

November 17, 2010

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
(November 12–14, 2010)

I. RESPONSES TO SYNODICAL RESOLUTIONS

A. Termination of Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, Defined Benefit Pension Plan

1. Minneapolis Area Synod (3G)

WHEREAS, “Social statements establish policy for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America’s (ELCA) work in the areas of advocacy and corporate social responsibility, enabling, limiting, and directing these activities” (“Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns,” p.12); and

WHEREAS, in 1999 the ELCA adopted a social statement entitled, “Economic Life: Sufficient Sustainable Livelihood for All,” which states, “God is at work in economic life. Economic life is intended to be a means through which God’s purposes for humankind and creation are to be served. When this does not occur, as a church we cannot remain silent because of who and whose we are”; and

WHEREAS, that statement further says, “We commit ourselves as a church to: . . . provide adequate pension and health benefits, safe and healthy work conditions, sufficient periods of rest, vacation, and sabbatical, and family-friendly work schedules”; and

WHEREAS, Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, a unit of this church, has terminated its defined-benefit pension plan thereby eliminating the lifetime annuity payments promised through the plan; and

WHEREAS, the action of Augsburg Fortress places 175 retired persons in diminished financial positions and an additional 325 past and present employees, many of whom have worked for 20, 25, or 30 years for the ELCA publishing ministry, with the prospect of spending their end-of-life years with incomes below the established poverty lines; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that in keeping with stated policy to provide “adequate pension and health benefits,” the ELCA Church Council seek means of funding the pension accounts of the faithful servants—retirees and past and

present employees who were promised annuity benefits through the recently terminated Augsburg Fortress defined-benefit pension plan.

2. Southeastern Minnesota Synod (3I)

WHEREAS, the ELCA social statement “Economic Life: Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All” promotes economic justice; and

WHEREAS, Augsburg Fortress, Publishers (AFP), is a separately incorporated program unit of this church; and

WHEREAS, AFP has terminated its defined benefit pension plan, reducing the pension benefits some current and retired employees expected through this plan; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Minnesota Synod in assembly direct its synod council to memorialize the ELCA Church Council to:

1. Investigate means to restore any lost pension benefits for current and retired employees of AFP; and
2. Initiate an independent investigation to determine how the AFP pension program came to be underfunded.

3. Southwestern Texas Synod (4E)

WHEREAS, Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, a separately incorporated program unit of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, terminated its defined benefit pension plan by action of its Board of Trustees in December 2009; and

WHEREAS, the termination of the Augsburg Fortress defined benefit pension plan has adversely affected approximately 500 present and former employees; and

WHEREAS, individuals have asked about the background and reasons for the actions of the Augsburg Fortress Board of Trustees, and it is important to provide accurate and complete information regarding the termination; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Texas Synod Assembly expresses its concern and prayers for these 500 present, former, and retired employees of Augsburg

Fortress whose annuity payments have been eliminated and whose financial situations have been diminished through the termination of Augsburg Fortress' defined benefit pension plan; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Texas Synod Assembly direct the Synod Council to forward this resolution to the ELCA Church Council and the Board of Trustees of Augsburg Fortress, the ministry of publishing of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

4. Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod (7E)

WHEREAS, the ELCA's 1999 social statement *Economic Life: Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All* contains this provision on page 10:

"We commit ourselves as a church to: . . . compensate all people we call or employ at an amount sufficient for them to live in dignity; provide adequate pension and health benefits, safe and healthy work conditions, sufficient periods of rest, vacation and sabbatical, and family-friendly work schedules"; and

WHEREAS, Augsburg Fortress Publishers is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; and

WHEREAS, Augsburg Fortress Publishers has terminated its defined benefits pension plan which was promised to approximately 500 present and former employees; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA claims to have no responsibility for this unjust act; and

WHEREAS, this action will render many Augsburg Fortress retirees destitute; and

WHEREAS, this church seeks to be an advocate for the hungry and for justice; and

WHEREAS, the Holy Scriptures call upon us, as we have opportunity, to do good to all and especially to the household of faith (Galatians 6:10), and Jesus sent out disciples saying that "the worker is worth his keep" (Matthew 10:7-10); and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has not taken action to restore the incomes of these plan members in spite of its commitment in the social statement; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod in assembly urges the Church Council to take all necessary actions to fulfill the commitments in the social statement on economic life for Augsburg Fortress employees and retirees who are suffering significantly reduced income.

5. South Dakota Synod (3C)

WHEREAS, Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, a separately incorporated program unit of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, terminated its defined benefit pension plan by action of its Board of Trustees in December 2009; and

WHEREAS, the termination of the Augsburg Fortress defined benefit pension plan has adversely affected approximately 500 present and former employees; and

WHEREAS, individuals have asked about the background and reasons for the actions of the Augsburg Fortress Board of Trustees, and it is important to provide accurate and complete information regarding the termination; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the South Dakota Synod in assembly ask its Synod Council and Synod Bishop to express deep concern to the Church Council and Presiding Bishop about the burdens that have been placed upon the past and present faithful servants of our church's publishing house; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the South Dakota Synod in assembly direct the Synod Council to ask the Church Council to seek means of restoring pension funds for the past and present faithful servants who were promised annuity benefits through the Augsburg Fortress Pension Plan; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the South Dakota Synod in assembly direct the Synod Council to ask the Church Council to conduct a review of the actions of the management and trustees of Augsburg Fortress Publishers regarding the background, reasons for, and implications of the termination of its defined benefits plan, and to report on the results of the review at the November 2010 meeting of the Church Council; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the South Dakota Synod in assembly direct the Synod Council to forward this resolution to the Church Council for consideration and possible action.

6. Metropolitan Chicago Synod (5A)

WHEREAS, Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, a separately incorporated program unit of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, terminated its defined benefit pension plan by action of its Board of Trustees in January 2010; and

WHEREAS, the termination of the Augsburg Fortress defined benefit pension plan has adversely affected approximately 500 present and former employees; and

WHEREAS, individuals have asked about the background and reasons for the actions of the Augsburg Fortress Board of Trustees, and it is important to provide accurate and complete information regarding the termination; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan Chicago Synod Council expresses its concern and prayers for these 500 present and former employees of Augsburg Fortress who have been adversely affected by the termination of the defined benefit pension plan; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan Chicago Synod Council forward this resolution to the Church Council and to the Augsburg Fortress Board of Trustees to convey this synod's concern.

7. Upstate New York Synod (7D)

WHEREAS, the people of the Upstate New York Synod are a resurrection people who pray first, walk together, and change lives, we hold special concern for all those who are suffering in these difficult financial times; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Upstate New York Synod hold in prayer those who are negatively affected by the changes in the pension plans of the ELCA and Augsburg Fortress, Publishers; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Upstate New York Synod also pray for the hungry, the homeless, the jobless, and all who are experiencing fear, frustration, depression, and devastation due to the current economic climate; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Upstate New York Synod memorialize the ELCA, its synods and congregations, its various organizations, small groups, and individuals to pray for the recovery of this nation's economy and the alleviation of those conditions that are so devastating to so many of God's children locally, nationally, and globally; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Upstate New York Synod Assembly affirm the actions taken by the Synod Council at its April 2010 meeting [SC10.04.32].

8. Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod (8B)

WHEREAS, Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, is the result of the merger of publishing houses of the predecessor bodies of the ELCA; and

WHEREAS, many of the retirees of Augsburg Fortress were of important service to the predecessor bodies of the ELCA, and, many of the retirees of Augsburg Fortress remained employed after the institution of the ELCA; and

WHEREAS, the predecessor bodies and the ELCA have continually maintained a relationship with Augsburg Fortress (or its predecessor companies) which both Augsburg Fortress and the ELCA has recognized as adjunct to, supportive of, and driven by the ministry of the ELCA; and

WHEREAS, since its inception, and still today, the ELCA commits itself to causes of social justice and fairness; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly request the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to recognize that, even though the ELCA has no legal or fiduciary obligations to Augsburg Fortress retirees whose retirement benefits were terminated, it does have responsibility to seek justice and fairness and to investigate ways that the ELCA can act justly (not simply legally) toward these retirees; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly direct the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod Council to forward this resolution to the Church Council for consideration and possible action.

Background from the Office of the Secretary

On December 31, 2009, Augsburg Fortress, Publishers (AFP), the publishing house of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), announced that it would terminate its defined benefit retirement plan effective March 5, 2010. The action, approved by the board of trustees of AFP, affected 500 plan participants. In announcing the termination, AFP explained that the action was necessitated primarily by financial losses attributable to decreasing sales and the dramatic downturn in the financial markets.

During 2005, AFP had taken action to freeze the defined benefit plan and began offering a separate defined contribution plan to its employees. According to AFP, if it had done nothing more, the plan would have run out of money in approximately five years and left about 60 percent of those in the plan with no retirement benefits. The trustees of the AFP plan amended the plan to provide a more equitable allocation of plan assets among plan participants. As a result, most participants in the defined benefit plan received a lump sum payment after the plan was terminated. The publishing company has maintained and continues to maintain retirement benefits for its staff.

AFP is separately incorporated entity apart from the ELCA churchwide organization. The churchwide organization has never had authority or control over AFP's pension plans. The ELCA had no role in the creation, management, funding, or termination of the Augsburg Fortress defined benefit retirement plan that was closed. The individual members of that plan were not employed by the churchwide organization.

On April 21, 2010, a group of those AFP employees who had been covered by the terminated pension plan filed a lawsuit in the U.S. District Court of Minnesota, naming as defendants the publishing house and the ELCA, as well as a number of individuals. That lawsuit seeks to recover losses suffered by the plaintiffs and all other members of the plan. The ELCA denied the allegations made against it and has filed a motion seeking a complete dismissal from the case.

Church Council Action:

To receive with gratitude the resolutions of the Metropolitan Chicago, Upstate New York, Minneapolis Area, Southeastern Minnesota, Southwestern Texas, Northeastern Pennsylvania, South Dakota, and Southwestern Pennsylvania synods related to the termination of the defined benefit plan of Augsburg Fortress, Publishers (AFP);

To join with those synods in expressing deep concern and offering prayers for all persons adversely affected by the termination of the AFP defined benefit retirement plan, and to encourage this church to

remember in prayer those current and former employees of AFP, as well as those serving in other church-related institutions impacted by the current economic crisis;

To acknowledge with regret that this entire matter is now the subject of litigation in federal court in Minnesota and to recognize that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America must now defend itself against the claims for substantial monetary damages that are being alleged in that lawsuit, and therefore to decline at this time to undertake any further investigation or review of this matter during the pendency of the lawsuit;

To refer these resolutions to the Office of the Presiding Bishop and the Office of the Treasurer to explore possible ways that those seeking to assist the affected AFP retirees financially might be provided an opportunity to do so through means of a voluntary appeal or special fund for that purpose, and report their findings and possible recommendations to the council upon conclusion of the pending lawsuit; and

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

B. Resolution Commending the ELCA's Church Council for its Leadership and Urging it to "Stay the Course" in Regard to 2009 Churchwide Assembly Actions

Florida-Bahamas Synod (9E)

WHEREAS, the Synod Council of the Florida-Bahamas Synod shares with the Church Council of the ELCA the responsibility for legislative and policy direction and implementation between our respective assemblies; and

WHEREAS, this Synod Council has strong appreciation and support for the wise, faithful, and courageous leadership consistent with this church's foundational and governing documents that has been the hallmark of the Church Council's history; and

WHEREAS, it falls to all of us with council responsibilities at the churchwide, synod, and congregation levels in this church to demonstrate the finest in such leadership traits in our sometimes arduous and demanding positions; and

WHEREAS, the Church Council has the responsibility to implement the ministry policy recommendations adopted by the 2009 Churchwide Assembly in the midst of disagreement; and

WHEREAS, in the midst of these internal and external challenges faced by the Church, the Florida-Bahamas Synod Council wishes to convey its appreciation, thanks, and support to the Church Council for its faithful leadership; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Florida-Bahamas Synod Council gives thanks to Almighty God for the gifts and discipleship of all engaged in the ministry of our Church Council and for the council's exemplary guidance and leadership in these trying times; and be it further

RESOLVED, that we urge you, with our full support and appreciation, as well as our commitment to a constructive and positive partnership with you, to "stay the course" in moving in the positive directions toward which we have been called by the 2009 Churchwide Assembly actions, however difficult and demanding that may be; and be it further

RESOLVED, that we commit to continue to lift up Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson and the entire Church Council in prayer at every meeting of our Synod Council, asking that each of you be given the necessary vision, courage, strength, and wisdom to continue your ministry as you are called to do.

Church Council Action:

To receive with gratitude the resolution of the Florida-Bahamas Synod Council commending the ELCA Church Council for its leadership in preparation for the actions of the 2009 Churchwide Assembly;

To acknowledge the commitment to "constructive and positive partnership" expressed by the Florida-Bahamas Synod Council and to join with them and with leaders throughout the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in prayer, partnership, and continuing work together;

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

C. Accessibility in the ELCA and South-Central Synod of Wisconsin

South-Central Synod of Wisconsin (5K)

WHEREAS, Jesus commissions his followers to gather disciples everywhere, and the ELCA seeks to follow this call by welcoming diversity in its communities of faith and also by continuing a healthy tradition of self-examination and change when it discovers bias in its words or actions; and

WHEREAS, liturgical and scriptural literacy is highly valued among the people of the ELCA and the ELCA has chosen the NRSV translation of the Scriptures as its accepted translation and embarked on a churchwide biblical literacy program—the Book of Faith Initiative; and

WHEREAS, Augsburg Fortress is the designated publishing house of the ELCA that provides pastors, educators, worship planners, and other members of the ELCA with products and services that communicate the Gospel, enhance faith, and enrich the life of the Christian community from a Lutheran perspective; and

WHEREAS, printed resources produced by the ELCA and Augsburg Fortress are rarely published in accessible formats, i.e., formats other than small-size print; and further, it is understood that the ELCA and Augsburg Fortress have no plans to expand the selection; and

WHEREAS, people with most kinds of vision impairment, people with certain learning disabilities, and people with other disabilities affecting the activity of reading are not able to use most of the ELCA or Augsburg Fortress materials in the available format; and

WHEREAS, individuals and congregations must spend large amounts of money and time to create or re-create materials so that people with disabilities affecting the activity of reading are able to participate fully in worship, spiritual development, and educational activities at home, school, or church; and

WHEREAS, people who are blind or otherwise visually impaired are currently involved in a struggle for basic civil rights like access to education, employment, and voting, and the ELCA ignores this struggle by promoting worship and educational materials that are available only in small-size print and by allowing inaccessible features on their Web sites thus further marginalizing many children and adults with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, in spite of these barriers, people with vision impairments and other disabilities, through their commitment to the Gospel, are already active as worshipers and leaders in ELCA congregations, schools, colleges, and seminaries; and

WHEREAS, modern technology makes production and distribution of accessible format materials easier than ever, and centralizing these functions would allow congregations across the ELCA to have more convenient and less expensive access to such materials; and

WHEREAS, the resurrection of a comprehensive ministry to provide accessible format materials to ELCA congregations would benefit and uplift the entire body of Christ; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin memorialize the Church Council to direct Augsburg Fortress to report to the 2011 Churchwide Assembly a plan to implement in its own publishing, partnership publishing, or other contracted manufacturing a way to make available at reasonable cost its printed materials (books and other forms) upon request in an appropriate accessible format that maintains the structural integrity of the original material; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin requests the Church Council at its November 2010 meeting to direct all churchwide units and encourage auxiliary organizations to design their Web sites in ways that respect the accessibility needs of people with vision impairment by using high-contrast, following W3C standards, and incorporating feedback from users with disabilities; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin requests the Church Council to direct all churchwide units of the ELCA to include information on plans to implement the accessibility to the April 2011 Church Council meeting; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2010 Synod Assembly of the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin requests the Synod Council to examine synodically created materials and

policies on accessibility for those with disabilities and order changes to said materials and policies in the spirit of this resolution and as the Synod Council directs; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2010 Synod Assembly of the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin encourages all congregations within this synod to review their internal policies and materials and to make changes as needed in the spirit of this resolution; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the bishop of this Synod shall report to the 2011 Synod Assembly any actions taken on this subject by the Church Council and the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin Synod Council; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2010 Synod Assembly of the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin directs the Synod Secretary to forward this resolution to the Church Council and the ELCA Secretary, for consideration and possible action, and to each congregation within this synod.

Church Council Action:

To receive the resolution of the South Central Synod of Wisconsin related to accessibility in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the South Central Synod of Wisconsin;

To refer the resolution to the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit in consultation with the Office of the Presiding Bishop and Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, especially as a Message on Disabilities is drafted as requested by the 2009 Churchwide Assembly;

To request that a report and possible recommendations be brought to the April 2011 meeting of the Church Council; and

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

D. Social Statement *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* South Carolina Synod (9C)

WHEREAS, the 2009 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, in accordance with ELCA bylaw 12.12.01, adopted a social statement, *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*, by exactly a two-thirds vote; and

WHEREAS, the social statement has generated substantial disagreement and debate among faithful members of the ELCA; and

WHEREAS, the South Carolina Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has in assembly expressed disagreement with the social statement *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* (275 opposed, 125 in favor, 89 abstain [2009 South Carolina Synod Bulletin of Reports]); and

WHEREAS, "Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns" expressly provides for reconsideration of a social statement by

the Churchwide Assembly following its adoption, and its removal or revision; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the South Carolina Synod Assembly direct the South Carolina Synod Council to request the Church Council to request the Churchwide Assembly to reconsider the social statement *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* in accordance with “Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns.”

Background information

The document guiding the reconsideration of social statements is “Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concern.” The section called “Social Statement Reconsideration” (page 17) describes the process for reconsideration:

Churchwide Assemblies may reconsider previously adopted social statements. Such reconsideration may involve either a revision or removal of the statement. This may be done in two ways:

1. A Churchwide Assembly, by a two-thirds vote, may call for the reconsideration of a social statement at the next assembly. Subsequent to such a vote, the social statement shall be referred to the Church in Society unit for re-study. The proposed change and the reasons for it shall be made available to this church with an official notice of such proposed action to be sent to the synods by the secretary of this church at least three months prior to the Churchwide Assembly at which it will be considered. A two-thirds vote of the assembly shall be required to revise or remove the social statement.
2. The Church Council by a two-thirds vote of its voting members may ask the Churchwide Assembly to reconsider a social statement. Such Church Council action must be taken no later than at the Church Council meeting in the autumn prior to the assembly. The proposed change and the reasons for it shall then be made available to this church with an official notice of such proposed action to be sent to the synods by the secretary of this church at least three months prior to the Churchwide Assembly. A two-thirds vote of the assembly shall be required to reconsider the statement and also to revise or remove it. Both actions may occur at the same assembly.

In addition to the resolution of the South Carolina Synod, four synods passed memorials addressing the social statement *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*. The memorial of the South Dakota Synod requests that the 2011 Churchwide Assembly to “reconsider and remove the social statement *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* in accordance with “Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns.” The memorials of the Metropolitan Chicago, Metropolitan New York, and the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. synods, all similarly worded, request the 2011 Churchwide Assembly “to encourage the full implementation of the social statement *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* and its implementing resolutions....” Additional memorials on this topic may be approved by the 2011 synod assemblies.

Church Council Action:

To receive the resolution of the South Carolina Synod requesting the reconsideration of the social statement *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*;

To acknowledge that four synod assemblies in 2010 passed memorials addressing the 2011 Churchwide Assembly on this topic, one requesting reconsideration of the social statement and three requesting “full implementation” of the social statement and its implementing resolutions, and to anticipate that synod assemblies in 2011 may pass additional memorials on this topic;

To decline to request reconsideration of *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* by the Churchwide Assembly, but to request that the resolution of the South Carolina Synod and this response be reported as information to the Memorials Committee; and

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

E. The Decade of Women—Gender Equality: Theological Reflections and Congregational Action Strategies

Southwest California Synod (2B)

WHEREAS, we celebrate this church’s ordination of women as a clear public witness of the equality of women and men intended by Jesus and the early Christian community; and

WHEREAS, we globally profess to love our wives, mothers, sisters and daughters, yet leave millions of women and children displaced in the wilderness, or homeless on highways and streets, ignoring their cries for help, and remaining blind to their bruises and wounds from the violence they suffer; and

WHEREAS, a global study on the discrimination and disempowerment women face throughout their lives and how that impacts children’s lives entitled the *UNICEF 2007 Report on the State of the World’s Children* concluded the following:

Gender equality is not only morally right, it is pivotal to human progress and sustainable development;

Gender equality furthers the cause of child survival and development;

Gender equality will not only empower women to overcome poverty and live full and productive lives, but will better the lives of children, families and countries as well;

Women's equal rights and influence in the key decisions that shape their lives and those of children must be enhanced in three distinct arenas: the household, the workplace and the political sphere; and

WHEREAS, the 2009 Churchwide Assembly approved the creation of a Social Statement on Justice for Women (which was memorialized by this Synod); and

WHEREAS, the ELCA's implementation of "The Decade for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence" and the "Stand With Africa" formats successfully highlighted ministry opportunities and can be readily adapted to focus directly on the obstacles and challenges faced by women around the world; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Southwest California Synod Assembly direct the Synod Council to forward this resolution to the Church Council for timely consideration and possible action to adopt 2011–2020 as "The Decade of Women" within our denomination by incorporating those successful strategies as exhibited in "The Decade for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence" and "Stand With Africa" and other gender-equality action strategies for congregations; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwest California Synod lend its voice and efforts in promoting gender equality, which contributes to achieving the goals of reducing poverty and hunger, saving children's lives, improving maternal health, ensuring universal education, combating HIV and AIDS, malaria, and other diseases, and ensuring environmental sustainability; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwest California Synod Assembly commend and enhance the efforts of this church's Global Mission unit, the ELCA World Hunger Program, Lutheran World Relief, Women of the ELCA, and other ecumenical and interfaith advocacy efforts by raising awareness and funds for their important work in honoring women by faithfully addressing issues critical to their survival; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwest California Synod, through its staff, conferences, congregations and members, exercise intentional efforts to labor for real change on women's issues, especially in the areas of sexual violence, domestic violence, healthcare, human rights, displaced refugees, reproductive rights, poverty, economic and property rights, among others.

Church Council Action:

To receive the resolution of the Southwest California Synod requesting consideration of a "The Decade of Women" (2011–2020) within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America;

To refer the resolution to the Office of the Presiding Bishop in consultation with the Administrative Team with a request that a report and possible recommendations be brought to the April 2011 meeting of the Church Council; and

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

F. Hearing the Various Voices of this Church on the Matter of Sexuality Allegheny Synod (8C)

WHEREAS, the decision by the 2009 Churchwide Assembly to allow for the rostering of pastors who are in same-gender, publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous relationships has had a major effect on our church and has left many wondering how to respond faithfully to this decision; and

WHEREAS, this church can run the risk of losing the voices of that large majority of people who out of their conviction and faith in Christ find themselves somewhere in the middle of this issue and as space needs to be created for continued, respectful dialogue so that these voices are not silenced; and

WHEREAS, we believe that no one comes to their beliefs and positions lightly, that people with opposing views hold them out of their conviction of what it means to be faithful to the Gospel of Christ, and that committed Christians can come to opposing beliefs on how they are to be faithful; and

WHEREAS, we understand that the debate over this issue runs the risk of becoming so polarized that we could lose the ability to talk to and hear each other; and

WHEREAS, the Church has always faced times of tension and testing, and it has gotten through these challenges and controversies through dialogue, attention to each other, and listening to the guidance of the Holy Spirit who speaks through the Body of Christ as well as Scripture. A few examples of these challenges can be found in the controversy between Peter and Paul over circumcision (Acts 15:5–21, Galatians 2:11–21); the early Church's learning how to be God's people in this world (1 Corinthians); the Church's struggle to define its beliefs (Council of Nicaea and Arian Controversy); the Reformation to call the entire church back to the Gospel of Christ; and the struggles in the last century regarding the ordination of women; and

WHEREAS, we are called to work out our differences within the Body of Christ as part of the witness to the evidence of Jesus living in our midst, and the work of the Holy Spirit among us. By doing so we humbly offer to our communities and the world a new way, rather than retreating to the ways of the world around us. We do this remembering that, "if [we] have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if [we] have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, [we are] nothing" (1 Corinthians 13:2); and

WHEREAS, the social statement on human sexuality adopted by the 2009 Churchwide Assembly reflects the complexity of the issue. The statement includes different understandings and practices within the life of this church as it seeks to live out its mission and ministry in the world. This church recognizes with conviction and integrity all four positions as put forth in Section IV of *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*; and

WHEREAS, trusting God's Spirit to lead, we are faced with the challenging work of discerning how we are to live in this time, finding the way together, as this church. We acknowledge that there is room for discussion and group discernment and that there is time for the process of God's work leading us to find the way through the present reality; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Allegheny Synod continue in these discussions with intentional prayer for guidance of the Holy Spirit as it maps out a faithful path. Let us intentionally pray for Christ's unity amidst our differing understandings of faithful response to this issue on the first and fifteenth of each month. Let us pray with each other; and be it further

RESOLVED, we commit ourselves in Christ to strive together with a spirit of compassion for the other, humility before God; love for our brothers and sisters in Christ, and respect for where other faithful Christians may be on this issue. We acknowledge that the Holy Spirit continues to be actively at work in this process, inviting us to hear each other and discern where God is leading us. Let us walk with each other; and be it further

RESOLVED, that Allegheny Synod commit itself to the challenge of working out how we live under this reality, unified as the Allegheny Synod of the ELCA in this prayerful process, working together, and listening to each other. We do this believing it is a witness to the Body of Christ which serves and furthers the mission and ministry of the one holy catholic and apostolic church for which our Lord prayed on the night of his arrest in the Gospel of John (John 17:20–23). Let us work with each other; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Conference of Bishops be commended for its faithful work in recent deliberation on policies related to this topic. This is a witness to the living Christ within the Church, embracing the unity Christ offers while recognizing with conviction and integrity the various positions held on this topic. These efforts enable us to continue to work through the present situation. Let us encourage one another; and be it further

RESOLVED, that, for the sake of the Gospel and the unity of the Church, the Allegheny Synod Assembly strongly urge the Church Council, Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson, and the Conference of Bishops as they continue to form and shape policies for the church regarding this issue to be about the deliberate, committed, and challenging work of hearing the various voices of the church on this subject; praying deliberately for the Spirit's guidance on this issue; and

seeking to be shaped and led by the Living Word! Let us move together into the future for the sake of Christ's mission and ministry to which we are called.

Church Council Action:

To receive with gratitude the resolution of the Allegheny Synod related to "hearing the various voices of this church on the matter of sexuality" and to acknowledge the commitment of the Church Council to be attentive to this church as we

- **Pray with each other**
- **Walk with each other**
- **Work with each other**
- **Encourage each other**
- **Move together into the future for the sake of Christ's mission and ministry to which we are called;**

To invite the congregations and members of this church to respond to the call of the Allegheny Synod by hearing the various voices of the church, praying deliberately for the Spirit's guidance and seeking to be shaped and led by the Living Word on those issues that challenge us, including sexuality; and

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

G. Timeline of the Social Statement on Genetics West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod (8H)

WHEREAS, the Conference of Bishops expressed concern about the timeline of the draft social statement on genetics during their meetings March 5-9, 2010; and

WHEREAS, some bishops expressed concern that the social statement and its potentially controversial topics are being presented to the church at a time when some parts of the ELCA are still immersed in controversy over decisions from the 2009 Churchwide Assembly; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has continued with the timeline of its Task Force on Genetics by issuing the draft social statement for study and response despite the expressed concerns of the Conference of Bishops; and

WHEREAS, responses to the draft social statement need to be submitted prior to October 15, 2010; and

WHEREAS, this short timeline provided only seven months for the West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod to coordinate efforts and to respond to a social statement with potentially controversial implications; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod ask the Church Council not to submit the social statement on genetics to the 2011 Churchwide Assembly for approval; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod ask the Church Council to instead submit the social statement on genetics to the 2013 Churchwide Assembly for approval.

Church Council Action:

To receive the resolution of the West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod related to the timeline for the social statement on genetics;

To acknowledge the action of the Church Council at its November 2010 to establish a timeline for the development of social statements as the response of this council to the resolution of the West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod; and

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

H. Board of Pensions and ELCA Participating Annuity and Bridge Fund

1. Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod (8B)

WHEREAS, the ELCA Participating Annuity and Bridge Fund (“the Fund”) experienced significant losses as a result of the recession that began in 2008; and

WHEREAS, the board of trustees of the ELCA Board of Pensions, in consultation with Board of Pensions senior staff and advisors, acted in a number of ways to address losses in the Fund, including closing the Fund to new contributions; reducing payments to annuitants in the Fund by 9% for 2010; advising annuitants of potential decreases in annuity payments in 2011 and 2012; reducing in 2010 by 3.5% the value of not yet annuitized accounts of participants in the bridge component of the Fund; and advising these participants of potential decreases in account values in 2011 and 2012; and

WHEREAS, the 2010 reductions and possible future reductions have the potential of working severe hardships on many with fixed financial responsibilities, and puts the burden on those individuals only; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA Special Needs Retirement Fund was created to provide assistance for eligible plan participants, spouses, and surviving spouses, who have financial need; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly requests the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to consult with the Board of Pensions regarding the background of, reasons for, and implications of the decisions made with respect to the ELCA Participating Annuity and Bridge Fund, to explore possible alternative ways to restore Fund losses (including congregational, synodical, or church-wide contributions, or temporary increases in payment contributions by individuals to the Fund until the Fund is brought to a “fully funded” position), and increase payment levels for annuitants and account values for those with bridge component accounts not yet annuitized, and to report on the results of the consultation at the November 2010 meeting of the Church Council; and be it further

RESOLVED, that steps be explored to mitigate the

adverse effects of the Fund reductions and possible future reductions, including the expansion and promotion of the ELCA Special Needs Retirement Fund; and be it further RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly direct the Synod Council to forward this resolution to the Church Council for consideration and possible action.

2. Metropolitan New York Synod (7C)

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan New York Synod Assembly request that the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America retain an external agency to consult with the Board of Pensions regarding the background of, reasons for, and implications of the decisions made with respect to the ELCA Participating Annuity and Bridge Fund, to explore possible alternative ways to restore Fund losses and increase payment levels for annuitants and account values for those with bridge component accounts not yet annuitized, and to report on the results of the external agency consultation at the November 2010 meeting of the Church Council; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan New York Synod Assembly request the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct that steps be explored to mitigate the adverse effects of the Fund reductions and possible future reductions, including the expansion and promotion of the ELCA Special Needs Retirement Fund, and that the results of that exploration be reported to all congregations, agencies, and institutions of the ELCA and to all participants in the ELCA Participating Annuity and Bridge Fund and/or the ELCA Special Needs Retirement Fund; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America be requested by the Metropolitan New York Synod in Assembly to ensure that reconsideration of the drastic actions taken by the Board of Pensions be undertaken, with a view to alleviating the hardships imposed upon retirees, their spouses, surviving spouses, and their families, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan New York Synod Assembly direct the Synod Council to forward this resolution to the Church Council for consideration and possible action.

3. Northeastern Iowa Synod (5F)

WHEREAS, the ELCA Board of Pensions has informed pensioners in the Participating Annuity and Bridge Fund that their monthly annuity payments may be decreased by 9% in each of the years 2010, 2011, and 2012 (an accumulated decrease of 25% from the 2009 level) based on “future investment returns in the Fund of 7.6% per annum”; and

WHEREAS, this reduction has the potential of working a severe hardship on those with fixed responsibilities, especially those “who have served so faithfully and generously—with passion for the Gospel and compassion for God’s people” (the Rev. Mark S. Hanson, presiding bishop) in congregations with reduced means; and

WHEREAS, the theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America proclaims that we are one church in the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12: 14–26); and

WHEREAS, the ELCA social statement *Economic Life: Sufficient and Sustainable Livelihood for All* states, “We commit ourselves as a church to . . . provide adequate pension and health benefits”; and

WHEREAS, the plan of the Board of Pensions to correct the current under-funding puts the burden of that correction on the pensioners only; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Iowa Synod Council request the Church Council to consult with the Board of Pensions in order to explore a variety of ways, including congregational or churchwide contributions, so that the Participating Annuity and Bridge Fund can be brought to a “fully funded” position or carry a reasonable “unfunded liability,” in order that the reductions in payment to pensioners can be reversed or ameliorated as quickly as possible; and, be it further

RESOLVED, that a thorough review of policy regarding investments be conducted so that the effects of sharp market volatility might be mitigated in view of hardship imposed upon retirees, their spouses, surviving spouses, and their families.

Church Council Action:

To receive the resolutions of the Southwestern Pennsylvania, Metropolitan New York, and Northeastern Iowa synods related to the ELCA Board of Pensions annuity funding;

To acknowledge the action of the Church Council in August 2010 to establish an *Ad Hoc* Committee with the following members: Church Council: David Anderson, Mark Helmke, Ann Niedringhaus, Carlos Peña (convener); liaison bishops: Callon Holloway, Jr., Martin Wells; advisory member: Lois O’Rourke, chair, Board of Pensions Board of Trustees; ex-officio: Christina Jackson-Skelton, ELCA treasurer and David Swartling, ELCA secretary; Board of Pensions staff liaison: Robert Berg; churchwide staff liaison: Ruth Hamilton, Office of the Secretary;

To anticipate a report and recommendations from the *Ad Hoc* Committee at the November 2010 meeting of the Church Council related to the ELCA Participating Annuity and Bridge Fund, including but not limited to:

1. Consultation with the Board of Pensions regarding the background of, reasons for, and

implications of the decisions made with respect to the ELCA Participating Annuity and Bridge Fund; and

2. Exploration of possible:

- a. alternative ways to restore Fund losses and increase payment levels for annuitants and account values for those with bridge component accounts not yet annuitized;**
- b. steps to mitigate adverse effects of the Fund reductions and possible future reductions, including the expansion and promotion of the ELCA Special Needs Retirement Fund;**

To acknowledge the action of the ELCA Church Council related to possible recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee as the response of the Church Council to all synodical resolutions on this issue; and

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

I. Board of Pensions and ELCA Participating Annuity and Bridge Fund

1. Minneapolis Area Synod (3G)

WHEREAS, the theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) includes the understanding that we are all one in the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:14–26); and

WHEREAS, the ELCA social statement *Economic Life: Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All*, adopted by the sixth Churchwide Assembly on August 20, 1999, in Denver, Colorado, states in part, “We commit ourselves as a church to . . . provide adequate pension and health benefits . . .”; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Pensions of the ELCA (the Board) has a fiduciary responsibility to manage the pension funds so that they will adequately fund the annuity obligations owed to pensioners; and

WHEREAS, the Board’s plan to correct an underfunding of pension obligations to former employees puts much of the burden on the pensioners (with some experiencing greater hardship because of the cuts) and does not share the burden with the entire Body of Christ; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Minneapolis Area Synod meeting in assembly urge the Church Council to request that the Board reevaluate both the bases of loss in the Board’s formula that measures the gap to an average high over the past 10 years and thereby re-determine the gap that the Board needs to cut annuities; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Minneapolis Area Synod meeting in assembly urge the Church Council to request that the Board reconsider those who have experienced this cut as a major hardship; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Minneapolis Area Synod meeting in assembly urge the Church Council to request that the executive staff of the Board look for additional

ways to re-fund the under-funding in the Annuity Fund; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Church Council urge the Board of Pensions to separate the Annuity and Bridge Fund into two separate funds and manage the Annuity Fund in a more conservative and less risky way, so that in the future it will not experience the loss experienced in this last recession.

2. Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod (4F)

WHEREAS, the ELCA Participating Annuity and Bridge Fund ("the Fund") experienced significant losses as a result of the recession that began in 2008; and

WHEREAS, the board of trustees of the ELCA Board of Pensions, in consultation with Board of Pensions senior staff and advisors, acted in a number of ways to address losses in the Fund, including closing the Fund to new contributions; reducing payments to annuitants in the Fund by 9% for 2010; advising annuitants of potential decreases in annuity payments in 2011 and 2012; reducing in 2010 by 3.5% the value of not yet annuitized accounts of participants in the bridge component of the Fund; and advising these participants of potential decreases in account values in 2011 and 2012; and

WHEREAS, the 2010 reductions and possible future reductions have the potential of working severe hardships on many with fixed financial responsibilities; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA Special Needs Retirement Fund was created to provide assistance for eligible plan participants, spouses, and surviving spouses, who have financial need; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod Assembly requests the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to consult with the Board of Pensions regarding the background of, reasons for, and implications of the decisions made with respect to the ELCA Participating Annuity and Bridge Fund, to explore possible alternative ways to restore Fund losses and increase payment levels for annuitants and account values for those with bridge component accounts not yet annuitized, and to report on the results of the consultation at the November 2010 meeting of the Church Council; and be it further

RESOLVED, that steps be explored to mitigate the adverse effects of the Fund reductions and possible future reductions, including the expansion and promotion of the ELCA Special Needs Retirement Fund; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod Assembly direct the Synod Council to forward this resolution to the Church Council for consideration and possible action.

3. Southwestern Minnesota Synod (3F)

RESOLVED, that Southwestern Minnesota Synod at its 2010 Assembly request the Church Council to explore and implement, in partnership with the ELCA Board of Pensions, strategies to restore the reduction and cancel any future reductions to the recipients of the ELCA Board of Pensions Participating Annuity and Bridge Fund; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Minnesota Synod Assembly requests the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to consult with the Board of Pensions regarding the background of, reasons for, and implications of the decisions made with respect to the ELCA Participating Annuity and Bridge Fund, to explore possible alternative ways to restore Fund losses and increase payment levels for annuitants and account values for those with bridge component accounts not yet annuitized, and to report on the results of the consultation at the November 2010 meeting of the Church Council; and be it further

RESOLVED, that steps be explored to mitigate the adverse effects of the Fund reductions and possible future reductions, including the expansion and promotion of the ELCA Special Needs Retirement Fund; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Minnesota Synod Assembly direct the Synod Council to forward this resolution to the Church Council for consideration and possible action.

4. South Dakota Synod (3C)

WHEREAS, the ELCA Participating Annuity and Bridge Fund ("the Fund") experienced significant losses as a result of the recession that began in 2008; and

WHEREAS, the board of trustees of the ELCA Board of Pensions, in consultation with Board of Pensions senior staff and advisors, acted in a number of ways to address losses in the Fund, including closing the Fund to new contributions; reducing payments to annuitants in the Fund by 9% for 2010; advising annuitants of potential decreases in annuity payments in 2011 and 2012; reducing in 2010 by 3.5% the value of not yet annuitized accounts of participants in the bridge component of the Fund; and advising these participants of potential decreases in account values in 2011 and 2012; and

WHEREAS, the 2010 reductions and possible future reductions have the potential of working severe hardships on many with fixed financial responsibilities; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA Special Needs Retirement Fund was created to provide assistance for eligible plan participants, spouses, and surviving spouses, who have financial need; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the South Dakota Synod Assembly request that the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America consult with the Board of Pensions regarding the background of, reasons for, and implications of the decisions made with respect to the

ELCA Participating Annuity and Bridge Fund, to explore possible alternative ways to restore Fund losses and increase payment levels for annuitants and account values for those with bridge component accounts not yet annuitized, and to report on the results of the consultation at the November 2010 meeting of the Church Council; and be it further

RESOLVED, that steps be explored to mitigate the adverse effects of the Fund reductions and possible future reductions, including the expansion and promotion of the ELCA Special Needs Retirement Fund; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the South Dakota Synod Assembly direct the Synod Council to forward this resolution to the Church Council for consideration and possible action.

5. Upstate New York Synod Council (7D)

WHEREAS, the ELCA Participating Annuity and Bridge Fund (“the Fund”) experienced significant losses as a result of the recession that began in 2008; and

WHEREAS, the board of trustees of the ELCA Board of Pensions, in consultation with Board of Pensions senior staff and advisors, acted in a number of ways to address losses in the Fund, including closing the Fund to new contributions; reducing payments to annuitants in the Fund by 9% for 2010; advising annuitants of potential decreases in annuity payments in 2011 and 2012; reducing in 2010 by 3.5% the value of not yet annuitized accounts of participants in the bridge component of the Fund; and advising these participants of potential decreases in account values in 2011 and 2012; and

WHEREAS, the 2010 reductions and possible future reductions have the potential of working severe hardships on many with fixed financial responsibilities; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA Special Needs Retirement Fund was created to provide assistance for eligible plan participants, spouses, and surviving spouses, who have financial need; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Upstate New York Synod Council requests the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to consult with the Board of Pensions regarding the background of, reasons, for, and implications of the decisions made with respect to the ELCA Participating Annuity and Bridge Fund, to explore possible alternative ways to restore Fund losses and increase payment levels for annuitants and account values for those with bridge component accounts not yet annuitized, and to report on the results of the consultation at the November 2010 meeting of the Church Council; and be it further

RESOLVED, that steps be explored to mitigate the adverse effects of the Fund reductions and possible future reductions, including the expansion and promotion of the ELCA Special Needs Retirement Fund.

6. La Crosse Area Synod (5L)

WHEREAS, the ELCA Participating Annuity and Bridge Fund (“the Fund”) experienced significant losses as a result of the recession that began in 2008; and

WHEREAS, the board of trustees of the ELCA Board of Pensions, in consultation with Board of Pensions senior staff and advisors, acted in a number of ways to address losses in the Fund, including closing the Fund to new contributions; reducing payments to annuitants in the Fund by 9% for 2010; advising annuitants of potential decreases in annuity payments in 2011 and 2012; reducing in 2010 by 3.5% the value of not yet annuitized accounts of participants in the bridge component of the Fund; and advising these participants of potential decreases in account values in 2011 and 2012; and

WHEREAS, the 2010 reductions and possible future reductions have the potential of working severe hardships on many with fixed financial responsibilities; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA Special Needs Retirement Fund was created to provide assistance for eligible plan participants, spouses, and surviving spouses, who have financial need; therefore, be it

RESOLVED that the La Crosse Area Synod Assembly requests the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to consult with the Board of Pensions regarding the background of, reasons for, and implications of the decisions made with respect to the ELCA Participating Annuity and Bridge Fund, to explore possible alternative ways to restore Fund losses and increase payment levels for annuitants and account values for those with bridge component accounts not yet annuitized, and to report on the results of the consultation at the November 2010 meeting of the Church Council; and be it further

RESOLVED, that steps be explored to mitigate the adverse effects of the Fund reductions and possible future reductions, including the expansion and promotion of the ELCA Special Needs Retirement Fund; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the La Crosse Area Synod Assembly direct the Synod Council to forward this resolution to the Church Council for consideration and possible action.

7. Greater Milwaukee Synod (5J)

WHEREAS, the theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is that it is one church in the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:14–26); and

WHEREAS, the Lutheran church bodies which are the predecessor church bodies of the ELCA have a 250-year history of being concerned that its retired clergy and rostered lay workers have adequate pensions; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA social statement on economic life, *Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All*, adopted by the sixth Churchwide Assembly on August 20, 1999, in Denver, Colorado, states in part, “We commit ourselves as a church to . . . provide adequate pension and health benefits”; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA Board of Pensions has a fiduciary responsibility to manage the pension funds; and

WHEREAS, the plan of the ELCA Board of Pensions to correct the underfunding puts the burden of that correction on the faithful pensioners that participated in the Participating Annuity and Bridge Fund; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Greater Milwaukee Synod at its 2010 Assembly request the Church Council to explore and implement, in partnership with the Board of Pensions, strategies to restore the reduction and cancel any future reductions to the recipients of the ELCA Board of Pensions Participating Annuity and Bridge Fund; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Greater Milwaukee Synod Assembly requests the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to consult with the Board of Pensions regarding the background of, reasons for, and implications of the decisions made with respect to the ELCA Participating Annuity and Bridge Fund, to explore possible alternative ways to restore Fund losses and increase payment levels for annuitants and account values for those with bridge component accounts not yet annuitized, and to report on the results of the consultation at the November 2010 meeting of the Church Council; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Greater Milwaukee Synod Assembly requests the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to explore steps with the Board of Pensions to mitigate the adverse effects of the Fund reductions and possible future reductions, including the expansions and promotion of the ELCA Special Needs Retirement Fund; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Greater Milwaukee Synod Assembly direct the Synod Council to forward this resolution to the Church Council for consideration and possible action.

8. New Jersey Synod (7A)

WHEREAS, the ELCA Participating Annuity and Bridge Fund (“the Fund”) experienced significant losses as a result of the recession that began in 2008; and

WHEREAS, the board of trustees of the ELCA Board of Pensions, in consultation with Board of Pensions senior staff and advisors, acted in a number of ways to address losses in the Fund, including closing the Fund to new contributions; reducing payments to annuitants in the Fund by 9% for 2010; advising annuitants of potential decreases in annuity payments in 2011 and 2012; reducing in 2010 by 3.5% the value of not yet annuitized accounts of participants in the bridge component of the Fund; and advising these participants of potential decreases in account values in 2011 and 2012; and

WHEREAS, the 2010 reductions and possible future reductions have the potential of working severe hardships on many with fixed financial responsibilities; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA Special Needs Retirement Fund was

created to provide assistance for eligible plan participants, spouses, and surviving spouses, who have financial need; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the New Jersey Synod Assembly ask the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to consult with the Board of Pensions regarding the background of, reasons for, and implications of the decisions made with respect to the ELCA Participating Annuity and Bridge Fund, to explore possible alternative ways to restore Fund losses and increase payment levels for annuitants and account values for those with bridge component accounts not yet annuitized, and to report on the results of the consultation at the November 2010 meeting of the Church Council; and be it further

RESOLVED, that steps be explored to mitigate the adverse effects of the Fund reductions and possible future reductions, including the expansion and promotion of the ELCA Special Needs Retirement Fund; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the New Jersey Synod Assembly direct the Synod Council to forward this resolution to the Church Council for consideration and possible action; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the New Jersey Synod take leadership in supporting the Special Needs Retirement Fund of the Board of Pensions to assist those who are in or on the edge of poverty.

9. Northern Illinois Synod (5B)

WHEREAS, the ELCA Participating Annuity and Bridge Fund (“the Fund”) experienced significant losses as a result of the recession that began in 2008; and

WHEREAS, the board of trustees of the ELCA Board of Pensions, in consultation with Board of Pensions senior staff and advisors, acted in a number of ways to address losses in the Fund, including: closing the Fund to new contributions; reducing payments to annuitants in the Fund by 9% for 2010; advising annuitants of potential decreases in annuity payments in 2011 and 2012; reducing in 2010 by 3.5% the value of not yet annuitized accounts of participants in the bridge component of the Fund; and advising these participants of potential decreases in account values in 2011 and 2012; and

WHEREAS, the 2010 reductions and possible future reductions have the potential of working severe hardships on many with fixed financial responsibilities; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA Special Needs Retirement Fund was created to provide assistance for eligible plan participants, spouses, and surviving spouses, who have financial need; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Northern Illinois Synod Assembly request the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to consult with the Board of Pensions regarding the background of, reasons for, and implications of the decisions made with respect to the ELCA Participating Annuity and Bridge Fund, to explore

possible alternative ways to restore Fund losses and increase payment levels for annuitants and account values for those with bridge component accounts not yet annuitized, and to report on the results of the consultation at the November 2010 meeting of the Church Council, and to those members who experienced a reduction in their pensions; and be it further

RESOLVED, that steps be explored to mitigate the adverse effects of the Fund reductions and possible future reductions, including the expansion and promotion of the ELCA Special Needs Retirement Fund; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northern Illinois Synod Assembly direct the Synod Council to forward this resolution to the Church Council for consideration and possible action.

Church Council Action [CC10.08.33a]:

To receive the resolutions of the Minneapolis Area, Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast, Southwestern Minnesota, South Dakota, Upstate New York, La Crosse Area, Greater Milwaukee, New Jersey, and Northern Illinois synods related to the ELCA Board of Pensions annuity funding;

To establish an *Ad Hoc* Committee, including the following members:

1. Church Council: David Anderson, Mark Helmke, Ann Niedringhaus, Carlos Peña (convener)
2. Advisory Member: Lois O'Rourke, chair, Board of Trustees
3. Liaison Bishops: Callon Holloway, Jr., Martin Wells
4. Ex-Officio: Christina Jackson-Skelton, ELCA treasurer and David Swartling, ELCA secretary
5. Board of Pensions staff liaison: Robert Berg
6. Churchwide staff liaison: Ruth Hamilton, Office of the Secretary;

To request that the *Ad Hoc* Committee respond to synodical resolutions related to the ELCA Participating Annuity and Bridge Fund, including but not limited to:

1. Consultation with the Board of Pensions regarding the background of, reasons for, and implications of the decisions made with respect to the ELCA Participating Annuity and Bridge Fund; and
2. Exploration of possible:
 - a. alternative ways to restore Fund losses and increase payment levels for annuitants and account values for those with bridge component accounts not yet annuitized;
 - b. steps to mitigate adverse effects of the Fund reductions and possible future reductions, including the expansion and promotion of the ELCA Special Needs Retirement Fund;

To request that a report and possible recommendations be brought to the November 2010 meeting of the ELCA Church Council; and

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

Church Council Action:

To receive report of the Ad Hoc Committee created to respond to the resolutions of the following synods related to the ELCA Board of Pensions annuity funding: the South Dakota, Southwestern Minnesota, Minneapolis Area, Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast, Northern Illinois, Northeastern Iowa, Greater Milwaukee, La Crosse Area, New Jersey, Metropolitan New York, Upstate New York, and Southwestern Pennsylvania synods;

To acknowledge the report of the Ad Hoc Committee as the response of the Church Council to the synods' resolutions as well as any future resolutions received on this topic; and

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

At its November 12–14, 2010, meeting, the Church Council received the report and recommendations of the *Ad Hoc* Committee and took the following action:

To receive with gratitude the report and recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee in response to the resolutions of the Minneapolis Area, Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast, Southwestern Minnesota, South Dakota, Upstate New York, La Crosse Area, Greater Milwaukee, New Jersey, and Northern Illinois synods related to the ELCA Board of Pensions annuity funding;

To authorize one-time payments from the Special Needs Retirement Fund (SNRF) as soon as realistically possible in 2011 to those most adversely affected by the reduction in annuity payments, drawing both from Church Council funds already designated for SNRF and undesignated funds received by the BOP and allocated to SNRF;

To request that, in order to make these payments, the BOP, in consultation with the Managing Committee of SNRF, develop criteria based on need and a process for distribution of available funds to those most adversely affected by the reduction of annuity payments;

To provide for the expansion of the criteria for eligibility to SNRF and make provision for the possibility of more frequent reviews of eligibility, including periodic comprehensive reviews, to address the needs of plan members in light of economic realities;

To authorize that the membership of the SNRF Managing Committee be increased to include one representative from the Conference of Bishops and one from the Church Council;

To authorize periodic offerings and appeals designated for SNRF;

To anticipate the development of a process for regular review of SNRF by the Church Council;

To authorize the Ad Hoc Committee to continue its work, to monitor the implementation of these recommendations and to bring a report and possible recommendations to the April 2011 Church Council meeting;

To request that the Board of Pensions:

1. Enhance communications to and the education of annuitants and prospective annuitants regarding the ELCA Participating Annuity and Bridge Fund (PABF) and any new annuity products. In so doing:
 - a. Consider and develop additional ways to be proactive in such communication and education efforts; and
 - b. Continue and increase emphasis on assisting members in understanding the aspects of a defined contribution retirement plan, including members' responsibilities and role in decision-making;
2. Consider developing a fund, within SNRF or separate from it, to make available payments to plan members in situations of extraordinary economic distress and develop a process to authorize payments in such cases and to make recommendations, as appropriate, to the Church Council;
3. Enhance communications to and the education of members and sponsors regarding SNRF; work to ensure that synodical bishops and staff are knowledgeable about SNRF and make recommendations, as appropriate, to the Church Council;
4. Explore possibilities for voluntary regular contributions by sponsors and members to SNRF, in addition to special gifts from members and sponsors; make recommendations, as appropriate, to the Church Council;
5. Explore other options for providing funds to SNRF and make recommendations, as appropriate, to the Church Council;
6. Consider amending the name of the BOP to reflect that it is providing retirement income through annuity payments and investment fund(s) distributions, not providing pension payments, and to reflect more accurately the other services

it provides; make recommendations, as appropriate, to the Church Council.; and

To request the secretary of this church to inform the synods of the report of the Ad Hoc Committee and this action.

J. Support and Encouragement for Waldorf College Western Iowa Synod (5E)

WHEREAS, Waldorf College was founded in 1903 by Lutherans as an expression of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and has been a valued leader in Lutheran higher education since that time; and

WHEREAS, Waldorf College has been an active partner in ministry to and with the Western Iowa Synod since the founding of this synod; and

WHEREAS, Waldorf College is now owned by Mayes Education, Inc., a subsidiary of Columbia Southern University; and

WHEREAS, Mayes Education is open to and welcoming of a continued Lutheran presence on the Waldorf campus; and

WHEREAS, the Waldorf Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit entity, has been established as a separate entity from Waldorf College to provide scholarships to Lutheran and non-Lutheran students who attend Waldorf College, and to support Campus Ministry on the Waldorf campus; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA continues to explore the possibility of an on going relationship between the ELCA and Waldorf College and/or the Waldorf Foundation, and

WHEREAS, Immanuel Lutheran Church of Forest City, Iowa, is open and willing to partner with the Waldorf Foundation to build and support Campus Ministry on the Waldorf campus; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the congregations of the Western Iowa Synod give prayerful, spiritual support to Waldorf College, the Waldorf Foundation, Immanuel Lutheran Church, and Mayes Education, Inc., during this time of exploration, discovery, and transition; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Western Iowa Synod Assembly direct the Synod Council to encourage the Office of Bishop to seek ways to assist and encourage congregations of the synod to financially support Campus Ministry on the Waldorf College campus through the Waldorf Foundation; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Western Iowa Synod Assembly supports and encourages the Vocation and Education program unit of the ELCA to continue to recognize Waldorf College as a historically Lutheran college and to work to maintain a spiritual and ecclesiastical relationship with the college into the future.

Executive Committee Action [EC10.08.13a]:

To receive the resolution of the Western Iowa Synod related to support and encouragement for Waldorf College;

To refer the resolution to the Vocation and Education program unit, in consultation with Development Services and the Western Iowa Synod, and to request that a report and possible recommendations be brought to the November 2010 meeting of the ELCA Church Council; and

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

Response from the Vocation and Education unit

For several years through 2009, Waldorf College faced severe challenges to its financial viability. This situation, common to many small colleges, had many causes, including lower than optimal enrollment and a very small endowment. Waldorf's board and administration worked very hard to find a way to continue its existence as a non-profit, ELCA-related college. In addition to the active involvement of Bishop Michael Last of the Western Iowa Synod as a member of the board, the Rev. Stanley N. Olson, executive director of the Vocation and Education unit had been active as the churchwide organization's liaison to the board for two years. The board was comprised primarily of ELCA members, both from Iowa and across the church.

At the point when the possibility of sustaining the college as a private college with its existing revenue sources seemed unlikely, the Waldorf administration and board began to explore other options, including sale to a for-profit entity. During these years the college also established the Waldorf Lutheran College Foundation, a separately incorporated 501(c)(3) nonprofit entity. Both these actions have born fruit.

After extensive negotiations, including work with bond holders and accrediting agencies, Waldorf College was sold in January 2010 to Mayes Education, Inc., a family corporation with many years of experience in online education, which was seeking a way to expand its offerings with a residential campus and a liberal arts curriculum. The college accepted this sale as the best way to preserve the college and its mission of educating young people for service in the world. Vocation and Education staff members believe the principles of this church's social statement *Our Calling in Education* undergird the conviction that those engaged in a for-profit educational endeavor legitimately can approach that work through a Lutheran understanding of vocation. Given that their vocation includes preparing young people for their own vocations, this church can share a vision for appropriate mission with such a school. How this church might relate directly to a for-profit school is largely unexplored territory. Vocation and Education staff members have indicated their willingness to engage in such exploration.

At no time in the conversations and negotiations between Waldorf College and Mayes Education or after the sale did Mayes Education indicate to churchwide staff that it had any desire to find a way to maintain the former relationship with the ELCA. Nor did they suggest any desire to develop new ways to relate formally. There were direct and cordial conversations among Vocation and Education staff members and the principals of Mayes Education, but because the college did not care to pursue this, there was never any exploration by the ELCA as to whether it would be legally and ecclesially possible and wise to seek a new formal relationship. During a final consultation this spring, college officials indicated that any future connections should be through the Waldorf College Foundation. The ELCA's relationship with college officials continues to be amicable. We anticipate the possibility of future conversations, but we have pursued instead a connection to the foundation.

The Waldorf Lutheran College Foundation is now operating with a small endowment and with staffing provided by Waldorf College. In 2009, the final grant through the churchwide organization was directed to the foundation rather than to the college itself to facilitate transition in the work this church has supported there. Publicity from the foundation indicates its intent to focus on scholarships, alumni relations, and campus ministry. Vocation and Education staff members have been in ongoing conversation with the foundation's board and staff. The foundation's leaders are open to exploring a formal relationship with the ELCA. Our suggestion has been that the foundation explore applying to be acknowledged by the Church Council as an Independent Lutheran Organization. The foundation board was to discuss this at its September 2010 meeting. Preparing for that application would require some clarifying of its governing documents and/or purpose statement.

The Waldorf Lutheran College Foundation is now working with Immanuel Lutheran Church of Forest City to provide part-time campus ministry to Waldorf students. A program has been established that includes many of the elements of ministry that were available under the college's ELCA-related status. Vocation and Education staff are in conversation with Immanuel's pastor, offering counsel on the ministry and offering to explore with them a formal connection with ELCA campus ministry. The intern who is staffing the campus ministry has been invited to the ELCA Campus Ministry new staff orientation this fall.

Because of the present financial realities, we anticipate the rapid phase-out of the program of grants to ELCA-related colleges. However, even if the program were to continue, a grant could not be given to a for-profit

school, nor is there any provision for regular grants to foundations, even Lutheran ones. It is possible that the Waldorf Lutheran College Foundation and/or Immanuel Lutheran Church could seek churchwide and synod support for the new campus ministry. No such requests have been received, nor is it clear that funds would be available, but a request would be in order and would be considered carefully.

The staff of the Western Iowa Synod does not anticipate that the synod will be able to offer any significant financial support. However, the synod does stand ready to use its communication resources to tell the story of the foundation as an opportunity to perpetuate the important Lutheran presence that has and could continue to be a part of the fabric of the Waldorf community.

The ELCA Foundation worked in conjunction with the Advancement Department of Waldorf Lutheran College Foundation with regard to donors who had named Waldorf College as the charitable beneficiary of a deferred gift. Donors whose gifts were generated by the ELCA Foundation were contacted by our staff regarding beneficiary changes. The vast majority of gifts were generated by Waldorf College, and these donors were contacted directly by the Advancement Department of Waldorf Lutheran College Foundation. The ELCA Foundation currently administers 34 deferred gift contracts that now benefit the Waldorf Foundation.

The ELCA Foundation manages only one endowment that named Waldorf College as a beneficiary. The endowment agreement allows for the ELCA, through the Church Council, to name a “similar or complimentary ministry” to receive the annual distributions from this endowment. In consultation with the Vocation and Education unit and the Office of the Treasurer, the ELCA Foundation will develop a recommendation for redirecting the distributions from this endowment for consideration and action by the Church Council.

Church Council Action:

To receive with gratitude the response of the Vocation and Education unit to the resolution of the Western Iowa Synod related to Waldorf College;

To encourage the appropriate churchwide units and the Western Iowa Synod to continue exploring opportunities for shared mission with the Waldorf Lutheran College Foundation, particularly in the area of campus ministry;

To anticipate a recommendation from the ELCA Foundation to name a “similar or complimentary ministry” to receive the annual distributions from the endowment managed by the Foundation on behalf of Waldorf College; and

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

At its November 12–14, 2010, meeting, the Church Council took the following related action:

To receive and endorse the recommendation of the Board of Trustees of the ELCA Foundation related to ELCA endowments that benefit Waldorf College;

To name the Western Iowa Synod as the beneficiary of that portion of the Ivan F. and Deloris M. Hunter Endowment Fund that currently benefits Waldorf College; and

To restrict endowment distributions from that Fund to the Western Iowa Synod for the support of campus ministry, with preference through the Waldorf Lutheran College Foundation.

K. Lay Rostered Leaders

South Carolina Synod (9C)

WHEREAS, in February 2007, this church’s Vocation and Education unit convened a consultation of representatives of the three lay rosters (Associates in Ministry, Deaconesses, and Diaconal Ministers), synodical bishops, churchwide staff, seminary and college faculty, and agency leaders to articulate ways in which the theology and experience of vocation and service should define the role of lay rostered persons as publicly called leaders in the ELCA in the twenty-first century; and

WHEREAS, as a follow-up to this churchwide consultation, regional consultations are convening throughout the ELCA to continue discussions of these issues; and

WHEREAS, in March 2009, ordained and lay rostered persons came together with the bishops of each synod in Region 9 for a follow-up consultation to consider the ministry of Word and Service in the ELCA; and

WHEREAS, members of the regional consultation affirmed that a sense of call is central to the vocation of all people of God through baptism and assumes particular expressions for rostered persons; and

WHEREAS, members of the regional consultation agreed that the existing lay rosters share much in common with ordained ministers of Word and Sacrament, while acknowledging that a need exists among all four rosters of this church for better relationships that recognize partnership in ministry and enhance mutual understanding; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA currently lacks sufficient language to convey with theological clarity an accurate description of the functions that honor the vocation of all the baptized while recognizing the significant and distinctive roles of the four rosters of this church; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the South Carolina Synod encourage continued conversation among the four rosters around the issues of partnership in ministry and mutual understanding raised at the churchwide and regional consultations; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the South Carolina Synod ask the Vocation and Education unit of the ELCA to work toward developing theologically coherent language for use among the rosters of this church which honors the commonality of the rosters while respecting their differences; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the South Carolina Synod Assembly direct the Synod Council to forward this resolution to the Church Council for consideration and possible action.

Executive Committee Action [EC10.08.13b]:

To receive the resolution of the South Carolina Synod related to lay rostered leaders;

To refer the resolution to the Vocation and Education program unit with a request that a report and possible recommendations be brought to the April 2011 meeting of the Church Council; and

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

Response from Vocation and Education unit

In response to the March 2010 report and recommendations from the two-year *ad hoc* Public Ministry Consultations Planning Team, the Vocation and Education unit has prepared a report and recommendation on these matters. The South Carolina Synod Assembly's resolution is understood as implicitly supportive of the *ad hoc* team's work and also of the recommendation below.

Church Council Action:

To receive the response of the Vocation and Education unit in response to the resolution of the South Carolina Synod related to lay rostered leaders;

To acknowledge the action of the Church Council in response to the "Recommendations of the Public Ministry Consultations Planning Team" as the Church Council's response to the resolution from the South Carolina Synod assembly; and

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

At its November 12–14, 2010, meeting, the Church Council took the following related action:

To express the appreciation for the work of the Public Ministry Consultations planning team, acknowledging that their work has assisted the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to deepen its understanding both of the diaconal work shared by all members and of the public ministries of word and service;

To call upon this church to name these word and service ministries, to affirm their vital roles, to recruit

individuals to explore these callings and to assist people in preparing for and being called to specific ministries in the ELCA and in the world we serve;

To request that the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit, with the appropriate committee of the Conference of Bishops, constitute a small task force on ministries of service (*diakonia*), including at least one teaching theologian, one bishop and one member from each of the four rosters, with this mandate:

- 1. To suggest ways that the leaders and expressions of the ELCA can continue to undergird the ministries of members of the three Word and service rosters and their communities and to facilitate the use of their gifts and called service in ELCA congregations and other ministries, including non-profit, government and public entities;**
- 2. To articulate for the ELCA a fuller theology of word and service ministry that builds upon:
 - a. This church's diaconal tradition and its complementarity to the theology of word and sacrament ministry, grounding both in the baptismal call to all God's people to serve within the institutional church and in the world;**
 - b. The ELCA's "Together for Ministry" report (1993), the Lutheran World Federation report "Diakonia in Context" (2009), the report and recommendations of Public Ministry Consultations planning team (2010) and other Lutheran and ecumenical studies;****
- 3. To consider whether this word and service ministry would be better expressed and the present ELCA mission and ecumenical mission better served by the formation of one new ELCA word and service roster that incorporates the members and heritage of the three present rosters into a diversified whole with a common entrance rite; and**

To request that a report and possible recommendations be brought to the April 2012 meeting of the Church Council.

L. Rostered Leader Profiles

Upper Susquehanna Synod (8E)

WHEREAS, the pastoral call is an intimate relationship between the pastor and the congregation; and

WHEREAS, a knowledgeable evaluation from many perspectives of a pastor's current situation and style is most appropriate for the call process; and

WHEREAS, the current Rostered Leader Profile (RLP) of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) requires a current member of the pastor's congregation to provide a

personal reference for a pastor seeking a call in another congregation; and

WHEREAS, this requirement is sometimes not practical and may threaten the pastor/congregation relationship; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Upper Susquehanna Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America request that the ELCA program unit for Vocation and Education modify the current clergy RLP to remove the requirement for a recommendation by a current congregational member; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Upper Susquehanna Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America request that the ELCA program unit for Vocation and Education modify the current RLP to replace the requirement for a recommendation by a current congregational member with a requirement for a recommendation by “a non-rostered person who knows the pastor’s current situation and pastoral style” or words to that effect.

Executive Committee Action [EC10.08.13c]:

To receive the resolution of the Upper Susquehanna Synod related to lay rostered leaders;

To refer the resolution to the Vocation and Education program unit with a request that a report and possible recommendations be brought to the April 2011 meeting of the Church Council; and

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

Response from Vocation and Education unit

The online “Rostered Leader Profile” system was tested first for members of the three Word and service rosters. With the learnings from that experience, a team convened by the Vocation and Education unit made extensive revisions to the forms and in the processes so that the system could be used for all four rosters. Both process and forms were developed and modified in consultation with the Conference of Bishops over a period of two years. The system was put in operation in June 2009 and has been well received.

The resolution from the Upper Susquehanna Synod asks for a change to page 6 of the Rostered Leader Profile (RLP). That page asks for names and contact information for five people: the synodical bishop, an ELCA pastor, *a lay person in the current or most recent ministry setting* [emphasis added], a lay person who is not a member of the current ministry setting, and a supervisor or colleague who knows the rostered leader well. In addition, the page requests “the name of a lay person who is able to observe you in your current ministry and is willing to offer a brief recommendation. Your reference will be asked to complete a questionnaire and offer comments on your ministry.”

The resolution refers to the request italicized above, a lay person in the current or most recent ministry setting. The expressed concern is that this may not be practical and may “threaten the pastor/congregation relationship.” Although it is not stated explicitly, the point seems to be that a rostered leader’s current ministry might be undermined if members knew that he or she is open to another call.

While recognizing the validity of the underlying concern, it is suggested that there is a strong reason not to change the form, since there are several other ways for an individual to deal with the concern. First, a reference from a member of the current ministry provides a different kind of information than is provided by one who is outside that ministry. A non-member reference also is requested. The two are complementary; an important perspective could be lost if no member reference were included. Second, it is the rostered leader who completes this form. The rostered leader has several options to address the stated concern. For example, he or she normally would be able to find one member who could be trusted with a confidential conversation about the reasons the rostered leader wants to be available for call. In addition, the rostered leader could indicate to each synod receiving the form that the current member named should be contacted only after the rostered person has given advance notice. Finally, the rostered person could decline to enter a name in the blank, indicating that the name would be supplied at the appropriate time and explaining the reasons to his or her bishop and the bishop of each synod receiving the form.

Church Council Action:

To receive the response of the Vocation and Education unit to the Upper Susquehanna Synod requesting a revision to the Rostered Leader Profile;

To express gratitude to the synod for the request, but to decline to make the requested change in the Rostered Leader Profile as detailed in the background information provided; and

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

II. RESPONSES TO CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY REFERRALS

A. Worship and Educational Materials in Braille, Large Print, and Audio [Memorial Category B7] [CA09.03.12]

1. Upstate New York Synod (7D)

WHEREAS, the Good News is a life-giving gift of God, meant to be shared freely with everyone, like sunlight or oxygen; and

WHEREAS, Jesus commissions his followers to gather disciples everywhere, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) seeks to follow this call by welcoming diversity in its communities of faith and also by continuing a healthy tradition of self-examination and change when bias is discovered in words or actions; and

WHEREAS, in John 9:3, Jesus specifically affirms God's calling for people who are blind, saying, "[this man] was born blind so that God's works might be revealed to him," and the man in the story goes on to demonstrate this by courageously witnessing to Christ, just as many people with low vision or blindness continue to do today; and

WHEREAS, people who have low vision or blindness are involved in an ongoing struggle for basic civil rights like access to voting and education, and the ELCA should support this struggle as part of its commitment to promoting justice for all God's children; and

WHEREAS, people with low vision and blindness are already active as worshipers and leaders in ELCA congregations and seminaries; and

WHEREAS, promoting the availability of Braille, large-print, and audio resources would encourage growth in our church membership; and

WHEREAS, modern technology makes production and distribution of large-print, audio, and Braille materials easier than ever before, and centralizing these functions would allow congregations across the ELCA to have more convenient and less expensive access to such materials, and

WHEREAS, the formation of the ELCA included an organization called the ELCA Braille & Tape Service, later renamed ELCA Braille & Tape Ministry, which became inactive in 2004; and

WHEREAS, since 2004 the ELCA has promoted worship and education resources (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, Book of Faith resources, social statements, Christian education materials, etc.) that are available only in small-size print, thus marginalizing children and adults who read Braille or large print and use audio resources; and

WHEREAS, the resurrection of a comprehensive program to provide Braille and large-print and audio resources to ELCA congregations would benefit and uplift the entire body of Christ; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Upstate New York Synod in assembly memorialize the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to provide financial and other support for the

creation of a new full-time program to make resources readily available in Braille, large print, and audio form.

2. Minneapolis Area Synod (3G)

WHEREAS, hymns are a wonderful tool for members of a congregation to use for inspiration as well as bringing joy, faith-building, and healing for their lives as a community as well as individually; and

WHEREAS, blind people are members of congregations and have the same spiritual needs as the sighted; and

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) produced a Braille version of the *Lutheran Book of Worship*, and many blind people are accustomed to its use; and

WHEREAS, Braille printers are expensive for most people to purchase; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Minneapolis Area Synod, meeting in assembly, memorialize the 2009 Churchwide Assembly to commit sufficient funding for the publication of a Braille version of the *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*.

3. Southern Ohio Synod (6F)

WHEREAS, the Good News is a life-giving gift of God, meant to be shared freely with everyone, like sunlight or oxygen; and

WHEREAS, Jesus commissions his followers to gather disciples everywhere, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) seeks to follow this call by welcoming diversity in its communities of faith and also by continuing a healthy tradition of self-examination and change when bias is discovered in words or actions; and

WHEREAS, in John 9:3, Jesus specifically affirms God's calling for people who are blind, saying, "[this man] was born blind so that God's works might be revealed to him," and the man in the story goes on to demonstrate this by courageously witnessing to Christ, just as many people with low vision or blindness continue to do today; and

WHEREAS, people who have low vision or blindness are involved in an ongoing struggle for basic civil rights like access to voting and education, and the ELCA ignores this struggle by continuing to promote worship and educational resources (such as *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, the NRSV Bible, social statements, and Christian education materials) that are available only in small-size print, thus marginalizing children and adults who read Braille or large print; and

WHEREAS, people with low vision and blindness are already active as worshipers and leaders in ELCA congregations and seminaries; and

WHEREAS, promoting the availability of Braille and large-print resources would encourage growth in membership of this church; and

WHEREAS, modern technology makes production and distribution of large-print and Braille materials easier than ever before, and centralizing these functions would allow congregations across the ELCA to have more convenient and less expensive access to such materials, and

WHEREAS, the formation of the ELCA in 1988 included an organization called the ELCA Braille and Tape Service, later

renamed ELCA Braille and Tape Ministry, which became inactive in 2004; and

WHEREAS, the resurrection of a comprehensive program to provide Braille and large-print resources to ELCA congregations would benefit and uplift the entire body of Christ; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Southern Ohio Synod call on the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to provide financial and other support for the creation of a new full-time program to make resources readily available in Braille and large print.

4. New England Synod (7B)

RESOLVED, that the New England Synod memorialize the 2009 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to provide financial and other support for the creation of a new full-time program to make resources readily available in Braille and large print.

5. Virginia Synod (9A)

WHEREAS, the Good News is a life-giving gift of God, meant to be shared freely with everyone, like sunlight or oxygen; and

WHEREAS, Jesus commissions his followers to gather disciples everywhere, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) seeks to follow this call by welcoming diversity in its communities of faith and also by continuing a healthy tradition of self-examination and change when bias is discovered in words or actions; and

WHEREAS, in John 9:3, Jesus specifically affirms God's calling for people who are blind, saying, "[this man] was born blind so that God's works might be revealed to him," and the man in the story goes on to demonstrate this by courageously witnessing to Christ, just as many people with low vision or blindness continue to do today; and

WHEREAS, people who have low vision or blindness are involved in an ongoing struggle for basic civil rights like access to voting and education, and the ELCA should support this struggle as part of its commitment to promoting justice for all of God's children; and

WHEREAS, people with low vision and blindness are already active as worshipers and leaders in ELCA congregations and seminaries; and

WHEREAS, promoting the availability of Braille and large-print resources would encourage growth in the membership of this church; and

WHEREAS, modern technology makes production and distribution of large-print and Braille materials easier than ever before, and centralizing these functions would allow congregations across the ELCA to have more convenient and less expensive access to such materials, and

WHEREAS, the formation of the ELCA in 1988 included an organization called the ELCA Braille and Tape Service, later renamed ELCA Braille and Tape Ministry, which became inactive in 2004; and

WHEREAS, since 2004 the ELCA has promoted worship and educational resources (such as *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, Book of Faith resources, social statements, and Christian education materials) that are available only in small-size print, thus marginalizing children and adults who read Braille or large print; and

WHEREAS, the resurrection of a comprehensive program to provide Braille and large-print resources to ELCA congregations would benefit and uplift the entire body of Christ; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the bishop of the Virginia Synod be directed to present to the ELCA Churchwide Assembly this resolution calling the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to provide financial and other support for the creation of a new full-time program to make resources readily available in Braille and large print.

Churchwide Assembly Action [CA09.03.12]:

To receive the memorials of the Minneapolis Area, Southern Ohio, New England, Upstate New York, and Virginia synods calling for additional worship and educational materials in Braille, large print, and audio formats, and other forms of technology as may be available;

To affirm and celebrate the many ways individuals, networks, congregations, synods, the churchwide worship staff, Augsburg Fortress, and the Vocation and Education unit already are engaged in ministry with and providing resources for people with impaired vision;

To encourage appropriate churchwide staff to give continued attention to the needs articulated in these memorials and to continue collaboration with the network of people advocating for and facilitating these ministries;

To acknowledge with regret the funding challenges and the resulting limitations on this work;

To encourage the network and others to give particular attention to inviting contributions to appropriate endowments held by the ELCA Foundation; and

To direct the Vocation and Education unit to bring a progress report on these ministries and their funding to the November 2010 meeting of the ELCA Church Council.

Church Council Referral

The Church Council referred [CC09.11.87] these memorials to the Vocation and Education unit in consultation with the Worship and Liturgical Resources section, Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, and the ELCA Foundation.

Response from the Vocation and Education unit

Work continues on issuing *Evangelical Lutheran Worship (ELW)* as a Braille resource. This is a cooperative effort of Augsburg Fortress, Publishers (AF)

and the Worship and Liturgical Resources (WP) section of the churchwide organization. A contract has been signed to convert text files (RTF format) of 650 hymns from *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* into electronic Braille files (BRF format). The first third of these hymns in BRF format are due at AF on October 1, 2010. Beginning in November 2010, these Braille hymn files will be posted on the Sundaysandseasons.com Web site for downloading as they are completed. In addition, over the next year large print files (RTF format) will be added to that Web site for the hymns in *ELW*. The next step in the process is the conversion of liturgical texts to BRF and large print format. Extensive portions of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* already are available in audio form, including all ten settings of the liturgy.

AF also has published the *Lutheran Study Bible* and *ELW* in “enlarged print” editions (not large print). Approximately 1200 book titles are now available from AF for digital download via Kindle and other e-readers. Print size can then be adjusted according to the reader’s preference. AF has several Web-based resources that allow users to enlarge print as needed for both worship and faith formation resources (i.e., Sundaysandseasons.com, Herewestandconfirmation.org, Sparksundayschool.com). AF also tries, upon request, to provide permission and electronic files when possible for adapting AF intellectual property into alternate formats through third-party organizations such as Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic and Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

In the restructuring of 2005, the VE unit was given responsibility for oversight of the churchwide organization’s work with disability ministries. Because of reductions in the general budget these past years, all programming work and much of the limited staff support now are funded through restricted endowments and a small accumulated reserve rather than the general budget. The endowments, which aggregate various gifts and bequests received over many years, generate about \$24,000 annually for disability ministries in general and an additional \$6,000 for Braille and tape ministries. No large additions have been made to the principal of the endowments in recent years, but there are occasional smaller donations. Within these funding limits, VE focuses its ongoing efforts on being part of the various networks that engage the ministries. VE’s payroll includes part-time staff consultants in Braille, audio and large print ministries, and deaf ministries. The director for ministry leadership’s portfolio includes oversight of these responsibilities. The various networks are grateful for this partnership, but continue to push for more staff time dedicated to disability ministries. At present, such

expansion of staff work is financially impossible.

We anticipate that endowment income can continue to give limited assistance with the production and distribution of Braille, large print, and audio ELW hymns and worship settings. In related work, VE has supported the network’s expressed desire to be engaged in the production of the forthcoming Message on Disabilities, to be considered by the Church Council in November 2010, and is ready to provide funds so that drafts, process resources, and the message itself can be available in Braille, large print, and/or audio (MP3) formats to enhance participation in the completion of the message and its use.

Church Council Action:

To receive with gratitude the response of the Vocation and Education unit in consultation with the Worship and Liturgical Resources section, Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, and the ELCA Foundation in response to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly action related to worship and educational materials in Braille, large print, and audio; and

To acknowledge the report provided above and the ongoing commitment to this work through the newly formed Congregational and Synodical Mission unit as well as the approval of a social message, “People Living with Disabilities,” as the response of the Church Council to the Churchwide Assembly action.

**B. Advocacy for Legal Protection and Fairness
[Memorial Category E1] [CA.09.03.09i]
Minneapolis Area Synod (3G)**

WHEREAS, the Lutheran church has a tradition of opposing discrimination codified in law, even during times of social dislocation; and

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has written social statements to guide efforts to advocate for the protection of legal rights and has developed an advocacy arm to carry out the pragmatic efforts at legislative change; and

WHEREAS, the social statement on human sexuality notes that “laws have a direct impact on patterns of social trust within households and networks of kinship” and that “victims of sexual violation must be able to rely on public institutions for intervention”; and

WHEREAS, the social statement on human sexuality notes that “certain laws and economic realities . . . may create extreme economic hardship for some, including older adults, who desire to be legally married” and asks that the ELCA advocate for “altering laws and the factors that create a significant impediment for such people to be married”; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Minneapolis Area Synod, meeting in assembly, memorialize the 2009 Churchwide Assembly to call on bishops, ministries, and members of

this church to advocate for laws that prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity and for laws that define violence on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity as a hate crime; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Minneapolis Area Synod, meeting in assembly, memorialize the 2009 Churchwide Assembly to direct appropriate churchwide units and to encourage synods, congregations, and members of this church to advocate for laws and regulations that permit widows and widowers to marry without losing retirement benefits.

Churchwide Assembly Action [CA.09.03.09i]

To thank the Minneapolis Area Synod for connecting faith to issues in public life;

To acknowledge the importance of the issues raised and to note background information provided related to the current and recent work done on hate-crime sentencing and employment non-discrimination;

To affirm the historical concern of ELCA social policy for advocacy related to human and civil rights and equal protection under the law and to encourage the members of this church to advocate in keeping with this tradition;

To request that, as financial and staff resources permit, the Church in Society unit study the issue of the potential loss of retirement and related benefits for older adults who desire to marry; and

To acknowledge that the Church in Society unit advocates on these issues based on this church's social policy statements related to human and civil rights.

April 2010 Response from the Church in Society unit

The Church in Society unit, due to limited staff resources, has not been able to date to "study the issue of the potential loss of retirement and related benefits for older adults who desire to marry" as requested in the 2009 Churchwide Assembly response to the Minneapolis Area Synod memorial (Advocacy for Legal Protection and Fairness [CA.09.03.09i]).

Church Council Action [CC.10.04.22b]:

To authorize a delay in the response of the Church in Society unit to the memorial of the Minneapolis Area Synod related to legal protection and fairness regarding the potential loss of retirement and related benefits for older adults who desire to marry;

To request that a report and possible recommendations be brought to the November 2010 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 advocacy department of the Church in Society program unit affirms the importance of the issues raised by the Minneapolis Area Synod. The background information included in the report of the Memorials Committee provides helpful context:

The ELCA works in the tradition of predecessor church bodies to oppose discrimination in all forms and does so through various offices. This includes advocating for the equal protection of civil rights under the law. The ELCA also advocates for changes in laws in order to end discriminatory practices that have been codified into law. These efforts are based upon the social statements and social policy actions of this church and rely both on a broad movement of members of this church and organized advocacy efforts in New York at the United Nations, in Washington, D.C., and in state capitals.

This church's social statements and messages express deep concern for legal protection and human rights grounded in the dignity of all people.¹ Over many years, the ELCA has gone on record in opposition to civil and human rights violations due to sexuality and sexual orientation. The 1989 Churchwide Assembly said that the ELCA would not tolerate any forms of sexual abuse or harassment [CA89.04.18]. The 1991 Churchwide Assembly reaffirmed the 1989 Churchwide Assembly action [CA91.07.52]. In 1993, the ELCA Church Council reaffirmed [CC93.03.37] the historical position of the ELCA:

1. Strong opposition to all forms of verbal or physical harassment or assault of persons because of their sexual orientation; and
2. Support for legislation, referendums, and policies to protect the civil rights of all persons, regardless of their sexual orientation, and to prohibit discrimination in

¹ For example, see the social statements *The Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective* (1991); *Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity and Culture* (1993); *Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All* (1999); and the message *Commercial Sexual Exploitation* (2001).

housing, employment, and public service and accommodations....

The 1993 Churchwide Assembly commended this action by the Church Council [CA93.03.4]. On the basis of these precedents, the 1997 Churchwide Assembly acted to support the Employment Non-Discrimination Act and affirm advocacy by synods and the Church in Society unit “in support of laws barring discrimination against individuals on the basis of their sexual orientation” [CA97.6.29].

This church is also on record in support of equal protection under the law for all people including areas related to property and inheritance rights, home ownership, and health and retirement benefits. Through its advocacy ministry, this church has supported adding sexual orientation as a class actionable under “hate crimes” sentencing. More recently, the ELCA supported adding sexual orientation as a protected class in the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA). Both actions seek to uphold the thematic concern of this church’s language addressing civil rights and legal protections, including opposition to discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

Human dignity is common to all by virtue of creation by God in the image of God. Christians are called to support and defend basic human rights for others. While equal protection under the law in the United States extends to several specific classes of protection, the current social policy language of this church does not address specifically the situation of older adults and the legal effect of a decision to marry on their existing retirement and related benefits.

The resolution from the Minneapolis Area Synod makes reference to language in the draft of the social statement on human sexuality coming before the 2009 Churchwide Assembly. We note that, as such, this language is pending and cannot be construed as a basis for action by the ELCA or its various offices. However, regardless of pending social statement language, the focus in this area of work remains compelling, as described above and as derived from existing social policy language.

The fourth “whereas” clause and the second “resolved” clause seem to address the situation of older heterosexual couples, typically widows and widowers, who desire to be married but are

inhibited in this decision by laws that might, in effect, negate one or the other’s retirement benefits.

The connection being drawn between the two issues stated in the two “resolved” clauses is the importance of altering laws when the force and effect of those laws perpetuate discrimination related to certain benefits and rights, especially those in danger of being forfeited by virtue of becoming a couple or entering into marriage.

The advocacy ministries of the ELCA will continue both to support civil and legal rights and to oppose laws that deny these rights and protections.

The advocacy department confirms the Church Council requested action (above) and will continue to find opportunities to advocate on this issue in its broader context of human and civil rights and equal protection.

With regard to studying the issue of marriage and potential loss of benefits for older adults, the advocacy department finds the following:

Tax Treatment

A so-called “marriage penalty” refers to certain features of the tax code that require higher taxes from some married couples when filing one tax return (“married filing jointly”) than for the same two people filing two separate tax returns if they were unmarried (i.e., filing as “single,” not “married filing separately”). Couples with a wider gap between their incomes more often escape the marriage penalty, but couples with similar incomes usually pay a penalty. Legislation in 2001 remedied the marriage penalty for many couples. The 2001 law had three marriage penalty provisions, two of which could relate to older adults.

- **Standard Deduction:** The legislation in 2001 reduced the application of the marriage penalty by equalizing the standard deduction rate for singles and married couples. For example, in 1999 the standard deduction for single filers was \$4,300, while the deduction for married couples was only \$7,200. The 2001 legislation increased the standard deduction for couples to be two times the standard deduction for individuals.
- **Payment Bracket:** The legislation eliminated some of the marriage penalty tax by increasing the 15 percent tax bracket for married couples filing jointly. In 1999, single taxpayers paid a 15 percent tax on income of \$25,750 or less. Married couples, however, only qualified for the 15 percent tax bracket

if the income on a joint return was \$43,050 or less. The elimination of the marriage penalty has equalized the 15 percent tax bracket for single filers and married couples filing jointly. Thus, married couples filing jointly now will qualify for the 15 percent bracket on income of up to \$51,500 (exactly double the single-filer amount). The marriage penalty tax, however, may still apply when a married couple's income exceeds the 15 percent tax bracket, which today means married joint filers whose taxable income (i.e., income after deductions and personal exemptions, exceeds \$67,900).

The improvements made in 2001 expire in 2010. Currently, they are part of the much larger middle class tax package that is stalled in Congress. The marriage provisions are not controversial, but because they are included in a much larger tax bill that contains contentious provisions, the fate of the marriage penalty remains to be seen. Congress is expected to convene for a "lame duck" session in November 2010 after the midterm elections, during which time it is expected to take up expiring tax issues.

For more information on tax issues facing older taxpayers, see IRS Publication 554, *Older Americans Tax Guide*, available at <http://www.irs.gov/>.

Social Security Benefits

Another area of common concern related to benefits for older adults is Social Security. According to the Social Security Administration, in most situations there is no marriage penalty in Social Security. A married couple's lifetime earnings are calculated independently to determine their benefit amounts. Therefore, each spouse receives a monthly benefit amount based on his or her own earnings. However, if one member of the couple earned low wages or did not earn enough Social Security credits to be insured for retirement benefits, s/he may be eligible to receive benefits as a spouse.

Widows and widowers who remarry after age 60 can keep their own (higher) benefit, rather than switching to a lower spousal benefit. This has been the case since 1977. When one reaches age 62 or older, s/he may get retirement benefits on the record of his/her new spouse if it is higher. Also, remarriage would have no effect on the benefits being paid to children.

For more information on social security and related federal benefits, see the following Web sites: www.ssa.gov or www.socialsecurity.gov.

Church Council Action:

To receive the response of the Church in Society program unit to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly

memorial on "Legal Protection and Fairness" related to older adults;

To approve the background information provided as the response of the Church Council to the assembly's action; and

To request that the ELCA advocacy staff continue to find opportunities to advocate on these issues within the broader context of human and civil rights and equal protection for all people.

C. Environmental Stewardship

[Memorial Category B5] [CA09.03.09f]

Sierra Pacific Synod (2A) [2009 Memorial]

WHEREAS, we in the industrialized world are consuming energy and the earth's resources in a way that is both unsustainable in the future and unfair to those in the developing world; and

WHEREAS, we hear disturbing scientific reports of environmental pollution, global climate change, a record rate of species extinction, and a depletion of nonrenewable resources that should give us pause; and

WHEREAS, human activity, especially over-consumption of energy and resources in the pursuit of material wealth, appears to be a critical driver in this change in climate and environmental distress; and

WHEREAS, Genesis 2:15 directs us to be stewards of creation, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), recognizing the gravity of these threats, has committed to addressing them in a constructive way, as evidenced by the 1993 social statement *Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope and Justice*; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Sierra Pacific Synod Assembly call on the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America at its 2009 Churchwide Assembly to adopt the Genesis Covenant [*see below for more information*] to reduce by a minimum of 50 percent the emission of greenhouse gases from all facilities, houses of worship, camps, offices, and conference centers of this church within 10 years; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the bishop and Synod Council appoint a Creation Care Task Force to develop a roadmap to sustainability, which gives congregations and other institutions an actionable plan on user-friendly terms for reducing their greenhouse gas emissions by maximizing energy efficiency, reducing unnecessary consumption of energy and resources, and witnessing to creation as God's gift for which we are responsible as disciples of Christ; and be it further

RESOLVED, that this assembly calls on its congregations and the ELCA to work together with all religious institutions regionally, nationally, and globally and with leaders of science, government, and business to adopt the same goals of the Genesis Covenant.

The Genesis Covenant

The Challenge

The Genesis Covenant is an invitation to every community of faith to take action to reverse global warming.

The Genesis Covenant is a pledge to be made publicly by the national religious bodies that endorse it as their witness to the holiness of creation and their commitment to protect the Earth as a sacred trust.

The Genesis Covenant is an expression of the unity of the world's religious communities in the face of a shared crisis.

The Genesis Covenant is a challenge to all other sectors of society to join people of faith in a global effort to change history by changing behavior.

The Covenant

We will reduce the greenhouse gas emissions from every facility that we maintain by 50 percent in 10 years.

The Commitment

The Genesis Covenant must be endorsed by the appropriate representative governing body of the community. Once that body has adopted the covenant, every facility that it maintains will reduce the greenhouse gas emissions from their levels at the time of ratification by 50 percent within ten years. This includes places of worship, offices, schools, camps, retreat centers, and other facilities.

The Community

The Genesis Covenant will maintain an interactive online presence to support and network local communities who are part of the Covenant. This resource will empower every faith community to meet its goals in fulfilling the reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. It will welcome people of all faiths into a working partnership with their neighbors to achieve an historic change for the sake of our children.

Churchwide Assembly Action [CA09.03.09f]:

To thank the Sierra Pacific Synod for connecting Christian faith to public issues;

To acknowledge that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America through its social statement *Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice*, its resources, and its action has sought to bring the importance of climate change to the attention of congregations, synods, the churchwide organization, and related agencies and institutions, as well as to public and private sectors of society;

To thank the congregations, synods, and related

agencies and institutions of the ELCA that are practicing environmental stewardship and seeking to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; and

To request that, as financial and staff resources permit, the Church in Society program unit bring a proposal that includes a timeline, detailed budget, proposed funding sources, and identified partners to the ELCA Church Council for the development of a strategy for this church to address climate change.

Response from the Church in Society unit

The Church in Society unit, due to limited staff resources, has not been able to date to “bring a proposal that includes a timeline, detailed budget, proposed funding sources, and identified partners to the ELCA Church Council for the development of a strategy for this church to address climate change” as requested in the 2009 Churchwide Assembly response [CA.09.03.09f]. Steps, however, have been taken with other units to create and begin to implement a plan in which the churchwide organization, together with synods, can address climate change.

A review of memorials approved by synod assemblies in 2010, however, indicates that ten synods approved memorials addressing comparable issues under the theme of “energy stewardship.” In light of the restructuring of the churchwide organization and the significance of the pending response of the 2011 Memorials Committee, it is recommended that the action of the 2009 Churchwide Assembly be reported as information to the 2011 Memorials Committee as it prepares recommendations for consideration by the next Churchwide Assembly.

Church Council Action:

To receive the response of the Church in Society program unit and recognize that current financial, staffing, and restructuring challenges limit the capacity of the churchwide organization to respond to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly action related to environmental stewardship;

To acknowledge that steps have been taken with other units to create and begin to implement a plan in which the churchwide organization, together with synods, can address climate change;

To anticipate that the issue of energy stewardship will be brought to the 2011 Churchwide Assembly through memorials from at least ten synods; and

To decline to respond to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly action regarding environmental stewardship at this time, but to request that the 2011 Memorials Committee receive the 2009 action and this response as information to inform its work.

D. Message on Human Disability
[Memorial Category B1] [CA.09.06.37]

1. Alaska Synod (1A)

WHEREAS, an estimated 54 million children and adults within the United States live with a disability; and

WHEREAS, people who live with a disability historically have faced challenges in gaining equal access to education, employment, health care, and accessibility and are more likely to live in poverty than people without disabilities; and

WHEREAS, because of ignorance, fear, and the perpetuation of myths, people with disabilities and their families have been stigmatized and discriminated against in church and society; and

WHEREAS, persons who live with a disability are active members and leaders in congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, yet many congregations struggle with issues of accessibility, accommodation, and welcome; and

WHEREAS, in carrying out its mission to the world, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America commits itself to “study social issues and trends, work to discover the causes of oppression and injustice, and develop programs of ministry and advocacy to further human dignity, freedom, justice, and peace in the world” [ELCA 4.03.1.]; and

WHEREAS, neither the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America nor its predecessor bodies has a social statement addressing the theological and social implications of human disability; and

WHEREAS, the “Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns” states that topics for social statements shall be approved by the Churchwide Assembly and development of a social statement shall be overseen by the Church in Society unit; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Alaska Synod memorialize the 2009 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct the Church in Society program unit to develop a social statement concerning persons with disabilities to be presented for consideration by the 2013 Churchwide Assembly; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the task force charged with the formation of this social statement pay special attention to the unique issues that face different types of disabilities, whether they be physical, sensory, psychiatric, or intellectual.

2. Nebraska Synod (4A)

WHEREAS, an estimated 54 million children and adults within the United States live with a disability; and

WHEREAS, people who live with a disability historically have faced challenges in gaining equal access to education, employment, health care, and accessibility and are more likely to live in poverty than people without disabilities; and

WHEREAS, because of ignorance, fear, and the perpetuation of myths, people with disabilities and their families have been stigmatized and discriminated against in church and society; and

WHEREAS, persons who live with a disability are active members and leaders in congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, yet many congregations struggle

with issues of accessibility, accommodation, and welcome; and

WHEREAS, in carrying out its mission to the world, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America commits itself to “study social issues and trends, work to discover the causes of oppression and injustice, and develop programs of ministry and advocacy to further human dignity, freedom, justice, and peace in the world” [ELCA 4.03.1.]; and

WHEREAS, neither the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America nor its predecessor bodies has a social statement addressing the theological and social implications of human disability; and

WHEREAS, the “Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns” states that topics for social statements shall be approved by the Churchwide Assembly and development of a social statement shall be overseen by the Church in Society unit; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Nebraska Synod in assembly memorialize the 2009 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct the Church and Society program unit to develop a social statement concerning persons with disabilities to be presented for consideration by the 2013 Churchwide Assembly; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Nebraska Synod in assembly memorialize the 2009 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct the task force charged with the formation of this social statement to pay special attention to the unique issues that face different types of disabilities, whether they be physical, sensory, psychiatric, or intellectual.

3. Metropolitan Chicago Synod (5A)

WHEREAS, an estimated 54 million children and adults within the United States live with a disability; and

WHEREAS, people who live with a disability historically have faced challenges in gaining equal access to education, employment, health care, and accessibility and are more likely to live in poverty than people without disabilities; and

WHEREAS, because of ignorance, fear, and the perpetuation of myths, people with disabilities and their families have been stigmatized and discriminated against in church and society; and

WHEREAS, there are persons who live with a disability who are active members and leaders in congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, yet many congregations struggle with issues of accessibility, accommodation, and welcome; and

WHEREAS, in carrying out its mission to the world, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America commits itself to “study social issues and trends, work to discover the causes of oppression and injustice, and develop programs of ministry and advocacy to further human dignity, freedom, justice, and peace in the world” [ELCA 4.03.1.]; and

WHEREAS, neither the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America nor its predecessor bodies has a social statement addressing the theological and social implications of human disability; and

WHEREAS, the “Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical

Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns” states that topics for social statements shall be approved by the Churchwide Assembly and that development of a social statement shall be overseen by the Church in Society unit; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan Chicago Synod memorialize the 2009 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct the Church and Society program unit to develop a social statement concerning persons with disabilities to be presented for consideration by the 2015 Churchwide Assembly; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the task force charged with the formation of this social statement pay special attention to the unique issues that face different types of disabilities, whether they be physical, sensory, psychiatric, or intellectual.

4. New Jersey Synod (7A)

WHEREAS, an estimated 54 million children and adults within the United States live with a disability; and

WHEREAS, people who live with a disability historically have faced challenges in gaining equal access to education, employment, health care, and accessibility and are more likely to live in poverty than people without disabilities; and

WHEREAS, because of ignorance, fear, and the perpetuation of myths, people with disabilities and their families have been stigmatized and discriminated against in church and society; and

WHEREAS, persons who live with a disability are active members and leaders in congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, yet many congregations struggle with issues of accessibility, accommodation, and welcome; and

WHEREAS, in carrying out its mission to the world, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America commits itself to “study social issues and trends, work to discover the causes of oppression and injustice, and develop programs of ministry and advocacy to further human dignity, freedom, justice, and peace in the world” [ELCA 4.03.1.]; and

WHEREAS, neither the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America nor its predecessor bodies has a social statement addressing the theological and social implications of human disability; and

WHEREAS, the “Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns” states that topics for social statements shall be approved by the Churchwide Assembly and development of a social statement shall be overseen by the Church in Society unit; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the New Jersey Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America memorialize the 2009 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct the Church in Society program unit to develop a social statement concerning persons with disabilities to be presented for consideration by the 2013 Churchwide Assembly; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the task force charged with the formation of this social statement pay special attention to

the unique issues that face persons with different types of disabilities, whether they be physical, sensory, psychiatric, or intellectual.

5. Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod (7F)

WHEREAS, an estimated 54 million children and adults within the United States live with a disability; and

WHEREAS, people who live with a disability historically have faced challenges in gaining equal access to education, employment, health care, and accessibility and are more likely to live in poverty than people without disabilities; and

WHEREAS, because of ignorance, fear, and the perpetuation of myths, people with disabilities and their families have been stigmatized and discriminated against in church and society; and

WHEREAS, persons who live with a disability are active members and leaders in congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, yet many congregations struggle with issues of accessibility, accommodation, and welcome; and

WHEREAS, in carrying out its mission to the world, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America commits itself to “study social issues and trends, work to discover the causes of oppression and injustice, and develop programs of ministry and advocacy to further human dignity, freedom, justice, and peace in the world” [ELCA 4.03.1.]; and

WHEREAS, neither the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America nor its predecessor bodies has a social statement addressing the theological and social implications of human disability; and

WHEREAS, the “Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns” states that topics for social statements shall be approved by the Churchwide Assembly and development of a social statement shall be overseen by the Church in Society unit; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America memorialize the 2009 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct the Church in Society program unit to develop a social statement concerning persons with disabilities to be presented for consideration by the 2013 Churchwide Assembly; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the task force charged with the formation of this social statement pay special attention to the unique issues that face persons with different types of disabilities, whether they be physical, sensory, psychiatric, or intellectual.

6. Greater Milwaukee Synod (5J)

WHEREAS, an estimated 54 million children and adults within the United States live with a disability; and

WHEREAS, people who live with a disability historically have faced challenges in gaining equal access to education, employment, health care, and accessibility and are more likely to live in poverty than people without disabilities; and

WHEREAS, because of ignorance, fear, and the perpetuation of myths, people with disabilities and their families have been

stigmatized and discriminated against in church and society; and

WHEREAS, persons who live with a disability are active members and leaders in congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), yet many congregations struggle with issues of accessibility, accommodation, and welcome; and

WHEREAS, in carrying out its mission to the world, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America commits itself to “study social issues and trends, work to discover the causes of oppression and injustice, and develop programs of ministry and advocacy to further human dignity, freedom, justice, and peace in the world” [ELCA 4.03.1.]; and

WHEREAS, neither the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America nor its predecessor bodies has a social statement addressing the theological and social implications of human disability; and

WHEREAS, the “Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns” states that topics for social statements shall be approved by the Churchwide Assembly and development of a social statement shall be overseen by the Church in Society unit; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Greater Milwaukee Synod memorialize the 2009 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct the Church in Society program unit to develop a social statement concerning persons with disabilities to be presented for consideration by the 2013 Churchwide Assembly; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the task force charged with the formation of this social statement pay special attention to the unique issues that face different types of disabilities, whether they be physical, sensory, psychiatric, or intellectual.

7. New England Synod (7B)

RESOLVED, that the New England Synod memorialize the 2009 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct the Church in Society program unit to develop a social statement concerning persons with disabilities to be presented for consideration by the 2013 Churchwide Assembly; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the task force charged with the formation of this social statement pay special attention to the unique issues that face people with different types of disabilities, whether they be physical, sensory, psychiatric, or intellectual.

8. Pacifica Synod (2C)

WHEREAS, an estimated 54 million children and adults within the United States live with a disability; and

WHEREAS, people who live with a disability historically have faced challenges in gaining equal access to education, employment, health care, and accessibility and are more likely to live in poverty than people without disabilities; and

WHEREAS, because of ignorance, fear, and the perpetuation of myths, people with disabilities and their families have been stigmatized and discriminated against in church and society; and

WHEREAS, persons who live with a disability are active members and leaders in congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), yet many congregations struggle with issues of accessibility, accommodation, and welcome; and

WHEREAS, in carrying out its mission to the world, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America commits itself to “study social issues and trends, work to discover the causes of oppression and injustice, and develop programs of ministry and advocacy to further human dignity, freedom, justice, and peace in the world” [ELCA 4.03.1.]; and

WHEREAS, neither the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America nor its predecessor bodies has a social statement addressing the theological and social implications of human disability; and

WHEREAS, the “Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns” states that topics for social statements shall be approved by the Churchwide Assembly and development of a social statement shall be overseen by the Church in Society unit; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Pacifica Synod memorialize the 2009 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct the Church and Society program unit to develop a social statement concerning persons with disabilities to be presented for consideration by the 2015 Churchwide Assembly; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the task force charged with the formation of this social statement pay special attention to the unique issues that face different types of disabilities, whether they be physical, sensory, psychiatric, or intellectual.

Churchwide Assembly Action [CA09.06.37]:

To thank the Alaska, Pacifica, Nebraska, Metropolitan Chicago, Greater Milwaukee, New Jersey, New England, and Southeastern Pennsylvania synods for their call for strengthened awareness within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to the particular challenges faced by people living with disability as well as this church’s responsibility to address issues of accessibility, accommodation, and welcome;

To acknowledge with gratitude the many resources available through the churchwide organization, synods, social ministry organizations, and congregations and urge their use throughout this church in its ongoing commitment to address both the challenges of stigmatization and discrimination within church and society and the issues of accessibility, accommodation, and welcome; and

To decline to authorize the development of a social statement on human disability, but to request the Church in Society unit to consider development of a message on

human disability, as financial and staff resources permit, that would aid awareness, deliberation, and action within this church, giving special attention to the unique issues (e.g., physical, sensory, psychiatric, or intellectual) of the different types of disability.

Response from the Church in Society unit

The proposed social message titled “People Living with Disabilities” was provided to members of the Church Council for input on October 15, 2010, with response requested by November 5, 2010. It was then reviewed by the Program and Services Committee of the Church Council and recommended for adoption by the council at its November 12–14, 2010, meeting.

Church Council Action:

To adopt “People Living with Disabilities” as a message of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America;

To express the gratitude of the Church Council for individuals and ministries throughout the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America who have provided not only vital initiatives and innovative models, but also prophetic witness and determined leadership toward the spirit and commitments now expressed in the message, “People Living with Disabilities”; and

To request that the 2011 Churchwide Assembly lift up and acknowledge this message and those who made it possible.