the church, fostering a more creaturely self-awareness, and extolling a posture that reflects greater humility and theological awe;
- affirming a role for humans as residents or tenants of an earthly home that God pronounced good and promises to make new;
- extolling Luther's potent language of divine immersion in creation and familiarizing ELCA members with Luther's imagery of a God who moves all things while resting and of a risen Christ who inhabits the tiniest tree leaf; and
- appealing for large, bold actions that suit the scale of our global situation while honoring the smaller, more modest actions that mark a lighter path for humankind.

#### Background

This memorial uses the term "renew" but essentially is a request to revise or replace *Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice* (1993, CC:VHJ). It specifies five points of resolution for special attention for that purpose. Renewed concern for church teaching about caring for creation is understandable, given the consensus of the global scientific community about the disaster unfolding in earth's atmosphere from collective human action illustrated by the 2022 report of [The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#).

The third preamble must be corrected, however, because ELCA protocol does not institute "review of social statements every 10 years" as claimed. Instead, a churchwide assembly can authorize at any time a revision of a social statement. The request of this memorial for social statement renewal, then, could be exercised in one of two ways according to ELCA protocol ([Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns](#)): either a substantial revision of CC:VHJ (a three-year process) or a complete replacement (a six-year process).

The decision for revision or replacement has substantial implications for financial and staff resources because ELCA social teaching is guided by a procedure for wide participation and extensive discernment. There are three questions for assessment of such a request:

1. What precisely would be the costs involved?
2. What is the capacity of this church at this time?
3. Is revision necessary or the most appropriate vehicle necessary to address the concerns?

The cost of replacing a social statement is approximately \$250,000 plus staff time for the six-year process and the normal capacity is one social statement at a time. (It should be noted there are several memorials for social statement authorization at this 2022 Churchwide Assembly.)

This memorial names statement age and the continued despoiling and destruction of the earth as rationale for undertaking a renewed statement, but it does not put forth or demonstrate reasons why the existing statement fails. For instance, the memorial's second and third listed items in the "resolved" are clearly evident in CC:VHJ. Moreover, the social statement provides four principles that describe creation justice: participation, solidarity, sufficiency, and sustainability. These principles have proven durable across several decades and in numerous social teaching documents. They have provided a foundation from which to address diverse and evolving environmental concerns and have grounded speaking to environmental policy in the ELCA's public witness. While the list of "urgent facts" from 1993 (social statement's date) has grown to include issues unforeseen at the time, the comprehensive nature of the statement's theological and moral principles seems to continue to provide robust grounding for the ELCA's discernment and advocacy.

In November 2021, the ELCA Church Council authorized the development of a social message on "Climate Care" in order to provide ELCA social teaching with a contemporary assessment of facts and to identify actions and more comprehensive efforts on the part of society and our church. Per ELCA protocol this effort is being undertaken by the

director for theological ethics desk in the Office of the Presiding Bishop. Information about the project can be found at [www.elca.org/climatecare](http://www.elca.org/climatecare). A public comment period on a draft regarding climate care is expected in the fall of 2022 and a proposed social message for consideration is anticipated for the Spring 2023 Church Council meeting.

### **Recommended for assembly action**

**To receive with gratitude the memorial from the Rocky Mountain Synod concerning a renewal of *Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice* (1993), but to decline to take action in light of the current development of a social message on climate care.**

### **Category C2: Child Abuse and Protection**

#### **1. Saint Paul Area Synod (3H) [2022]**

WHEREAS, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) often have profound and lifelong impacts on children; and

WHEREAS, every congregation should collectively study, review the data and evidence regarding child abuse, and educate themselves on the harm that abuse can do to a child physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually; and

WHEREAS, Jesus called children messengers from God and contended that people's treatment of children reflects their view of their Creator (Mark 9:36–37), people must repent their sins against children and demonstrate the fruit of this repentance through enforceable child protection policies, sermons, and Bible studies on child maltreatment, and ministries to address the needs of children suffering under the cross of abuse or neglect; and

WHEREAS, the biblical interpretation by some communities of faith have been used to excuse or minimize the abuse of children, to discourage victims of child abuse from seeking evidence-based mental health care, and to violate mandated reporting laws; and

WHEREAS, biblical interpretation has sometimes been distorted to justify hitting children of all ages, and that this violence has been repeatedly shown in research to increase the risk of poor medical and mental health outcomes; and

WHEREAS, every congregation, church agency, and school should have child protection policies that are widely communicated and clearly state that abuse, neglect, and maltreatment of minor children will not be tolerated and that child protection is of the highest priority; and

WHEREAS, child protection policies help safeguard children, educate congregations, deter potential offenders, and witness our faith to the world; and

WHEREAS, providing abuse survivors with a voice and opportunity to share their experiences will require the church to develop collaborations with professionals trained in recognizing and responding to all forms of child maltreatment and who are willing to consult with faith leaders in coordinating medical, mental health, and spiritual care; and

WHEREAS, taking steps to develop a comprehensive training program for the leadership and members of the congregation lays the foundation for a safe environment in which abuse is identified, understood, and addressed promptly and effectively, including the process of mandated reporting; therefore, be it,

RESOLVED, the Saint Paul Area Synod memorializes the 2022 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to develop and adopt a social statement on child abuse and child protection.

#### **2. Central States Synod (4B) [2021]**

WHEREAS, one in eight children in the United States experiences a confirmed case of abuse or neglect before they turn 18, although the actual prevalence of known and unknown abuse is significantly higher;

WHEREAS, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) often have profound and lifelong impacts on children;

WHEREAS, 90% of people receiving public mental health services for major mental illnesses have experienced physical, emotional, or sexual abuse in their lives, often as children;

WHEREAS, every congregation should collectively study, review the data and evidence regarding child abuse, and educate themselves on the harm that abuse can do to a child physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually;

WHEREAS, Jesus called children messengers from God and contended that people's treatment of children reflects their view of their Creator (Mark 9:36–37), people must repent their sins against children and demonstrate the fruit of this repentance through enforceable child protection policies, sermons and Bible studies on child maltreatment, and ministries to address the needs of children suffering under the cross of abuse or neglect;

WHEREAS, the Bible and Lutheran theology have sometimes been used to excuse or minimize the abuse of children, to discourage victims of child abuse from seeking evidence-based mental health care, and to violate mandated reporting laws;

WHEREAS, the Bible has often been distorted to justify hitting children of all ages, including infants, and that this violence has been repeatedly shown in research to increase the risk of poor medical and mental health outcomes;

WHEREAS, every congregation, church agency, and school should have child protection policies that are widely communicated and clearly state that abuse and neglect will not be tolerated and that child protection is of the highest priority;

WHEREAS, child protection policies help safeguard children, educate congregations, deter potential offenders, and witness our faith to the world;

WHEREAS, providing abuse survivors with a voice and opportunity to share their experiences will require the church to develop collaborations with professionals trained in recognizing and responding to all forms of child maltreatment and with those who are willing to consult with faith leaders in coordinating medical, mental health, and spiritual care;

WHEREAS, taking steps to develop a comprehensive training program for the leadership and members of the congregation lays the foundation for a safe environment in which abuse is identified, understood, and addressed promptly and effectively; therefore be it,

RESOLVED:

1. The Central States Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America encourages its members to read and study the “Rationale for a Social Statement on Child Abuse and Child Protection” available for reference at: <http://currentsjournal.org/index.php/currents/article/view/306/335>
2. The Central States Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America join a churchwide, synod-wide, and congregation-wide process for developing effective and enforceable child protection and child maltreatment policies at every level;
3. The Central States Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America encourages ELCA seminaries to provide education on recognizing and responding to child abuse, including appropriate spiritual care, and to provide continuing education on child maltreatment for pastors, deacons and other faith leaders in the field;
4. The Central States Synod of the ELCA encourages its congregations to offer opportunities for dialogue and education on effective discipline of children including Bible studies on the Christian obligation to discipline children without the use of corporal punishment;
5. The Central States Synod memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly to develop and adopt a social statement on child abuse and child protection.

### 3. Northeastern Iowa Synod (5F) [2021]

WHEREAS, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) often have profound and lifelong impacts on children;

WHEREAS, every congregation should collectively study, review the data and evidence regarding child abuse, and educate themselves on the harm that abuse can do to a child physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually;

WHEREAS, Jesus called children messengers from God and contended that people’s treatment of children reflects their view of their Creator (Mark 9:36–37), and yet the Bible and theology have sometimes been used to excuse or minimize the abuse of children—even to justify hitting children of all ages, including infants, and that this violence has been repeatedly shown in research to increase the risk of poor medical and mental health outcomes—as well as to discourage victims of child abuse from seeking evidence-based mental health care, to violate mandated reporting laws, and;

WHEREAS, every congregation, church agency, and school should have child protection policies that are widely communicated and clearly state that abuse and neglect will not be tolerated and that child protection is of the highest priority;

WHEREAS, child protection policies help safeguard children, educate congregations, deter potential offenders, and witness faith to the world;

WHEREAS, providing abuse survivors with a voice and opportunity to share their experiences will require the church to develop collaborations with professionals trained in recognizing and responding to all forms of child maltreatment and who are willing to consult with faith leaders in coordinating medical, mental health, and spiritual care;

WHEREAS, taking steps to develop a comprehensive training program for the leadership and members of the congregation lays the foundation for a safe environment in which abuse is identified, understood, and addressed promptly and effectively; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Iowa Synod memorializes the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to develop and adopt a social statement on child abuse and child protection.

### Background

The memorials submitted for this category provide extensive rationale for the sad reality of child abuse and the need for child protection. The preamble expresses the concerns theologically and socially as well as indicating the pastoral and personal implications evident in the lack of attention to this unhappy reality. Many of the “resolved” paragraphs are directed at synod activities, but there is a shared request that a social statement process be authorized by the 2022 Churchwide Assembly.

The topic is not widely considered a key concern by many people or organizations, but it has considerable implications. Child abuse can be emotional/spiritual, physical, and sexual. Widely available statistics indicate it is much more prevalent than generally recognized. Children and other members of vulnerable population are unable to protect themselves nor do they have the power to stop stronger people from continuing the abuse. The abuse in childhood affects the victims into adult life and sometimes contributes to victims becoming abusers in the next generation.

The memorials’ rationale does not indicate what is already in place within the ELCA. [Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline](#) (2021) addresses child abuse in the section about abusive activity perpetrated by rostered ministers. It provides specific definitions regarding abuse. Some synod boundary workshops on abuse address the matter, and some synods occasionally provide “safe church” education.

It is also the case that some congregations have developed “safe church” policies and some ELCA-related social ministry organizations (SMOs) attend to issues of child abuse. The educational organization Evangelical Lutheran Education Association (ELEA) provides guidance and resources to aid schools and learning centers, which are legally required to have a policy. The [ELEA](#) is an Independent Lutheran Organization serving as the office of schools and as a membership organization with over 1,300 schools and early learning centers operating as ministries. For example, the ELEA website lists [this resource](#) for preparing policy.

While all of these represent important efforts and resources, there has been no comprehensive address or guidance across the ELCA. It seems clear that few rostered ministers or congregations are aware of or require best practices. For instance, the Federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) requires each state to have provisions or procedures that require certain individuals to report known or suspected instances of child abuse and neglect. In the majority of states, clergy fall within these provisions, some with privileged communication clauses. State codes can be found at <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubpdfs/manda.pdf>.

Best practices, then, include procedure guidelines for organizations and training for individuals on an annual basis with annual review. Yet, “safe church” policies are rare in congregations. It is unlikely that most congregations require background checks for lay staff and volunteers even though many belong to the category of mandated reporters. Sample church policy for reporting abuse can be found at: <https://hope4hurtingkids.com/trauma-tragedy/abuse/sample-church-policy-reporting-abuse-neglect/>.

Even fewer rostered ministers and congregations are prepared to respond to child abuse taking place in homes. It is an interesting question, for instance, what percentage of seminarians have received education on recognizing and responding to child abuse, including appropriate spiritual care? Likewise, how many rostered ministers have received continuing education on child maltreatment?

Based on the sporadic address and minimal resources used within the ELCA, there seems to be a clear need for addressing as a church the matter of child abuse and childhood protection.

The request that the Churchwide Assembly authorize a social statement falls under the purview of [Policies and Procedures of the ELCA for Addressing Social Concerns](#) (2018). There are three questions for assessment of a request for a social statement:

1. What precisely would be the costs involved?
2. What is the capacity of this church at this time?
3. Is a social statement the most appropriate vehicle necessary to address the concerns?

Question one has a standard answer. A typical social statement involves a six-year cycle with a cost of approximately \$250,000 plus staff time. The amount of churchwide staff time needed for a social statement development is difficult to determine in advance but involves a sizable portion of the work of the director for theological ethics and the theological discernment program coordinator. (This program coordinator simultaneously supports two other directors). Budget dollars provide for meetings of a blue-ribbon task force and provision of resources for their work.

The question of churchwide capacity involves not only budget and staff time but also leadership commitments across this church because this church develops its social teaching and policy as a community of moral deliberation. Development protocol involves three specific periods of broad-scale input from members as well as formal review at several points by the Conference of Bishops and Church Council. Generally speaking, there is ELCA-wide capacity for the development of one social statement during a six-year period.

A social statement is currently under development for consideration at the 2025 Churchwide Assembly on the role of government, the nature of civic engagement, and the relationship of church and state. This means any additional social statement process could not begin until 2025 unless significant additional dollars were made available to supplement the current churchwide organization budget. Further, voting members should note that there may be other requests to the 2022 Churchwide Assembly for social statement development.

The final question is whether a social statement is the necessary vehicle for the question of childhood abuse and protection. ELCA Policies and Procedures indicate that social statements are undertaken to address either the most controversial questions or to address comprehensively the great social institutions of contemporary life such as systems of health care, economics, or criminal justice.

An alternative means for developing social teaching is through social messages. These are ELCA teaching documents that address social topics narrower in scope and are, therefore, generally briefer and typically are developed within a year. They provide this church flexibility to respond to questions that arise from the ELCA’s mission in the world. A social message provides theological rationale, appropriate analysis, and can indicate ELCA commitments just as social statements do, but on a more focused topic. Messages may be requested by a churchwide assembly but are authorized by the ELCA Church Council.

Addressing the issue of child abuse and child protection seems vital but more appropriately addressed through a social message ([www.elca.org/socialmessages](http://www.elca.org/socialmessages)). Parallel examples include the social message on “Gender-Based Violence” (2017) or the social message on the “Body of Christ and Mental Illness” (2012).

## **Recommended for assembly action**

**To receive with gratitude the memorials from the Saint Paul Area Synod, Central States Synod, and Northeastern Iowa Synod concerning development of a social statement on child abuse and protection; and**

**To request that the Church Council consider authorizing development of a social message on child abuse and protection.**

### **Category C3: Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust Revision**

#### **1. Greater Milwaukee Synod (5J) 2022**

WHEREAS, ELCA social statements set policy for the ELCA and guide its advocacy and work as a publicly engaged church as members participate in God's work in the world; and

WHEREAS, the social statement *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*, adopted by two-thirds majority vote at Churchwide Assembly in 2009, now serves as the primary and comprehensive teaching and policy document of the ELCA on sexuality; and

WHEREAS, the social statement states: "One reason Lutherans have engaged so deeply in education and research is that we believe God works through such means to guide us in reading Scripture and in understanding how we will live in a world of continuing complexity and change" (p. 10); and

WHEREAS, it further states: "Within the last decades, this church has begun to understand and experience in new ways the need of same-gender-oriented individuals to seek relationships of lifelong companionship and commitment as well as public accountability and legal support for those commitments" (p. 18); and

WHEREAS, it further states: "[T]his church must work toward greater understanding of sexual orientation and gender identity. It must seek that which is positive and life-giving while protecting from all that is harmful and destructive... This church commits itself to continued attention to and discernment about changing family configurations and the ways they serve to shelter and protect relationships of mutual trust" (pp. 23–24); and

WHEREAS, it further states: "In ways that are still not fully understood, we develop strong gender identities at a very early age. While there is still much to be learned about the biological complexity of human beings, we have come to understand that this complexity suggests a variety of sexual orientations and gender identities" (p. 28); and

WHEREAS, in the years since 2009 society has much greater awareness of the spectrum of sexual orientation and gender identity and expression; therefore, be it

RESOLVED that the Greater Milwaukee Synod memorializes the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America at its 2022 Churchwide Assembly to authorize a review of the social statement *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*, revising it to reflect current church understanding, church policy, civil law, and public acceptance of marriage of same-gender and gender non-conforming couples.

#### **2. Southeastern Synod (9D) [2022]**

RESOLVED that the Southeastern Synod memorializes the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America at its 2022 Churchwide Assembly to take the steps needed to embark on review and where appropriate, revision of the social statement *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* to reflect current church understanding, church policy, and marriage of same-gender and gender non-conforming couples.

#### **3. Florida-Bahamas Synod (9E) [2022]**

WHEREAS, ELCA social statements set policy for the ELCA and guide its advocacy and work as a publicly engaged church as members participate in God's work in the world; and

WHEREAS, the social statement *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*, adopted by two-thirds majority vote at the Churchwide Assembly in 2009, now serves as the primary and comprehensive teaching and policy document of the ELCA on sexuality; and

WHEREAS, the social statement states: "One reason Lutherans have engaged so deeply in education and research is that we believe God works through such means to guide us in reading Scripture and in understanding how we will live in a world of continuing complexity and change" (p. 10); and

WHEREAS, it further states, "In ways that are still not fully understood, we develop strong gender identities at a very early age. While there is still much to be learned about the biological complexity of human beings, we have come to understand that this complexity suggests a variety of sexual orientations and gender identities" (p. 28); and

WHEREAS, in the years since 2009, society has a much greater awareness of the spectrum of sexual orientation and of gender identity and expression; now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Florida-Bahamas Synod memorializes the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America at its 2022 Churchwide Assembly to take the steps needed to initiate review and where appropriate, revise the social statement *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* (2009) to reflect current church understanding, church policy, civil law, and public acceptance regarding marriage of same-gender and gender non-conforming couples.

## **Background**

Societal and religious views and understandings of sex, gender, and sexuality continue to change, perhaps more rapidly now, but as they have throughout human history. The U.S. Supreme Court decision in 2015 (legalizing same-sex marriage across the United States) represents the hallmark of social shifts regarding sexual orientation, even while

religious liberty concerns continue to raise controversy. Scientific consensus continues to evolve around understanding of sex, gender, and sexuality, even while some findings remain contested and in flux.

*Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* (2009) serves as the ELCA's primary teaching document on this church's understanding of sexuality and marriage. (Other teaching documents do address related aspects. For instance, *Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Call to Action* (2019) includes more contemporary references to LGBTQIA+ people.) *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* speaks to the questions of same-sex orientation (called same-gender in the document) in relation to publicly accountable, life-long, monogamous relationship and acknowledges that a new consensus has not emerged in this church. It then draws on a foundational Lutheran understanding of ethics that Christian freedom in such a case permits a certain diversity of convictions and pastoral practices among God's people even as they share the common purpose to love the neighbor. There are four sets of diverse convictions identified in the ELCA social statement.

While not compelled by the social statement, four resolutions on ministry policy congruent with the statement also were adopted by the 2009 Churchwide Assembly and directed the establishment of practices that allow structured diversity regarding ordination and the liturgical recognition of publicly accountable, life-long, monogamous same-sex relationships. At that time, same-sex marriage was not the law of the land.

In light of legal, social, and scientific shifts since 2009, this memorial requests a review and editorial revision to "reflect current church understanding, church policy, civil law, and public acceptance of marriage of same-gender and gender non-conforming couples." As the "whereas" clauses suggest, social statements provide official church teaching but often recognize the need for subsequent discernment and carefully considered change. This memorial is consistent with ELCA understanding of a church constantly seeking renewed understanding of what is God-pleasing. The protocol for what is technically "reconsideration" (the memorial requests review and revision) is spelled out in "[Policies and Procedures of the ELCA for Addressing Social Concerns](#)" (2018, p. 18f).

In short, this kind of request is designated "reconsideration to revise" where specific "changes to designated portions of a statement involving substantive change" are possible (p.19f). Such action requires two-thirds support at this assembly to authorize the revision process and the same to approve the proposed revisions at a subsequent Churchwide Assembly. (This is consistent with the adoption of a social statement in the first place by that same level of support.) A resolution for reconsideration to revise also requires designation in the resolution of which specific topics and "which paragraphs or sections would be reconsidered." Examples here would seem to include the correction of "same-gender" to "same-sex," and the recognition of the 2015 U.S. Supreme Court decision that legally establishes marriage in place of the statement's use of "publicly accountable, life-long, monogamous, same-gender relationships."

A social statement reconsideration for revision cycle involves a task force in a three-year cycle, led by the director for theological ethics in the Office of the Presiding Bishop and overseen by the Church Council. The cycle is intended to bring proposed revisions to the subsequent Churchwide Assembly using standard protocol for social statements, including review by the Conference of Bishops and action of the Church Council. The listening and study phases of social statement development necessarily are constrained by focused topic and time, but the process "shall include at least a brief period of public comment on a draft of any proposed wording changes," occurring no later than 15 months before a Churchwide Assembly.

There are three strategic questions involved in a request for revision of a social statement:

- 1) How would the revision support the church's ministry?
- 2) What are the approximate costs involved?
- 3) What is the capacity of this church at this time?

It is the role of assembly debate to probe the first question, but this background can provide relevant information regarding the second and third questions. The estimated cost for a social statement revision is between \$75,000 to \$150,000 over the three-year period, depending on the extent of the work involved. Such costs include assembling a small task force and would necessarily involve hiring part-time contract staff. Given the current projects for social statement and social message development—which fill current churchwide organization staff capacity—additional budget or a delayed start until 2025 would seem to be required. (It should be noted that there are several other synod memorials to the 2022 Churchwide Assembly requesting the authorization of new social statement processes.) Decisions for budget and timing are the responsibility of the ELCA Church Council, but assembly voting members need to be aware of these factors.

The question of capacity involves not only budget and staff time but also the commitments of this church as a community of moral deliberation. That is, [the ELCA develops its social teaching and policy with broad participation from across this church](#) and invites member participation as well as review and input from the Conference of Bishops and Church Council. A revision of this kind requires less ELCA capacity than new social statement development but would nonetheless be sizeable.

### **Recommended for assembly action**

To receive with gratitude the memorials on “Review and Revision of LGBTQIA+ References in the ELCA Social Statement *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*” from the Greater Milwaukee Synod, Southeastern Synod, and Florida-Bahamas Synod;

To authorize a social statement reconsideration to revise *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* (2009) so that its wording reflects current church understanding, church policy, civil law, and public acceptance of marriage of same-gender and gender non-conforming couples in accordance with “Policies and Procedures of the ELCA for Addressing Social Concerns” (2018). While references would be reviewed throughout the whole statement, the following sections are designated for reconsideration as described here:

- “Marriage: shelter and context for trust” p.15. This would not reconsider the idea of marriage as shelter and context for trust but would consider the import that marriage legally is now a covenant between two individuals;
- “Lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships” p.18f. Revision here would not change this church’s current understanding that recognizes four identified positions of bound conscience within its life. p.19, but would review wording about “publicly accountable, lifelong monogamous same-sex relationships” in light of public acceptance of marriage of same-gender and gender-non-conforming couples;
- “Loving families: ground and source for social trust” p.21f. Review here would consider references to diversity of family configurations; and

To authorize the Office of the Presiding Bishop and Church Council to approve the parameters and expense budget of this process and identify the revenue source(s) to provide for this revision to be considered as early as the 2025 Churchwide Assembly.

### **Category C4: Social Statement on Homelessness**

#### **1. Sierra Pacific Synod (2A) [2022]**

WHEREAS, the ELCA develops social statements for the teaching and formation of its members, for guidance in the institutional life of our church, and for its service and advocacy in settings of government, ecumenical, and interfaith relationships; and

WHEREAS, our Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Scriptures that witness to the Word and work of God in the world call us again and again to serve and support those whose basic needs are not met; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA intends that social statements “seek to discern God’s will for today” by guiding us in developing a faithful understanding of and just response to current social issues; and

WHEREAS, in the most recent census the United States counted over half a million homeless individuals in January 2020, and statistics show that homelessness has been on the rise for the past five years and that the United States needs approximately 7 million affordable housing units to resolve the current housing crisis; and

WHEREAS, the most recent statement on homelessness from the ELCA was a social message adopted by the ELCA Church Council over thirty years ago; therefore be it

RESOLVED that the Sierra Pacific Synod in assembly memorializes the 2022 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to commit to developing a social statement on homelessness.

### **Background**

As indicated in this memorial’s “whereas” clauses, homelessness in the United States is an ongoing and tragic social problem, a crisis for many communities and the individuals who are without affordable housing. The 2020 census counted half a million people experiencing homelessness, but specialists widely believe the numbers of those without affordable housing (i.e., living in overcrowded situations with friends or family for short periods) is much higher. The substantial need for affordable housing is widely acknowledged.

The problems of homelessness are not recent and ELCA social teaching addressed the issue in 1990 with a social message—not a social statement as indicated in the last “whereas” clause. That message has served as the basis for teaching, advocacy, and action since that time. While not new, the dynamics of homelessness have evolved in the last 30 years and attention by social science and activists has brought greater understanding of the social dynamics involved, such as race and economics.

This memorial requests a new social statement on homelessness, which could be authorized by the 2022 Churchwide Assembly. However, there are two clear reasons why the topic more appropriately would be handled by a social message rather than a social statement. (More detail can be found in “[Policies and Procedures of the ELCA for Addressing Social Concerns](#)” (2018).) Social statements generally address the great social systems of contemporary life, while messages focus attention on special social topics—such as homelessness. In addition, the time, capacity, and cost of a social statement is dramatically more extensive.

A social statement requires six years with costs of approximately \$250,000 plus a substantial amount of staff time. Budget dollars provide for meetings of a blue-ribbon task force and provision of resources for their work. The

question of capacity involves not only budget and staff time but also leadership commitments across this church because this church develops its social teaching and policy as a community of moral deliberation. Development protocol involves three specific periods of broad-scale input from members as well as formal review at several points by the Conference of Bishops and Church Council. Generally speaking, there is ELCA-wide capacity for the development of one social statement during a six-year period. A social statement on government and civic engagement is in process, and there are four or more requests for social statements pending before the 2022 Churchwide Assembly.

For these reasons of purpose and size, it would seem that a social message on homelessness is more appropriate. Social messages are intended to be developed in about 12 months, calling upon a consultant group rather than a task force and involving substantially less time, cost, and capacity. There is, however, a public comment period on a draft, so ELCA commitment to moral deliberation remains a part of the process.

Since the 1990 social message already provides theological themes and social analysis, it also would seem that the concerns about its age are best considered as a request from the Churchwide Assembly to the Church Council for revision rather than starting from scratch. (See "[Policies and Procedures of the ELCA for Addressing Social Concerns](#)" (2018), p. 23.) This approach would build on the existing social message while allowing for an expansion of its text to bring to bear contemporary developments and analysis, without committing the ELCA to a six-year social statement process.

The Memorials Committee recognizes there are multiple definitions of home. Given the variety of definitions, the Memorial Committee suggests the title "homelessness" may not properly reflect the contemporary analysis for people seeking a permanent place of residence and that this should be taken into consideration during the review process.

### ***Recommended for assembly action***

**To receive with gratitude the memorial on "Social Statement on Homelessness" from the Sierra Pacific Synod; and  
To request that the Church Council consider authorizing the revision of the "Message on Homelessness" (1990) to reflect contemporary analysis of housing insecurity and its effects on individuals and communities.**

## Memorials considered as resolutions

## Appendix A

The Office of the Secretary has determined that six Synod Assembly memorials are resolutions that more properly should have been forwarded to Synod Councils. These resolutions were transmitted to the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America through its Executive Committee. Actions taken by the Church Council are in the Report of the Church Council, Section XI of the *Pre-Assembly Report*.

- Ethiopia [Minneapolis Area Synod (3G), 2021]
- Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act [Minneapolis Area Synod (3G) and Southeastern Iowa Synod (5D), 2022]
- Gender Representation and Inclusion [Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod (7E), 2021]
- Justice for the Rev. Nelson Rabell-Gonzalez [Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod (7F), 2022]
- LGBTQ+ Programming for Events [Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod (8G), 2022]

The Church Council voted in November 1988 “that future communications from synods will be dealt with according to ELCA constitutional and bylaw provisions.” This affirms that:

- Synod Assemblies address the Churchwide Assembly.
- Synod Councils address the Church Council.
- Synod Councils address churchwide units through the Church Council’s Executive Committee, including forwarding resolutions adopted by the Synod Assembly.

The content of a Synod Assembly’s action determines whether it is a memorial or a resolution. Generally, memorials are reserved for broad policy matters that are the primary work of the assembly. Resolutions concern implementation of policies that already have been established or specific requests that concern either work already assigned or work that is related to the responsibilities of churchwide units. For example, if a previous assembly has taken action to establish a policy, the work is underway. Advice about the work goes to those units carrying out this responsibility.

The Office of the Secretary has provided the following information for all synods prior to each Synod Assembly:

### Memorials

Memorials address broad policy issues. Only a Synod Assembly may address a memorial to the Churchwide Assembly. Synod Councils are not authorized to adopt memorials. One of the responsibilities of the Churchwide Assembly, in accordance with provision 12.21.c. of the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, is to “receive and consider proposals from Synod Assemblies.” Once received by the churchwide organization, memorials are referred to the Memorials Committee. Memorials must always include a final “resolved” clause asking the Churchwide Assembly to act (or refrain from acting) in a particular way.

RESOLVED, that the \_\_\_\_\_ Synod Assembly memorialize the [YEAR] Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to . . . [describe the proposed course or action for consideration.]

### Resolutions

Resolutions are requests from synods to the Church Council or units or offices of the churchwide organization. Synod councils may pass resolutions to the Church Council. Resolutions have a narrower focus than memorials because they are requests for consideration or action by the Church Council or by individual units or offices of the churchwide organization by way of the Church Council Executive Committee. Frequently, synod councils will pass resolutions between meetings of their Synod Assembly and forward them to the Church Council for consideration, or to the Church Council Executive Committee if the desired action involves referral to a unit or office of the churchwide organization.

The final “resolved” clause of resolutions will differ depending upon whether they are intended for the attention of the Church Council or a churchwide unit or office. For example:

RESOLVED, that the \_\_\_\_\_ Synod Assembly direct the \_\_\_\_\_ Synod Council to forward this resolution to the Church Council’s Executive Committee for proper referral and disposition under the bylaws and continuing resolutions of this church.

*Or*

RESOLVED, that the \_\_\_\_\_ Synod Council request the Church Council to ... [describe the proposed course of action].

*Or*

RESOLVED, that the \_\_\_\_\_ Synod Council request the Church Council's Executive Committee to ... [describe the proposed course of action].

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## Notice related to recommendations of Memorials Committee

## Appendix B

If a voting member desires the assembly to discuss a synod memorial or the Memorials Committee's response that is proposed for *en bloc* consideration, she or he may request that it be removed from the proposed *en bloc* resolution, provided the member's request is supported by ten other voting members. Such request shall be made in accordance with the following paragraph. The assembly then will consider and vote separately on the proposed response of the Memorials Committee. After removals, the *en bloc* resolution shall be voted upon without amendments or debate.

► **Separate consideration:** To call for such separate consideration, a voting member must submit notification electronically or on a paper form to the secretary of this church or the secretary's assistant prior to the established deadline on the memorials form. Paper forms are available from the secretary's assistant.

The **deadline** to submit a request for separate consideration of a recommended response to synod memorials or to offer a substitute response to synod memorials is **Tuesday, Aug. 9, 2022, at 11:45 a.m.**

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## Motion form

## Appendix C

With respect to any recommendation made by the Memorials Committee in this report, a voting member of the assembly may offer a substitute motion to the committee's recommendation only if such member has given notice electronically or on a paper form by the established deadline. For such notice, a voting member who desires to offer a substitute to the recommendation of the Memorials Committee must complete the memorials form and submit it to the secretary of this church or the secretary's assistant prior to the established deadline. In addition, the text of the proposed substitute should be submitted on a **motion form** electronically or on a paper form to the secretary or the secretary's assistant. Paper forms are available from the secretary's assistant.

Consultation with at least one of the co-chairs of the Memorials Committee is required when a substitute will be moved and is recommended when any other amendment will be proposed to the response recommended by the Memorials Committee.

The **deadline** to submit a request for separate consideration of a recommended response to synod memorials or to offer a substitute response to synod memorials is **Tuesday, Aug. 9, 2022, at 11:45 a.m.**