

November 14, 2007

To: Bishops of synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Secretaries of synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Vice Presidents of synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Members of the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Members of the Cabinet of Executives
Regional Coordinators

FROM: David D. Swartling, secretary

SUBJECT: Report of Responses to Synodical Resolutions by the Church Council
(November 9–11, 2007)

I. RESPONSES TO SYNODICAL RESOLUTIONS

A.1. CHAPLAINCY, PASTORAL COUNSELING, AND CLINICAL PASTORAL EDUCATION

Southwestern Washington Synod (1C)

WHEREAS, the Lutheran church has historically been a pioneer and leader in the delivery of chaplaincy services, pastoral counseling, and clinical pastoral education, dating from at least 1944 through the National Lutheran Council, the college chaplains of the American Protestant Hospital Association, the Lutheran Hospital Association, and the National Council of Churches Commission on Ministry in Institutions of Religion and Health; and

WHEREAS, in 1947 a conference of Lutheran professors of theology recommended that the National Lutheran Council explore possibilities of making adequate provision for the training of Lutheran institutional chaplains, and that it is recommended that each seminary of this church strengthen its own program with special courses and supervised field work; and

WHEREAS, in 1950 the Lutheran Advisory Council on Pastoral Care was formed and, in dialogue with the Lutheran theological professors, became the spokesperson for the Lutheran Church and the integrating agency for Lutheran clinical pastoral training; and

WHEREAS, in 1955 an agreement was reached between the National Lutheran Council and the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod relative to chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, and clinical pastoral education; and

WHEREAS, in 1962 Henry Cassler became the secretary to the National Lutheran Council and in 1967 Walter Baepler became an associate director of the National Lutheran Council and in 1977 David Farley was added as an associate director upon the resignation of Henry Cassler; and

WHEREAS, the Commission for a New Lutheran Church at

the formation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in 1988 recommended one staff person for the Office of Chaplaincy, Pastoral Counseling, Clinical Pastoral Education; and

WHEREAS, the Division for Ministry reduced this position to two-thirds and one-third candidacy in about 1994; and

WHEREAS, this staff position was further reduced to quarter-time consultant in 2003; and

WHEREAS, since from 1988 to 2005 there has been a reduction of rostered persons in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America serving in the field of chaplaincy, pastoral counseling and clinical pastoral education from 1000 to 690; a reduction of certified pastoral education training supervisors from 148 to 51 active supervisors; and a reduction from 429 rostered, endorsed, and certified persons serving in chaplaincy, pastoral counseling and clinical pastoral education in 1995 to 355 in 2005; and

WHEREAS, the seminaries of the ELCA require a unit (1600) hours of clinical pastoral education of students before graduation from seminary, and the dramatic decline in Lutheran clinical pastoral education supervisors limits opportunities for Lutheran seminary students to serve their clinical pastoral education within a Lutheran context; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Washington Synod Assembly direct the Southwestern Washington Synod Council to forward this resolution to the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for consideration and possible action to correct this departure from the rich historical tradition of Lutheran leadership in the field of chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, and clinical pastoral education, and take action to rectify the dramatic decline of rostered persons called to serve in these missional ministries of the ELCA.

**A.2. CHAPLAINCY, PASTORAL COUNSELING, AND CLINICAL PASTORAL EDUCATION
Southeastern Iowa Synod (5D)**

WHEREAS, the Lutheran Church historically has been a pioneer and leader in the delivery of chaplaincy services, pastoral counseling, and clinical pastoral education, dating from at least 1944 through the National Lutheran Council, the College of Chaplains of the American Protestant Hospital Association, the Lutheran Hospital Association, and the National Council of Churches Commission on Ministry in Institutions of Religion and Health; and

WHEREAS, in 1947 a conference of Lutheran professors of theology recommended that the National Lutheran Council explore possibilities of making adequate provision for the training of Lutheran institutional chaplains and recommended that each seminary of this church strengthen its own program with special courses and supervised field work; and

WHEREAS, in 1950 the Lutheran Advisory Council on Pastoral Care was formed and, in dialogue with the Lutheran theological professors, became the spokesperson for the Lutheran Church and the integrating agency for Lutheran clinical pastoral training; and

WHEREAS, in 1955 an agreement was reached between the National Lutheran Council and the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod relative to chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, and clinical pastoral education; and

WHEREAS, in 1962 Henry Cassler became the secretary to the National Lutheran Council; in 1967 Walter Baepler became an associate director of the National Lutheran Council; and in 1977 David Farley was added as an associate director upon the resignation of Henry Cassler; and

WHEREAS, the Commission for a New Lutheran Church at the formation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in 1988 recommended one staff person for the Office of Chaplaincy, Pastoral Counseling, and Clinical Pastoral Education; and

WHEREAS, the Division for Ministry subsequently reduced this position to a two-thirds time position and further reduced it to a quarter-time consultant in 2003; and

WHEREAS, from 1988 to 2005 there has been a reduction of rostered persons in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America serving in the field of chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, and clinical pastoral education from 1000 to 690; a reduction of certified pastoral education training supervisors from 148 to 51 active supervisors; and a reduction from 429 rostered, endorsed, and certified persons serving in chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, and clinical pastoral education in 1995 to 355 in 2005; and

WHEREAS, the seminaries of the ELCA require one unit (400) hours of clinical pastoral education of students before graduation from seminary and 1600 hours of clinical pastoral education for endorsement for ministries in chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, and clinical education (formerly called specialized pastoral care), and the dramatic decline in Lutheran clinical pastoral education supervisors limits opportunities for Lutheran seminary students to serve their clinical pastoral education within a Lutheran context; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Iowa Synod request that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America take action to correct the departure from the rich historical tradition of Lutheran leadership in the field of chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, and clinical pastoral education,

reverse the neglect of the nurture of Lutheran chaplains, pastoral counselors, and clinical pastoral education supervisors, and take action to rectify the dramatic decline of rostered persons called to serve in these missional ministries of the ELCA; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Iowa 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; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Synod Council request that the Church Council report to the 2007 Southeastern Iowa Synod Assembly the actions taken and the progress made in this matter.

Background provided to the 2007 Churchwide Assembly Memorials Committee by the Vocation and Education unit

From 1988 through the reorganization of the churchwide organization in 2005, the former Division for Ministry was responsible for churchwide relationships with ministries of chaplaincy, pastoral care, and clinical education (MCPCCE). Since then, these relationships have been overseen through the Vocation and Education unit.

The 2003 Churchwide Assembly adopted the social statement, "Caring for Health: Our Shared Endeavor." That statement includes attention to these areas of ministry, and one of the implementing resolutions requested a study of the "current trends and future needs for ministries in health-care chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, spiritual direction, and clinical education," and also a study of the "clinical and academic education needed for the future of these ministries." A report on this study was presented to the Vocation and Education program committee in March 2007. The bulk of the material from that report is incorporated here because it is current and addresses the concerns of the synodical memorials.

The Church Council at its November 2006 meeting considered similar resolutions and took the following action [CC06.11.57]:

To receive the resolutions of the Southwestern Washington Synod, the Southeastern Iowa Synod, and the Southeastern Synod related to chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, and clinical pastoral education; and

To refer the resolution to the Vocation and Education unit with a request that a report and possible recommendations be brought to the November 2007 meeting of the Church Council.

The churchwide organization had engaged previously in careful consideration of this church's needs and opportunities in MCPCCE. In 2000 a "Strategic Plan for Specialized Pastoral Care and Clinical Education" was

developed by a planning team. That plan restated the importance of health-care chaplaincy, pastoral care, and clinical education in the ELCA and laid out an ambitious set of goals for these ministries and various expressions of this church. Not all goals of the plan were adopted by the unit's board, nor have all been met. Nevertheless, they have guided the churchwide role into a focus on consultation with synod leadership and implementation of the ecclesiastical endorsement system for the ELCA.

The work of the churchwide organization related to MCPCE is overseen through the Vocation and Education unit's leadership workgroup. MCPCE is part of the portfolio of the director for rostered and authorized ministries. A part-time consultant and nine regional consultants—who receive a small honorarium—do the bulk of the organizational and consultative work. It is the responsibility of each regional consultant to work with the synodical bishops so that there will be an active MCPCE liaison in each of the 65 synods. A Vocation and Education administrative assistant handles all the paper work for the ecclesiastical endorsement process. Twenty volunteers across this church serve as conveners for the endorsement panels that serve the process. Although Vocation and Education unit staff members and the program committee would be pleased to have more extensive staffing in this arena, they agree that present and projected financial realities make that impossible. More importantly, they agree that the present system is working well and that synods are the primary location for developing and supporting MCPCE leadership.

Through the Inter-Lutheran Coordinating Committee for Ministries in Chaplaincy, Pastoral Counseling, and Clinical Education (ILCC), the ELCA participates with The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod in a process of ecclesiastical endorsement that determines an individual to be both a recognized (i.e., rostered) minister in good standing and one who has met the appropriate criteria for ecclesiastical endorsement for ministries in MCPCE. This endorsement, combined with an individual's professional certification, helps establish criteria for persons to serve as qualified and certified health-care chaplains and pastoral counselors. There is a similar process for persons endorsed and certified to be clinical education supervisors. A summary of procedures for ecclesial endorsement is included in the ELCA Manual of Policies and Procedures for the Management of the Rosters. The full process is explained in the newly revised ILCC manual, "Ministries in Chaplaincy, Pastoral Counseling, and Clinical Education: Endorsement Standards and Procedures, Call Criteria, Program Guidelines."

Current Trends and Future Needs

There continues to be an obvious need for qualified persons to serve as health-care chaplains. The emphasis within the health-care industry for higher standards in

health-care delivery, including chaplaincy programs, amplifies the importance of the systems that provide for ecclesiastical endorsement and for professional certification. There has been some decline in the number of ELCA ordained or consecrated rostered ministers with ecclesiastical endorsement serving in the ministries of chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, and clinical education. In 1995 there were a total of 429 rostered persons with ecclesiastical endorsement and professional certification serving in health-care chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, and clinical education; in 2006 the number had declined to 366 persons. Age profiles of those presently serving suggest that the decline in numbers may continue. One area of particular concern is the decline in the number of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) programs available and the decline in the number of ELCA chaplains certified to lead such programs. On the other hand, in 2006, twenty-six rostered leaders received endorsement for ministries in chaplaincy, pastoral care and clinical education. That is an addition of seven percent to those serving in the prior year, suggesting that there is strong, growing interest in these ministries, despite some declines in prior years.

Demographic trends and changes in health care in this country likely will create a need to increase the number of qualified and professionally trained pastoral care providers, though perhaps in different service configurations and with new skills. The decline in the number of rostered persons in the ELCA who serve in these ministries should be reversed if the ELCA is to continue to have its traditional proportional and leadership representation in the field. Lutheran health and social service institutions are part of one of the largest ministry networks in this country. Many of the available and needed positions are in ELCA institutions, but ELCA ministers also serve in other private and in public institutions.

Seminaries and synods can play important roles in communicating the need for qualified people to serve in those ministries and in facilitating preparation and support. The establishment of the roster of ELCA diaconal ministers in 1995 and the continuation of the ELCA Deaconess Community are areas of potential growth, as these two lay rosters focus on service ministries, often at the edges of the institutional church. Some associates in ministry also prepare for and serve in these roles. Along with these ministries of Word and Service, there continues to be a need for ordained ministers of Word and Sacrament in MCPCE roles. Both the Master of Arts degree and the Master of Divinity degree offered by ELCA seminaries can provide the appropriate academic background for people preparing to serve in MCPCE ministries. The additional requirements for clinical education and supervised fieldwork enable an individual to seek ecclesiastical endorsement and professional certification.

Those exploring or beginning candidacy for ordained or consecrated ministries—as well as those already serving in rostered ministry—can be invited to consider serving in a ministry in health-care chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, or clinical education. Students in ELCA seminaries are eligible for a variety of general financial assistance. It would be useful if additional funding sources were developed to make possible the specialized learning required for many MCPCCCE ministries, notably additional training and clinical supervision. The Vocation and Education unit currently provides very limited scholarship assistance for qualified ELCA candidates and also shares in an inter-Lutheran scholarship fund that was established to provide financial assistance to qualified people from both the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod.

MCPCCCE and the Vocation and Education program unit

As indicated above, good structures are in place for supporting, encouraging, and monitoring needs and opportunities for ministry in chaplaincy, pastoral care, and clinical education. Through staff members and the regional and synodical representatives, the Vocation and Education program unit will continue to lift up the importance of having an ample cadre of qualified people both to serve as endorsed and certified health-care chaplains, pastoral counselors, and clinical educators and to facilitate the endorsement and support processes. These ministers provide pastoral care for people at critical life and death junctures and are trained to provide the theological and spiritual dimensions in health care and to demonstrate God’s gracious and healing presence in life, as described in the “biblical and theological perspectives” section of “Caring for Health: Our Shared Endeavor.”

The Vocation and Education unit has systematized the way in which new bishops and synod staff members are made aware of the ELCA’s commitment to and processes for MCPCCCE. The unit also is more regularly convening its nine regional MCPCCCE representatives for planning to address needs identified in the various studies and reports. The focus is on support to synods, seminaries, and the various networks engaged in this work. This group facilitates and monitors ecclesiastical endorsements by the ELCA. The Vocation and Education unit will continue to cooperate through the Inter-Lutheran Coordinating Committee for these.

With sustained support from the churchwide organization, primary responsibility for ministries in chaplaincy, pastoral care, and clinical education will continue to be in synods. In the synods, staff and other leaders can be more directly aware of those serving or having the potential to serve in these ministries and can actively recruit, offer preparation, and facilitate support. In collaboration with synods and their candidacy committees, and with clinical education programs,

seminaries will continue to play a critical role in invitation and preparation.

2007 Churchwide Assembly Action

The 2007 Churchwide Assembly voted [07.06.33p]:

To receive the memorials of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, Northwestern Ohio Synod, North Carolina Synod, Minneapolis Area Synod, and Metropolitan Chicago Synod concerning the ministries of chaplaincy, pastoral care, and clinical education (MCPCCCE);

To commend and thank those who currently serve in ministries of chaplaincy, pastoral care, and clinical education;

To encourage other rostered leaders and candidates for rostered ministry to consider and to prepare for such ministries;

To thank ELCA synods and seminaries for their facilitation of ministries and ministers in chaplaincy, pastoral care, and clinical education, and to encourage the synods and seminaries of this church to recruit actively and collaboratively for such service and to offer continuing and expanded support and preparation opportunities, including scholarship aid;

To affirm the Vocation and Education unit staff, its consultants, and the regional and synodical MCPCCCE representatives for their work in these arenas and for their focused and ongoing planning; to encourage the unit’s continued advocacy for chaplaincy, pastoral care, and clinical education ministries;

To acknowledge the action on this subject taken by the Church Council at its November 2006 meeting [CC06.11.57]:

To receive the resolutions of the Southwestern Washington Synod, the Southeastern Iowa Synod, and the Southeastern Synod related to chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, and clinical pastoral education; and

To refer the resolution to the Vocation and Education unit with a request that a report and possible recommendations be brought to the November 2007 meeting of the Church Council; and

To refer the memorials to the Vocation and Education unit as additional information as it prepares its report for the November 2007 meeting of the Church Council.

Church Council Action:

To thank the Southwestern Washington and the Southeastern Iowa Synods for bringing attention to the issue of chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, and pastoral care; and

To acknowledge the action of the 2007 Churchwide Assembly [CA07.06.33p] as the response of the Church Council to these resolutions; and

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

B. CRIMINAL JUSTICE

South Dakota Synod (3C)

WHEREAS, Jesus instructs us that ministry to those in prison is ministry to him (Matthew 25:31-46), and as faithful disciples we desire to model charity and justice toward those who commit crimes, as well as to offer care and support for those who suffer the effects of crime; and

WHEREAS, the United States now incarcerates over 2.2 million of its citizens, giving it the highest *per capita* rate of people in prison of any nation in the world with an incarceration rate of 726 per 100,000*; and

WHEREAS, funding appropriations for prisons has grown, diverting funds from other state programs such as education and human services; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the 2006 South Dakota Synod Assembly encourage its congregations to promote education on prison issues, to pray for ministries to those in prison and for those who work and serve in the prison systems, and to advocate for sufficient funding for alternatives to incarceration, for prevention services for children and families, and for aftercare of inmates; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2006 South Dakota Synod Assembly ask the Church in Society unit to consider and recommend the best ways for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to promote education on prison issues, to pray for ministries to those in prison and for those who work and serve in the prison systems, and to advocate for sufficient funding for alternatives to incarceration, for prevention services for children and families, and for aftercare of inmates; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2006 South Dakota Synod Assembly direct the South Dakota Synod Council to forward this resolution to the Executive Committee of the Church Council for proper referral and disposition under the bylaws and continuing resolutions of this church.

**Source of information: American Correctional Association*

Background Information:

The 2007 Churchwide Assembly received memorials from the Rocky Mountain Synod, South Dakota Synod, and La Crosse Area Synod concerning criminal justice and calling for a social statement on the topic. The assembly voted:

To thank the Rocky Mountain Synod, South Dakota Synod and La Crosse Area Synod for their concern for this important social issue that affects those incarcerated, their families, and the broader society;

To direct the Church in Society unit to

develop a social statement on criminal justice, in accordance with “Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns” (2006), for possible consideration at the 2013 Churchwide Assembly.

It is anticipated that the proposed social statement will address the issues raised in the resolution from the South Dakota Synod.

Church Council Action:

To thank the South Dakota Synod for bringing attention to the issue of criminal justice and urging people to pray for prisoners, prison systems, and for those who work in prison systems;

To acknowledge the action of the 2007 Churchwide Assembly calling for the Church in Society unit to develop a social statement on criminal justice as the response of the Church Council to this resolution;

To refer the resolution to the task force for the criminal justice social statement; and

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

C. IMPROVEMENTS IN THE PENSION DISABILITY PLAN Northern Great Lakes Synod (5G)

WHEREAS, congregations of the Northern Great Lakes Synod and congregations of all the synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America make a monthly contribution to the Board of Pensions for the disability benefit program; and

WHEREAS, each congregation with clergy under call expects to receive certain financial benefits for their person(s) under call and for relief of other financial obligations for health insurance benefits and pension benefits when a medical disability would occur; and

WHEREAS, the current language of the plan reads that this benefit shall not apply to any person who has reached the full benefit retirement age as defined by Social Security; and

WHEREAS, the Northern Great Lakes Synod has clergy under call who have exceeded the full retirement age as defined by Social Security and other synods also have clergy under call who have reached this same benchmark in their life passage; indeed, there were 392 pastors under call in this church who, because they have exceeded the Social Security full retirement age, are not under this benefit even as their congregations are paying for it; and

WHEREAS, the clergy shortage within this church will only increase the number of pastors who are over 65 years of age and still serving under call; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Northern Great Lakes Synod meeting in assembly hereby memorializes the 2007 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to require the Board of Pensions to amend the disability benefit program for this church to provide to those workers of this church under call who have passed full benefit retirement age a temporary total

disability benefit equal to the current benefit, but not to exceed a predetermined time limit, such as six months from the onset of the disability.

Response of the ELCA Board of Pensions

The Northern Great Lakes Synod has brought attention to the need for disability benefits for the increasing number of pastors who are working beyond Social Security’s normal retirement age. In addition the synod has pointed out an inconsistency between the ELCA Disability Plan’s benefit provisions and the related contributions billed to congregations and other sponsoring employers.

The ELCA Disability Benefits Plan provides for benefits to be paid until “expected retirement ages,” or earlier recovery or death. Currently the plan defines “expected retirement age” as the member’s Social Security normal retirement age, which ranges from age 66 to 67, depending on the member’s year of birth.

The ELCA Board of Pensions has taken action to address the needs identified by the Northern Great Lakes Synod. If approved by the trustees of the ELCA Board of Pensions at its meeting on August 5, 2007, effective January 1, 2008, the ELCA Disability Benefits Plan will no longer exclude those who are working beyond Social Security normal retirement age. Instead it will provide that all sponsored members are eligible for disability benefits regardless of age, subject to the following maximum period of payment:

Age at Disability	Maximum period of payment
Less than 63	To Social Security normal retirement age
63	To Social Security normal retirement age, but not less than 36 months
64	To Social Security normal retirement age, but not less than 30 months
65	24 months
66	21 months
67	18 months
68	15 months
69 and over	12 months

The plan’s benefits will remain the same for all who become disabled, regardless of the age at disability. Those benefits include replacement of 2/3 of the member’s

pre-disability income plus continuation of health, survivor and retirement plan contributions.

With regard to contributions, congregations will continue to be billed for those working beyond Social Security normal retirement age. With the change in benefit provisions, there will no longer be an inconsistency between the plan’s benefit provisions and the related contributions.

Church Council Action:

To thank the Northern Great Lakes Synod for raising up the need to revise the ELCA Disability Plan benefit provisions to better meet the needs of pastors who are serving beyond Social Security normal retirement age and the congregations that sponsor those pastors; and

To acknowledge and support the benefit changes being implemented by the ELCA Board of Pensions to address those needs; and

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

D. CHANGE THE POLICY OF THE MISSION INVESTMENT FUND

Texas–Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod (4F)

Note: This resolution was conceived as a memorial by the synod. The Memorials Committee requested and the 2007 Churchwide Assembly voted that it be considered by the Executive Committee of the Church Council as a resolution.

WHEREAS, congregations directly affected by natural or human-made disasters need to minister to the suffering people in their communities without becoming overly preoccupied with their own financial needs and economic viability; and

WHEREAS, some secular financial institutions, such as banks and credit card companies, graciously have deferred, postponed, and even canceled payments for some disaster customers; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Mission Investment Fund of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) be encouraged to work in collaboration with synods to assist ELCA congregations impacted by natural disaster. This assistance could include, but not be limited to, appropriate modifications, such as a moratorium on loan or rental payments or a reduction in an outstanding loan balance; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Texas–Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod, meeting in assembly, direct the Texas–Louisiana Gulf Coast 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.

Executive Committee Action:

The Executive Committee voted [EC07.10.28f]:

To receive the resolution of the Texas–Louisiana Gulf Synod requesting a change in the

policy of the Mission Investment Fund;

To refer the resolution to the Office of the Presiding Bishop in consultation with the Church in Society unit and ELCA Disaster Response with the request that the report on the consultation on disaster response anticipated at the November 2007 meeting of the ELCA Church Council address the issues raised by the synod; and

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

Response from the Mission Investment Fund

The Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod has asked that the Mission Investment Fund of the ELCA “be encouraged to work in collaboration with synods to assist ELCA congregations impacted by natural disaster.” The Mission Investment Fund (MIF) both appreciates the importance of partnership of congregations with synods in working to respond to the complex construction and financial issues that often develop as a result of natural disasters and welcomes the opportunity to provide experience and resources where possible to support congregations. When a disaster occurs, the Mission Investment Fund will:

1. Be in contact with the synods and assist as appropriate in assessing damage, advising on property matters, and consulting on financial issues in order to determine some possible steps to assist the congregation.
2. Consult collaboratively with synods in response to any suggestions and requests for special assistance from the MIF.
3. Maintain regular communications throughout the period of recovery, focusing on the best way to be good stewards of the resources entrusted to MIF, while also supporting the mission and ministry of the synod and the ELCA.

Church Council:

To request that the information provided by the Mission Investment Fund of the ELCA be the response of the Church Council to the resolution of the Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod related to the suspension of transactions; and

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

E.1. CLERGY FOR DISASTER AREAS

Texas–Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod (4F)

Note: This resolution was conceived as a memorial by the synod. The Memorials Committee requested and the 2007 Churchwide Assembly voted that it be considered by the Executive Committee of the Church Council as a resolution.

WHEREAS, in the wake of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the

financial, emotional, and spiritual burdens on congregations afflicted by disaster have increased enormously; and

WHEREAS, a number of congregations in the Texas–Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod have been unable to call pastoral staff to lead them because of the uncertainty of their circumstances in the wake of the hurricanes; and

WHEREAS, the finances of some disaster-stricken congregations have been so devastated that they are unable to compensate adequately their pastors so that they can continue to live in the communities where they have been called to serve; and

WHEREAS, the pastoral staffs of other congregations have been taxed severely as a result of their responsibility not merely to lead their own congregations but to assist in the support and rebuilding of other congregations destroyed—or placed at risk—by the hurricanes and their aftermath; and

WHEREAS, there is a need for an intentional commitment on the part of this church to provide additional ordained leadership in times of crisis in order to assist those churches in need of pastoral staff and to provide relief to those pastors who have struggled without respite since these disasters; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that:

1. the presiding bishop promptly undertake to identify and create a list of retired rostered clergy and chaplains who are willing to serve in disaster-stricken areas as intentional interim pastoral staff for those congregations that need pastors or to provide respite and relief to existing pastoral staff in disaster-stricken communities and congregations that need additional help; and
2. the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America provide resources sufficient to fund the amounts necessary to pay interim and permanent pastoral staff salaries (if local congregations lack the means to do so) in order to permit rostered clergy and chaplains to return to the service of this church in disaster-stricken areas; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Texas–Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod Assembly direct the Texas–Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod Council to forward this resolution for proper referral and disposition under the bylaws and continuing resolutions of this church.

Executive Committee Response:

The Executive Committee voted: [EC07.10.28c]:

To receive the resolution of the Texas–Louisiana Gulf Synod related to clergy for disaster areas;

To refer the resolution to the Office of the Presiding Bishop in consultation with the Church in Society unit and ELCA Disaster Response with the request that the report on the consultation on disaster response anticipated at the November 2007 meeting of the ELCA Church Council address the issues raised by the synod; and

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

E.2. DISASTER RESPONSE

Texas–Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod (4F)

Note: This resolution was conceived as a memorial by the synod. The Memorials Committee requested and the 2007 Churchwide Assembly voted that it be considered by the Executive Committee of the Church Council as a resolution.

WHEREAS, Hurricanes Katrina and Rita taught many valuable lessons to be learned about disaster response; and

WHEREAS, the faith communities of the Gulf Coast areas, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and the world responded with great generosity and love; and

WHEREAS, the presence of local pastors and congregations became beacons of hope and visible signs of Christ; and

WHEREAS, the local congregations and their church facilities should be spiritual centers in the relief response and long-term recovery efforts as well as a public witness to the core values of Lutheran communities; and

WHEREAS, Lutheran Disaster Response does not allocate money for the financial support of pastors and staff, rebuilding of church buildings, or congregational ministries devastated by a disaster; and

WHEREAS, the gap of coverage for churches and their staff impacted by a disaster is one of the lessons from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita as well as after other disasters which have hit this country; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Texas–Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod, meeting in assembly, requests that the Evangelical Outreach and Congregational Mission unit of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America develop a clear, immediate, and effective response plan to assist local pastors and congregations in disaster areas; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Texas–Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod Assembly direct the Texas–Louisiana Gulf Coast 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.

Executive Committee Action:

The Executive Committee voted (EC07.10.28d):

To receive the resolution of the Texas–Louisiana Gulf Synod related to disaster response;

To refer the resolution to the Office of the Presiding Bishop in consultation with the Church in Society unit and ELCA Disaster Response with the request that the report on the consultation on disaster response anticipated at the November 2007 meeting of the ELCA Church Council address the issues raised by the synod; and

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

E.3. CHANGE THE POLICY OF LUTHERAN DISASTER RESPONSE

Texas–Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod (4F)

Note: This resolution was conceived as a memorial by the synod. The Memorials Committee requested and the 2007 Churchwide Assembly voted that it be considered by the Executive Committee of the Church Council as a resolution.

WHEREAS, the current policy and practice of Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR) does not allow money contributed to LDR to be used for the rebuilding of churches devastated by disaster; and

WHEREAS, that policy forces local congregations to hustle and scramble in search of alternate financial assistance for their rebuilding; and

WHEREAS, many contributors to LDR naturally assume that their donations also will be used for the rebuilding of Lutheran churches; and

WHEREAS, current policy and practice often lead pastors and congregations to be preoccupied with finding the financial resources to rebuild their structures, diverting time, effort, and money away from the other ministries of the congregations; and

WHEREAS, the current policy and practice has caused bewilderment, outrage, and resentment among members of devastated churches and has caused a public relations blunder for LDR in recently ravaged areas; and

WHEREAS, it is the local congregation that provides hope, compassion, and physical help to its community and therefore needs immediate support following a disaster; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the practice and policy of the Lutheran Disaster Response immediately be changed in order to free up both current and future donations to Lutheran Disaster Response for use in the rebuilding of church facilities affected by disaster; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Texas–Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod Assembly direct the Texas–Louisiana Gulf Coast 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.

Executive Committee Action:

To receive the resolution of the Texas–Louisiana Gulf Synod requesting a change in the policy of Lutheran Disaster Response;

To refer the resolution to the Office of the Presiding Bishop in consultation with the Church in Society unit and ELCA Disaster Response with the request that the report on the consultation on disaster response anticipated at the November 2007 meeting of the ELCA Church Council address the issues raised by the synod; and

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

Church Council Action:

To acknowledge the report of the ELCA Disaster Response Consultation and the action of the Church Council as the response of the Church Council to the resolutions of the Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod related to clergy for disaster areas, the policy of Lutheran Disaster Response, and this church's disaster response;

To request that the report and the action of the Church Council be transmitted as information to the synod; and

To anticipate additional response by the Church Council at its November 2008 meeting.

II. RESPONSES TO CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY REFERRALS DIRECTED TO THE CHURCH COUNCIL

Since this was the first Church Council meeting after the 2007 Churchwide Assembly, no responses to assembly referrals were on the council's agenda.