

April 1, 2009

To: Bishops of synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Vice Presidents of synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Secretaries 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 by the Church Council to Synodical Actions
(March 27–30, 2009)

I. RESPONSES TO SYNODICAL RESOLUTIONS

A. EXHORTATION FOR CHANGE IN POLICIES

Minneapolis Area Synod (3G)

WHEREAS, this church asks Candidacy Committees to steward the gifts of leadership that God bestows on those called to prepare for rostered ministry; and

WHEREAS, this church asks Candidacy Committees to uphold the standards for rostered leadership in this church, such as those set forth in “Vision and Expectations”; and

WHEREAS, this church’s present policies occasionally make it impossible for Candidacy Committees faithfully to fulfill both objectives, such that highly qualified candidates may not be Approved and Called, as in the situation of a wondrously gifted young woman to whom the Minneapolis Area Synod’s Candidacy Committee wrote in its Approval decision:

We would enthusiastically recommend for Approval this outstanding candidate were it not for the conflict between her desire to be open to a committed same-gender relationship and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America’s “Vision and Expectations” for rostered leaders. That is the sole reason we are not at this time acting to approve this gifted candidate. Instead, and with regret, we recommend postponement of Approval for Diaconal Ministry until such time as this church (the ELCA) modifies its policies in such a way that her ministry may be received without reservation;

therefore; be it

RESOLVED, that the Synod Council of the Minneapolis Area Synod exhort the Church Council of the ELCA to support the development and implementation of policies to allow the Entrance, Endorsement, and Approval for Call of all qualified candidates for rostered ministry, including those drawn to be in a committed relationship with a person of the same gender, for the sake

for the mission entrusted to us through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Church Council Action:

To receive the resolution of the Minneapolis Area Synod requesting a change in ministry policies related to candidates for rostered ministry who are in committed, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships;

To acknowledge the action of the Church Council related to the Report and Recommendation on Ministry Policies as the response to the resolution; and

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

B. RESOLUTION AFFIRMING MARRIAGE

South Dakota Synod (3C)

WHEREAS, the 2008 South Dakota Synod Assembly asked the South Dakota Synod Council “to submit responses regarding sexuality to the ELCA Church Council regarding the Task Force’s final draft of a proposed ELCA Social Statement on Human Sexuality and regarding its recommendations on whether to change ELCA policy to permit persons in same-sex sexual relationships to serve as pastors and other rostered leaders in the ELCA prior to the ELCA Church Council’s March 2009 meeting and to make the responses available to members of the congregations of the South Dakota Synod (for example, by posting the responses to the synod web site and by including them in the ‘Synod Scene’)”; and

WHEREAS, the South Dakota Synod Assembly has adopted several resolutions in recent years expressing the will of this synod on matters of sexuality including:

- 2008 - Participation in Process Toward ELCA Social Statement on Human Sexuality (Resolution 5);
- 2007 - Honoring the ELCA Study Process for a Social Statement on Human Sexuality (Resolution 6);

- 2005 - Amending & Opposing Church Council Recommendations (Resolution 13);
- 2005 - Resolution of Thanksgiving and Encouragement for the ELCA's Study on Human Sexuality (Resolution 4);
- 2004 - ALC Social Statement on Human Sexuality (Resolution 8);
- 2004 - Congregational Ratification of Any Measures Passed at ELCA Churchwide Assemblies Allowing the Blessing of "Same-Sex" Unions and/or Rostering Non-celibate Gay and Lesbian Persons (Resolution 7);
- 2004 - Response to ELCA Sexuality Studies (Resolution 9);
- 2003 - On Affirming Traditional Marriage Conventions and Family Structures (Resolution 10);
- 2002 - Final Ratification of Changes Regarding the Blessing of Same-Sex Unions and/or Regarding Ordination of Non-celibate Gay and Lesbian Persons to be considered by the ELCA Churchwide Assembly (Resolution 14A);
- 2001 - Resolution on Human Sexuality (Resolution 13); and

WHEREAS, the Lutheran Confessions state: "We believe, teach, and confess that the only rule and guiding principle according to which all teachings and teachers are to be evaluated and judged are the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments alone" (*Book of Concord*, Formula of Concord, Epitome, Rule & Norm); and

WHEREAS, the Confession of Faith of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America states: "This church accepts the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired Word of God and the authoritative source and norm of its proclamation, faith, and life" (ELCA constitution provision 2.03.); and

WHEREAS, Jesus taught that "from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate;" (Mark 10:6-9; Jesus is quoting Genesis 1:27 and Genesis 2:24); and

WHEREAS, the Lutheran Confessions, in Martin Luther's Large Catechism, teach regarding marriage and the Sixth Commandment: "You should carefully note, first, how highly God honors and praises this walk of life, endorsing and protecting it by his commandment. He endorsed it above in the Fourth Commandment, 'You shall honor father and mother.' But here, as I said, he has secured and protected it. For the following reasons he also wishes us to honor, maintain, and cherish it as a divine and blessed walk of life. He has established it before all others as the first of all institutions, and he created man and woman differently (as is evident) not for indecency but to be true to each other, to be fruitful, to beget children, and to nurture and bring them up to the glory of God. God has therefore blessed this walk of life most richly, above all others, and, in addition, has supplied and endowed it with everything in the world in order that this walk of life might be richly provided for. Married life is no matter for jest or idle curiosity, but it is a glorious institution and an object of God's serious concern" (*Book of Concord*, The Large Catechism, Sixth Commandment); and

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America currently teaches that "Marriage is a lifelong covenant of faithfulness between a man and a woman" ("Sexuality: Some Common Convictions: A Message of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America," 1996); and

WHEREAS, the Lutheran Church in America, one of the predecessor churches of the ELCA, taught that "Christian faith affirms marriage as a covenant of fidelity—a dynamic, lifelong commitment of one man and one woman in a personal and sexual union" and that "Marriage is ordained by God as a structure of the created order" ("Sex, Marriage, and Family: A Social Statement of the Lutheran Church in America," 1970); and

WHEREAS, The American Lutheran Church, one of the predecessor churches of the ELCA, taught that "Scripture sets the standard of a lifelong monogamous marriage of one man and one woman" ("Human Sexuality and Sexual Behavior: A Social Statement of The American Lutheran Church," 1980) and that "Marriage is a structure of human life built into the creation by the Creator. It builds upon our creation as male and female (Gen. 1:27). Sexual differences are of God's good design, intended to bring joy and enrichment to human life as well as to provide for procreation. The essence of marriage is that in the act and relationships of marriage two persons become one flesh (Gen. 2:24). In this complementary nature of the two sexes as God created them lies the basis for marriage and each new family" ("Teachings and Practice on Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage: A Social Statement of The American Lutheran Church," 1982); and

WHEREAS, the 2008 draft social statement on human sexuality taught that "Marriage is a structure of mutual promises between a man and woman blessed by God (Mark 10:7-9) and authorized in a legal arrangement required by the state"; and

WHEREAS, some members of the ELCA are asking the ELCA to change the definition of marriage or merely to acknowledge that "marriage has historically been understood as" between a man and a woman;¹

WHEREAS, the 2009 proposed ELCA Social Statement, "Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust," removed language from the first draft that defined marriage as between a man and woman and now merely acknowledges that "the historic Christian tradition and the Lutheran Confessions have recognized marriage as a covenant between a man and a woman" and notes that some "conclude that marriage is also the appropriate term to use in describing similar benefits, protection, and support for same-gender couples entering into lifelong monogamous relationships" ("Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust," pages 15-16); and

WHEREAS, ELCA pastors promise "to preach and teach in accordance with the Holy Scriptures and the Confessions of the Lutheran Church" when they are ordained and installed (Rite for

¹ Lutherans Concerned/North America, "Response to the ELCA Draft Social Statement on Human Sexuality," http://www.lcna.org/lcna_downloads/lcna_draft_social_statement_response.pdf. This document states that changes in teaching on marriage are "the most important changes to be made in the Draft Social Statement."

Installation of a Pastor, *LBW Occasional Services*, page 225); and

WHEREAS, the Church Council will meet March 27–30 and has the opportunity to amend the proposed Social Statement on Human Sexuality before recommending the text that will be considered by the 2009 Churchwide Assembly; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the South Dakota Synod Council affirm this synod’s commitment to marriage as a lifelong covenant of faithfulness between a man and a woman in faithfulness to Scripture and in keeping with the ELCA Message “Sexuality: Some Common Convictions” and predecessor church social statements; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the South Dakota Synod Council ask the Church Council to affirm marriage as a lifelong covenant of faithfulness between a man and a woman and to recommend no statements in the proposed ELCA Social Statement on Human Sexuality or in ELCA standards for pastors and other rostered leaders that could be interpreted as rejecting Christian teaching on marriage; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the South Dakota Synod Council specifically ask the Church Council to make the following changes to the proposed social statement “Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust,” before recommending it to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly:

1. Add the words “between one man and one woman” to lines 502-503, page 14, so that the first sentence reads:
“This church understands marriage as a covenant of mutual promises, commitment, and hope between one man and one woman authorized legally by the state and blessed by God.”
2. Move lines 588-594, page 16, to line 671, page 18, in the section on “Lifelong monogamous same gender-relationships.”

Church Council Action:

To receive the resolution of the South Dakota Synod affirming marriage;

To acknowledge the action of the Church Council related to the proposed social statement, “Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust,” as the response to the resolution; and

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

C. AMENDMENT TO THE MODEL CONSTITUTION FOR CONGREGATIONS

Southeastern Iowa Synod (5D)

WHEREAS, provision †S8.12.g.2. in the *Constitution for Synods* gives to the synodical bishop the responsibility to “coordinate the use of resources available to this synod as it seeks to promote the health of this church’s life and witness in the areas served by this synod”; and

WHEREAS, provision *C6.06. of the *Model Constitution for Congregations* requires a congregation to consult with the synodical bishop and receive the approval of the Synod Council before relocating; and

WHEREAS, this provision affirms the interdependence of the congregations with each other and with the synod; and

WHEREAS, a satellite or branch ministry can have the same effects upon neighboring congregations as a relocated or new congregation, and consideration of the establishment of such a satellite or branch could provide an opportunity for shared outreach visions among neighboring congregations; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that *C6.06. of the *Model Constitution for Congregations* be amended to read [*additions underlined*]: “If this congregation considers relocation or establishment of additional sites for worship, it shall confer with the bishop of the synod in which it is territorially located before any steps are taken leading to such action. The approval of the Synod Council shall be received before any such action is effected”; and be it further

RESOLVED, that a parallel provision be added to the *Constitution for Synods* and to 9.53.06. of the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions* of the ELCA; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2008 Southeastern Iowa Synod Assembly direct the Southeastern Iowa 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 2008 Southeastern Iowa Synod Assembly direct the Southeastern Iowa Synod Council to refer the concerns of this resolution also to the Synod Mission Strategy Task Force for further consideration as it completes its task in preparation for the 2009 Synod Assembly.

Executive Committee Action:

The Executive Committee of the Church Council voted [EC08.06.11d]:

To receive the resolution of the Southeastern Iowa Synod related to the possible amendment of the *Model Constitution for Congregations*;

To refer the resolution to the Office of the Secretary in consultation with the Evangelical Outreach and Congregational Mission unit with the request that a report and possible recommendations be brought to the November 2008 meeting of the Church Council;

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

Response from the Office of the Secretary:

The origin of the resolution from the Southeastern Iowa Synod Council to the Church Council was a resolution to the Southeastern Iowa Synod Assembly calling for a congregation to consult with synod offices before starting a satellite or second campus. The basis for the request was required provision *C6.06. of the *Model Constitution for Congregations*, which requires consultation with the bishop of the synod in which a congregation is territorially located if it desires to relocate. The author of the resolution argued that starting a second campus or a satellite had the same effect as relocating a congregation.

The Office of the Secretary consulted with the Southeastern Iowa Synod and the Evangelical Outreach and Congregational Mission program unit of the churchwide organization and drafted proposed constitutional amendments to respond to the Synod Council resolution.

At its November 2008 meeting, the Church Council voted to recommend to the 2009 Churchwide assembly the following amendments to the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Model Constitution for Congregations*, and the *Constitution for Synods*:

To amend and add the following to make the process for relocation parallel to the process for establishment of additional sites for worship:

To amend:

9.53.06. A congregation considering a relocation shall confer with the bishop of the synod in which it is territorially located and the appropriate program unit of the churchwide organization before any steps are taken leading to such action. The approval of the Synod Council shall be received before any such action is effected.

To add:

†**S13.19.** A congregation considering a relocation shall confer with the bishop of the synod in which it is territorially located and the appropriate program unit of the churchwide organization before any steps are taken leading to such action. The approval of the Synod Council shall be received before any such action is effected.

To amend:

***C6.06.** If this congregation considers relocation, it shall confer with the bishop of the synod in which it is territorially located and the appropriate program unit of the churchwide organization before any steps are taken leading to such action. The approval of the Synod Council shall be received before any such action is effected.

To add the following to provide an interdependent process for the establishment of additional sites for worship:

9.53.08. A congregation considering development of an additional site to be used regularly for worship shall confer with the bishop of the synod in which it is territorially located and the appropriate program unit of the churchwide organization before any steps are taken leading to such action.

†**S13.20.** A congregation considering development of an additional site to be used regularly for worship shall confer with the bishop of the synod in which it is territorially located and the appropriate program unit of the churchwide organization before any steps are taken leading to such action.

***C6.07.** If this congregation considers developing an additional site to be used regularly for worship, it shall confer with the bishop of the synod in which it is territorially located and the appropriate program unit of the churchwide organization before any steps are taken leading to such action.

Church Council Action:

To acknowledge the November 2008 action of the Church Council to recommend to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly proposed amendments to the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Model Constitution for Congregations*, and the *Constitution for Synods* as the response of the Church Council to the resolution of the Southeastern Iowa Synod related to the relocation of congregations or the development of additional sites by congregations; and

To request that the secretary of this church inform the synod of this action by providing a record of the proposed amendments.

**D. ETHANOL POLICY AND THE WORLD FOOD CRISIS
Upstate New York Synod (7D)**

WHEREAS, according to the Web site of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) World Hunger program, 874 million people are hungry, 1 billion people live on less than \$1 per day, and 6.9% of US households (24.4 million people, including 12.2 million children) are at risk of hunger;² and

WHEREAS, the ELCA World Hunger program improves the lives of people in the United States and around the world by providing immediate relief for people affected by chronic hunger and poverty; assisting whole communities through long-term, sustainable development to help alleviate chronic hunger and poverty; advocating for justice by changing laws and systems and educating members of the ELCA in awareness of issues relating to hunger, poverty, and justice;¹ and

WHEREAS, rapidly rising food and commodity prices are threatening these efforts along with the lives of millions of people and the livelihood of Upstate NY dairy, poultry, and livestock farmers, and are severely impacting the food budgets of all; and

WHEREAS, the Energy Policy Act of 2005 requires that 4 billion gallons of renewable fuel be used in 2006, and this requirement will grow to a yearly production of 7.5 billion gallons by 2012³, a requirement that is met primarily by diverting corn for livestock feed and human consumption into energy production; and

WHEREAS, the energy returned on energy invested for ethanol made from corn in the U.S. has been found lower than the energy returned on energy invested for ethanol made from sugar cane, and other creative sources of ethanol show promise for renewable energy without grain from the food supply; and

WHEREAS, in 2007 the United Nations' independent expert on the right to food called for a five-year moratorium on biofuel production from food crops to allow time for development of non-food sources, calling recent increases in food costs because of fuel production, such as the quadrupling of the world corn price in one year, a growing "catastrophe" for the poor;⁴ therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Upstate New York Synod of the ELCA express its concern over the unintended consequences of current ethanol policy on the hungry, the impoverished, Upstate New York farmers, and others who are struggling with rapidly rising food prices; and be it further

RESOLVED, that this resolution be conveyed to the President of the United States, the Secretary of Agriculture, the Secretary of Energy, the New York United States Senators, and members of the House of

² <http://archive.elca.org/hunger/facts/facts.html>.

³ PUBLIC LAW 109-58-AUG. 8, 2005: 119 STAT. 1069
The Energy Policy Act of 2005.

⁴ <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=24434&Cr=food&Cr>

Representatives representing the people of the Upstate New York Synod by the secretary of the synod; and be it further

RESOLVED, that this resolution be conveyed to the ELCA World Hunger program and the Washington office by the secretary of the synod so that appropriate information and advocacy may be forthcoming.

Executive Committee Action:

The Executive Committee of the Church Council voted [EC08.07.16c]:

To receive the resolution of the Upstate New York Synod related to "ethanol and the world food crisis";

To refer the resolution to the Church in Society unit with the request that a report and possible recommendations be brought to the April [March] 2009 meeting of the Church Council; and

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

Response from the Church in Society unit:

The Upstate New York Synod has expressed concern about the current ethanol policy, which relies largely on corn, and the consequences both for people who are hungry, impoverished, and struggling with food prices and farmers—groups that ELCA World Hunger and ELCA advocacy ministries seek to help live lives marked by sufficiency and sustainability.

Two ELCA social statements have a bearing on this concern. The social statement "Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice" (1993) calls for justice for all of God's creation through sufficiency:

In a world of finite resources, for all to have enough means that those with more than enough will have to change their patterns of acquisition and consumption. Sufficiency charges us to work with each other and the environment to meet needs without causing undue burdens elsewhere (page 7).

"Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All" (1999), the ELCA's social statement on economic life, recognizes that a sustainable global economy rests on wise management of the earth and its resources. It calls for sustainability when it states:

The vantage point of the kingdom of God motivates us to focus on more than short-term gains. Humans, called to be stewards of God's creation, are to respect the integrity and limits of the earth and its resources (page 14).

This social statement also emphasizes sufficiency, noting that our calling to the stewardship of creation

“includes holding economic, political, and social processes and institutions responsible for producing and distributing what is needed for sufficiency for all” (page 11). Finally, the economic life social statement calls for this church to support the calling of farmers through advocacy that leads to adequate prices for crops and sustainable agricultural practices.

The use and development of corn-based ethanol has been encouraged and even mandated by government programs and policies since the 1970s, but its use has increased dramatically in the past five years for a number of reasons. These range from the substitution of ethanol for the gasoline additive MTBE, required by Clean Air Act regulations, to the rising cost of oil, which has made ethanol a more cost-effective alternative.

Ethanol has been an economic boon for many struggling small towns, which benefit from jobs created by new ethanol plants, and for corn farmers, who for many years received far less than the cost of production for their crop. It has, however, contributed to rising costs for feed corn, with negative impacts for livestock, poultry, and dairy farmers. In addition, the use of corn to create fuel has been linked to rising food costs in the global South, where food prices are much more sensitive to the rising cost of basic commodities like corn, wheat, and rice. These economic contrasts point to the difficulty faced when developing policies relating to corn-based ethanol.

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in 2008 hosted a meeting to discuss the growing food crisis and concluded that the rising cost of corn and other commodities is due to a number of factors. In addition to the rising use of corn for ethanol in the U.S., FAO experts pointed to the rising cost of oil used to fertilize, harvest, and transport commodity crops and multi-year droughts in some key growing regions as factors that also are to blame for the rapid increase in commodity prices during 2007 and 2008.

A new report from the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) offers the following sober description about rising food prices:

The surge in food prices in the last years, following a century of decline, has been the most marked of the past century in its magnitude, duration and the number of commodity groups whose prices have increased. The ensuing crisis has resulted in a 50–200% increase in selected commodity prices, driven 110 million people into poverty and added 44 million more to the undernourished. Elevated food prices have had dramatic impacts on the lives and livelihoods, including increased infant and child mortality, of those already undernourished or living in poverty and spending 70–80 percent of their daily income on food. Key causes of the current food crisis are the combined effects of speculation in food stocks, extreme

weather events, low cereal stocks, growth in biofuels competing for cropland and high oil prices. Although prices have fallen sharply since the peak in July 2008, they are still high above those in 2004 for many key commodities. The underlying supply and demand tensions are little changed from those that existed just a few months ago when these prices were close to all-time highs.⁵

The UNEP report predicts that the food crisis will grow worse in the future unless specific environmental factors are addressed, including climate change, water stress, invasive pests, and land degradation.

The connection between ethanol policy and the world food crisis, and the complexity of this relationship, is addressed in the education and advocacy work supported by ELCA World Hunger. These education materials, including the new “Taking Root” hunger curriculum for children and youth and Web-based materials, provide resources for congregations and others.

The ELCA Washington Office and the Lutheran Office for World Community at the United Nations have been monitoring this issue carefully for several years and have worked on legislation supporting alternatives to corn-based ethanol as this biofuel has grown in popularity, creating with it an increasing ecological and economic problem. The Washington Office has been advocating for research and investment in new technologies that do not use food crops or food-growing lands to meet our energy needs. This advocacy has supported the inclusion of funding for cellulose-based fuels in the 2008 farm bill and in energy legislation. The ELCA Washington Office also is working to address other issues impacting world food supplies and distribution through legislation that speaks to climate change and foreign aid, as well as through the ONE Lutheran Campaign.

Church Council Action:

To thank the Upstate New York Synod for its articulation of and effort related to the important issue of ethanol policy and global food prices and for connecting Christian faith and public life by communicating its concerns with elected officials;

To request that the background information provided above be shared with the synod;

To affirm the ongoing attention to this issue by ELCA World Hunger and the advocacy ministries of this church; and

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

⁵ United Nations Environmental Program, *The Environmental Food Crisis*, p. 6. Christian Nellemann, Ed. c. 2009

E. RURAL REVITALIZATION IN AMERICA
Eastern North Dakota Synod (3B)

WHEREAS, population in rural areas of the United States has been declining since the 1930s and 1940s; and

WHEREAS, rural communities have experienced not only a decline in population and school enrollment, but also a loss of high school graduates, as young people who earn degrees find it difficult to remain in those communities due to a perceived lack of career opportunities and other social and economic factors; and

WHEREAS, the number of farmers and ranchers at one time was sufficient to keep the economy alive in small rural towns, especially those with populations of 5,000 and under; and

WHEREAS, the decline of family farmers and ranchers has had a great impact on small town businesses, schools, and churches; and

WHEREAS, rural America has an adequate infrastructure in place to support business growth and bring young families back to rural America; and

WHEREAS, the loss of rural businesses, schools, and churches will continue unless new ways are found to revitalize rural America; and

WHEREAS, more than 80 percent of congregations in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) serve rural communities; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the 2008 Eastern North Dakota Synod Assembly request the Rural Desk of the Evangelical Outreach and Congregational Mission unit to review the rural revitalization plan that is in place in rural Australia.⁶ A similar project is taking place in New Mexico,⁷ where the community and schools are working closely together in the area of economic development and community revitalization; and be it further

⁶ The mission of Rural Education Forum Australia (REFA) is to work with its member groups and departments of education in all states and territories and the Commonwealth to identify and promote issues that will improve opportunities for rural children and families. REFA has policies aimed at improving education and allied services for rural and remote communities. They cover a broad range of issues associated with the preparation and support of teachers, leaders, and community, integrating human services, resourcing, and sustainability. Full details are available by contacting the secretariat at www.refa.edu.au.

⁷ The mission of New Mexico Rural Education Partners in Learning (PIL) is to create 21st-century economic engines for rural communities fueled by innovation and informed career, academic, and educational choices for all students and their families. The state will establish a model for engaging communities in strategic alliances that result in engagement of economic engines to create jobs in the community and shifts in the school culture, curriculum, and instruction that ready students for 21st-century jobs in their local communities and beyond. It can be reached at www.ped.state.nm.us.

RESOLVED, that the Eastern North Dakota Synod Assembly request the Rural Desk of the Evangelical Outreach and Congregational Mission unit to work with other organizations in America, such as the National Community Education Association (NCEA)⁸ and the Organization Concerned with Rural Education (OCRE),⁹ that are making a concerted effort to revitalize rural America; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the report on these matters of the Rural Desk of the Evangelical Outreach and Congregational Mission unit be presented at the 2009 Eastern North Dakota Synod Assembly.

Executive Committee Action:

The Executive Committee of the Church Council voted [EC08.06.11b]:

To receive the resolution of the Eastern North Dakota Synod related to rural revitalization in America;

To refer the resolution to the Evangelical Outreach and Congregational Mission unit with the request that a report and possible recommendations be brought to the March 2009 meeting of the Church Council;

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

Response from the Evangelical Outreach and Congregational Mission unit:

The mission of the ELCA's office for rural ministry resourcing and networking is to provide a vision of hope. In addition, this office is to be a resource to the three expressions of this church related to small town and rural issues. The office was created in 1999 after a memorial was passed by the 1997 Churchwide Assembly requesting that a "rural desk" be established.

Over the past 10 years, the office has addressed the important issue of rural and small town community development through a variety of venues. The director has:

⁸ The mission of NCEA is to provide leadership to those who build learning communities in response to individual and community needs. The NCEA organization recently organized the National Center for Rural Revitalization and is preparing to host a National Rural Summit. It can be reached at www.ncea.com.

⁹ The mission of OCRE, a coalition of more than two dozen national organizations, is dedicated to the improvement of public education and economic development in rural America. It can be reached at www.ruralschools.org.

1. Worked directly in 17 synods to provide examples, resources, and networks for the synod and congregations to utilize related to community development and other issues important to rural and small town life.
2. Met with four undersecretaries of rural development at the USDA as well as with then-Secretary of Agriculture, Ann Venneman.
3. Toured several states looking at examples of small town revitalization and sharing them as requested.
4. Worked closely with the ELCA's Washington, D.C., office, specifically related to the new rural homestead act, which has been introduced into Congress twice. A significant portion of the act is devoted to rural and small town community development.
5. Worked with Jan and Cornelia Flora from Iowa State University; both are experts on rural and small town community development and have written several books and many articles on this topic. They have also researched several towns in the Great Plains using asset-based community mapping as the basis for their research in towns that have been revitalized.
6. Accessed, supported, and worked nationally with many organizations that focus some of their work on revitalization: Rural Advancement Fund International, the Center for Rural Affairs, the Land Stewardship Project, and the Asset-based Community Development group based at Northwestern University.
7. Received reports from and met with rural church specialists who have toured Australia and shared their discoveries related to the Australian rural church effort. The director also met with one of the Australian experts on the rural church movement.

During the past few months, EOCM has begun to work primarily with synods on the unit's work. This will be through a directors for evangelical mission (DEM) in each synod. Therefore, staff of EOCM will work with the DEMs and synods to provide networking and resourcing. Some of the original ministry will continue, but will be directed in a more concrete way.

Church Council Action:

To express gratitude to the Eastern North Dakota Synod for its resolution related to rural revitalization and to acknowledge that, while the issues raised in the resolution are specific to North Dakota and parts of the Great Plains, they underscore the passion and deep knowledge necessary to address the vital issue of community development in those areas;

To encourage the Eastern North Dakota Synod to form an affinity group or task force through the office

for rural ministry resourcing and networking to address the issues of rural community development in the synod and, with partners, beyond it;

To request that the director for rural ministry resourcing and networking collaborate with the synod bishop and director for evangelical mission as well as the ELCA Washington, D.C., office to identify possible resources available through current legislative related to rural communities;

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

**F. MISSIONARY FOR MOROGORO DIOCESE
Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod (4C)**

WHEREAS, the Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod is in a companion-synod relationship with the Morogoro Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania; and

WHEREAS, the synod and the diocese currently are involved in joint ministries in the areas of evangelism, mission building (church construction), community health (e.g., basic sanitation, HIV and AIDS, malaria), water well development and maintenance, economic sustainability, and global awareness and advocacy; and

WHEREAS, the Morogoro Diocese has issued a request to the Global Mission unit of the churchwide organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for a missionary to work in the area of evangelism; and

WHEREAS, the synodical Global Mission Committee has identified several ways both to strengthen and be supportive of these ministries with the Morogoro Diocese; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that each of the five conferences in the Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod be encouraged to establish an ongoing relationship with districts of the Morogoro Diocese for the purpose of mutual support through prayer and development of a deeper understanding of one another's ministries, cultural context, concerns, and gifts; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod as a whole continue its relationship with the Mission District of the Morogoro Diocese; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Global Mission Committee of the Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod explore with Asbury Methodist Church, Tulsa, Oklahoma, the possibility of bringing a youth choir from the Morogoro Diocese to visit the Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod and Asbury Methodist Church in 2009, possibly at the time of the 2009 Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod Assembly; and be it further

RESOLVED, that every congregation in the Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod be encouraged to become a Living Water Congregation through participation in the "Living Water: Small Change for a Big Change" campaign, which seeks to collect change (coins) for the water well and other water-ministry projects in the Morogoro Diocese; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod convey to the Global Mission unit of the churchwide organization its support in regards to the Morogoro request for a missionary for evangelism; and be it further

RESOLVED, that, in support of the work of said missionary, congregations and individuals in the Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod be encouraged to raise up to \$20,000 to provide a vehicle for this missionary's ministry in the Morogoro Diocese; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod and its Global Mission Committee continue to invite and welcome other persons and parties beyond the synod to be in partnership with it in the companion relationship with and support of the Morogoro Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania.

Executive Committee Action:

The Executive Committee of the Church Council voted [EC08.06.11a]:

To receive the resolution of the Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod related to a missionary for the Morogoro Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania;

To refer the resolution to the Global Mission unit with the request that a report and possible recommendations be brought to the November 2008 meeting of the Church Council; and

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

Church Council Action:

To authorize a delay in the response of the Global Mission unit to the resolution of the Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod related to a missionary for the Morogoro Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania;

To request that a report and possible recommendations be brought to the November 2009 meeting of the Church Council;

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

**G1. 2009 CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY RULES OF ORGANIZATION AND PROCEDURE
Central/Southern Illinois Synod (5C)**

WHEREAS, the Task Force on Human Sexuality will bring its report and recommendations to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly; and

WHEREAS, this report and recommendations have the potential to seriously divide and create tumult among the members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA); and

WHEREAS, the ELCA Church Council, meeting November 14-17, 2008, declined two proposals for a two-thirds vote to adopt recommendations on resolutions related to a task force report; and

WHEREAS, a two-thirds vote on all matters of human sexuality would show the clear will of the assembly; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that this Central/Southern Illinois Synod Council communicate to the ELCA Church Council its desire to have a two-thirds vote on all matters pertaining to human sexuality at the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly.

**G2. PROCEDURAL RULES FOR THE 2009 CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY
Allegheny Synod (8C)**

WHEREAS, the 2001 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) created the Task Force for the ELCA Studies on Sexuality and directed it, in part, to develop a social statement on human sexuality; and

WHEREAS, the 2007 Churchwide Assembly directed this task force to "make recommendations to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly on changes to any policies that preclude practicing homosexual persons from the roster of this church"; and

WHEREAS, the Church Council, in its November 2008 meeting, recommended that the rules of the 2009 Churchwide Assembly would necessitate a two-thirds vote to approve a social statement on human sexuality; and

WHEREAS, the Church Council, in its November 2008 meeting, declined to recommend a two-thirds vote on any resolutions, recommendations, or memorials related to this social statement, including any rostering proposals; and

WHEREAS, this would create the situation in which this social statement could be rejected while recommendations related to the social statement could be approved; and

WHEREAS, the issues surrounding human sexuality have been vigorously debated in this church; and

WHEREAS, it has been the intention of the ELCA to "journey together faithfully" in the debate and decisions made in this process of discernment; and

WHEREAS, a threshold of two-thirds approval for any resolutions, recommendations, or memorials related to human sexuality would be a clear indication of the "mind of the church" on these matters; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Synod Council of the Allegheny Synod of the ELCA memorialize the ELCA Church Council, at their March 2009 meeting, to reconsider the decision made at their November 2008 meeting and to recommend to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly the adoption of the rule that "any recommendations, resolutions, or memorials related to the report of the Task Force of the ELCA Studies on Sexuality require a two-thirds vote for adoption"; and be it further

RESOLVED, that this action be communicated to Secretary David Swartling for presentation to the ELCA Church Council at its March 2009 meeting.

**G3. PROCEDURAL RULES FOR THE 2009 CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY
Northeastern Iowa Synod (5F)**

WHEREAS, the 2001 Churchwide Assembly created the Task Force for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) Studies on Sexuality and directed it, in part, to develop a social statement on human sexuality; and

WHEREAS, the 2007 Churchwide Assembly directed this task force to “make recommendations to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly on changes to any policies that preclude practicing homosexual persons from the roster of this church”; and

WHEREAS, the Church Council, in its November 2008 meeting, recommended rules of procedure for the 2009 Churchwide Assembly that affirm ELCA bylaw 12.12.01, which requires a two-thirds vote to approve a social statement, and affirm the precedent that implementing resolutions for a social statement also require a two-thirds vote; and

WHEREAS, the Church Council, in its November 2008 meeting, declined to recommend a two-thirds vote on any resolutions, recommendations, or memorials related to this social statement, including any rostering proposals; and

WHEREAS, this would create the situation in which this social statement could be rejected while recommendations related to the social statement could be approved; and

WHEREAS, the issues surrounding human sexuality have been vigorously debated in this church; and

WHEREAS, it has been the intention of the ELCA to “journey together faithfully” in the debate and decisions made in this process of discernment; and

WHEREAS, a threshold of two-thirds approval for any resolutions, recommendations, or memorials related to human sexuality would be a clear indication of the “mind of the church” on these matters; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Synod Council of the Northeastern Iowa Synod of the ELCA memorialize the Church Council, at its March 2009 meeting, to reconsider the decision made at the November 2008 meeting and to recommend to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly the adoption of the rule that “any recommendations, resolutions, or memorials related to the report of the Task Force of the ELCA Studies on Sexuality require a two-thirds vote for adoption; and be it further

RESOLVED, that this action be communicated to Secretary David Swartling for presentation to the Church Council at its March 2009 meeting.

**G4. VOTE MARGIN FOR 2009 CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY RULES OF ORGANIZATION AND PROCEDURE
Southwestern Texas Synod (4E)**

WHEREAS, the 2007 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) voted “to

direct the Task Force for ELCA Studies on Sexuality specifically to address and to make recommendations to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly on changes to any church policies that preclude practicing homosexual persons from the rosters of this church”; and

WHEREAS, the Legal and Constitutional Review Committee of the Church Council recommended that “any motion to come before this Churchwide Assembly regarding changes in this church’s current policy and practice for the rostering of ordained ministers, diaconal ministers, associates in ministry, and deaconesses shall require a two-thirds vote by the assembly for adoption”; and

WHEREAS, the Church Council voted 19-10 to delete this provision and is recommending rules of procedure for the 2009 Churchwide Assembly that would require only a simple majority vote to change ELCA standards to allow pastors and other rostered leaders to be in same-sex sexual relationships; and

WHEREAS, a two-thirds majority vote is usually required for major decisions, including the adoption of an ELCA social statement, and for amendments to the ELCA constitution and bylaws; and

WHEREAS, a decision to change church teaching and policy to allow pastors and other rostered leaders to be in same-sex sexual relationships holds the potential to be very divisive in ELCA synods and congregations and to cause both membership and financial losses for synods and congregations; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA is seeking ways to make decisions on a consensus basis rather than by close votes; and

WHEREAS, a super majority vote— such as a two-thirds majority—would require an overwhelming majority of Churchwide Assembly voting members to make such a significant change to church teaching and practice; and

WHEREAS, the Church Council will meet March 27–30 and could change its proposed rules for the Churchwide Assembly to recommend a two-thirds majority for adoption of any changes to standards for pastors and other rostered leaders; and

WHEREAS, the 2009 Churchwide Assembly will adopt its rules for the assembly and could change the required majority for adoption of any changes to standards for pastors and other rostered leaders; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Texas Synod Council ask the Church Council to add the following provision to the rules of procedure for the 2009 Churchwide Assembly: “Any motion to come before this Churchwide Assembly regarding changes in this church’s current policy and practice for the rostering of ordained ministers, diaconal ministers, associates in ministry, and deaconesses shall require a two-thirds vote by the assembly for adoption.”

**G5. 2009 CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY RULES OF ORGANIZATION AND PROCEDURE
Lower Susquehanna Synod (8D)**

WHEREAS, the 2007 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) voted “to direct the Task Force for the ELCA Studies on Sexuality specifically to address and to make recommendations to the

2009 Churchwide Assembly on changes to any church policies that preclude practicing homosexual persons from the rosters of this church”; and

WHEREAS, the Legal and Constitutional Review Committee of the Church Council recommended that “any motion to come before this Churchwide Assembly regarding changes in this church’s current policy and practice for the rostering of ordained ministers, diaconal ministers, associates in ministry, and deaconesses shall require a two-thirds voted by the assembly for adoption”; and

WHEREAS, the Church Council voted 19-10 to delete this provision and is recommending rules of procedure for the 2009 Churchwide Assembly that would require only a simple majority vote to change ELCA standards to allow pastors and other rostered leaders to be in same-sex sexual relationships; and

WHEREAS, a two-thirds majority vote is usually required for major decisions, including the adoption of an ELCA social statement, and for amendments to the ELCA constitution and bylaws; and

WHEREAS, a decision to change church teaching and policy to allow pastors and other rostered leaders to be in same-sex relationships holds the potential to be very divisive in ELCA synods and congregations and to cause both membership and financial losses for synods and congregations; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA is seeking ways to make decisions on a consensus basis rather than by close votes; and

WHEREAS, a super majority vote—such as a two-thirds majority—would require an overwhelming majority of Churchwide Assembly voting members to make such a significant change to church teaching and practice; and

WHEREAS, the Church Council will meet March 27–30 and could change its proposed rules for the Churchwide Assembly to recommend a two-thirds majority for adoption of any changes to standards for pastors and other rostered leaders; and

WHEREAS, the Churchwide Assembly will adopt its rules for the assembly and could change the required majority for adoption of any changes to standards for pastors and other rostered leaders; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Lower Susquehanna Synod Council ask the Church Council to add the following provision to the rules of procedure for the 2009 Churchwide Assembly: “Any motion to come before this Churchwide Assembly regarding changes in this church’s current policy and practice for the rostering of ordained ministers, diaconal ministers, associates in ministry, and deaconesses shall require a two-thirds vote by the assembly for adoption.”

G6. PROCEDURAL RULES FOR THE 2009 CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY Southeastern Iowa Synod (5D)

WHEREAS, consensus within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America on matters related to human sexuality, particularly with regard to rostering gay and lesbian leaders who are in long-term, monogamous, publicly accountable same-gender relationships remains elusive; and

WHEREAS, many individuals and groups within this church advocate a higher threshold for the number of votes required to change this church’s corresponding policies; and

WHEREAS, the Southeastern Iowa Synod Council understands that advocacy for a specific higher vote threshold carries with it the responsibility to respect and honor decisions by this church in assembly that meet those thresholds; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Iowa Synod Council encourage the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Church Council at its March 2009 meeting to reconsider decisions related to the rules for the 2009 Churchwide Assembly; and be it further

RESOLVED, that any motion to come before the 2009 Churchwide Assembly regarding changes in this church’s current policy and practice for the rostering of ordained ministers, diaconal ministers, associates in ministry, and deaconesses shall require a two-thirds vote by the assembly for adoption; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the members of the Southeastern Iowa Synod Council will hold the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Church Council in prayer, with thanksgiving for their faithful service and attention to the many challenges they face on behalf of this church.

G7. VOTE MARGIN FOR 2009 CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY RULES OF ORGANIZATION AND PROCEDURE

Western North Dakota Synod (3A)

WHEREAS, the 2007 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) voted “to direct the Task Force for ELCA Studies on Sexuality specifically to address and to make recommendations to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly on changes to any church policies that preclude practicing homosexual persons from the rosters of this church”; and

WHEREAS, the Legal and Constitutional Review Committee of the Church Council recommended that “any motion to come before this Churchwide Assembly regarding changes in this church’s current policy and practice for the rostering of ordained ministers, diaconal ministers, associates in ministry, and deaconesses shall require a two-thirds vote by the assembly for adoption”; and

WHEREAS, the Church Council voted 19-10 to delete this provision and is recommending rules of procedure for the 2009 Churchwide Assembly that would require only a simple majority vote to change ELCA standards to allow pastors and other rostered leaders to be in same-sex sexual relationships; and

WHEREAS, a two-thirds majority vote is usually required for major decisions, including the adoption of an ELCA social statement, and for amendments to the ELCA constitution and bylaws; and

WHEREAS, a decision to change church teaching and policy to allow pastors and other rostered leaders to be in same-sex sexual relationships holds the potential to be very divisive in

ELCA synods and congregations and to cause both membership and financial losses for synods and congregations; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA is seeking ways to make decisions on a consensus basis rather than by close votes; and

WHEREAS, a super majority vote— such as a two-thirds majority—would require an overwhelming majority of Churchwide Assembly voting members to make such a significant change to church teaching and practice; and

WHEREAS, the Church Council will meet March 27–30 and could change its proposed rules for the Churchwide Assembly to recommend a two-thirds majority for adoption of any changes to standards for pastors and other rostered leaders; and

WHEREAS, the 2009 Churchwide Assembly will adopt its rules for the assembly and could change the required majority for adoption of any changes to standards for pastors and other rostered leaders; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Western North Dakota Synod Council ask the Church Council to add the following provision to the rules of procedure for the 2009 Churchwide Assembly: “Any motion to come before this Churchwide Assembly regarding changes in this church’s current policy and practice for the rostering of ordained ministers, diaconal ministers, associates in ministry, and deaconesses shall require a two-thirds vote by the assembly for adoption.”

G8. RESOLUTION ON 2009 CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY RULES OF PROCEDURE South Carolina Synod (9C)

WHEREAS, a social statement, which is developed by the appropriate churchwide unit and presented to the Churchwide Assembly as a proposed social statement of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, shall require for adoption a vote of two-thirds of those voting members present and voting in a Churchwide Assembly (bylaw 12.12.01. of the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*); and

WHEREAS, at the first plenary session of the 2007 Churchwide Assembly, the assembly considered the Rules of Organization and Procedure and adopted the following rule: “A two-thirds vote of the voting members of the Churchwide Assembly present and voting shall be required to adopt recommendations from a task force report or amendments or substitute motions related to them that require amendment of a constitution or bylaw provision for implementation” (*Report of Actions of the Church Council* (November 14-17, 2008, page 7); and

WHEREAS, up until 2007, social statements and their implementing resolutions were combined in a single action, which required a two-thirds vote for approval (*Report of Actions of the Church Council* (November 14-17, 2008, page 7); and

WHEREAS, for the good of this church, a two-thirds vote should be required for a precedent-breaking, significant issue; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America reconsider its recommendation to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly

concerning the proposed Rules of Organization and Procedure so that any recommendations from the Task Force for the ELCA Studies on Sexuality, not just the proposed social statement, require a two-thirds vote of the assembly for approval.

G9. 2009 CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY VOTE ON MINISTRY POLICY CHANGES Northwestern Ohio Synod (6D)

WHEREAS, the 2007 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) voted “to direct the Task Force for ELCA Studies on Sexuality specifically to address and to make recommendations to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly on changes to any church policies that preclude individuals in same-sex, life-long, committed relationships from the rosters of this church”; and

WHEREAS, the Legal and Constitutional Review Committee of the Church Council recommended that “any motion to come before this Churchwide Assembly regarding changes in this church’s current policy and practice for the rostering of ordained ministers, diaconal ministers, associates in ministry, and deaconesses shall require a two-thirds vote by the assembly for adoption”; and

WHEREAS, the Church Council voted 19–10 to delete this provision and is recommending rules of procedure for the 2009 Churchwide Assembly that would require only a simple majority vote to change ELCA standards to allow pastors and other rostered leaders to be in same-sex, life-long, committed relationships; and

WHEREAS, a two-thirds majority vote is usually required for major decisions, including the adoption of an ELCA social statement and for amendments to the ELCA constitution and bylaws; and

WHEREAS, a decision to change church teaching and policy to allow pastors and other rostered leaders to be in same-sex, life-long, committed relationships holds the potential to be very divisive in ELCA synods and congregations and to cause both membership and financial losses for synods and congregations; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA is seeking ways to make decisions on a consensus basis rather than by close votes; and

WHEREAS, a super-majority vote, such as a two-thirds majority, would require an overwhelming majority of Churchwide Assembly voting members to make such a significant change to this church’s teaching and practice; and

WHEREAS, the 2009 Churchwide Assembly will adopt its rules for the assembly and could set a two-thirds majority vote requirement for adoption of any changes to standards for pastors and other rostered leaders; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Northwestern Ohio Synod Council recommend that the following provision to the rules of procedure for the assembly be added: “Any motion to come before this Churchwide Assembly regarding changes in this church’s current policy and practice for the rostering of ordained ministers, diaconal ministers, associates in ministry, and deaconesses shall require a two-thirds vote by the assembly for adoption.”

**G10. VOTE MARGIN ON CHANGES IN THIS CHURCH'S POLICY AND PRACTICE
South Dakota Synod (3C)**

WHEREAS, a two-thirds majority vote of the Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has been the usual requirement for major decisions, including the adoption of ELCA social statements and amendments to the ELCA constitution and bylaws; and

WHEREAS, the Legal and Constitutional Review Committee of the Church Council recommended that "any motion to come before this Churchwide Assembly regarding changes in this church's policy and practice for the rostering of ordained ministers, diaconal ministers, associates in ministry, and deaconesses shall require a two-thirds vote by the assembly for adoption"; and

WHEREAS, the upcoming 2009 Churchwide Assembly vote on the recommendations of the Task Force for ELCA Studies on Sexuality, as embodied in its reports "Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust" and "Report and Recommendation on Ministry Policies," potentially would necessitate "changes in this church's current policy and practice for the rostering of ordained ministers, diaconal ministers, associates in ministry, and deaconesses"; and

WHEREAS, the process by which this church arrives at its major decisions affect directly the legitimacy and acceptability of such decisions both within this church and across the wider body of believers; and

WHEREAS, the 2009 Churchwide Assembly vote on the recommendations of the Task Force for ELCA Studies on Sexuality has the potential to foment division within this church in its various expressions; and

WHEREAS, the continued unity and well-being of this church, and the mutual trust and respect of all of its members and expressions, is the rightful concern of all who are associated with the ELCA; and

WHEREAS, a two-thirds majority vote clearly illustrates that a given outcome is most definitively the will of the assembly as the primary legislative body of this church; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the South Dakota Synod Council ask the Church Council to add the following provision to the rules of procedure for the 2009 Churchwide Assembly: "Any motion to come before this Churchwide Assembly regarding changes in this church's policy and practice for the rostering of ordained ministers, diaconal ministers, associates in ministry, and deaconesses shall require a two-thirds vote by the assembly for adoption."

**G11. VOTE MARGIN FOR CHANGES IN POLICY AND PRACTICE
Nebraska Synod (4A)**

RESOLVED, that any motion to come before this Churchwide Assembly regarding changes in this church's current policy and practice for the rostering of ordained ministers, diaconal ministers, associates in ministry, and deaconesses shall require a two-thirds vote by the assembly for adoption.

**G12. PROCEDURAL RULES FOR THE 2009 CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY
North Carolina Synod (9B)**

WHEREAS the Task Force for ELCA Studies on Sexuality has recommended decisions regarding ministry policies to be made at the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly; and

WHEREAS the proposed decisions potentially change current policy of the ELCA and that of its predecessor organizations; and

WHEREAS the ELCA Church Council's Constitution and Legal Committee recommended a two-thirds majority to decide any issues relating to rostering proposals; and

WHEREAS the committee gave four reasons for recommending a two-thirds vote:

1. It sets a clear rule for all matters and heads off potential confusion and ambiguity.
2. Since the social statement needs a two-thirds vote, all matters relating to it should also require a two-thirds vote.
3. If the council wants the Churchwide Assembly to move toward communal discernment, then a two-thirds vote helps move the Churchwide Assembly in that direction.
4. The Church Council (and Churchwide Assembly) will have to deal with the rules anyway, so the committee's recommendation was a starting point for discussion; therefore, be it

RESOLVED that the North Carolina Synod Council request the ELCA Church Council to recommend Rules of Procedure for the 2009 Churchwide Assembly requiring that all matters relating to rostering proposals require a two-thirds majority vote for adoption.

**G13. VOTE MARGIN ON CHANGES IN THIS CHURCH'S POLICY ON ROSTERING
Saint Paul Area Synod (3H)**

RESOLVED, to affirm the simple majority adopted by the Church Council regarding the changes in policies around rostering of ordained ministers, diaconal ministers, associates in ministry, and deaconesses.

**G14. MARGIN OF VOTE FOR CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY RULES
Western Iowa Synod (5E)**

WHEREAS, the 2007 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) voted "to direct the Task Force for ELCA Studies on Sexuality specifically to address and to make recommendations to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly on changes to any church policies that preclude practicing homosexual persons from the rosters of this church"; and

WHEREAS, the Legal and Constitutional Review Committee of the ELCA Church Council recommended that "a two-thirds vote of the voting members of the Churchwide Assembly present and voting shall be required to adopt recommendations or resolutions originating from or relating to the subject of a social statement task force report or amendments or substitute motions related to such recommendations or resolutions"; and

WHEREAS, the Church Council voted 19–10 to delete this provision and is recommending rules of procedure for the 2009 Churchwide Assembly that would require only a simple majority vote to change ELCA standards to allow pastors and other rostered leaders to be in “publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships”; and

WHEREAS, a two-thirds majority vote is usually required for major decisions, including the adoption of a social statement and for amendments to the ELCA constitution and bylaws; and

WHEREAS, a decision to change church policy to allow pastors and other rostered leaders to be in “publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships” holds the potential to test the unity of the ELCA; and

WHEREAS, a super majority vote—such as a two-thirds majority—would require an overwhelming majority of Churchwide Assembly voting members to make such a significant change to church teaching and practice; and

WHEREAS, the Church Council will meet March 27–30 and could change its proposed rules for the Churchwide Assembly to recommend a two-thirds majority for adoption of any changes to standards for pastors and other rostered leaders; and

WHEREAS, the 2009 Churchwide Assembly will adopt its rules for the assembly and could change the required majority for adoption of any changes to policies and practices for pastors and other rostered leaders; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Western Iowa Synod Council ask the ELCA Church Council to add the following provision to the rules of procedure for the 2009 Churchwide Assembly: “Any motion to come before this Churchwide Assembly regarding changes in this church’s current policy and practice for the rostering of ordained ministers, diaconal ministers, associates in ministry, and deaconesses shall require a two-thirds vote by the assembly for adoption.”

G15. VOTE MARGIN FOR 2009 CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY RULES

Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod (8B)

RESOLVED, that the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) recommend to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly that a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote be required for the adoption of the recommendations on the ministry policies from the Task Force for the ELCA Studies on Sexuality.

G16. VOTE MARGIN FOR THE 2009 CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY RULES

Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod (8G)

WHEREAS, the documents known as “Vision and Expectations” and “Definition and Guidelines for Discipline” are policy documents adopted by the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), pursuant to ELCA bylaws 7.31.11., 7.31.13.f., 7.51.03.b., and 20.71.11.; and

WHEREAS, “Vision and Expectations” and “Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline” were adopted by the vote of a simple

majority (Church Council minutes Nov. 1989, pp. 54-66; Oct. 1990, pp.128-29; Dec. 1993, p. 159); and

WHEREAS, policy documents typically have been moved for adoption or amendment under simple majority rule (for example, the “Policy for Ordination under Unusual Circumstances,” Church Council action CC01.04.34); and

WHEREAS, the Church Council, at its November 2008 meeting, defeated motions that would require a two-thirds majority for the 2009 Churchwide Assembly to direct amendments to “Vision and Expectations” and “Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline” (“Report of Actions of the Church Council (November 14-17, 2008),” pp. 8-9); now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, by the Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod Council that this Synod Council find and declare its affirmation and concurrence with the Church Council decision of November 14-17, 2008, to maintain the practice of acting upon policy documents by simple majority votes, whether by the council or by the Churchwide Assembly; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod Council find and declare that requiring a two-thirds majority of the Churchwide Assembly to direct amendments to “Vision and Expectations” and “Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline” would grossly violate the spirit and nature of this church’s polity, while threatening to establish a super-majority standard, which has never been applied to policy documents in the Church Council or the Churchwide Assembly; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod Council request the Church Council not to reconsider the rules it proposed at its November 2008 meeting for the 2009 Churchwide Assembly.

G17. VOTE MARGIN FOR 2009 CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY RULES

Southwest California Synod (2B)

RESOLVED, that the Synod Council of the Southwest California Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, in keeping with the widely accepted governance of *Robert’s Rules of Order* as specified by the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, urge the Church Council to abide by its decision to employ a simple majority rule in actions related to ministry standards and human sexuality at the 2009 Churchwide Assembly.

G18. VOTE MARGIN FOR 2009 CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY RULES

Northern Great Lakes Synod

RESOLVED, that the Northern Great Lakes Synod Council ask the ELCA Church Council to add the

following provision to the rules of procedure for the 2009 Churchwide Assembly: “Any motion to come before this Churchwide Assembly regarding changes in this church’s current policy and practice for the rostering of ordained ministers, diaconal ministers, associates in ministry, and deaconesses shall require a two-thirds vote by the assembly for adoption.”

Executive Committee Action:

The Executive Committee of the Church Council voted [EC09.02.07]:

To receive the resolutions of the Central/Southern Illinois, Allegheny, Northeastern Iowa, Southwestern Texas and Lower Susquehanna synods related to the Rules of Organization and Procedure for the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly;

To refer these resolutions and any additional synodical resolutions on this topic to the Legal and Constitutional Review Committee of the Church Council with a request that a report and possible recommendations be brought to the March 2009 meeting of the Church Council;

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

Church Council Action:

At its November 2008 meeting, the Church Council voted to strike the following draft provision in Part Ten of the proposed Rules of Organization and Procedure for the 2009 Churchwide Assembly:

Vote to Adopt Certain Recommendations or Resolutions from a Social Statement Task Force

A two-thirds vote of the voting members of the Churchwide Assembly present and voting shall be required to adopt recommendations or resolutions originating from or relating to the subject of a social statement task force report or amendments or substitute motions related to such recommendations or resolutions.

The Church Council also voted against another proposed amendment in Part Ten to require a two-thirds vote on proposals that would change ELCA policies.

As a result of the November 2008 action of the Church Council, under the proposed Rules of Organization and Procedure, the social statement will require a two-thirds vote to pass pursuant to ELCA bylaw 12.12.01, but any other implementing resolutions or the ministry policy recommendation will require a majority vote for passage under *Robert’s Rules of Order*.

Prior to the February 2009 meeting of the Executive Committee, the Office of the Secretary received five synodical resolutions addressing the vote required in the proposed Rules of Organization and Procedure for the Churchwide Assembly relating to the social statement, its implementing resolutions, or the ministry policy recommendation and its resolutions. A number of additional resolutions have been received since that time. Although the resolutions varied somewhat, most seek a two-thirds vote on some or all of the issues addressed in the social statement or ministry policy recommendation.

At its February 2009 meeting, the Executive Committee voted [EC09.02.07]:

To receive the resolutions of the Central/Southern Illinois, Allegheny, Northeastern Iowa, Southwestern Texas, and Lower Susquehanna synods related to the Rules of Organization and Procedure for the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly;

To refer the resolutions to the Legal and Constitutional Review Committee of the Church Council and to request that a report and possible recommendations be brought to the March 2009 meeting of the Church Council;

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

At its meeting on March 27, 2009, the Legal and Constitutional Review Committee extensively discussed ways to respond to the synodical resolutions that the Executive Committee had referred to it and to present language for Part Ten of the Rules for purposes of discussion by the Church Council.

The Legal and Constitutional Review Committee presented the following to the Church Council without recommendation:

To amend the action previously taken by the Church Council with respect to Part Ten of the Rules of Organization and Procedure for the 2009 Churchwide Assembly [CC08.11.37] by addition of the following paragraph:

Vote to Adopt Certain Recommendations, Resolutions, Memorials, or Other Motions Originating From, or Relating to a Social Statement Task Force Report

A two-thirds vote of the voting members of the Churchwide Assembly present and voting shall be required to adopt recommendations, resolutions, memorials, or any other motions (including motions to amend or substitute motions) originating from, or relating to the

subject of, a social statement task force report presented to this assembly.

After considerable discussion, the Church Council voted against adding the proposed rule. The vote was 10–21 with two abstentions, Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson and Secretary David D. Swartling.

Therefore, unless the Churchwide Assembly amends the proposed Rules of Organization and Procedure at its first plenary session, any implementing resolutions for the social statement or ministry policy actions will require a majority vote for passage, as specified in *Robert's Rules of Order*.

II. RESPONSES TO CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY REFERRALS TO THE CHURCH COUNCIL

A. RESPONSIBILITIES OF BISHOPS

2007 Churchwide Assembly [CA07.06.34]

RESOLVED, that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, meeting in assembly at Chicago, Ill., on August 11, 2007, request the Conference of Bishops to enter into discussion and consideration of the matter of the accountability of bishops to the adopted policies, practices, and procedures of the ELCA and to formulate a clear statement of such accountability for consideration and adoption by the 2009 assembly of this church.

Response of the Conference of Bishops

This action was referred to the Conference of Bishops, which referred it for consideration to the Theological and Ethical Concerns Committee, chaired by Rev. Margaret G. Payne, bishop of the New England Synod. That committee discussed the matter and brought the issue before the March 2008, October 2008, and February 2009 meetings of the Conference of Bishops for discussion and consideration by the entire conference. The committee also drafted a proposed response to the action, and the conference then formulated its own statement, which appears below.

In brief, the Conference of Bishops concluded that the governing documents of this church, together with the relational agreement adopted by the Conference, fully address the issues of the responsibilities of bishops to this church, to their synods, and to one another. These documents provide for both accountability of bishops and discretion to address issues in the context of their synods. As a result, the Conference of Bishops' statement does not propose any additional resolution to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly.

Introduction

The Conference of Bishops values the opportunity provided by 2007 Churchwide Assembly action CA07.06.34 to respond with a statement regarding matters of accountability to be shared with the 2009 Churchwide Assembly. This is a timely conversation as the assembly gathers to consider the many important issues in our life together as we seek to be faithful to the mission of the Gospel to which God calls us.

In response to the request of the 2007 Churchwide Assembly, the Conference of Bishops engaged in discussions on this topic during its meetings in March 2008, October 2008, and March 2009, reviewing and studying the documents of our church that contain standards for the multi-faceted accountability to which the bishops are called. We believe that clear standards for accountability already are in place and honored by the bishops and are eager to share highlights of these documents with the 2009 Churchwide Assembly as well as an open affirmation of our commitment to them.

1. The Constitution of the ELCA

The responsibilities of the Conference of Bishops are set forth in the ELCA constitution (15.41.A91) and include a wide range of pastoral and administrative oversight. This is just the beginning of the constitutional responsibilities and accountabilities related to synodical bishops individually and the Conference of Bishops collegially. The roles of bishops and of the conference are detailed extensively in the ELCA constitution, especially chapters 7, 8, 9, 10, and 20, which address respectively ministry, relationships, congregations, synods, and consultation, discipline, appeals, and adjudication. In addition, of course, the very specific responsibility of synodical bishops is set out in †S8.10 of the *Constitution for Synods*.

The bishops are committed to functioning within these constitutional and policy guidelines of the ELCA. However, bishops are called to provide pastoral leadership in synods that are diverse in context and mission. The accomplishment of unity in diversity is best served as each bishop guides the life of the synod in a manner that is responsive to mission needs in that place. Consequently, practices and procedures vary from synod to synod.

2. “The Office and Ministry of the Bishop in the ELCA: A Shared Vision of Episcopacy and a Relational Agreement”

Each new bishop receives a copy of this document, which is referred to as “the relational agreement.” It provides a summary of the role of bishops in this church, especially as it relates to our mutual accountability.

Because it is foundational to our work and relationships within the Conference of Bishops and in our synodical leadership, this document is regularly reviewed and discussed.

The preamble sets forth our commitment as bishops:

As ministers of the Gospel and in keeping with scriptural, confessional, and the constitutional principles of the ELCA, we pledge to fulfill faithfully our responsibilities within the office of bishop.

Addressing the wide range of responsibilities, the document particularly notes the importance of faithful diversity in this church. Within the bishops' accountability to the policies of the ELCA is a fruitful tension that constantly recognizes the differing contexts and manners in which God is continuing to work and create the church:

Because the Church is called and gathered by the Holy Spirit in a wide variety of settings and circumstances, it is useful and even necessary for there to be a variety of gifts and styles of ministry exercised by those called to serve as bishops. Flexibility and adaptability according to the mission needs of the Church, but always within the confessional and constitutional understandings of this church and the collegial agreements of the COB, are both honored and encouraged.

The full range of accountability includes the basic support and commitment to Word and Sacrament ministry, support of other ministries within this church, mission outreach, financial support for mission, and the oversight of candidacy and the rosters for leadership. These matters are addressed regularly in the meetings of the Conference of Bishops as well as in ongoing conversation among the bishops, with an emphasis on mutual respect and trust.

Bishops place a high value on their relationships within the Conference of Bishops, and strive to maintain a climate of trust and integrity with one another. Bishops respect one another's decisions, but also realize that local and synodical decisions and actions can have an impact in other areas of this church.

Members of the Conference of Bishops engage in frequent conversation, sharing opinions, decisions, and actions of bishops that affect the entire church as well as individual synods. The mix of differing approaches,

anchored in an atmosphere of mutual trust, creates a spiritually rich and dynamic form of leadership that refuses to defer either to empty practice or unfaithful license, but prayerfully seeks God's will and direction for this church.

3. "A Policy Statement Explaining the Processes Contemplated by †S17.02. as it Relates to Synodical Bishops, Executive Committees of Synod Councils, and Synod Councils."

Matters related to all forms of disciplinary action within this church are sensitive and connected to deep commitments of call and conscience. Bishops are called to provide faithful and pastoral direction and guidance for decision-making in which polarization surrounding a decision can often create a highly charged situation. When such situations arise, it is essential to note that the governing documents of the ELCA grant synodical bishops the discretion to take or not take certain actions. Several of these actions committed to a bishop's discretion are discussed in the document entitled, "A Policy Statement Explaining the Processes Contemplated by †S17.02. as it Relates to Synodical Bishops, Executive Committees of Synod Councils, and Synod Councils," which was adopted by the ELCA Church Council in 1995. For example, matters of discretion include: "Making or not making written charges, thereby invoking the formal discipline process under ELCA bylaws . . ." or "When recommended by a consultation panel . . . dismissing or modifying, or not dismissing or not modifying, disciplinary written charges. . . ." Therefore, a bishop bears the responsibility to formulate a decision that is consistent with the documents of the ELCA, open to God's will, and in harmony with the Holy Spirit's guidance for this church. This work is done with prayer and in consultation with other synod and ELCA partners. Synodical bishops seek to be faithful to both Scripture and our confessions as well as to the particulars of such difficult situations. Aware of the trust implied in the exercise of such discretion, bishops do not take these responsibilities lightly. The Conference of Bishops regularly engages in mutual conversation and admonition while continuing personal and pastoral support to one another.

Conclusion

The existing documents, regularly reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, form a clear statement of accountability. We appreciate the opportunity to share the nature, level, and breadth of mutual accountability between and among bishops of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America for the sake of its mission and ministry.

Church Council Action:

To receive the report of the Conference of Bishops in response to the action of the 2007 Churchwide Assembly [CA07.06.34] related to “the accountability of bishops to the adopted policies, practices, and procedures of the ELCA”;

To acknowledge that the Conference of Bishops and its Committee on Theological and Ethical Concerns Committee have addressed, as requested, the responsibilities of bishops;

To further acknowledge that the following documents address the accountability of bishops to one another:

- *The Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*
- “The Office and Ministry of the Bishop in the ELCA: A Shared Vision of Episcopacy and a Relational Agreement”
- “A Policy Statement Explaining the Processes Contemplated by †S17.02. as it Relates to Synodical Bishops, Executive Committees of Synod Councils, and Synod Councils”; and

To transmit to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly the report of the Conference of Bishops as the response to the 2007 Churchwide Assembly’s action.