

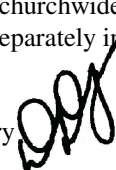


Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

May 10, 2013

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
Administrative Team of the churchwide organization
Chief executive officers of separately incorporated ministries
Regional Coordinators

FROM: David D. Swartling, secretary 

SUBJECT: Report of Responses by the Church Council to Synodical and Churchwide Assembly Actions (April 5–7, 2013)

I. RESPONSES TO SYNODICAL RESOLUTIONS

PREVIOUSLY REFERRED TO UNITS BY CHURCH COUNCIL OR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

A. Food and Fuel

Eastern Washington-Idaho Synod (1D)

WHEREAS, food insecurity is rising both in the United States and abroad; and

WHEREAS, using 40 percent of the 2011 corn crop for ethanol production has put pressure on food prices in general; and

WHEREAS, the surplus stock of food in the United States has dwindled in the past decade and food prices have gone up some, limiting our ability to be of help to countries that face hunger; and

WHEREAS, disruptive events in food prices used to be driven only by unusual weather; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Eastern Washington-Idaho Synod Council request the advocacy office of the ELCA to solicit the federal administration to lift the requirement that ethanol be a part of all motor fuel; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Eastern Washington-Idaho Synod Council request the advocacy office of the ELCA to solicit Congress to phase out subsidies that fund research into the conversion of food crops into fuel and the manufacture of these fuels.

Response from the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit with the Office of the Presiding Bishop

[This response is the same response for Motion G: Ethanol and World Hunger, an action of the 2011 Churchwide Assembly, cited on page 13.]

The use and development of corn-based ethanol has been encouraged and even mandated by government programs and policies since the 1970s. In recent years its use has exploded for a number of reasons: steady increases in the supply of corn; the increasing number of cars and trucks that can run on a higher percentage ethanol blend; and the rising cost of oil, which makes ethanol a cost-effective way to extend the supply of gasoline. However, the most significant factor in the increasing use of ethanol is the federal Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS). Passed in a 2007 energy bill and administered by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), this mandate requires refiners to blend 15 billion gallons of conventional biofuels (i.e. corn ethanol) into the U.S. fuel supply by 2015.

The use of a food crop to make fuel for transportation has long been controversial. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization 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: 1) the rising use of corn for ethanol in the U.S.; 2) the rising cost of oil used to fertilize, harvest and transport commodity crops; and 3) multi-year droughts in some key growing regions. A 2009 report from the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) also noted that while the rise of food-based biofuels has an impact on the global food supply, there are numerous factors that contribute to food supply issues and rising food prices on the global market. The UNEP report predicted 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 drought this past summer in the Midwest had a significant impact on the supply of corn on U.S. markets and led to dramatic increases in the price of corn. Many livestock and dairy farmers that use corn as feed were forced to

reduce their herds and flocks substantially because they could not afford to feed their animals. As a result, U.S. consumers will see significant increases in the prices of milk, beef, chicken and pork this year. The drop in the available supply of corn due to the drought led to calls in the fall of 2012 for the EPA to waive the biofuel requirements under the RFS; however, the agency has declined to do so.

In addition, a loose coalition of groups, ranging from environmental organizations to fiscally conservative think tanks and taxpayer organizations, are calling for Congress to end the ethanol mandate. Reasons for opposition to the mandate range from the impact that rising demand for corn has had on land use in farm communities as millions of acres of wetlands and grasslands have been converted to growing corn, to fiscal concerns over the use of taxpayer funds to subsidize ethanol production. Although there have been discussions of this issue in Congress, to date it has not acted to abandon the RFS.

Although the advocacy office of the ELCA has continued to call for research into non-food crop-based biofuels as a better alternative to those based in corn or soy, we have not taken a position on the Renewable Fuel Standard, nor have we advocated against the use of corn for biofuels in general.

There are many communities served by ELCA congregations where ethanol production is a centerpiece of livelihood for farmers. In addition, corn-based ethanol has contributed to a revival of economic life in many rural communities throughout the Midwest: communities that have suffered from economic loss and negative population growth for decades are experiencing new vitality that can, at least in part, be attributed to the growing market for ethanol. As the national advocacy office of the ELCA, we need to weigh carefully the benefits of ethanol to many rural communities served by our church against the very real concerns about hunger and the global food supply expressed in the resolutions passed by the East-Central Synod of Wisconsin and the Eastern Washington-Idaho Synod, together with a resolution brought by the Upstate New York Synod in 2009.

Given the complexity of the issues raised by corn-based ethanol, including a number of environmental and economic factors, and the variety of important and valid perspectives held by ELCA members and communities on this issue, we think a wider informal discussion or even a formal dialog would be constructive and helpful for this church.

We recommend that interested parties and stakeholders find ways to be in contact with each other about their perspectives in some form of on-going conversation to which they could invite the involvement of advocates and issue experts as might be helpful. Such a dialog might underscore the difficulty in finding agreement on corn-based ethanol, in particular, or it could lead to new understandings about our church's commitments to ending hunger, supporting rural communities and caring for God's creation. In any case, it would serve as an expression of Christian discourse, mutual good faith and concern for neighbors.

We thank the synod for raising an important issue and for its continued partnership as we work to address global hunger.

Church Council Action:

[En Bloc]

To receive the response from the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit on the resolution of the Eastern Washington-Idaho Synod related to the conversion of food crops for motor fuel;

To recognize the wide spectrum of perspectives throughout this church on the use and development of a food crop for motor fuel;

To affirm the recommendation of the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit to encourage conversation among all expressions of this church and with other appropriate stakeholders and to share perspectives and insights regarding this church's commitment to supporting rural communities, ending hunger and caring for God's creation;

To ask the ELCA Washington Office to continue its monitoring of this issue and supporting of policies that assist in the development of non-food-based biofuels and minimize the impact of biofuels on the food supply; and

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

**B. Counseling Services for Rostered Leaders
Delaware-Maryland Synod Assembly (8F)**

WHEREAS, rostered leaders are called to high-profile, high-stress jobs with demands placed on them all hours of the day and all days of the week, and often face very high expectations that can lead to frustration, self doubt, feelings of failure and hopelessness, that can potentially lead to depression; and

WHEREAS, statistics indicate that as many as one in four (25 percent) of all pastors suffer depression at some time, with pressure and anxiety markedly higher in recent years as the result of cultural and economic changes which have negatively affected both worship attendance and congregational budgets; and

WHEREAS, most depression can be successfully addressed and does not lead to suicide, but about two-thirds of all suicides begin with depression; and

WHEREAS, rostered leaders may be particularly inhibited in even discussing their own depression because of career fears, social stigma, and spiritual taboo, and nearly two out of three depressed people do not even seek treatment, increasing the risk that depression may lead to suicide (which may be compounded when counseling services are not easily accessible or available); and

WHEREAS, as loving Christians, this synod and its rostered leaders and congregations can and should do much better at caring for ourselves and those around us to minimize stress, lessen the likelihood of depression, and undertake timely and proper care of those in need; and

WHEREAS, we are called by Christ to care for one another with compassion and love; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Delaware-Maryland Synod Assembly call on the rostered leaders of this synod to encourage one another to (I) take better care of their spiritual, emotional, and physical health, (ii) seek professional help, (iii) share concerns and problems with colleagues and congregational leaders, and (iv) support and look after each other; and be it further

RESOLVED, that all congregations of the Delaware-Maryland Synod be encouraged to (I) examine their pastoral expectations and ensure they are not unreasonable (such as placing inappropriate burdens on pastors to balance budgets and increase worship attendance), (ii) work with and fully support pastors in all aspects of the life of the church; and (iii) honor pastors' need for self care; and be it further

RESOLVED, that all congregations of the Delaware-Maryland Synod be encouraged to initiate Suicide Awareness and Prevention training (classes, newsletter articles, and informational brochures) at the conference and congregational levels in the year of our Lord 2013 with resource help from the synod staff and Synod Council; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ministry of the Delaware-Maryland Synod staff be designed to support struggling pastors (who may be reticent to seek care from synod staff for reasons articulated above) who need confidential, wise counsel, and/or referral, and that the Council initiate such a program at the earliest possible time; and be it further

RESOLVED, that, since the Office of the Bishop may receive initial reports of mental health issues, synod staff and the Synod Council work together to implement policies and procedures to assure that staff members are equipped and prepared to immediately respond to such situations with spiritual intervention and medical referral; and be it further

RESOLVED, that key resources that exist within this synod, such as nationally recognized experts, be identified and shared with all the congregations of this synod; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Delaware-Maryland Synod Council forward this resolution to the Church Council's Executive Committee for proper referral and disposition under the bylaws and continuing resolutions of the ELCA, petitioning this church to re-institute, through the ELCA Board of Pensions (Portico Benefit Services), the Church Renewal Center for the care and health of rostered leaders of this and other church bodies; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Delaware-Maryland Synod Council forward this resolution to the Church Council for its consideration that this church (I) be more aware of and draw attention to the serious nature of depression and suicide among its clergy, (ii) take steps to ensure that all synods are aware of this problem, and (iii) strongly urge all synods to have adequate pastoral counseling services in place as soon as possible, that all clergy are made aware of and encouraged to make use of such services.

Response from the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit with the Office of the Secretary and Portico Benefit Services

Portico Benefit Services recognizes that rostered leaders and churchworkers are called to high-profile, high-stress jobs with demands placed on them all hours of the day and all days of the week. They often face very high expectations that can lead to frustration, self-doubt, feelings of failure and hopelessness, and depression. As a ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), Portico Benefit Services' mission is to provide retirement, health, (including mental health benefits and an Employee Assistance Program), and related benefits and services to enhance the well-being of those who serve. Portico designs and manages benefit plans to help rostered leaders and churchworkers live well emotionally, physically and financially.

The ELCA plan includes Employee Assistance Program (EAP) counseling, support, and referral services for health plan members and their covered family members. They can call—24 hours a day, seven days a week—to talk to an EAP professional about stress, relationships, family issues, work issues or any other personal concern. The EAP provides up to six in-person sessions per issue per year, at no cost to the member. The EAP is a confidential resource to:

- Help members with personal and work concerns
- Refer members and family members for EAP counseling sessions
- Find support and information resources in your community

If an EAP counselor does not feel an issue can be resolved within the covered six sessions or feels the member's condition requires more specialized or intensive services, he or she may refer the member to a mental health counselor, which is covered by the plan's medical and mental health benefit.

The medical and mental health benefit of the ELCA health plan covers medically necessary mental health and substance abuse services—evaluation/assessment, individual and group counseling, marital counseling, medication management, psychological testing, detoxification, facility-based treatment and addiction treatment—at the same benefit (deductible, then coinsurance up to the out-of-pocket limit) as medically necessary medical services. Outpatient mental health services can be provided by state-licensed psychiatrists, psychologists, and therapists. Services can also be provided by a pastoral counselor who is a licensed doctoral-level psychologist holding a Ph.D, Ed.D or Psy.D degree or a master's-prepared therapist holding a degree from an accredited institution in a licensable mental health discipline. These professionals must be licensed by the state in which they perform services, and offer services within the scope of their license.

While Portico Benefit Services does not and has not managed a renewal center, we offer comprehensive benefits to support emotional well-being. Portico Benefit Services receives aggregate EAP, medical and mental health benefit utilization information from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota, indicating that depression and bipolar disorder account for 40% of mental health claims dollars spent by the ELCA health plan. Reports also show that the ELCA health plan pays more per member for mental health services. In addition, members (and covered family members) seek mental health care and visit their mental health providers more often than members of other employer-provided plans administered by Blue Cross. Members are tending their emotional well-being by using the ELCA health plan's benefits.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America also has worked to address the issues of the mental health of rostered leaders through a new message adopted by the Church Council on November 10, 2012. The message is titled: "The Body of Christ and Mental Illness." While the message addresses the mental health of all people, at the end it does encourage clergy to "treat your own mental health as essentially important in your life of baptismal vocation." It also asks congregations to "encourage their pastors to take the time to tend their mental health."

In support of the recommendations in the new mental illness message, resources are being prepared to help encourage clergy and other rostered leaders to do those things which can strengthen their mental health. Resources are also being prepared to encourage congregations to help in this process by working with their leaders to make sure there are reasonable expectations and time for vacations and sabbaticals. Through these resources, attention can be given to the serious nature of depression and suicide among the leaders of the church.

A workshop is also being developed as an additional resource that could be used throughout the synods to help raise awareness regarding the social message on mental illness.

Church Council Action:

[En Bloc]

To receive the response from the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit, in consultation with the Office of the Secretary and Portico Benefit Services, on the resolution from the Delaware-Maryland Synod Assembly regarding counseling services for rostered leaders;

To encourage this church to use the social message on "The Body of Christ and Mental Illness" as appropriate for discussion and action;

To recognize with appreciation the comprehensive benefits that Portico Benefit Services has to support emotional well-being;

To commend the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit and Portico Benefit Services for developing resources that will encourage clergy and other rostered lay leaders to strengthen their mental health and to encourage congregations to work with their leaders in creating reasonable expectations and time for vacations and sabbaticals;

To encourage the consideration of a workshop that could raise awareness regarding the social message on "The Body of Christ and Mental Illness" for use across this church; and

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

C. Witnessing against Capital Punishment

Sierra Pacific Synod (2A)

RESOLVED that the Sierra Pacific Synod in Assembly urge both California and Nevada to replace the death penalty with a sentence of life in prison without possibility of parole; and be it further

RESOLVED that congregations and members of the ELCA within the territory of the Sierra Pacific Synod be urged to advocate for the replacement of the death penalty by life in prison without the possibility of parole in the states of California and Nevada; and be it further

RESOLVED that the Sierra Pacific Synod memorialize the 2013 Churchwide Assembly to advocate for replacement of the death penalty by life in prison without the possibility of parole in those 32 states that currently have the death penalty.

[The Office of the Secretary has determined that the Sierra Pacific Synod Assembly memorial, “Witnessing against Capital Punishment,” is a resolution to be addressed by the Church Council’s Executive Committee.]

Response from Congregation and Synodical Mission (April 2013)

The ELCA Social Statement on the Death Penalty (adopted in 1991) sums up the ELCA’s opposition to capital punishment: “The practice of the death penalty undermines any possible moral message we might want to ‘send.’ It is not fair and fails to make society better or safer. The message conveyed by an execution, reflected in the attention it receives from the public, is one of brutality and violence.”

Three thousand one hundred seventy people in the United States currently are under a death sentence. Since the death penalty was reinstated in 1976, 1314 men, women, children, and mentally ill people have been shot, hanged, asphyxiated, lethally injected, and electrocuted by the states and the federal government. Mounting evidence shows that innocent people have been sentenced to death and that serious legal errors infect the administration of capital punishment. For every eight people executed in this country, one innocent person on death row has been identified and exonerated. In response to growing concerns about reliability, many states have suspended executions or experienced a decline in the use of capital punishment but most southern states have continued to condemn and execute large numbers of people who disproportionately are low income and/or people of color.

According to a 2008 report [<http://www.naacp.org/pages/criminal-justice-fact-sheet>], together African American and Latinos make up 58% of all prison populations but are approximately one quarter of the U.S. population. In a 1990 report, the non-partisan U.S. General Accounting Office found “a pattern of evidence indicating racial disparities in the charging, sentencing, and imposition of the death penalty.” The study concluded that a defendant was several times more likely to be sentenced to death if the murder victim was white. Critics have accused some studies of failing to consider the defendant’s criminal history and/or the heinousness of the crime. However, in the studies the GAO considered most reliable, cases were not deemed similar if the nature of the crime or the background of the defendant were materially different. This has been confirmed by the findings of many other studies that, holding all other factors constant, the single most reliable predictor of whether someone will be sentenced to death is the race of the victim.

From initial charging decisions to plea bargaining to jury sentencing, African-Americans are treated more harshly when they are defendants, and their lives are accorded less value when they are victims. All-white or virtually all-white juries are still commonplace in many localities.

- A 2007 study of death sentences in Connecticut conducted by Yale University School of Law revealed that African-American defendants receive the death penalty at three times the rate of white defendants in cases where the victims are white. In addition, killers of white victims are treated more severely than people who kill minorities when it comes to deciding what charges to bring.
- The typical juvenile offender on death row is a 17-year-old African American or Latino male whose victim is a white adult. Additionally, two-thirds of the victims of juvenile offenders on death row are white.

Prosecutorial discretion

In states such as New York and California, the death penalty can be sought for any intentional murder committed during the course of a felony, and the “intent” to commit murder can be formed instantaneously before the killing, without premeditation.

In California each year there are from 600 to 800 willful homicides that involve felonies. Prosecutors and juries have significant say in which of those 600-800 homicides will lead to death sentences. About 25 of them usually result in death sentences.

Ineffective counsel and procedural bars

Cases of poor representation from court-appointed defense lawyers have recently brought attention to the lack of adequate counsel for many criminal defendants—a problem which particularly plagues people of color. Poor people charged with serious crimes have been entitled to legal assistance since *Gideon v. Wainwright* (1963). Such assistance varies among states, and federal funding for legal assistance involving capital punishment resource cases was cut in 1996. But studies show that state-appointed lawyers in capital cases are typically under-qualified, underpaid, overworked and unable to provide adequate representation.

Venue and jury selection

The manner and location in which juries are selected also leads to racial disparities in capital sentencing. For example, changes of venue can result in all-white juries for black defendants. In addition, problems arise when prospective jurors are not questioned outside the presence of others. Jurors who denied being racist when questioned in group settings have later revealed racist beliefs during sequestered, individualized questioning.

Capital Punishment

Supporters and opponents of the death penalty agree that its application is racially discriminatory. Studies which examine the relationship between race and the death penalty have now been conducted in every active death penalty state. In 96 percent of these reviews, there was a pattern of either race-of-victim or race-of-defendant discrimination or both. [http://www.prisonpolicy.org/scans/aclu_dp_factsheet4.pdf]

The Congregation and Synodical Mission unit (CSM) on behalf of the ELCA thanks the Sierra Pacific Synod for its advocacy for replacement of the death penalty by life in prison. The ELCA has been involved in advocacy at the state level based upon the 1991 Social Statement on the Death Penalty. We have supported the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty (NCADP) in its efforts. Therefore we recommend that the ELCA continue its advocacy through the State Public Policy Offices and in conjunction with the NCADP.

Church Council Action:

[En Bloc]

- To receive the response and report from Congregational and Synodical Mission unit;**
- To express appreciation to the Sierra Pacific Synod for sharing the concern about the elimination of the death penalty; and**
- To affirm the recommendation of the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit that the ELCA continue its advocacy based upon the 1991 Social Statement on the Death Penalty; and**
- To request that the secretary of this church inform the synod of this action.**

D. Immigration Reform

Southeastern Synod (9D)

WHEREAS, current national legislation prevents undocumented persons—especially high school aged graduates—from benefitting from any federally funded student financial aid, i.e. loans, grants, scholarships, and work-study programs, effectively curtailing their ability to further their education and thereby obtain jobs with steady incomes and benefits (see U.S. Supreme Court decisions in *Toll vs. Moreno* 1982 and in *Plyer vs. Doe* 1982); and

WHEREAS, the process for naturalization is a long and formidable one, often made more difficult by lack of funds and a sturdy educational foundation; and

WHEREAS, more than 56,000 documented immigrants to the United States in 2011 were refugees of political and religious violence, civil war, genocide, human trafficking, famine, and other social, economic, and political ills (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Refugee Resettlement, “Fiscal Year 2011 Refugee Arrivals,” www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/data/fy2011RA.htm); and

WHEREAS, the body of Christ is called to feed, clothe, and welcome strangers (Matthew 25:35) and told that “Any immigrant who lives with you must be treated as if they were one of your citizens. You must love them as yourself, because you were immigrants in the land of Egypt; I am the LORD your God (Leviticus 19:34 CEB); and

WHEREAS, Jesus tells us to love our neighbor as ourselves; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod of the ELCA encourage the ELCA Washington Office and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services to continue their strong work with the United States Congress and the Administration

to encourage just, humane, and comprehensive immigration reform and the adoption of the DREAM Act; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod Assembly encourage the rostered leaders, congregations, and youth of the Southeastern Synod to be involved actively in conversations about immigration with their congregations and communities and to advocate for the rights and humane treatment of all people no matter their race, gender, age, or citizenship status.

Response from the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit with Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service

The following provides a summary of related activities of the ELCA, in partnership with Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS), in support of fair and humane immigration reform and the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act.

Advocacy for Comprehensive Immigration Reform (CIR) and National Solutions

Post-election, the landscape for comprehensive immigration reform (CIR) has changed rather dramatically. While there are no guarantees, there is hope that a reform package will be introduced in the Senate as early as June 2013.

Bishop Hanson's continued leadership on keeping CIR at the forefront of his sermons and statements is not only appreciated, but necessary in keeping Lutherans engaged and ensuring that a good reform packages makes their way through Congress.

The ELCA worship team produced worship materials to help pastors lead a *Stand for Welcome Sunday* in their parishes. Stand for Welcome Sundays focus on the ministry of welcome as shared by the ELCA and LIRS and encourage worshipers to not only pray for and help newcomers, but to advocate for reforms, most especially CIR, that welcome immigrants and refugees to our communities. <http://www.elca.org/Growing-In-Faith/Worship.aspx>

In an effort to further encourage members of Congress to endorse CIR, ELCA advocacy staff along with LIRS, will host a lobby day in Washington D.C. April 15-16, 2013. The focus of the visit will be one of encouraging the bishops of the Immigration Ready Bench to urge legislators and the White House to act in support of LIRS's advocacy priorities for fair and humane immigration reform with targeted "asks" that will be timely and relevant.

Principles for a compassionate comprehensive package and recent LIRS statements on both the White House and Senate CIR proposals released in late January can be found on the LIRS website: <http://lirs.org/act/issues/cir/>

Although the focus of LIRS's advocacy work is and will be on CIR, LIRS also continues to lift up the voices of Lutheran leaders on a number of advocacy efforts to protect migrant populations.

- Advocating for the inclusion of protections for vulnerable populations such as refugees and migrant children within the context of CIR.
- Protecting funding for the Office of Refugee Resettlement, which provides integration and self-sufficiency services to refugees, asylees, victims of torture and human trafficking, and unaccompanied refugee and migrant children. The prospect of sequestration and the climate of fiscal austerity make these prospects particularly dire. LIRS will be working to engage key leaders and partners to join us in advocacy for all of the vulnerable migrant populations the United States has pledged to serve and protect.
- Protecting immigration provisions in the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) that protect migrant survivors of domestic violence and victims of serious crimes. The Senate passed modest improvements to these protections on February 11, 2013.

At the invitation of Bishop Claire Burkat (Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod), LIRS participated in a late January/early February ecumenical gathering, Churches Coming Together (CCT), which was focused on immigration reform. Bishop Hanson also participated in the convening of the historical Protestant, Orthodox, Catholic, Evangelical/Pentecostal and historically Black denominations that produced an ecumenical statement on the need for a fair and just immigration reform package to be passed this Congressional session.

LIRS also helped lead a national interfaith call-in day in partnership with the Interfaith Immigration Coalition on January 22, 2013. The intent was to encourage people of faith from across the country to call their senators to urge the passage of CIR. Over 1,000 faith leaders across the country made phone calls, including Bishop Michael Rinehart (Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod), who was quoted in a press release about the event.

LIRS helped lead a national prayer vigil on Capitol Hill in support of immigration reform prior to a hearing of the Senate Judiciary Committee of February 13, drawing attention to the coincidence of the hearing's date with Ash Wednesday. The event garnered media coverage in the *Washington Post* the same day: "Group prays on Capitol Hill in support of immigration reform."

Bishop Julian Gordy (Southeastern Synod), chair of the ELCA Immigration Ready Bench, wrote an op-ed piece entitled, "Laws Causing Latino Exodus," which was published on September 28, 2012 in the *Montgomery Advertiser*, the newspaper of record in Alabama's capital. His piece was part of an op-ed campaign that grew out of this summer's Lutheran Immigration Leadership Summit (LILS) in the Twin Cities. Bishop Gordy's commentary was followed by Rev. Paul L. Lubold's October 19, 2012 op-ed piece in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, "Stop Jailing So Many Immigrants."

The DREAM Act and Protection for DREAMers

In November 2012, ELCA bishops, pastors and congregants in Maryland joined Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) in a push to ensure that the Maryland version of the DREAM Act was approved as a referendum measure on the November ballot. In concert with local organizations, MD DREAMers and Casa de Maryland, and led by LIRS, Lutherans were encouraged to vote "for" the measure. In part because of the support and leadership of Lutheran leaders, the measure passed and young people in Maryland who were brought to the United States as children are now eligible for in-state college tuition benefits.

Church Council Action:

[En Bloc]

To receive the response of the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit, in partnership with Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, and express appreciation for the many ways the ELCA is working in support of fair and humane immigration reform and the DREAM act; and

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

E. In Support of the Montagnard People of Vietnam

North Carolina Synod (9B)

WHEREAS, it is incumbent of every Christian to support their fellow Christians throughout the world who face repression and persecution; and

WHEREAS, the Vietnam Communist Government seeks closer ties with the United States in the form of a Multilateral Free Trade Agreement; and

WHEREAS, the Vietnam Communist Government continues to monitor, harass, threaten, arrest, torture, and kill its citizens who participate or display religious activity that is not registered or sanctioned by the Vietnam Communist Government; and

WHEREAS, one of the Vietnam Communist Government's objectives in monitoring, harassing, threatening, arresting, and torturing its citizens is to pressure such persons to broadcast or otherwise publically renounce their Christianity; therefore, be it

RESOLVED that the North Carolina Synod Assembly direct the Synod Council to introduce to the Church Council a resolution asking the ELCA Washington Office and the Lutheran Office for World Community to support the United States government in the creation and implementation of any economic or diplomatic policies, regulations, orders, or non-violent operations designed to, or having the effect of, assuring religious freedom for the Montagnard people in Vietnam.

History of this topic from the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit (April 2013)

Religious Persecution (CA97.06.48)

The following was adopted by the 1997 Churchwide Assembly in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

RESOLVED, To respond to the memorials of the New Jersey Synod and New England Synod by calling upon members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to pray for all victims of religious persecution, both Christians and non-Christians, and for their oppressors;

To direct the Division for Church in Society to continue its work with other appropriate churchwide units to study the matter of religious persecution and religious freedom and assist this church to respond effectively and sensitively to violations of the human right of freedom of thought, conscience, and religion;

To call on members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to continue to foster respect, tolerance, and understanding of other faiths, including an examination of the causes and manifestations of religious extremism in a variety of religious contexts; and

To call on members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to communicate to the President of the United States, the Department of State, and both Houses of Congress, their concern for all victims of religious persecution in

other parts of the world, conveying their conviction that such human rights violations are contrary to the international community's standards for freedom of conscience and religion.

Persecution of Christians (CA99.03.07)

The following was adopted by the 1999 Churchwide Assembly in Denver, Colorado.

RESOLVED, To respond to the memorial of the Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod by calling upon members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to pray for all victims of religious persecution, both Christians and non-Christians, and for their oppressors;

To direct the Division for Church in Society to continue its work with other appropriate churchwide units to study the matter of religious persecution and religious freedom and assist this church to respond effectively and sensitively to violations of the human right of freedom of thought, conscience, and religion;

To call upon members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to continue to foster respect, tolerance, and understanding of other faiths, including an examination of the causes and manifestations of religious extremism in a variety of religious contexts; and

To call upon members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to communicate to the President of the United States, the Department of State, and both Houses of Congress, their concern for all victims of religious persecution in other parts of the world, conveying their conviction that such human rights violations are contrary to the international community's standards for freedom of conscience and religion.

Response from the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit (April 2013)

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, at its Churchwide Assemblies in 1997 and 1999, has expressed its concern for the victims of religious persecution and asked its members to pray for those who have suffered under such oppression. The ELCA also calls on its members to communicate this concern to their elected national officials, noting that such human rights violations are contrary to the international community's standards for freedom of conscience and religion. In addition, staff of the churchwide organization have expressed this church's pastoral concern and solidarity with the churches facing such persecution and raised these issues with federal officials. The staff will continue these efforts to respond effectively and sensitively to violations of the human rights of freedom of thought, conscience, and religion in situations where churches are being denied these rights.

Church Council Action:

[En Bloc]

To receive the response of the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit;

To express appreciation for this church's continued advocacy in responding to violations of the human rights of freedom of thought, conscience, and religion in situations where churches are being denied these rights; and

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

II. RESPONSE TO SYNODICAL RESOLUTION

REFERRED BY THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

A. Confirmation Resources

Southeastern Minnesota (3I)

WHEREAS, members of the Southeastern Minnesota Synod have engaged in ongoing conversation about confirmation ministry and what it means in this time and place;

WHEREAS, the most recent study of confirmation ministry in the ELCA is from 1993;

WHEREAS, 56 percent of the youth in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America ages 13–17 make a personal commitment to living life with and for God (*Portraits of Protestant Teens: A Report on Teenagers in Major U.S. Denominations*, Phil Schwadel and Christian Smith, 2005);

WHEREAS, one third of adults under 30 are religiously unaffiliated (*Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life*, October 2012); and

WHEREAS, if confirmation is only centered in youth ministry, we miss opportunities for lifelong faith formation; and

WHEREAS, some in our Lutheran faith community are struggling with biblical literacy, faith articulation, and Christian identity; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Minnesota Synod will continue innovative exploration of confirmation ministry; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Minnesota Synod will share with other expressions of the church any resources that are discovered in this exploration; and be it further

RESOLVED, that synods and congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America be invited to re-imagine confirmation ministry in the 21st century; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America be a network for the adaptations that are already and will take place in the three expressions of the church; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Minnesota Synod Council requests that the Church Council direct the appropriate unit of the churchwide expression to update the resources available on the churchwide website to reflect the changes in faith formation ministry that are taking place within all expressions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Church Council Action:

To thank the Southeastern Minnesota Synod for its resolution related to confirmation ministry;

To acknowledge that the churchwide organization is in the process of a redesign of the entire *ELCA.org* website;

To ask the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit, in consultation with the Mission Advancement unit and the Office of the Presiding Bishop, to update the resources on the new *ELCA.org* website to reflect the changes in faith formation ministry taking place within all expressions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America;

To further request that the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit, as part of the ongoing work of the Faith Formation Team (which includes unit staff and staff from Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, as well as Christian education teachers in ELCA colleges and seminaries and other partners) take up the conversation about “re-imagining” confirmation ministry and resources, and to report progress to the Conference of Bishops and the Church Council; and

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

III. RESPONSES TO CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY ACTIONS

PREVIOUSLY REFERRED TO UNITS BY CHURCH COUNCIL OR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

A. Native Americans and Alaska Natives

Motion J: Churchwide Assembly Action [CA11.04.18]

Submitted by Vance Blackfox, Metropolitan Chicago Synod

WHEREAS, the historic relationship between predecessor/partner Lutheran church bodies and American Indian and Alaska Native peoples was so significant during the struggle for American Indian and Alaska Native civil rights, known as the American Indian Movement; and

WHEREAS, support of American Indian and Alaska Native peoples has declined significantly since the constituting of the ELCA in 1988; and

WHEREAS, all ELCA Churchwide Organization’s events and participants are hosted in and participants enter into various sovereign American Indian and Alaska Native nations, geographically, and/or historic tribal lands that have systematically been taken from American Indian and Alaska Native peoples by extinction/termination or by the removal of the original tribal inhabitants; and

WHEREAS, the general population of the United States and the general membership of the ELCA is largely uneducated about American Indian and Alaska Native cultures and histories, as well as uninformed about American Indian and Alaska Native sovereignty, their nations, and present challenges; and

WHEREAS, American Indian and Alaska Native people are under-represented in our church usually under-represented at churchwide and synodical events; and

WHEREAS, this church’s purpose, in part, is to “Serve in response to God’s love to meet human needs, caring for the sick and the aged, advocating dignity and justice for all people, working for peace and reconciliation among the nations, and standing with the poor and powerless and committing itself to their needs;” [ELCA Constitution 4.02.C] and

WHEREAS, contrary to popular belief, American Indian and Alaska Native people continue to statistically be the poorest populations in the countries in the “western hemisphere” with, reportedly, the greatest needs related to poverty, e.g. disease, lacking clean water, addiction, length of life expectancy, education, unemployment, and access to nutrient rich foods; and

WHEREAS, organizations that are working to make a difference and honoring the lands and original peoples of the “western hemisphere,” such as the International Olympic Committee when they partnered with and honored as dignitaries the leaders of the First Nations peoples in and around the region near Vancouver, British Columbia, during the 2010 Winter Olympics;

RESOLVED, that the ELCA Churchwide Organization be committed to inviting the tribal leader or a representative of the sovereign tribal or region wherein any and at every ELCA Churchwide Organization sponsored event held—e.g.

Churchwide Assemblies, Global Mission Events, ELCA Youth Gatherings, smaller or regional events, etc.—with costs incurred to be supported by each event’s budget, to bring a word of welcome/greetings from their nations or peoples; and that consultation with the ELCA Director for American Indian and Alaska Native Ministries be done so as to ensure the invitation is extended appropriately; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA Churchwide Organization be committed to ensuring at least one educational component is developed and offered to participants at every Churchwide Organization sponsored event—e.g. Churchwide Assemblies, Global Mission Events, ELCA Youth Gatherings, smaller or regional events, etc.—regarding American Indian and Alaska Native tribal peoples of the nation or region wherein the Churchwide Organization sponsored event is being held, with costs incurred to be supported by each event’s budget; and that consultation with the ELCA’s Director for American Indian and Alaska Native Ministries be done so as to ensure such an educational experience is developed and presented appropriately.

Churchwide Assembly Action [CA11.04.18]

To refer Motion J to the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit for consultation with the American Indian and Alaska Native Ministries to identify ways to address the intent of the motion.

Response from the Congregational and Synodical Mission Unit (April 2013)

We recognize and appreciate the past efforts of congregations and synods, particularly the Montana Synod and Grand Canyon Synod, in making apologies to tribal councils and illustrating support of American Indians and Alaska Natives. We also welcome the recent action taken by the Church Council at its November 2012 meeting to “join synods and congregations in greeting the tribes who originally inhabited the North American Continent, apologizing for injustices rendered in the past, and pledging to work together in the future.” (CC12.11.42)

Therefore, it is a welcomed opportunity to provide a report and recommendations to the Church Council in responding to the Churchwide Assembly action “to address the intent of the motion.” (CA11.04.18)

The new program director for American Indian and Alaska Native Ministries convened a teleconference to discuss recommendations for a response to Motion J on February 8, 2013. Present at the meeting were the following people: The Rev. Mark Allred (Inupiat Eskimo), Program Director for the ELCA American Indian and Alaska Native Ministries program (AIANMP); Elizabeth Gaskins (Muscogee-Creek), President of the American Indian Alaska Native Lutheran Association (AIAN); The Rev. Marlene “White Rabbit” Helgemo (Ho-Chunk), Executive Director for the Council for American Indian Ministry (United Church of Christ) and Sr. Pastor at All Nations Indian Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

All participants at the meeting stated that Motion J is a wonderful and respectful acknowledgement of American Indian and Alaska Native ancestral lands and further that Motion J affirms our people. We offer the following recommendations to the Church Council as to the intent of Motion J.

As to the first resolve in seeking to provide invitations to “the tribal leader or a representative of the sovereign tribal or region”, we recommend that a working group of the AIANMP be created. The working group will recommend guidelines for this church on ways to approach and offer invitation to Indian Nations. For example, who is the proper person to invite from a region? What do you do if multiple Indian Nations are within the region where your meeting is being held?

These and other questions including the types and sizes of events that might be appropriate will be recommended by the group to the Congregational and Synodical Mission Unit. The working group would also recommend guidelines to the American Indian and Alaska Native community on acceptable ways to provide greetings at ELCA events like synod assemblies. In addition, the considerations will include cost estimates for participation in such events and consideration of how they will be funded.

As to the second resolve in seeking to provide an “educational component” at appropriate events, we offer the following recommendations. A series of six 5-minute professionally produced educational videos would be planned and used at appropriate events introducing participants to the Lutheran historical commitment to accompany American Indian and Alaska Native Christian peoples of North America throughout the past century and to lift up the current concerns in Indian Country. The AIANMP and the AIAN association will serve as consultants to the production of the videos. While we understand that this would require funding, the AIANMP, in consultation with the AIAN association, commits to making every effort at finding partners and advocates who are sensitive to the plight of the American Indian people to provide joint funds for the proposed recommendation.

This step is a welcome one in lifting up and honoring America’s First people.

Church Council Action:

[En Bloc]

To receive the report of the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit in response to Motion J: Native Americans and Alaska Natives;

To thank the Rev. Mark Allred (Inupiat Eskimo), Program Director for the ELCA American Indian and Alaska Native Ministries program (AIANMP); Elizabeth Gaskins (Muscogee-Creek), President of the American Indian Alaska Native Lutheran Association (AIAN); the Rev. Marlene “White Rabbit” Helgemo (Ho-Chunk), Executive Director for the Council for American Indian Ministry (United Church of Christ) and Sr. Pastor at All Nations Indian Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota, for their attentive recommendations to raise awareness and honor America’s First people;

To recommend the establishment of a working group of the ELCA American Indian and Alaska Native Ministries Program for the purpose of recommending guidelines for this church on ways to approach and offer invitations to the American Indian and Alaska Native community, guidelines for the American Indian and Alaska Native community on acceptable ways to provide greetings at ELCA events, suggestions for which events or opportunities might be most appropriate for greetings, a possible educational experience, and consideration of the costs and monies of funding such participation; and

To request that a report of the findings from the working group be brought to the Congregational and Synodical Mission (CSM) unit and a report from CSM be made to the Church Council at its November 2013 meeting.

B. Energy Stewardship

Memorials Category A4: Churchwide Assembly Action [CA11.03.06a]

To receive with gratitude the memorials of the Sierra Pacific, Rocky Mountain, Northeastern Minnesota, Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast, Metropolitan Chicago, Northern Illinois, Northeastern Iowa, South-Central Synod of Wisconsin, North/West Lower Michigan, New Jersey, New England, Metropolitan New York, Southeastern Pennsylvania, and Metropolitan Washington, D.C. synods related to energy stewardship;

To thank the Lutheran Climate Change Coalition and Lutherans Restoring Creation for their work and to commend their strategies to this church;

To encourage all expressions and agencies of this church to improve their stewardship of energy resources and promote care for God’s creation; and

To request that, as financial and staff resources permit, the churchwide organization establish processes to track, assess, and share these efforts to improve our care of God’s creation.

Response from the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit with Office of the Treasurer and Office of the Presiding Bishop (April 2013)

The budget for encouraging and tracking energy conservation in the ELCA continues to be minimal and precludes us from actually quantifying how much energy is being saved throughout our church. We also cannot measure the amount of greenhouse gas emissions our energy conservation efforts have avoided. However, a number of things of note have occurred since 2011 that indicate a steadily growing interest in energy conservation and the reduction of our carbon footprint throughout the church.

In the fall of 2012, the Lutheran Center on Higgins Road in Chicago was certified as an Energy Star building by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Energy Star is a program that recognizes significant energy saving measures. In order to qualify, an applicant must show energy savings over a set period of time and must receive a score of 75 or higher. The Lutheran Center achieved a score of 92, which means that the building uses 35 percent less energy and generates 35 percent fewer greenhouse gas emissions than similar buildings across the nation.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, the ELCA is only the second US denomination to receive Energy Star certification for its headquarters building (the other is the Presbyterian Church, USA headquarters building in Louisville, Kentucky). Lutheran Center management achieved the energy savings through measures such as installing more energy efficient lighting during a building remodel several years ago and adding motion sensors for lighting in conference rooms, copy rooms and bathrooms. Building managers also have added variable speed drives to the building’s HVAC system so that it can be run at a lower speed. In addition, an efficient LED sign was installed on the outside of the building and more energy efficient materials were used in the roof replacement.

The Lutheran Center is only the most recent ELCA structure honored with Energy Star status. In September, the White House honored the first twenty-eight congregations to achieve Energy Star certification for their church buildings. Of the twenty-eight congregations honored, four were part of the ELCA: Elim Lutheran Church in Duluth, Minnesota; First English Lutheran in Columbus, Ohio; First Lutheran Church in Bothell, Washington; and Reformation Lutheran Church in Media, Pennsylvania.

The Energy Star program for congregations notes that if our country's houses of worship cut energy use by only 20 percent, they could save more than \$600 million each year on their utility bills and cut their use of electricity by more than 3.6 billion kilowatt hours. At the event in September, the Environmental Protection Agency and the White House issued a challenge to congregations to increase their energy efficiency and offered public recognition to congregations who are interested in engaging in this work. The ELCA Washington office, working together with Lutherans Restoring Creation, has passed this challenge along to our growing network of ELCA members concerned about care for creation.

In 2011, Lutherans Restoring Creation (LRC) launched a two-year pilot Energy Stewards Project designed to assist congregations in lowering their energy use and lessening their energy costs, thereby freeing up money for ministry. For a fee of \$10 a month, the program offers a step-by-step process with other congregations, a training program with regular conference calls and webinars and an online platform to track history and changes in energy use. The project has received support to offset the costs not covered by the modest fee for participants from the ELCA—through the budget for Environmental Education and Advocacy—and from the Lutheran Community Foundation and the Tithing Foundation.

There were eleven congregations enrolled in the first "class" of Energy Stewards. Now in their second year in the program, most have seen substantial reductions in their energy use and several now qualify for Energy Star certification. LRC is now enrolling a second class of participants in the program; each congregation will commit to participating for two years, with significant support from LRC trainers in reducing their energy use.

Church Council Action:

[En Bloc]

To receive the report of the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit in response to the memorial on Energy Stewardship and in recognizing the efforts throughout this church to improve our care of God's creation;

To extend deep appreciation to all expressions and agencies of this church for the significant and diverse ways they improve their stewardship of energy resources and improve our care of God's creation;

To acknowledge the diminished financial resources to establish processes to track and assess the amount of energy saved and greenhouse gas emissions energy conservation efforts have avoided throughout our church;

To encourage all expressions and agencies of this church to continue to find ways to increase their energy efficiency and to share their efforts in caring for God's creation; and

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

C. Effect of U.S. Ethanol Policy on World Hunger

Motion G: Churchwide Assembly Action [CA11.05.35]

Submitted by Mr. Lowell Klessig, East-Central Synod of Wisconsin (51)

WHEREAS, World Hunger has been a long-standing social concern of the ELCA; and

WHEREAS, World Hunger has been intensified by dramatic increases in the price of corn; and

WHEREAS, the high price of corn has been primarily caused by exponential growth in demand for corn from ethanol plants that now utilize nearly 40% of the U.S. corn crop; and

WHEREAS, no law mandates escalating amounts of ethanol be blended with gasoline, thus further shrinking world food supplies; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the ELCA, meeting in its 2011 Churchwide Assembly, urge the president and the Congress of the United States to recognize and address the unintended consequences of U.S. ethanol policy on world hunger.

Churchwide Assembly Action [CA11.05.35]

To refer Motion G to the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit and the Office of the Presiding Bishop.

Response from the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit with the Office of the Presiding Bishop (April 2013)

[The response to Motion G: Ethanol and World Hunger is the same response for the Food and Fuel resolution from the Eastern Washington-Idaho Synod, which begins on page 1.]

Church Council Action:

[En Bloc]

To receive the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit report on Motion G: Effect of U.S. Ethanol Policy on World Hunger;

To recognize the wide spectrum of perspectives throughout this church on the use and development of a food crop for transportation fuel; and

To affirm the recommendation of the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit to encourage conversation among all expressions of this church and with other appropriate stakeholders and to share perspectives and insights regarding this church's commitment to supporting rural communities, ending hunger and caring for God's creation.

D. Sacramental Obedience in Holy Communion

Memorials Category D2: Churchwide Assembly Action [CA11.03.06f]

Upper Susquehanna Synod (8E)

WHEREAS, our Lord said, "You are my friends if you do what I command you" (John 15:14); and

WHEREAS, St. Paul indicated an enduring tradition when he repeated the Lord's command: "For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, [gave] thanks...broke it and said 'This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me'" (1 Corinthians 11:23-24); and

WHEREAS, Christ established a covenantal relationship in this sacrament when he said, "... for this is the blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many . . ." (Matthew 26:28), and as children of God we have a duty and delight to obey his will: "Take, eat; this is my body. . . . Drink from it, all of you" (Matthew 26:26-27); and

WHEREAS, our Lord warned us, "Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you" (John 6:53); and

WHEREAS, the Augsburg Confession claimed, "Our churches are falsely accused of abolishing the Mass. In fact, the Mass is retained among us and is celebrated with the greatest reverence" (CA XXIV, 1); and "... one common Mass is held on every holy day, and it is administered on other days if there are those who desire it. . . . Chrysostom says that the priest stands daily at the altar, inviting some to Communion and keeping others away" (CA XXIV, 34, 36); and

WHEREAS, Martin Luther in the Large Catechism observed, "... we go to the sacrament because there we receive a great treasure . . . as a daily food and sustenance so that our faith may be refreshed and strengthened" (LC V, 22, 24), "... those who want to be Christians should prepare themselves to receive this blessed sacrament frequently" (LC V, 39), "... no one under any circumstances should be forced or coerced. . . . Nevertheless, it must be understood that such people who abstain and absent themselves from the sacrament over a long period of time are not to be considered Christians" (LC V, 42), "As in other matters . . . there must also be daily exhortation, so that on this subject we must be persistent in preaching" (LC V, 44), "What should move and induce you is that he [Christ] desires it, and it pleases him" (LC V, 52), "For if you wait until you are rid of your burden in order to come to the sacrament purely and worthily, you will have to stay away from it forever" (LC V, 73); and

WHEREAS, our congregational constitutions call the Augsburg Confession "a true witness to the Gospel" (*C2.05.), accept the other confessional writings including the Large Catechism as "further valid interpretations of the faith of the Church" (*C2.06.), and state that the congregation "accepts the canonical Scriptures of Old and New Testaments as the inspired Word of God and the authoritative source and norm of its proclamation, faith, and life" (*C2.03.); and

WHEREAS, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession professed, "Among us the Mass is celebrated every Lord's day and on other festivals" (Ap XXIV, 1), and all Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) congregations by ratifying the ELCA model constitution for congregations have already accepted their responsibility to defend and implement the practice of celebrating the Eucharist weekly; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that, in obedience to the unquestionable command of Christ and in concord with this church's Confessions and constitutions, the Upper Susquehanna Synod in annual assembly memorialize the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) in its next biennial assembly to embrace this Gospel treasure with joy; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Upper Susquehanna Synod in annual assembly memorialize the ELCA in its next biennial assembly to recognize that this is a divine mandate and not a human agenda, and is already firmly established in Scripture, confessional documents, and constitutions of this church; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Upper Susquehanna Synod in annual assembly memorialize the ELCA in its next biennial assembly to devise and implement a plan to encourage all of the congregations of the ELCA to exhort one another to obedience to Christ's command to the desirable end that all congregations share in the Holy Communion weekly by Reformation Sunday in 2012.

Churchwide Assembly Action [CA11.03.06f]

To receive with gratitude the memorial of the Upper Susquehanna Synod concerning Holy Communion and to affirm its commendation of faithful and joyful reception of this sacrament; and

To refer the memorial to the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit in consultation with the Conference of Bishops for consideration of actions that will promote more frequent reception of Holy Communion by ELCA members and weekly observance of Holy Communion as the primary worship service of each ELCA congregation.

Background from the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit (April 2013)

The Congregational and Synodical Mission unit is requesting an extension to our response to this Church Council motion until November 2013. This extension would offer time to facilitate discussion about the proposal in the memorial with the Office of the Presiding Bishop and the Conference of Bishops.

Church Council Action:

[En Bloc]

To receive the response from the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit;

To authorize a delay in the response of the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit to the memorial on Sacramental Obedience in Holy Communion;

To request that a report and possible recommendations be brought to the November 2013 meeting of the Church Council; and

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

E. Perpetual Prayer Vigil

Motion B: Churchwide Assembly Action [CA11.05.30]

Submitted by Philip K. Van Dam, Southern Ohio Synod

WHEREAS, the Apology to the Augsburg Confession, Ch. V, 71, Article XIII says that we can consider prayer a sacrament; and WHEREAS, we seek to be moved by the Holy Spirit; and

WHEREAS, prayer helps this to happen; and

WHEREAS, prayer vigils help to motivate people to pray; and

WHEREAS, the Moravians had an international prayer vigil for over 100 years; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the synods of the ELCA hold prayer vigils for the entirety of Lent in 2012; and be it further

RESOLVED, that by Lent 2013 the ELCA have a plan in place for a perpetual prayer vigil.

Churchwide Assembly Action [CA11.05.30]

To refer Motion B to the Office of the Presiding Bishop in consultation with the Conference of Bishops.

Response from Office of the Presiding Bishop (April 2013)

The Office of the Presiding Bishop is requesting an extension to our response to this motion until November 2013. The proposal's request is broad and thus requires further conversation and study. This extension would offer time to facilitate additional discussion about the proposal's request with the Conference of Bishops and for a possible recommendation in sufficient time for Lent 2014.

Church Council Action:

[En Bloc]

To receive the response from the Office of the Presiding Bishop;

To authorize a delay in the response of the Office of the Presiding Bishop to Motion B: Perpetual Prayer Vigil; and

To request that a report and possible recommendations be brought to the November 2013 meeting of the Church Council.