

**EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN
AMERICA**

Church Council

MINUTES

April 3–6, 2025

**Prepared by the
Office of the Secretary**

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**EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA
CHURCH COUNCIL**

**MINUTES
April 3–6, 2025**

The 118th meeting of the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) convened April 3–6, 2025, at the Lutheran Center in Chicago, Ill.

The Executive Committee of the Church Council met beginning on the morning of Thursday, April 3. The meeting of the Church Council began with worship with Holy Communion at 2:00 p.m. (all times Central Daylight Time unless otherwise noted). The Rev. Jesse W. Brown Jr., president of the African Descent Lutheran Association and advisory member of the Church Council, presided, the Rev. William H. Callister preached, Ms. Tracey A. Beasley served as assisting minister, and Ms. Divine served as lector.

ORGANIZATION OF THE MEETING

The following people were present for all or part of the meeting:

Voting members

Officers:

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton, presiding bishop
Mr. Imran Siddiqui, vice president
Deacon Sue E. Rothmeyer, secretary
Ms. Lori S. Fedyk, treasurer

Chair of the Conference of Bishops:

The Rev. Yehiel Curry, bishop of the Metropolitan Chicago Synod

Church Council:

The Rev. A. Elizabeth (Lisa) Ahlness
Mr. Kevin Anderson
Ms. Tracey A. Beasley
The Rev. Benjamin B. Bergren
The Rev. Marcus A. Bigott
The Rev. Nicholas M. Billardello III
Ms. Susan Boxberger
The Rev. Heather E. Brown
Ms. Jamie Brueschoff
The Rev. William H. Callister
The Rev. Leroy Cannon
Ms. Divine
The Rev. Joanne E. Engquist
Ms. Kerry A. Fehrman (*excused*)
Ms. Sheena R. Foster
Mr. Hans W. Giller
The Rev. Emily K. Hartner
Ms. Kristy K. Henriksen
The Rev. Pamela J. Hoh
Ms. Cherrish Holland

Mr. Rindra Josoa
The Rev. Gwendolyn S. King
Mr. David M. Lenz
The Rev. Tara R. Lynn
Ms. Olivia L. Martin-Call
Mr. Mitch S. McCartney
Mr. Joel A. Miller (*excused*)
Mr. Ethan G. Miller-Perez
Mr. Keoni Newman
Deacon Kari A. Olsen
Mr. Iván A. Pérez
Ms. Linda C. Rivera
Mr. Noah F. Roux
Ms. Valerie J. Shaw (*excused*)
Ms. Andraïne A. Sinaga
Mr. Loren A. Solberg
The Rev. Kjersten L. Sullivan
Ms. Loni Taylor
Ms. Jennifer E. Trom

Representatives of the Conference of Bishops:

Bishop Brenda K. Bos, Region 2
Bishop Amy L. Current, Region 5
Bishop Christopher deForest, Region 7
Bishop Suzanne D. Dillahunt, Region 6
Bishop James S. Dunlop, Region 8 (*excused*)

Bishop Scott Johnson, Region 4
Bishop Laurie A. Jungling, Region 1
Bishop Craig A. Schweitzer, Region 3
Bishop Kevin L. Strickland, Region 9

Advisory members of the Church Council:

The Rev. Jesse W. Brown Jr., president, African Descent Lutheran Association
Ms. Desta Goehner, president, White Lutherans for Racial Justice
The Rev. Alejandro Mejía, president, Asociación de Ministerios Latinos – ELCA
The Rev. Moses P. Penumaka, president, Association of Asian and Pacific Islanders
Ms. Dina Tannous, vice president, Association of Lutherans of Arab and Middle Eastern Heritage
The Rev. Larry Thiele, representative, American Indian and Alaska Native Lutheran Association
Ms. Aubrey Thonvold, executive director, ReconcilingWorks

Churchwide Staff Resource People:

Office of the Presiding Bishop:

Ms. Jackie Baumhover, director for strategy (*remote*)
The Rev. Timothy J. Brown, director for congregational stewardship
The Rev. M. Wyvetta Bullock, executive for administration
Mr. Aaron Cooper, senior director for strategic communications
Mr. Ryan Cumming, program director for theological ethics, education, and community engagement
Ms. Jennifer G. DeLeon, director for racial justice
Ms. Victoria Flood, senior director for Mission Support
Ms. Kathryn M. Lohre, executive for ecumenical and inter-religious relations and theological discernment
Ms. Judith E. Roberts, senior director for diversity, equity, and inclusion
Ms. Mary J. Streufert, director for gender justice and women's empowerment and director for the Quality of Call Initiative
Deacon John E. Weit, executive for worship
The Rev. Roger A. Willer, director for theological ethics
Ms. Rachel K. Wind, executive for development

Office of the Secretary:

Mr. Thomas A. Cuniff, general counsel
Mr. Dan F. Eppley, manager for official documentation
The Rev. N. Keith Fry, executive for Office of the Secretary administration
Mr. Paul K. Irwin, associate general counsel
Deacon MaryAnn Schwabe, executive for synod relations
Ms. Jodi L. Slattery, executive for governance

Christian Community and Leadership:

The Rev. Philip C. Hirsch, executive director
The Rev. Sara A. Cutter, senior director for operational effectiveness

Service and Justice:

The Rev. Khader El-Yateem, executive director
The Rev. Barbara Lund, senior director for operations and innovation

Innovation:

Mr. Iain Chester, executive director

Media:

Ms. Candice Hill Buchbinder, public relations manager and interim senior director for strategic communications

Separately Incorporated Ministries:

Mr. Tim Blevins, president and CEO, Augsburg Fortress Publishers (*excused*)
Ms. Jennifer Hockenbery, interim executive director, Women of the ELCA
Mr. Christopher Johnson, president and CEO, Portico Benefit Services
Ms. Eva Roby, president and CEO, Mission Investment Fund
Ms. Annette Shoemaker, interim president and CEO, ELCA Foundation

Ecumenical Guests:

The Rev. Deborah Jackson, The Episcopal Church (USA)
Presiding Bishop Susan Johnson, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada
Mr. Justin Rabbach, Moravian Church in America

Guests:

The Rev. Carla Christopher, co-chair of the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church (*remote*)

Mr. Leon Schwartz, co-chair of the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church

Thursday, April 3, 2025
PLENARY SESSION I

CALL TO ORDER AND ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

(Agenda I.A.)

Mr. Imran Siddiqui, vice president of the ELCA and chair of the Church Council, called the meeting to order at 3:15 p.m. The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton, presiding bishop of the ELCA, opened the meeting with prayer. Vice President Siddiqui invited liaison bishops, advisory members, and ecumenical guests to introduce themselves, then reviewed the agenda. Agenda items were distributed to council members electronically prior to the meeting.

A motion was made to adopt the agenda. There being no discussion, Vice President Siddiqui called for the vote.

VOTED:

CC25.04.01 To adopt the agenda and to permit the chair to call for consideration of agenda items in the order the chair deems most appropriate.

REPORT FROM THE PRESIDING BISHOP

(Agenda I.B.)

Presiding Bishop Eaton highlighted recent activities of the churchwide organization in support of the mission of this church and referred council members to her written report for additional detail. She spoke of challenges facing this church and its values in the current social and political climate and expressed her dedication to “keep doing what the Church does” regardless of political context. The presiding bishop outlined ways this church is working to support vulnerable communities impacted by recent cuts to USAID and actions targeting immigrants and refugees, particularly ways this church is cooperating with ecumenical and inter-religious partners on the basis of a shared commitment to justice and compassion.

ECUMENICAL GREETINGS

(Agenda I.C.)

The Rev. Susan Johnson, national bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC), brought greetings from her church, expressing commitment to maintaining the strong relationship between the ELCIC and the ELCA. Bishop Johnson thanked Bishop Eaton for their partnership over the past 12 years, and Bishop Eaton presented her with a token of the Church Council’s appreciation for her service.

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

(Agenda I.D.)

Vice President Siddiqui provided an overview of recent activities of the Executive Committee of the Church Council and invited council members to consult the minutes of meetings of the Executive Committee for more details.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The 118th meeting of the Church Council of the ELCA entered executive session at 3:54 p.m. to discuss personnel matters. The Executive Committee exited executive session at 4:06 p.m.

REPORT OF ACTION FROM EXECUTIVE SESSION

The following action was taken in executive session. The Rev. Tara R. Lynn abstained from the vote.

VOTED:

CC(ES)25.04.02 To endorse changes to the ELCA Medical and Dental Benefits Plans as outlined in the “Proposed changes to ELCA Medical and Dental Benefits Plans” for the plan year beginning Jan. 1, 2026.

COMMON STATEMENT ON THE *FILIOQUE*

(Agenda I.D.2.)

Recent developments in Lutheran-Orthodox relations present the possibility of continuing the journey toward reconciliation between Eastern and Western Christianity after nearly a millennium of church division, a precipitating cause of which was the addition of “*filioque*” to the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed by churches in the West. In 2024, the Joint International Commission on Theological Dialogue between The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and the Orthodox Church developed a “Common Statement on the *Filioque*.” Reception of this text by the Churchwide Assembly would reflect the acceptance of the invitation to live into the commitments reflected therein. Ms. Kathryn M. Lohre, executive for ecumenical and inter-religious relations and theological discernment, provided background on the *filioque* controversy and the resolution before the council.

VOTED:

CC25.04.03 *To recommend the following for reception by the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America:*

WHEREAS, 2025 is the 1700 anniversary of the first ecumenical Council of Nicaea, and a year in which we will celebrate a common date for Easter, which presents a unique opportunity for reconciliation between Eastern and Western Christianity; and

WHEREAS, the end-result of the Council of Nicaea—later expanded in 381—was the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, which has served as a common confession of faith for Christians around the world ever since; and

WHEREAS, the addition to the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed of the *filioque*—meaning “and the son”—by the Latin Church in an attempt to resolve a dispute, resulted in the division between the Eastern and Western churches in the year 1054; and

WHEREAS, in 1999, talks between the ELCA and the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas arrived at “A Lutheran-Orthodox Common Statement on Faith in the Holy Trinity,” coming to a shared understanding of history and the emphases of each tradition with regard to the creed; and

WHEREAS, in 2006, the ELCA Church Council adopted “A Lutheran-Orthodox Common Statement on Faith in the Holy Trinity,” and *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* was published with a footnote to the Nicene Creed that says it is appropriate to confess the creed without the phrase; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA is a member church of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), and the LWF has been in dialogue with the Orthodox Church for more than forty years; and

Whereas, in 1990, at the Eighth LWF Assembly in Curitiba, the LWF approved omitting the *filioque* clause in ecumenical services when the Orthodox Church is present, setting a precedent later adopted by other world communions; and

WHEREAS, in 2024, the Joint International Commission on Theological Dialogue between the LWF and the Orthodox Church affirmed a “Common Statement on the *Filioque*,” affirming that the *filioque* is not a church-dividing issue and encouraging renewed theological reflection on the Trinity and the role of the Holy Spirit, which was adopted by the LWF Council that June; and

WHEREAS, this Common Statement presents a ground-breaking opportunity to understand our history in light of our dialogue with the Orthodox, and to begin to heal millennium-old divisions in the body of Christ; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the ELCA prayerfully engage in commemorating the 1,700th anniversary of the first ecumenical council at Nicaea, and the common date of Easter, as an opportunity for continued theological reflection on the Trinity and the role of the Holy Spirit and reconciliation between the Western and Eastern churches; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2025 Churchwide Assembly prayerfully receive the 2024 Lutheran-Orthodox “Common Statement on the *Filioque*,” understanding such

reception to be an intention to lean into a fuller understanding of this issue and the promise of greater unity in the Body of Christ.

TRIENNIAL DIVERSITY PERCENTAGE GOALS

(Agenda I.D.3.)

Vice President Siddiqui announced that there would be discussion related to triennial diversity goals later in the meeting.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON REPORTS OF THE VICE PRESIDENT, SECRETARY, AND CHAIR OF THE CONFERENCE OF BISHOPS

(Agenda I.E.)

Vice President Siddiqui invited council members to ask questions about the written reports of the vice president, secretary, and chair of the Conference of Bishops that were shared electronically with council members prior to the meeting. There were no questions from the council.

ECUMENICAL GREETINGS

(Agenda I.F.)

The Rev. Deborah Jackson brought greetings on behalf of The Episcopal Church (USA) and updated council members on recent activities in The Episcopal Church (USA). Mr. Justin Rabbach brought greetings on behalf of the Moravian Church in America and expressed appreciation for the partnership between this church and the Moravian Church in America.

RECESS

The first plenary session of the 118th meeting of the Church Council recessed at 4:38 p.m. and reconvened at 4:50 p.m.

RECEPTION OF THE COMMISSION FOR A RENEWED LUTHERAN CHURCH (CRLC) REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

(Agenda I.G.)

The CRLC met March 13–15 for its twelfth and final meeting, at which the commission adopted its report and recommendations, giving editorial license to the Planning and Report Committee of the CRLC to finalize the report. Most commission members signed off on the final report and recommendations, which were shared with the Church Council electronically prior to the meeting. The Rev. Carla Christopher, co-chair of the commission, provided background on the report and an overview of the recommendations, beginning with Recommendation 1: Immediate Action on Dismantling Racism.

Vice President Siddiqui clarified that this time was set aside for discussion of the report and recommendations, with possible Church Council actions in response to the report and recommendations to be considered at a later session of this meeting. Mr. David M. Lenz, member of the commission, and Mr. Leon Schwartz, co-chair of the commission, introduced Recommendations 2–6. The Rev. Yehiel Curry, bishop of the Metropolitan Chicago Synod and chair of the Conference of Bishops, provided an overview of the response of the Conference of Bishops to an earlier draft of the Report and Recommendations of the CRLC. Pastor Christopher, Mr. Schwartz, and Mr. Lenz responded to comments and questions from members and advisory members of the Church Council regarding the report and recommendations. Vice President Siddiqui clarified next steps for Church Council action on the recommendations of the CRLC.

PERSONAL REFLECTION ON FAITH

(Agenda I.H.)

The Rev. Pamela J. Hoh shared personal reflections on faith.

ADJOURNMENT

The first plenary session of the 118th meeting of the Church Council of the ELCA adjourned at 6:28 p.m. on April 3, 2025, following prayer, announcements, and a hymn.

Friday, April 4, 2025
PLENARY SESSION II

RACIAL AND GENDER JUSTICE EDUCATION

(Agenda II.A.)

Beginning at 10:00 a.m., Ms. Mary J. Streufert, director for gender justice and women's empowerment and director for Quality of Call Initiative, and Ms. Jennifer G. DeLeon, director for racial justice, led council members in an educational session on racial and gender justice.

ADJOURNMENT

Following announcements, the second plenary session of the 118th meeting of the Church Council of the ELCA adjourned at noon on April 4, 2025.

MID-DAY PRAYER AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS

A mid-day prayer gathering led by ELCIC National Bishop Johnson was held at 12:15 p.m. The following committees met at 2:00 p.m. at the Lutheran Center: Budget and Finance; Christian Community and Leadership; Faith, Society, and Innovation; Legal and Constitutional Review; and Service and Justice.

Saturday, April 5, 2025
PLENARY SESSION III

CALL TO ORDER

Vice President Siddiqui called the third plenary session to order at 9:02 a.m. The Rev. Benjamin B. Bergren opened the session with a hymn and prayer.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CRLC

(Agenda III.A.)

Vice President Siddiqui and Deacon Sue E. Rothmeyer, secretary of the ELCA, reviewed previous actions taken by the Church Council in response to CRLC recommendations, then introduced additional council actions proposed by the Executive Committee in response to recommendations of the CRLC. On behalf of the Executive Committee, Secretary Rothmeyer brought forward the proposed action in response to CRLC Recommendation 1. Several council members spoke in support of the motion. Council members asked for and received clarification from members of the Executive Committee regarding the proposed action and its ramifications.

VOTED:

CC25.04.04

To receive with appreciation “Immediate Action on Dismantling Racism” Recommendation 1 from the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church which urges the creation of mutual accountability measures and compliance incentives across all expressions of the ELCA to ensure the proactive centering of dismantling racism within the denomination;

To authorize the Executive Committee of Church Council to consult with the Strategy Toward Authentic Diversity (STAD) Advisory Team and their resource staff to review the purpose of the advisory team;

To request the Office of the Presiding Bishop, in consultation with the Christian Community and Leadership and Service and Justice home areas, to identify possible individuals for service on the STAD Advisory Team and to provide those names to the Executive Committee;

To authorize the Executive Committee to appoint members, including a bishop and a Church Council member, to the STAD Advisory Team;

To authorize the Executive Committee to identify persons from the Church Council to work with the STAD Advisory Team to create an ELCA handbook, including recommended diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) standards for congregations;

To commit the Church Council to continue to work on cultural competency training in every official meeting of the Church Council;

To encourage the Conference of Bishops to work on creating DEIA standards for synods (including synod staff and councils), and to continue to work on cultural competency training within the conference;

To request the senior director for diversity, equity, and inclusion to report annually to the spring meeting of the Church Council regarding diversity of the synods and of the churchwide organization relative to historically underrepresented groups and assessments of initiatives that enable and advance anti-racism and diversity measures across all expressions of this church; and

To designate financial and human resources to incentivize engagement in multicultural educational events and creation of materials for ongoing leadership development (rostered and lay) across this church.

On behalf of the Executive Committee, Secretary Rothmeyer moved the proposed response to CRLC Recommendation 2.1. Vice President Siddiqui invited discussion and, hearing none, called for the vote.

VOTED:

CC25.04.05 **To receive with appreciation “Accountability within the ELCA” Recommendation 2.1 from the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church;**
To direct the Office of the Secretary to continue to explore collaboration with this church’s full-communion partners to develop processes for conflict resolution within this church that are endorsed by, but independent of, the churchwide organization and which are responsive to the needs of historically underrepresented groups, referring, as appropriate, to the considerations outlined in the rationale of “Accountability within the ELCA;” and
To consult with the Conference of Bishops on such resources and present a report by the Fall 2026 meeting of the Church Council.

On behalf of the Executive Committee, Secretary Rothmeyer moved the proposed response to CRLC Recommendation 2.2. Vice President Siddiqui invited discussion and, hearing none, called for the vote.

VOTED:

CC25.04.06 **To receive with appreciation “Accountability within the ELCA” Recommendation 2.2 from the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church;**
To request that the Committee on Appeals:
a. develop resources to help synods identify candidates with the appropriate spiritual gifts and demonstrated competencies in working with varied ethnic backgrounds to serve on synod consultation committees, referring, as appropriate, to the considerations outlined in the rationale of “Accountability within the ELCA;” consult with the Conference of Bishops on such resources; and present a report by the Fall 2026 meeting of the Church Council;
b. develop resources for training synod consultation committees in conflict resolution, referring, as appropriate, to the considerations outlined in the rationale of “Accountability within the ELCA,” consult with the Conference of Bishops on such resources, and present a report by the Fall 2026 meeting of the Church Council; and
To direct the Office of the Secretary and the Christian Community and Leadership home area to provide staff support to the Committee on Appeals for such work.

On behalf of the Executive Committee, Secretary Rothmeyer moved the proposed response to CRLC Recommendation 3.

MOVED;

[SECONDED]: **To receive with appreciation “Task Force on Interdependence and Purpose” Recommendation 3 from the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church;**
To establish a task force on interdependence and purpose consisting of no more than 12 voting members, of whom no more than five members shall also have been voting members of the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church, and directing the Executive Committee of the Church Council to appoint the task force, fulfilling the responsibilities of the Church Council related to nominations in accordance with 14.41.01.c.;
To populate the task force according to the representational principles of this church;
To request the appointment process be completed prior to the November 2025 Church Council meeting;
To direct the task force to undertake the following:

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- Assess the adequacy and clarity of the several purpose statements in the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* and make recommendations for modification;
- Assess the impact of the current governance structures and interdependence of the three expressions of this church on the fulfillment of its mission, and in so doing, develop recommendations for governance improvements;
- Consider how existing governance structures have (or may have) perpetuated systemic inequalities, and in so doing, develop recommendations to promote inclusion and equity;
- Evaluate the current structure of the synods (including number, geographic boundaries, governance structure, and other relevant factors) and make recommendations for change;

To direct the task force to consult with the Conference of Bishops regarding its work;

To direct the task force to present its report and recommendations to the Fall 2027 meeting of the Church Council;

To direct the task force to make periodic progress reports to the Executive Committee as the committee may request from time to time;

To direct the Office of the Presiding Bishop and Office of the Secretary to provide staff support to the task force; and

To invite this church to join us in prayer as this church embarks on this process.

A council member expressed concern regarding the time allotted to the task force, noting that the CRLC had more time and did not accomplish the task. Mr. Schwartz responded that the CRLC has already made significant progress on which the task force could build.

Vice President Siddiqui called for the orders of the day, inviting council members to continue to reflect on the motion for consideration at a later session of the meeting.

RECESS

The third plenary session of the 118th meeting of the Church Council recessed at 9:54 a.m. and reconvened at 10:00 a.m.

BIBLE STUDY

(Agenda III.B.)

Council members participated in a Bible study based on 1 Kings 19 led by the Rev. Leila M. Ortiz, bishop of the Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod.

RECESS

The third plenary session of the 118th meeting of the Church Council recessed at 10:31 a.m. and reconvened at 10:40 a.m.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CRLC (CONT.)

(Agenda III.C.)

The Church Council continued discussion of the recommendations of the CRLC, resuming with discussion of the motion to create a Task Force on Interdependence and Purpose.

Council members discussed ways to facilitate the work of the task force. A member made a motion that the task force be expanded to 14 members and include the presiding bishop and secretary of this church.

Moved;

Seconded;

ADOPTED:

To amend the response as follows:

To receive with appreciation “Task Force on Interdependence and Purpose” Recommendation 3 from the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church;

To establish a task force on interdependence and purpose consisting of no more than ~~42~~ 14 voting members, of whom no more than five members shall also have been voting members of the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church, and including the presiding bishop and secretary of this church; and directing the Executive Committee of the Church Council to appoint the task force, fulfilling the responsibilities of the Church Council related to nominations in accordance with 14.41.01.c.;

To populate the task force according to the representational principles of this church;

To request the appointment process be completed prior to the November 2025 Church Council meeting;

To direct the task force to undertake the following:

- Assess the adequacy and clarity of the several purpose statements in the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* and make recommendations for modification;
- Assess the impact of the current governance structures and interdependence of the three expressions of this church on the fulfillment of its mission, and in so doing, develop recommendations for governance improvements;
- Consider how existing governance structures have (or may have) perpetuated systemic inequalities, and in so doing, develop recommendations to promote inclusion and equity;
- Evaluate the current structure of the synods (including number, geographic boundaries, governance structure, and other relevant factors) and make recommendations for change;

To direct the task force to consult with the Conference of Bishops regarding its work;

To direct the task force to present its report and recommendations to the Fall 2027 meeting of the Church Council;

To direct the task force to make periodic progress reports to the Executive Committee as the committee may request from time to time;

To direct the Office of the Presiding Bishop and Office of the Secretary to provide staff support to the task force; and

To invite this church to join us in prayer as this church embarks on this process.

The composition of the task force was discussed, and a council member made a motion to define the composition of the task force more precisely. Members and advisory members of the council spoke on both sides of the motion.

MOVED;

SECONDED;

ADOPTED:

To amend the response as follows:

To receive with appreciation “Task Force on Interdependence and Purpose” Recommendation 3 from the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church;

To establish a task force on interdependence and purpose consisting of no more than 14 voting members, at least four of whom shall be members of historically underrepresented groups, and of whom no more than five members shall also have been voting members of the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church, and including the presiding bishop and secretary of this church; and directing the Executive Committee of the Church Council to appoint the task force, fulfilling the responsibilities of the Church Council related to nominations in accordance with 14.41.01.c.;

To populate the task force according to the representational principles of this church;

To request the appointment process be completed prior to the November 2025 Church Council meeting;

To direct the task force to undertake the following:

- Assess the adequacy and clarity of the several purpose statements in the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* and make recommendations for modification;

- Assess the impact of the current governance structures and interdependence of the three expressions of this church on the fulfillment of its mission, and in so doing, develop recommendations for governance improvements;
- Consider how existing governance structures have (or may have) perpetuated systemic inequalities, and in so doing, develop recommendations to promote inclusion and equity;
- Evaluate the current structure of the synods (including number, geographic boundaries, governance structure, and other relevant factors) and make recommendations for change;

To direct the task force to consult with the Conference of Bishops regarding its work;

To direct the task force to present its report and recommendations to the Fall 2027 meeting of the Church Council;

To direct the task force to make periodic progress reports to the Executive Committee as the committee may request from time to time;

To direct the Office of the Presiding Bishop and Office of the Secretary to provide staff support to the task force; and

To invite this church to join us in prayer as this church embarks on this process.

Council members continued discussion of the composition of the task force. Secretary Rothmeyer provided clarification on the timeline for the appointment of the task force. A member made a motion to amend the action to include specific reference to Christ, Scripture, the Holy Spirit, and other foundational elements of this church's faith.

MOVED;

SECONDED;

ADOPTED:

To amend the response as follows:

To receive with appreciation "Task Force on Interdependence and Purpose" Recommendation 3 from the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church;

To establish a task force on interdependence and purpose that will be grounded and rooted in our faith in Jesus Christ and guided by Scripture and our theological discernment as we live into the gospel through the leading of the Spirit. The task force will consisting of no more than 14 voting members, at least four of whom shall be members of historically underrepresented groups, and of whom no more than five members shall also have been voting members of the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church, and including the presiding bishop and secretary of this church; and directing the Executive Committee of the Church Council to appoint the task force, fulfilling the responsibilities of the Church Council related to nominations in accordance with 14.41.01.c.;

To populate the task force according to the representational principles of this church;

To request the appointment process be completed prior to the November 2025 Church Council meeting;

To direct the task force to undertake the following:

- Assess the adequacy and clarity of the several purpose statements in the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* and make recommendations for modification;
- Assess the impact of the current governance structures and interdependence of the three expressions of this church on the fulfillment of its mission, and in so doing, develop recommendations for governance improvements;
- Consider how existing governance structures have (or may have) perpetuated systemic inequalities, and in so doing, develop recommendations to promote inclusion and equity;
- Evaluate the current structure of the synods (including number, geographic boundaries, governance structure, and other relevant factors) and make recommendations for change;

To direct the task force to consult with the Conference of Bishops regarding its work;

To direct the task force to present its report and recommendations to the Fall 2027 meeting of the Church Council;

To direct the task force to make periodic progress reports to the Executive Committee as the committee may request from time to time;

To direct the Office of the Presiding Bishop and Office of the Secretary to provide staff support to the task force; and

To invite this church to join us in prayer as this church embarks on this process.

Council members discussed further the composition of the task force. A council member made a motion to amend the action to emphasize the importance of diversity on the task force.

MOVED;

SECONDED;

DEFEATED:

To amend the response as follows:

To receive with appreciation “Task Force on Interdependence and Purpose” Recommendation 3 from the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church;

To establish a task force on interdependence and purpose that will be grounded and rooted in our faith in Jesus Christ and guided by Scripture and our theological discernment as we live into the gospel through the leading of the Spirit. The task force will consist of no more than 14 voting members, at least four of whom shall be members of historically underrepresented groups, and of whom no more than five members shall also have been voting members of the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church, and including the presiding bishop and secretary of this church; and directing the Executive Committee of the Church Council to appoint the task force, fulfilling the responsibilities of the Church Council related to nominations in accordance with 14.41.01.c.;

To populate the task force according to the representational principles of this church and seeking as much diversity as possible;

To request the appointment process be completed prior to the November 2025 Church Council meeting;

To direct the task force to undertake the following:

- Assess the adequacy and clarity of the several purpose statements in the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* and make recommendations for modification;
- Assess the impact of the current governance structures and interdependence of the three expressions of this church on the fulfillment of its mission, and in so doing, develop recommendations for governance improvements;
- Consider how existing governance structures have (or may have) perpetuated systemic inequalities, and in so doing, develop recommendations to promote inclusion and equity;
- Evaluate the current structure of the synods (including number, geographic boundaries, governance structure, and other relevant factors) and make recommendations for change;

To direct the task force to consult with the Conference of Bishops regarding its work;

To direct the task force to present its report and recommendations to the Fall 2027 meeting of the Church Council;

To direct the task force to make periodic progress reports to the Executive Committee as the committee may request from time to time;

To direct the Office of the Presiding Bishop and Office of the Secretary to provide staff support to the task force; and

To invite this church to join us in prayer as this church embarks on this process.

A council member moved to end discussion, and the motion passed. Vice President Siddiqui called for a vote on the main motion as amended.

VOTED:

CC25.04.07

To receive with appreciation “Task Force on Interdependence and Purpose” Recommendation 3 from the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church;

To establish a task force on interdependence and purpose that will be grounded and rooted in our faith in Jesus Christ and guided by Scripture and our theological discernment as we live into the gospel through the leading of the Spirit. The task force will consist of no more than 14 voting members, at least four of whom shall be members of historically underrepresented groups, and of whom no more than five members shall also have been voting members of the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church, and including the presiding bishop and secretary of this church; and directing the Executive Committee of the Church Council to appoint the task force, fulfilling the responsibilities of the Church Council related to nominations in accordance with 14.41.01.c.;

To populate the task force according to the representational principles of this church;

To request the appointment process be completed prior to the November 2025 Church Council meeting;

To direct the task force to undertake the following:

- Assess the adequacy and clarity of the several purpose statements in the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* and make recommendations for modification;
- Assess the impact of the current governance structures and interdependence of the three expressions of this church on the fulfillment of its mission, and in so doing, develop recommendations for governance improvements;
- Consider how existing governance structures have (or may have) perpetuated systemic inequalities, and in so doing, develop recommendations to promote inclusion and equity;
- Evaluate the current structure of the synods (including number, geographic boundaries, governance structure, and other relevant factors) and make recommendations for change;

To direct the task force to consult with the Conference of Bishops regarding its work;

To direct the task force to present its report and recommendations to the Fall 2027 meeting of the Church Council;

To direct the task force to make periodic progress reports to the Executive Committee as the committee may request from time to time;

To direct the Office of the Presiding Bishop and Office of the Secretary to provide staff support to the task force; and

To invite this church to join us in prayer as this church embarks on this process.

A council member introduced a motion to change the orders of the day.

MOVED;

SECONDED;

DEFEATED:

To amend the orders of the day to end Plenary Session III at 11:45 a.m. and convene Plenary Session IV at 1:45 p.m.

On behalf of the Executive Committee, Secretary Rothmeyer moved the proposed response to CRLC Recommendation 4.

MOVED;

[SECONDED]:

To receive with appreciation “Financial Coordinating Task Force” Recommendation 4 from the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church;

To authorize the Executive Committee to create a Financial Coordinating Task Force that will be composed of no more than eight members with financial expertise representing all three expressions of this church, including a synod bishop. In addition, a member of the Budget and Finance or Audit committees will be appointed as a member. The ELCA treasurer will be an *ex officio* member. Staff support will be provided by the Office of the Treasurer and the Office of the Presiding Bishop;

To request that the task force:

- a. review existing resources of the ELCA or educational institutions that support financial management;
- b. explore opportunities where greater collaboration or shared processes/resources among the financial functions of the three expressions of this church may be beneficial;
- c. commit to sharing best practices, resources, and tools related to financial management;
- d. affirm the commitment of the financial separately incorporated ministries (ELCA Foundation, Mission Investment Fund, Portico Benefit Services) to continue collaboration amongst themselves and to identify possible ways to enhance operational efficiencies, to leverage synergies, to align strategic initiatives, and to identify opportunities for cost savings and to receive a report from the financial separately incorporated ministries to the Financial Coordinating Task Force by December 2026; and

To direct the task force to present a report on the work of the task force at the Spring 2027 Church Council meeting.

A council member noted that the motion did not include a date by which the task force would be created, and another member made a motion to set that date. Council members asked for and received clarification regarding the timeline of the work of the task force.

MOVED;

SECONDED;

ADOPTED:

To amend the response as follows:

To receive with appreciation “Financial Coordinating Task Force” Recommendation 4 from the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church;

To authorize the Executive Committee to create a Financial Coordinating Task Force **by the Spring 2026 Church Council meeting** that will be composed of no more than eight members with financial expertise representing all three expressions of this church, including a synod bishop. In addition, a member of the Budget and Finance or Audit committees will be appointed as a member. The ELCA treasurer will be an *ex officio* member. Staff support will be provided by the Office of the Treasurer and the Office of the Presiding Bishop;

To request that the task force:

- a. review existing resources of the ELCA or educational institutions that support financial management;
- b. explore opportunities where greater collaboration or shared processes/resources among the financial functions of the three expressions of this church may be beneficial;
- c. commit to sharing best practices, resources, and tools related to financial management;
- d. affirm the commitment of the financial separately incorporated ministries (ELCA Foundation, Mission Investment Fund, Portico Benefit Services) to continue collaboration amongst themselves and to identify possible ways to enhance operational efficiencies, to leverage synergies, to align strategic initiatives, and to

identify opportunities for cost savings and to receive a report from the financial separately incorporated ministries to the Financial Coordinating Task Force by December 2026; and

To direct the task force to present a report on the work of the task force at the Spring 2027 Church Council meeting.

Following additional discussion of the motion, Vice President Siddiqui called for the orders of the day.

ADJOURNMENT

The third plenary session of the 118th meeting of the Church Council of the ELCA adjourned following announcements, prayer, and a hymn at 12:07 p.m. on April 5, 2025.

Saturday, April 5, 2025
PLENARY SESSION IV

PRESENTATIONS BY ADVISORY MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH COUNCIL

During the lunch break, Church Council members attended presentations hosted by the advisory members of the Church Council.

CALL TO ORDER

Vice President Siddiqui called the fourth plenary session to order at 2:02 p.m. The Rev. Joanne E. Engquist opened the meeting with prayer.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CRLC (CONT.)

(Agenda IV.A.)

The Church Council continued discussion of recommendations of the CRLC. Vice President Siddiqui returned the council to discussion of the motion before the council.

A council member made a motion to amend.

MOVED;

SECONDED:

To amend the response as follows:

To receive with appreciation “Financial Coordinating Task Force” Recommendation 4 from the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church;

To authorize the Executive Committee to create a Financial Coordinating Task Force by the Spring 2026 Church Council meeting that will be composed of no more than eight members with financial expertise representing all three expressions of this church, including a synod bishop and at least four members from historically underrepresented communities. In addition, a member of the Budget and Finance or Audit committees will be appointed as a member. The ELCA treasurer will be an *ex officio* member. Staff support will be provided by the Office of the Treasurer and the Office of the Presiding Bishop;

To request that the task force:

- a. review existing resources of the ELCA or educational institutions that support financial management;
- b. explore opportunities where greater collaboration or shared processes/resources among the financial functions of the three expressions of this church may be beneficial;
- c. commit to sharing best practices, resources, and tools related to financial management;
- d. affirm the commitment of the financial separately incorporated ministries (ELCA Foundation, Mission Investment Fund, Portico Benefit Services) to continue collaboration amongst themselves and to identify possible ways to enhance operational efficiencies, to leverage synergies, to align strategic initiatives, and to identify opportunities for cost savings and to receive a report from the financial separately incorporated ministries to the Financial Coordinating Task Force by December 2026; and

To direct the task force to present a report on the work of the task force at the Spring 2027 Church Council meeting.

Noting that the task force may have fewer than eight members, a council member made a motion to amend the amendment.

MOVED;

SECONDED;

ADOPTED:

To further amend the response as follows:

To receive with appreciation “Financial Coordinating Task Force” Recommendation 4 from the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church;

To authorize the Executive Committee to create a Financial Coordinating Task Force by the Spring 2026 Church Council meeting that will be composed of no more than eight members with financial expertise representing all three expressions of this church, including a synod bishop and at least half ~~four members~~ from historically underrepresented communities. In addition, a member of the Budget and Finance or Audit committees will be appointed as a member. The ELCA treasurer will be an *ex officio* member. Staff support will be provided by the Office of the Treasurer and the Office of the Presiding Bishop;

To request that the task force:

- a. review existing resources of the ELCA or educational institutions that support financial management;
- b. explore opportunities where greater collaboration or shared processes/resources among the financial functions of the three expressions of this church may be beneficial;
- c. commit to sharing best practices, resources, and tools related to financial management;
- d. affirm the commitment of the financial separately incorporated ministries (ELCA Foundation, Mission Investment Fund, Portico Benefit Services) to continue collaboration amongst themselves and to identify possible ways to enhance operational efficiencies, to leverage synergies, to align strategic initiatives, and to identify opportunities for cost savings and to receive a report from the financial separately incorporated ministries to the Financial Coordinating Task Force by December 2026; and

To direct the task force to present a report on the work of the task force at the Spring 2027 Church Council meeting.

Council members spoke on both sides of the motion as amended.

MOVED;

SECONDED;

ADOPTED:

To amend the response as follows:

To receive with appreciation “Financial Coordinating Task Force” Recommendation 4 from the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church;

To authorize the Executive Committee to create a Financial Coordinating Task Force by the Spring 2026 Church Council meeting that will be composed of no more than eight members with financial expertise representing all three expressions of this church, including a synod bishop and at least half from historically underrepresented communities. In addition, a member of the Budget and Finance or Audit committees will be appointed as a member. The ELCA treasurer will be an *ex officio* member. Staff support will be provided by the Office of the Treasurer and the Office of the Presiding Bishop;

To request that the task force:

- a. review existing resources of the ELCA or educational institutions that support financial management;
- b. explore opportunities where greater collaboration or shared processes/resources among the financial functions of the three expressions of this church may be beneficial;
- c. commit to sharing best practices, resources, and tools related to financial management;
- d. affirm the commitment of the financial separately incorporated ministries (ELCA Foundation, Mission Investment Fund, Portico Benefit Services) to continue collaboration amongst themselves and to identify possible ways to enhance operational efficiencies, to leverage synergies, to align strategic initiatives, and to identify opportunities for cost savings and to receive a report from the financial separately incorporated ministries to the Financial Coordinating Task Force by December 2026; and

To direct the task force to present a report on the work of the task force at the Spring 2027 Church Council meeting.

A council member made a motion to further amend the action, emphasizing the importance of keeping the work of the Holy Spirit in mind.

MOVED;

SECONDED;

ADOPTED:

To amend the response as follows:

To receive with appreciation “Financial Coordinating Task Force” Recommendation 4 from the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church;

To authorize the Executive Committee to create a Financial Coordinating Task Force by the Spring 2026 Church Council meeting that will be composed of no more than eight members with financial expertise representing all three expressions of this church, including a synod bishop and at least half from historically underrepresented communities. In addition, a member of the Budget and Finance or Audit committees will be appointed as a member. The ELCA treasurer will be an *ex officio* member. Staff support will be provided by the Office of the Treasurer and the Office of the Presiding Bishop;

To request that the task force, guided by the Holy Spirit:

- a. review existing resources of the ELCA or educational institutions that support financial management;
- b. explore opportunities where greater collaboration or shared processes/resources among the financial functions of the three expressions of this church may be beneficial;
- c. commit to sharing best practices, resources, and tools related to financial management;
- d. affirm the commitment of the financial separately incorporated ministries (ELCA Foundation, Mission Investment Fund, Portico Benefit Services) to continue collaboration amongst themselves and to identify possible ways to enhance operational efficiencies, to leverage synergies, to align strategic initiatives, and to identify opportunities for cost savings and to receive a report from the financial separately incorporated ministries to the Financial Coordinating Task Force by December 2026; and

To direct the task force to present a report on the work of the task force at the Spring 2027 Church Council meeting.

Vice President Siddiqui invited additional discussion and, hearing none, called for the vote on the main motion as amended.

VOTED:

CC25.04.08

To receive with appreciation “Financial Coordinating Task Force” Recommendation 4 from the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church;

To authorize the Executive Committee to create a Financial Coordinating Task Force by the Spring 2026 Church Council meeting that will be composed of no more than eight members with financial expertise representing all three expressions of this church, including a synod bishop and at least half from historically underrepresented communities. In addition, a member of the Budget and Finance or Audit committees will be appointed as a member. The ELCA treasurer will be an *ex officio* member. Staff support will be provided by the Office of the Treasurer and the Office of the Presiding Bishop;

To request that the task force, guided by the Holy Spirit:

- a. review existing resources of the ELCA or educational institutions that support financial management;

- b. explore opportunities where greater collaboration or shared processes/resources among the financial functions of the three expressions of this church may be beneficial;
- c. commit to sharing best practices, resources, and tools related to financial management;
- d. affirm the commitment of the financial separately incorporated ministries (ELCA Foundation, Mission Investment Fund, Portico Benefit Services) to continue collaboration amongst themselves and to identify possible ways to enhance operational efficiencies, to leverage synergies, to align strategic initiatives, and to identify opportunities for cost savings and to receive a report from the financial separately incorporated ministries to the Financial Coordinating Task Force by December 2026; and

To direct the task force to present a report on the work of the task force at the Spring 2027 Church Council meeting.

On behalf of the Executive Committee, Secretary Rothmeyer moved the proposed response to CRLC Recommendation 5. Members of the Executive Committee provided clarification of the intent of the proposed action. Hearing no discussion, the chair called for the vote.

VOTED:

CC25.04.09 To receive with appreciation the “Creation of a Task Force to Develop a Comprehensive Congregational Management and Governance Toolkit and Orientation Program” Recommendation 5 from the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church;

To encourage rostered ministers, congregations, and synods to identify and share knowledge of existing congregational management and governance resources from the churchwide organization, seminaries, and the Publishing House of the ELCA, but to decline the establishment of a task force.

On behalf of the Executive Committee, Secretary Rothmeyer moved the proposed response to CRLC Recommendation 6. Vice President Siddiqui invited discussion and, hearing none, called for the vote.

VOTED:

CC25.04.10 To receive with appreciation “Strengthening the Framework for Ministers of Word and Service” Recommendation 6 from the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church;

To affirm the vocation of ministers of Word and Service to equip the baptized for ministry in daily life and to serve this church’s mission in the world through teaching, advocacy, and service;

To affirm the existing educational resources about the theology and practice of Word and Service ministry;

To direct the churchwide organization to post such educational resources on the ELCA website; and

To encourage congregations and synods to provide education about the role of ministers of Word and Service and the varied contexts in which they serve, emphasizing their contributions to this church’s mission and ministry.

On behalf of the Executive Committee, Secretary Rothmeyer moved the final action recommended in response to the recommendations of the CRLC. Vice President Siddiqui invited discussion and, hearing none, called for the vote.

VOTED:

CC25.04.11 To receive with gratitude the findings and recommendations from the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church (CRLC) to be shared with the 2025 Churchwide Assembly;

To give thanks to God for the faithful, dedicated, and conscientious members of the CRLC who gave tirelessly of their time and energy to the commission's mandate “to reconsider the statements of purpose for each of the expressions of this church, the principles of its organizational structure, and all matters pertaining thereunto, being particularly attentive to our shared commitment to dismantle racism;” and

To encourage the members, congregations, synods, churchwide organization, and related institutions, organizations, and ministries of this church to use this report in their continued discernment and engagement to live more fully into God’s mission in this changing world.

On behalf of the Church Council, Vice President Siddiqui thanked all members of the CRLC, particularly the co-chairs, for their service.

REPORT OF THE FAITH, SOCIETY, AND INNOVATION COMMITTEE

(Agenda IV.B.)

The Rev. Tara R. Lynn, chair of the Faith, Society, and Innovation Committee, provided an update on the work of the committee, noting particularly that this church is in the midst of creating a social message on child protection, and invited council members to comment on the draft of this message that has been made available to the public.

SOCIAL MESSAGE ON WHITE SUPREMACY

(Agenda IV.B.1.)

On behalf of the committee, Pastor Lynn introduced a motion regarding the next consideration of a social message. Vice President Siddiqui invited discussion and, hearing none, called for the vote.

VOTED:

CC25.04.12 To authorize staff of the Theological Discernment Team, in accordance with “Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns (2018),” to review and bring a recommendation regarding the request for a social message on White Supremacy to the November 2025 Church Council meeting.

PROPOSED SOCIAL STATEMENT ON FAITH AND CIVIC LIFE: SEEKING THE WELL-BEING OF ALL

(Agenda IV.B.2.)

Background

Churchwide Assembly action [CA19.05.29]

To receive with gratitude the memorial from the Minneapolis Area Synod requesting a social statement on the role of government, the nature of civic engagement, and the relationship of church and state; and

To authorize the development of an ELCA social statement on government, civic engagement, and the relationship of church and state that will allow thorough attention to scriptural, historical, theological, and social issues as a means to probe, share convictions, and establish this church’s comprehensive teaching in accordance with the “Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns” (2018); and

To urgently request the ELCA Church Council to authorize a social message as a priority in the development of a social statement. This message would elaborate in one place what this church already holds regarding issues such as public church, the vocation of citizenship, and the relation of church and state in accordance with “Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns” (2018).

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The ELCA Task Force on Studies on Civic Life and Faith began work in Fall 2020. This work included listening events, creation of a study for use throughout this church, posting a draft from January to October 2024, and hosting approximately 50 hearings on the draft. The task force revised the draft in light of feedback and proposed adoption of the social statement *Faith and Civic Life: Seeking the Well-being of All*. On behalf of the Faith, Society, and Innovation Committee, Pastor Lynn introduced a motion to recommend that the 2025 Churchwide Assembly adopt the proposed social statement. The Rev. Roger A. Willer, director for theological ethics, Pastor Hoh, member of the task force, Mr. Loren A. Solberg, member of the task force, and the Rev. Laurie A. Jungling, bishop of the Montana Synod and member of the task force, provided insight into the creation of the social statement.

VOTED:

CC25.04.13 ***To recommend the following for adoption by the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America:***

To adopt the proposed social statement “Faith and Civic Life: Seeking the Well-Being of All” as a social statement of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, in accordance with the “Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns” (2018).

On behalf of the Faith, Society, and Innovation Committee, Pastor Lynn introduced a motion to recommend that the 2025 Churchwide Assembly adopt implementing resolutions associated with the proposed social statement.

VOTED:

CC25.04.14 ***To recommend the following implementing resolutions for adoption by the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America:***

- 1. To urge members of this church to pray, participate in, and advocate for civic life in the United States that reflects God’s activity and call seeking the well-being of all people and creation marked by justice and peace;**
- 2. To encourage members to draw inspiration from the ELCA social message on “Government and Civic Engagement: Discipleship in a Democracy,” which highlights the call to embrace daily our baptismal vocation through active participation in self-governance;**
- 3. To reaffirm and encourage use across this church of other existing social teaching and policy documents that promote robust and wise civic participation, such as those that address matters of voting, campaign finance, public service, nonviolent protest, and the like;**
- 4. To recognize with deep appreciation the commitments and efforts by those in this church—including but not limited to churchwide organization teams such as Witness in Society and Building Resilient Communities, as well as the many church-related social ministry organizations and educational institutions—that contribute to healthy civic life through service, advocacy, or education;**
- 5. To call upon all members of this church to intentionally evaluate the dangers of polarization and the threats posed by disregard for democratic practices and self-government;**
- 6. To encourage ELCA worshipping assemblies and ministries to build bridges, foster reconciliation, practice communal discernment, provide opportunities for difficult conversations, and address polarization constructively in their communities;**
- 7. To encourage synod leaders, in collaboration with other appropriate bodies, to explore creating or expanding state public policy advocacy in their domains**

- as part of the ELCA Witness in Society network, similar to those already existing in several states;
8. To direct the churchwide organization, in consultation with the Conference of Bishops, theologians and ethicists, and rostered ministers, as well as elected lay leaders, to develop guidelines and protections consistent with this social statement regarding the roles in civic life of representatives of this church with official responsibility to preach, teach, and lead on behalf of this church;
 9. To call upon the publishing and educational ministries of this church, including but not limited to Augsburg Fortress Publishers, to consider the need for civics education curricula, civic participation guidance, and related theological reflection, and to create these in multiple formats, including multimedia and online;
 10. To call upon the publishing and educational ministries of this church, including but not limited to Augsburg Fortress Publishers, to explore the need for resources dedicated to nonviolent resistance and peaceful engagement in civic life, with special concern for materials dedicated to religious and political histories, liturgical guidance, and training for rostered and lay leaders;
 11. To direct the Witness in Society team of the churchwide organization and call upon all expressions of this church in their advocacy efforts to support and advocate for policies and laws consistent with this social statement and to give sustained attention to the fresh convictions and commitments found here in its creation of programs and projects;
 12. To direct the Ecumenical and Inter-religious Relations team in the Office of the Presiding Bishop to share this statement as a resource for dialogue, discernment, and collaboration with ecumenical and inter-religious partners toward the well-being of all people and creation from within the U.S. context;
 13. To urge faculty, staff, and administrators of ELCA-related colleges, universities, and seminaries to renew and emphasize education toward callings in public service and to model and encourage dynamic civic participation among their students;
 14. To direct appropriate units in the churchwide organization, coordinated by the Office of the Presiding Bishop, to establish or oversee processes for implementation of these resolutions, with an initial report to the Fall 2027 meeting of the Church Council.

Pastor Lynn led the council in thanking Pastor Willer and the members of the task force for their work on the social statement.

PROPOSED EDITED SOCIAL STATEMENT *HUMAN SEXUALITY: GIFT AND TRUST* (2009)

(Agenda IV.B.3.)

Background

Churchwide Assembly action [CA22.01.07]

To receive with gratitude the memorials on “Review and Revision of LGBTQIA+ References in the ELCA Social Statement *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*” from the Greater Milwaukee Synod, Southeastern Synod, and Florida-Bahamas Synod;

To authorize a social statement reconsideration to revise *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* (2009) so that its wording reflects current church understanding, church policy, civil law, and public acceptance of marriage of same-gender and gender non-conforming couples in accordance with “Policies and Procedures of the ELCA for Addressing Social Concerns” (2018). While references would be reviewed throughout the whole statement, the following sections are designated for reconsideration as described here:

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- “Marriage: shelter and context for trust” p.15. This would not reconsider the idea of marriage as shelter and context for trust but would consider the import that marriage legally is now a covenant between two individuals;
- “Lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships” p.18 ff. Revision here would not change this church’s current understanding that recognizes four identified positions of bound conscience within its life, p.19, but would review wording about “publicly accountable, lifelong monogamous same-sex relationships” in light of public acceptance of marriage of same-gender and gender-non-conforming couples;
- “Loving families: ground and source for social trust” p.21 ff. Review here would consider references to diversity of family configurations; and

To authorize the Office of the Presiding Bishop and Church Council to approve the parameters and expense budget of this process and identify the revenue source(s) to provide for this revision to be considered as early as the 2025 Churchwide Assembly.

Churchwide Assembly action [CA22.03.23]

To authorize a possible revision of the social statement on *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* which reconsiders this church’s current concept of the four positions of bound conscience. This revision would focus on pages 19–21 (“lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships”) and any other references to the four positions of bound conscience.

The ELCA Reconsiderations Task Force began its work in 2024 and was directed to handle the two reconsiderations consecutively—first, the reconsideration for possible edits [CA22.01.07] and, second, the reconsideration for possible revision [CA22.03.23].

Consistent with other social statement processes, the task force heard from experts, prepared a draft edited social statement, and collected public comment on the draft edited social statement from October 2024 through January 2025. At its February 2025 meeting, the task force considered the public feedback, including analysis of quantitative and qualitative data gathered via a survey, and made revisions in light of this feedback. The task force now offers this church the proposed edited social statement entitled *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*. The Faith, Society, and Innovation Committee reviewed the text at its April 4, 2025, meeting.

On behalf of the Faith, Society, and Innovation Committee, Pastor Lynn introduced a motion to recommend that the 2025 Churchwide Assembly adopt the identified changes. The Rev. Gwendolyn S. King, council liaison to the task force, provided insight into the process of creating the social statement.

MOVED;

[SECONDED]: ***To recommend the following for adoption by the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America:***

To adopt the identified changes to the social statement on *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* (2009) as an editorial update to bring wording up to date, to clarify, and to bring it into congruence with subsequent social teaching, as authorized by 2022 Churchwide Assembly action CA22.01.07.

In response to questions from members and advisory members of the Church Council, Mr. Ryan Cumming, program director for theological ethics, education, and community engagement, Mr. Mitch S. McCartney, member of the task force, and the Rev. Brenda K. Bos, bishop of the Southwest California Synod and member of the task force, clarified the work of the task force and rationales behind the proposed amendments to the social statement.

A council member asked for and received clarification regarding the power of the Churchwide Assembly to amend the statement. Another council member asked whether council members had the right to speak against the recommendation of the council at the Churchwide Assembly, and Secretary Rothmeyer said that the practice of the Church Council has been for members not to speak against recommendations approved by the entire council at the Churchwide Assembly, in keeping with the directive of the ELCA Church Council Governance Policy Manual.

Pastor Willer recommended against editing the social statement during the Church Council meeting, noting that the practice of not amending social statements on the floor of the Church Council developed because meetings of the council do not allow for the same careful consideration of a wide variety of perspectives that the task force was able to take into account. A council member introduced a motion to amend the social statement.

MOVED;

SECONDED: *To amend the social statement as follows:*
 Strike “, including their sexual fidelity” from lines 122–123.

Several members and advisory members of the Church Council spoke in opposition to the motion, and the maker withdrew the motion without objection.

MOVED;

SECONDED;
WITHDRAWN: *To amend the social statement as follows:*
 Strike “, including their sexual fidelity” from lines 122-123.

Vice President Siddiqui invited further discussion and, hearing none, called for the vote.

VOTED:

CC25.04.15 *To recommend the following for adoption by the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America:*
 To adopt the identified changes to the social statement on *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* (2009) as an editorial update to bring wording up to date, to clarify, and to bring it into congruence with subsequent social teaching, as authorized by 2022 Churchwide Assembly action CA22.01.07.

ADJOURNMENT

The fourth plenary session of the 118th meeting of the Church Council of the ELCA adjourned following announcements and prayer at 3:56 p.m. on April 5, 2025.

Saturday, April 5, 2025
PLENARY SESSION V

CALL TO ORDER

(Agenda V.A.)

Vice President Siddiqui called the fifth plenary session to order at 4:11 p.m.

PERSONAL REFLECTION ON FAITH

(Agenda V.B.)

The Rev. William H. Callister opened the session with prayer and shared personal reflections on faith.

UPDATE ON THE GOD’S LOVE MADE REAL INITIATIVE

(Agenda V.C.)

Ms. Jackie Baumhover, director for strategy, provided an update on the God’s Love Made Real initiative. She noted that the research phase of the initiative has ended and highlighted ways the churchwide organization is using the findings to support congregations in welcoming diverse communities.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

(Agenda V.D.)

The 118th meeting of the Church Council of the ELCA entered executive session at 4:39 p.m. for a legal briefing. The council returned to open session at 5:06 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

The fifth plenary session of the 118th meeting of the Church Council of the ELCA adjourned at 5:12 p.m. on April 5, 2025, following announcements, prayer, and a hymn.

**Sunday, April 6, 2025
PLENARY SESSION VI**

The sixth plenary session of the 118th meeting of the Church Council of the ELCA was preceded by worship with Holy Communion at 9:00 a.m. The Rev. Pamela J. Hoh presided, Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton preached, Ms. Jennifer E. Trom served as assisting minister, and Mr. Hans W. Giller served as lector.

CALL TO ORDER

Vice President Siddiqui called the sixth plenary session to order at 10:16 a.m.

PERSONAL REFLECTION ON FAITH

(Agenda VI.A.)

The Rev. Marcus A. Bigott shared personal reflections on faith.

REPORT OF THE TREASURER

(Agenda IV.B.)

Ms. Lori S. Fedyk, treasurer of the ELCA, highlighted elements of her written report. Treasurer Fedyk presented results from FY2024 and recent revenue trends for the churchwide organization unrestricted fund and ELCA World Hunger. After explaining recent changes to the churchwide organization budgeting process, she presented projected revenues for fiscal years 2025–2028 and projected expenses for fiscal years 2025–2026.

REPORT OF THE BUDGET AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

(Agenda IV.C.)

Ms. Cherrish Holland, chair of the Budget and Finance Committee, provided the report of the committee.

CHURCH COUNCIL DESIGNATED FUND

(Agenda IV.C.1)

On behalf of the Budget and Finance Committee, Ms. Holland introduced a motion to designate unused funds from FY2024. Vice President Siddiqui invited discussion and, hearing none, called for the vote.

VOTED:

CC25.04.16 To approve adding \$159,399 (the balance of net revenues over expenses for the year ended Jan. 31, 2025) to the Church Council designated fund, “Support for Possible Work from Churchwide Assembly Actions.”

REVISION OF THE FY25 CURRENT SPENDING AUTHORIZATION

(Agenda IV.C.1)

On behalf of the Budget and Finance Committee, Ms. Holland introduced a motion to revise the FY2025 spending authorization. Vice President Siddiqui invited discussion and, hearing none, called for the vote.

VOTED:

CC25.04.17 To revise the 2025 fiscal year current fund spending authorization from \$67,875,000 to \$65,375,000.

PROPOSED 2026–2028 TRIENNIAL BUDGET

(Agenda IV.C.3)

The Church Council is responsible for submitting budget proposals for approval by the Churchwide Assembly and authorizing expenditures within the parameters of approved budgets [ELCA Constitution 14.21.05.] On behalf of the Budget and Finance Committee, Ms. Holland introduced a motion to recommend the triennial budget to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly. Vice President Siddiqui invited discussion and, hearing none, called for the vote.

VOTED:

CC25.04.18 *To recommend the following for adoption by the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America:*

2026 Budget Proposal

To approve a 2026 current fund spending authorization of \$61,500,000;

**To approve a 2026 ELCA World Hunger spending authorization of \$21,550,000;
and**

To authorize the Church Council to revise the spending authorizations after periodic review of revised income estimates.

2027 Budget Proposal

To approve a 2027 current fund income proposal of \$56,915,000;

To approve a 2027 ELCA World Hunger income proposal of \$21,300,000; and

To authorize the Church Council to establish a spending authorization after periodic review of revised income estimates.

2028 Budget Proposal

To approve a 2028 current fund income proposal of \$56,320,000;

To approve a 2028 ELCA World Hunger income proposal of \$21,050,000; and

To authorize the Church Council to establish a spending authorization after periodic review of revised income estimates.

REPORT OF THE LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL REVIEW COMMITTEE

(Agenda VI.D.)

Mr. Kevin Anderson, chair of the Legal and Constitutional Review Committee, presented the report of the committee.

AMENDMENT OF *DEFINITIONS AND GUIDELINES FOR DISCIPLINE*

(Agenda VI.D.1.)

At its November 2024 meeting, the Church Council referred action related to proposed bylaws 7.31.12. and 7.61.08. to the Committee on Appeals for further consideration. [CC24.11.18] The committee recommended amendments to *Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline* that were shared with Church Council members electronically prior to the meeting. On behalf of the Legal and Constitutional Review Committee, Mr. Anderson introduced a motion to approve addition of the definition of “hate group” to *Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline*. Following brief discussion, Vice President Siddiqui called for the vote.

VOTED:

CC25.04.19 **To approve the addition of the definition of ‘hate group’ to the “Definitions” section of *Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline* and the related modifications to the “Guidelines for Discipline of Rostered Ministers and Members of Congregations” as set forth in “Proposed Changes to *Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline*.”**

PROPOSED CONTINUING RESOLUTION AMENDMENTS TO THE *CONSTITUTIONS, BYLAWS, AND CONTINUING RESOLUTIONS OF THE ELCA*

(Agenda VI.D.2.)

The Office of the Secretary recommends proposed amendments to various continuing resolutions in the ELCA Constitution. In addition, the Legal and Constitutional Review Committee members worked with members of the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church regarding the inclusion of a continuing resolution in Chapter 10 of the ELCA Constitution establishing an Association of Synod Vice Presidents. Proposed amendments were shared with Church Council members electronically prior to the meeting. On behalf of the Legal and Constitutional Review

Committee, Mr. Anderson introduced a motion to adopt the amendments to chapter 10 of the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA*.

A council member made a motion to amend the proposed continuing resolution 10.31.B25. Following discussion, Vice President Siddiqui called for the vote.

MOVED;

SECONDED;

ADOPTED: To amend proposed continuing resolution 10.31.B25. as follows:

- 10.31.B25. Association of Synod Vice Presidents:** *The Association of Synod Vice Presidents shall be composed of the synod vice presidents of this church. The churchwide vice president shall be a member with voice but not vote. The Church Council may appoint a member to serve as a liaison to the association with voice but not vote. The Conference of Bishops may appoint a synod bishop as a liaison to the association with voice but not vote. Triennially, the Association of Synod Vice Presidents shall elect a chair and vice chair to preside at meetings.*
- a. *The Association of Synod Vice Presidents shall provide to synod vice presidents opportunities for orientation, worship, spiritual renewal, continuing education, collaboration, and leadership development. To fulfill these responsibilities, the Association of Synod Vice Presidents shall:*
 - 1) *meet at every Churchwide Assembly and hold one additional in-person meeting each triennium ~~twice every three years (in years in which churchwide assemblies are held, the association meeting shall occur in conjunction with the assembly)~~ and periodically gather informally as desired;*
 - 2) *provide a forum in which goals, objectives, and strategies concerning lay leadership may be developed and shared;*
 - 3) *serve as a resource for training and guidance in the governance of this church;*
 - 4) *assist the vice presidents in their role as collaborative leaders with bishops in fostering the work of the synods; and*
 - 5) *when requested, provide advice and counsel to the Church Council and others holding leadership positions in this church.*
 - b. *The Association of Synod Vice Presidents may establish committees as the members from time to time may determine to assist in fulfillment of its responsibilities.*
 - c. *Staff services for meetings of the Association of Synod Vice Presidents shall be provided by the synod relations staff in the Office of the Secretary.*

A council member made a motion to further amend the proposed continuing resolution. Following discussion, Vice President Siddiqui called for the vote.

MOVED;

SECONDED;

ADOPTED: To amend proposed continuing resolution 10.31.B25. as follows:

- 10.31.B25. Association of Synod Vice Presidents:** *The Association of Synod Vice Presidents shall be composed of the synod vice presidents of this church. The churchwide vice president shall be a member with voice but not vote. The Church Council may appoint a member to serve as a liaison to the association with voice but not vote. The Conference of Bishops may appoint a synod bishop as a liaison to the association with voice but not vote. Triennially, the Association of Synod Vice Presidents shall elect a chair and vice chair to preside at meetings.*
- a. *The Association of Synod Vice Presidents shall provide to synod vice presidents opportunities for orientation, worship, spiritual renewal, continuing education, collaboration, and leadership development. To fulfill these responsibilities, the Association of Synod Vice Presidents shall:*
 - 1) *meet at every Churchwide Assembly and may hold one additional in-person meeting each triennium and periodically gather informally as desired;*

- 2) *provide a forum in which goals, objectives, and strategies concerning lay leadership may be developed and shared;*
- 3) *serve as a resource for training and guidance in the governance of this church;*
- 4) *assist the vice presidents in their role as collaborative leaders with bishops in fostering the work of the synods; and*
- 5) *when requested, provide advice and counsel to the Church Council and others holding leadership positions in this church.*
- b. *The Association of Synod Vice Presidents may establish committees as the members from time to time may determine to assist in fulfillment of its responsibilities.*
- c. *Staff services for meetings of the Association of Synod Vice Presidents shall be provided by the synod relations staff in the Office of the Secretary.*

A council member made an additional motion to amend.

MOVED;

SECONDED: *To amend proposed continuing resolution 10.31.B25. as follows:*

- 10.31.B25. Association of Synod Vice Presidents:** *The Association of Synod Vice Presidents shall be composed of the synod vice presidents of this church. The churchwide vice president shall be a member with voice but not vote. The Church Council may appoint a member to serve as a liaison to the association with voice but not vote. The Conference of Bishops may appoint a synod bishop as a liaison to the association with voice but not vote. Triennially, the Association of Synod Vice Presidents shall elect a chair and vice chair to preside at meetings.*
- a. *The Association of Synod Vice Presidents shall provide to synod vice presidents opportunities for orientation, worship, spiritual renewal, continuing education, collaboration, and leadership development. To fulfill these responsibilities, the Association of Synod Vice Presidents shall:*
 - 1) *meet at every Churchwide Assembly and may hold one additional in-person meeting each triennium and periodically gather informally as desired;*
 - 2) *provide a forum in which goals, objectives, and strategies concerning lay leadership may be developed and shared;*
 - 3) *be encouraged to participate in cultural competency training at each in-person meeting;*
 - ~~34~~ *serve as a resource for training and guidance in the governance of this church;*
 - ~~45~~ *assist the vice presidents in their role as collaborative leaders with bishops in fostering the work of the synods; and*
 - ~~56~~ *when requested, provide advice and counsel to the Church Council and others holding leadership positions in this church.*
 - b. *The Association of Synod Vice Presidents may establish committees as the members from time to time may determine to assist in fulfillment of its responsibilities.*
 - c. *Staff services for meetings of the Association of Synod Vice Presidents shall be provided by the synod relations staff in the Office of the Secretary.*

A council member made a motion to amend the proposed amendment, and several council members spoke in support of the motion.

MOVED;

SECONDED;

ADOPTED: *To amend the proposed amendment to continuing resolution 10.31.B25. as follows:*

- 10.31.B25. Association of Synod Vice Presidents:** *The Association of Synod Vice Presidents shall be composed of the synod vice presidents of this church. The churchwide vice president shall be a member with voice but not vote. The Church Council may appoint a member to serve as a liaison to the association with voice but not vote. The Conference of Bishops may appoint a synod bishop as a liaison to the association with voice but not vote. Triennially, the Association of Synod Vice Presidents shall elect a chair and vice chair to preside at meetings.*

- a. *The Association of Synod Vice Presidents shall provide to synod vice presidents opportunities for orientation, worship, spiritual renewal, continuing education, collaboration, and leadership development. To fulfill these responsibilities, the Association of Synod Vice Presidents shall:*
 - 1) *meet at every Churchwide Assembly and may hold one additional in-person meeting each triennium and periodically gather informally as desired;*
 - 2) *provide a forum in which goals, objectives, and strategies concerning lay leadership may be developed and shared;*
 - 3) ~~*be encouraged to*~~ *participate in cultural competency training at each in-person meeting;*
 - ~~34~~ *serve as a resource for training and guidance in the governance of this church;*
 - ~~45~~ *assist the vice presidents in their role as collaborative leaders with bishops in fostering the work of the synods; and*
 - ~~56~~ *when requested, provide advice and counsel to the Church Council and others holding leadership positions in this church.*
- b. *The Association of Synod Vice Presidents may establish committees as the members from time to time may determine to assist in fulfillment of its responsibilities.*
- c. *Staff services for meetings of the Association of Synod Vice Presidents shall be provided by the synod relations staff in the Office of the Secretary.*

Vice President Siddiqui invited further discussion of the proposed amendment as amended. Hearing none, he called for a vote.

MOVED;

SECONDED;

ADOPTED:

To amend the proposed amendment to continuing resolution 10.31.B25. as follows:

- 10.31.B25. Association of Synod Vice Presidents:** *The Association of Synod Vice Presidents shall be composed of the synod vice presidents of this church. The churchwide vice president shall be a member with voice but not vote. The Church Council may appoint a member to serve as a liaison to the association with voice but not vote. The Conference of Bishops may appoint a synod bishop as a liaison to the association with voice but not vote. Triennially, the Association of Synod Vice Presidents shall elect a chair and vice chair to preside at meetings.*
- a. *The Association of Synod Vice Presidents shall provide to synod vice presidents opportunities for orientation, worship, spiritual renewal, continuing education, collaboration, and leadership development. To fulfill these responsibilities, the Association of Synod Vice Presidents shall:*
 - 1) *meet at every Churchwide Assembly and may hold one additional in-person meeting each triennium and periodically gather informally as desired;*
 - 2) *provide a forum in which goals, objectives, and strategies concerning lay leadership may be developed and shared;*
 - 3) *participate in cultural competency training at each in-person meeting;*
 - ~~34~~ *serve as a resource for training and guidance in the governance of this church;*
 - ~~45~~ *assist the vice presidents in their role as collaborative leaders with bishops in fostering the work of the synods; and*
 - ~~56~~ *when requested, provide advice and counsel to the Church Council and others holding leadership positions in this church.*
 - b. *The Association of Synod Vice Presidents may establish committees as the members from time to time may determine to assist in fulfillment of its responsibilities.*
 - c. *Staff services for meetings of the Association of Synod Vice Presidents shall be provided by the synod relations staff in the Office of the Secretary.*

Vice President Siddiqui invited discussion of the motion to adopt the continuing resolution as amended. He then called for the vote.

VOTED:

Two-Thirds Vote Required

CC25.04.20

To adopt the amendments in Chapter 10 of the *Constitution, Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* as described in “Proposed Amendments – Continuing Resolutions,” as amended.

Vice President Siddiqui called for the orders of the day.

ADJOURNMENT

The sixth plenary session of the 118th meeting of the Church Council of the ELCA adjourned at 12:10 p.m. on April 6, 2025.

Sunday, April 6, 2025
PLENARY SESSION VII

CALL TO ORDER

Vice President Siddiqui called the seventh plenary session to order at 12:48 p.m.

PROPOSED BYLAW AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTIONS, BYLAWS, AND CONTINUING RESOLUTIONS OF THE ELCA

(Agenda VI.D.3.)

Since the November 2024 Church Council meeting, additional amendments to bylaws of the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA* have been identified for consideration by the 2025 Churchwide Assembly. These proposed amendments were shared with Church Council members electronically prior to the meeting. On behalf of the Legal and Constitutional Review Committee, Mr. Kevin Anderson introduced a motion to recommend adoption of those bylaw amendments. Vice President Siddiqui invited discussion and, hearing none, called for the vote.

VOTED:

CC25.04.21 *To recommend the following for adoption by the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America:*

*To adopt, en bloc, with the exception of such amendments as may be considered separately, the amendments to the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*; and*

*To authorize the Office of the Secretary to make appropriate changes in the *Constitution for Synods* and the *Model Constitution for Congregations* congruent with the ELCA Constitution as amended.*

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

(Agenda VII.A.)

The Church Council had one piece of unfinished business. On behalf of the Executive Committee, Ms. Tracey A. Beasley moved amendment of continuing resolution 5.01.A24. Vice President Siddiqui invited discussion and, hearing none, called for the vote.

VOTED:

Two-Thirds Vote Required

CC25.04.22 *To amend continuing resolution 5.01.D24 of the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA* as follows:*

“... The ~~minimum~~ goal shall be that at least 10 percent of the members of this church shall be persons of color and/or persons whose primary language is other than English.”

CONSIDERATION OF ITEMS REMOVED FROM EN BLOC

(Agenda VII.D.)

Secretary Rothmeyer reported that no items had been removed from *en bloc*.

EN BLOC APPROVAL OF CERTAIN ITEMS

(Agenda VII.E.)

The *en bloc* resolution includes agenda items that were judged to be non-controversial in nature that do not require plenary discussion and a separate vote. As the items were voted on *en bloc*, there was no discussion. The text of *en bloc* items and associated background information were shared with Church Council members electronically prior to the meeting. Vice President Siddiqui announced that because one of the *en bloc* actions was a constitutional amendment requiring a two-thirds vote, *en bloc* actions would be voted on in two actions.

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VOTED: *EN BLOC: Two-Thirds Vote Required*
CC25.04.23 To adopt the amendments to continuing resolutions in the *Constitution, Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* included in *En Bloc* Items.

A. Adoption of Amendments to Continuing Resolutions

The Office of the Secretary recommends proposed amendments to various continuing resolutions in the ELCA Constitution. Proposed amendments were shared with Church Council members electronically prior to the meeting.

The process for amending continuing resolutions is specified in chapter 22 of the ELCA Constitution. A two-thirds vote of the Church Council is required for adoption.

VOTED: *EN BLOC*
CC25.04.23a To adopt the amendments, other than amendments to Chapter 10, to the *Constitution, Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* as described in “Proposed Amendments—Continuing Resolutions.”

The vice president called for a vote on the remaining *en bloc* actions.

VOTED:
CC25.04.24 To take action *en bloc* on the remaining items listed in *En Bloc* Items, Responses to Churchwide Assembly Actions, and Responses to Synod Actions.

ACTIONS OF THE CHURCH COUNCIL

A. Appointment of the Elections Committee

Bylaw 12.51.04. provides for the appointment of a Churchwide Assembly Elections Committee to conduct and supervise elections.

VOTED: *EN BLOC*
CC25.04.24a To appoint the members of the Elections Committee for the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly:

- Ms. Jennifer E. Trom (*chair*)
- Ms. Bobbie Ochoa
- Mr. Kenny Olmedo
- Mr. Casy Goslin
- Mr. Erik Rehms; and

To authorize the Executive Committee of the Church Council to appoint additional members to the Elections Committee for the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly as needed.

B. Progress Report from the Educational Debt Task Force

At the Spring 2022 Church Council meeting, the Educational Debt Task Force was charged with studying the issue of addressing educational debt among rostered ministers and developing a comprehensive strategy to provide educational debt relief to as many rostered ministers as possible [CC22.04.05]. A final report with possible recommendations was anticipated for this Spring 2025 Church Council meeting. The task force is requesting an extension.

VOTED: *EN BLOC*
CC25.04.24b To receive the progress report from the Educational Debt Task Force and to postpone the final report with possible recommendations to the November 2025 Church Council meeting.

C. Ratification of Church Council Committees

Following elections by the Churchwide Assembly, newly elected Church Council members will indicate their committee preferences prior to the October 2025 meeting of the council. A final listing of committee membership for the triennium will be ratified by the Church Council at its October 2025 meeting upon recommendation of the

Executive Committee. At its October 2025 meeting, the Church Council also will appoint members to related advisory or liaison appointments for the 2025–2028 time period. Members of the Board Development Committee will be appointed by the Executive Committee in October 2025.

VOTED: *EN BLOC*
CC25.04.24c **To ratify the following appointments of continuing members of the ELCA Church Council to Church Council committees for the 2025–2028 time period beginning at the close of the Churchwide Assembly on Aug. 2, 2025:**
 Budget and Finance Committee: the Rev. A. Elizabeth (Lisa) Ahlness, the Rev. Heather E. Brown, Deacon Kari A. Olsen, and Mr. Rindra Josoa;
 Christian Community and Leadership Committee: Ms. Sheena R. Foster, Mr. Hans W. Giller, Mr. Joel A. Miller, and Ms. Linda C. Rivera;
 Faith, Society, and Innovation Committee: Ms. Jamie Bruesehoff, the Rev. Gwendolyn S. King, and Ms. Olivia L. Martin-Call;
 Legal and Constitutional Review Committee: the Rev. Leroy Cannon, Mr. Mitch S. McCartney, and Ms. Jennifer E. Trom; and
 Service and Justice Committee: Ms. Kristy K. Henriksen and Mr. Iván A. Pérez.

D. Election to Executive Committee

The terms of all elected executive committee members will end at the conclusion of the 2025 Churchwide Assembly. Newly elected chairs of the standing committees of the Church Council will serve on the council's Executive Committee beginning at the close of the 2025 Churchwide Assembly. The chair of the Christian Community and Leadership Committee will begin serving immediately as there is a current vacancy.

At their spring 2025 committee meetings, the council's standing committees, other than Christian Community and Leadership, elected chairs who will begin their terms on Aug. 2, 2025. In order to allow for a smoother transition of the Executive Committee, the chairs-elect will be invited to participate with voice but not vote in Executive Committee meetings from the time of their election until the Churchwide Assembly. At-large members of the Executive Committee will be elected at the October 2025 meeting of the Church Council.

VOTED: *EN BLOC*
CC25.04.24d1 **To declare that the newly elected chair of the Christian Community and Leadership Committee shall be a member of the Executive Committee of the Church Council effective immediately.**

VOTED: *EN BLOC*
CC25.04.24d2 **To declare that the newly elected chairs of the Budget and Finance Committee; Faith, Society, and Innovation Committee; Legal and Constitutional Review Committee; and Service and Justice Committee shall be members of the Executive Committee of the Church Council beginning at the close of the Churchwide Assembly on Aug. 2, 2025.**

E. 2025 Churchwide Assembly “Rules of Organization and Procedure”

The Church Council submits a recommendation to each Churchwide Assembly regarding proposed “Rules of Organization and Procedure.” These rules have been developed and refined based on the history of previous assemblies as well as the experience of predecessor church bodies. Voting members of the assembly act on the rules in the first plenary session.

VOTED: *EN BLOC*
CC25.04.24e1 ***To recommend the following for adoption by the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America:***
 To adopt the “Rules of Organization and Procedure” for the 2025 Churchwide Assembly (exclusive of quoted and highlighted constitutional provisions and bylaws that are already in force).

VOTED:

EN BLOC

CC25.04.24e2 **To authorize the presiding bishop and secretary of this church to prepare further editorial and scheduling revisions that may be found necessary for the Rules prior to their publication in the Churchwide Assembly Bulletin of Reports; and**
To report any changes to the Church Council at its July 2025 meeting.

F. Archiving of Certain Social Policy Resolutions

Social policy resolutions (SPRs) serve as this church's policy directives until a) replaced by subsequent resolutions, b) rendered moot by subsequent social teaching documents, or c) sent to archive by a Churchwide Assembly. A review for relevance of each SPR is initiated 25 years after adoption to consider whether a resolution should continue to represent the policy of this church in light of changing circumstances.

The list of SPRs to be considered for archiving was provided to Church Council members electronically prior to the meeting. In accordance with "Policies and Procedures of the ELCA for Addressing Social Concerns" (2018), SPRs that are 25 years old automatically are considered, but can be "retired" only by action of the Churchwide Assembly.

VOTED:

EN BLOC

CC25.04.24f **To recommend the following en bloc action for adoption by the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America:**
To archive the social policy resolutions identified in the "2025 Archiving of Certain Social Policy Resolutions" document, in accordance with the "Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns" (2018).

G. Experiment with Candidacy Process

The Candidacy Development Working Group is recommending a competency-based theological education process as normative for the formation of this church's rostered ministers. A competency-based process will require candidates to be assessed at the beginning of the candidacy process, and based on the outcomes of the assessment, a tailored formation plan will be recommended for each candidate. Throughout the candidacy process, candidates will be required to demonstrate competence for public ministry. Prior to being approved for ordination, candidates will be assessed using a variety of screening tools developed by subject matter experts, some of which are in development.

The Candidacy Leadership Development Working Group is seeking the Church Council's approval to allow several synods to experiment with the new process in an initial launch process beginning Fall 2025. A summary of the draft process outline for the revised candidacy process was provided to Church Council members electronically prior to the meeting.

VOTED:

EN BLOC

CC25.04.24g **To affirm a one-year experiment, beginning in Fall 2025 and ending in Fall 2026 and involving several synods selected by the Candidacy staff of the churchwide organization based on demographic criteria and willingness of synods to partner to finalize the proposed revisions to the candidacy process;**
To request that the synods in the experiment continue to form candidates for ministry utilizing the proposed process and give feedback to the Candidacy Working group and Candidacy staff for process improvement; and
To request that the director for candidacy consult with experimenting synods and provide updates to the Church Council throughout the duration of the one-year period.

H. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the Church Council meeting on Nov. 14–17, 2024, were provided to council members electronically.

The draft minutes of the Executive Committee of the Church Council meetings on Dec. 18, 2024, Jan. 21, 2025, and Feb. 18, 2025, were provided to Executive Committee members electronically.

Church Council members were asked to provide any notations or typographical errors in the distributed text of the minutes in writing to the Office of the Secretary and proper corrections were entered into the protocol copies of the minutes.

VOTED: *EN BLOC*
CC25.04.24h To approve the minutes of the Nov. 14–17, 2024, meeting of the Church Council; and
To ratify actions of the council’s Executive Committee as indicated in the minutes of the Oct. 29,
2024, Nov. 14, 2024, Dec. 18, 2024, Jan. 21, 2025, and Feb. 18, 2025, meetings.

I. Church Council Nominations and Elections

The Church Council has responsibility for electing people to fill terms on boards of separately incorporated ministries (SIMs), social ministry organizations, and seminaries. Bylaws 8.21.03. and 8.21.04. outline basic parameters for the election of members to the boards of ELCA seminaries. Pursuant to provision 14.22. of the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA*, the Church Council is also to elect nominees to a vacancy on a board or committee of the churchwide organization.

Biographical information for nominees was provided to Church Council members electronically prior to the meeting.

VOTED: *EN BLOC*
CC25.04.24i1 To elect to the board of directors of Wartburg Theological Seminary to a term beginning
June 1, 2025, and expiring May 31, 2029: Ms. Courtney Wiler.

VOTED: *EN BLOC*
CC25.04.24i2 To elect to the board of directors of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago to a term
beginning Oct. 1, 2024, and expiring Sept. 30, 2028: Ms. Carmen Teresa Cintron-Figueroa;
and
To elect to the board of directors of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago to a term
beginning April 3, 2025, and expiring Sept. 30, 2026: Mr. Tony Johnston.

VOTED: *EN BLOC*
CC25.04.24i3 To re-elect to the board of directors of Trinity Lutheran Seminary at Capital University
to a second term beginning July 1, 2025, and expiring June 30, 2028: the Rev. Jack Sullivan
and the Rev. Stephen Donald Wachtman.

J. Churchwide Nominating Committee Nominations

The Church Council nominates individuals for possible election to the Nominating Committee by the Churchwide Assembly, in accordance with bylaws 12.51.03 and 19.11.01 of the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA*. The committee has 12 to 18 members, at least one but no more than three of whom must be from each of the nine regions of this church. Members serve one six-year term (or until a successor is elected) and are not eligible for re-election. Biographical forms for nominees were shared with Church Council members electronically prior to the meeting.

VOTED: *EN BLOC*
CC25.04.24j To receive the written report of the Office of the Secretary on nominees for the
churchwide Nominating Committee;
To note that bylaw 19.11.01 states in regard to the Nominating Committee: “The Church
Council shall place in nomination the names of two persons for each position. The committee
shall consist of at least one member but no more than three members from any region.
Nominations from the floor shall also be permitted, but each floor nomination shall be
presented as an alternative to a specific category named by the Church Council and shall
therefore meet the same criteria as the persons against whom the nominee is nominated. In
the materials provided in advance to each member of the assembly, the Church Council shall
set forth the criteria applicable to each category that must be met by persons nominated from
the floor”;
To request, therefore, that the Church Council restrict the tickets to the following: lay
woman (Region 1); lay woman (Region 2); lay woman (Region 3); lay woman (Region 4); lay
woman (Region 6 or 9); lay man (Region 8); rostered minister (Region 1); rostered minister
(Region 2 or 8); and rostered minister (Region 5, member of historically underrepresented
group);

To authorize the Executive Committee of the Church Council to appoint additional members to the Nominating Committee for the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly as needed; and

To request that the Church Council transmit the following slate of nominees to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly:

Churchwide Nominating Committee

Group 1: Lay Woman (Region 1)

1. Ms. Carolyn Beth Adams, Southwestern Washington Synod (1C)
2. Ms. Kasey Miranda Schultz, Northwest Washington Synod (1B)

Group 2: Lay Woman (Region 2)

1. Ms. Diane L. Brauer, Rocky Mountain Synod (2E)
2. Ms. Karen Michele McClain, Southwest California Synod (2B)

Group 3: Lay Woman (Region 3)

1. Ms. Kristine Kay Bjorke, Minneapolis Area Synod (3G)
2. Ms. Kathy Fick, Eastern North Dakota Synod (3B)

Group 4: Lay Woman (Region 4)

1. Ms. Elizabeth Ann Dieringer, Southwestern Texas Synod (4E)
2. Ms. Susan Humphrey, Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod (4C)

Group 5: Lay Woman (Region 6 or 9)

1. Ms. Ginger Mildred Cutrell, Southeastern Synod (9D)
2. Ms. Jillan Marie Russell, Northwestern Ohio Synod (6D)

Group 6: Lay Man (Region 8)

1. Mr. Kevin D. Anderson, Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod (8G)
2. Mr. John Henderson (8F)

Group 7: Rostered Minister (Region 1)

1. The Rev. Susan Marie Halvor, Alaska Synod (1A)
2. The Rev. Martin Wells, Northwest Intermountain Synod (1D)

Group 8: Rostered Minister (Region 2 or 8)

1. The Rev. Nicole Raddu Ferry, Rocky Mountain Synod (2E)
2. [to be determined]

Group 9: Rostered Minister (Region 5, member of historically underrepresented group)

1. The Rev. Anthony F. Acompanado, Greater Milwaukee Synod (5J)
2. The Rev. Lukas E. Harris-Ferree, Metropolitan Chicago Synod (5A)

K. Churchwide Assembly Action

It was judged that combining proposed amendments to the ELCA Constitutions that were approved separately in November 2024 would be more convenient for the Churchwide Assembly.

VOTED:

EN BLOC

CC25.04.24k To combine CC24.11.14 and CC24.11.19 for consideration by the 2025 Churchwide Assembly to now read:

To recommend the following for adoption by the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America:

To adopt, *en bloc*, with the exception of such amendments as may be considered separately, certain amendments recommended by the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church to the Articles of Incorporation and *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, and other amendments to the Articles of Incorporation and the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*; and

To authorize the Office of the Secretary to make appropriate changes in the *Constitution for Synods* and the *Model Constitution for Congregations* congruent with the ELCA Constitution as amended.

RESPONSES TO CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY ACTIONS

L. Fortifying Urban Ministries

Churchwide Assembly Action [CA22.01.08]

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

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

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

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

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

Executive Committee Action [EC22.09.23b3]

To refer the 2022 Churchwide Assembly action on “Fortifying Urban Ministries in Underserved Urban Areas” to the Christian Community and Leadership home area for a report or for a timeline on when this will receive further attention; and

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

Response from the Christian Community and Leadership home area (November 2022)

The responsibility for the implementation of this memorial has been assigned to the Christian Community and Leadership (CCL) home area. The Rev. Sandra Chrostowski, senior director, congregational vitality and new ministry training and development, and the Rev. Ruben Duran, senior advisor for new ministry development, have been appointed as conveners of a churchwide organization group to address this memorial on urban ministry, in partnership with leaders in the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod who sent this memorial forward and who also passed a similar resolution on urban ministry for their synod.

Two initial action steps have been taken:

1. An initial consultation with the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod staff has taken place. The synod has appointed the Rev. Regina Goodrich, pastor of Mediator Lutheran Church, Philadelphia, Penn., and dean of the synod’s Central Conference, and the Rev. Brian Penman, the synod’s director for evangelical mission, as *ad hoc* members of the Synod Task Force for Urban Ministry. They are identifying members for this task force and are planning to meet for the first time in early November.
2. Pastors Chrostowski and Duran have begun to develop criteria for the selection of participants for the churchwide group on urban ministry, including representation from the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod leadership. The intention is to have group membership finalized in December and to begin convening in early 2023.

Response from the Christian Community and Leadership Home Area (April 2024)

In the beginning of 2023, Christian Community and Leadership (CCL) experienced a leadership transition and team realignment. Late in June the new senior director, the Rev. Miguel F. Gómez-Acosta, was hired. Pastor Gómez-Acosta was able to touch base with the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Bishop Patricia Davenport at the November 2023 Conference of Bishops meeting to identify who on her staff was the contact person for the Fortifying Urban Communities synod task force. However, due to other priorities having to do with budget cuts and responding to requests for ministry reviews, he was not able to connect with the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod’s director for evangelical mission (DEM), the Rev. Bryan Penman, until February 2024.

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At that meeting, staff were notified that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod's task force has been meeting since 2022. As part of their work, they partnered with Innovation Lab to conduct surveys of their urban congregations. Pastor Penman agreed to serve on a churchwide organization team to discuss the issue and agreed to invite two other members from the task force to be a part of the national conversation.

Pastor Gómez-Acosta also followed up with the churchwide organization's executive director for Innovation, Mr. Iain Chester. Mr. Chester reported that surveys and visitations were conducted in 2023. His team has a list of learnings that was shared with the local task force and has agreed to share those findings at the first meeting of the churchwide organization's Fortifying Urban Ministries team. Currently staff are in the process of identifying other DEMs to serve on this team.

Church Council Action [CC24.04.09e]

To receive the response on "Fortifying Urban Ministries in the Underserved Urban Areas" from the Christian Community and Leadership home area;

To request a final report on the work by the Spring 2025 Church Council meeting; and

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

Report from the Christian Community and Leadership Home Area (April 2025)

The Fortifying Urban Ministries Task Force addressing this memorial would like to respectfully note concerns regarding the ELCA's previous approach to this issue, which has primarily focused on studies and discussions with limited actionable outcomes. Additionally, the preliminary work has revealed that the allocated timeframe is impossible given the complexity of the matter. The scope extends beyond simply "supporting urban ministries," as it necessarily involves addressing underlying systemic factors including racism, classism, and other structural barriers that impact this task force's ability to effectively comprehend and respond to the needs of urban congregations.

Since the last report to the April 2024 meeting, the task force has convened three times. The task force began by reviewing the original intent of the memorial through interviews with individuals who assisted in drafting it for the 2022 Churchwide Assembly. Next, the task force examined previous urban ministry initiatives by surveying the varied experiences of each task force member in their respective urban contexts. The most notable initiative was In the City for Good, which was launched at the 1998 Churchwide Assembly and operated for approximately a decade. Finally, the task force consulted with the Innovation home area regarding its 2023 project with the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod. Their report on urban ministry visits within the synod revealed four significant findings:

1. **Serving Neighbors:** Every congregation, regardless of size, engages with its immediate community in meaningful ways. This was particularly evident in the prevalence of food ministries across nearly all congregations. For most, this community service forms a central element of their organizational identity.
2. **Building Challenges:** Facility size and/or maintenance presents significant challenges for all congregations surveyed.
3. **Attendance Trends:** The majority of congregations reported experiencing declining attendance, with common themes including challenges in returning to in-person worship and overall membership reduction.
4. **Collaboration Opportunities:** Congregations are developing innovative solutions to their challenges and envisioning new ministry possibilities. However, these efforts often remain isolated within individual communities. Neighboring congregations may be addressing identical challenges without awareness of potential synergies or shared learning opportunities within the broader community.

Based on these meetings, the task force has developed several initial recommendations, while recognizing that additional time would be beneficial to comprehensively address the complex issues at hand. Recommendations include:

1. **Regular Network Establishment:** The churchwide organization should establish a consistent networking forum (Network for Urban Ministries) where congregational and judicatory leaders can access support and exchange ideas to strengthen urban ministries. This could also serve as a platform for documenting and sharing effective evangelism, stewardship, and discipleship practices occurring within urban congregations.
2. **Resource Coordination:** The churchwide organization would benefit from considering a staffed resource center where urban ministries can access information and assistance regarding funding opportunities such as grants. The designated staff member would be responsible for gathering and distributing relevant information to Directors for Evangelical Mission (DEMs), assistants to the bishops, and ministry leaders.

3. **Inclusive Definition:** The ELCA would benefit from expanding its definition of urban ministries to better reflect the diverse populations encompassed by this memorial. Urban ministries frequently extend beyond communities of African descent to include varied ethnicities and socioeconomic backgrounds.
4. **Messaging Strategy:** The Christian Community and Leadership home area should collaborate with DEMs to develop a communication approach that reinforces the core identity of urban ministries as Jesus-centered communities serving the world. Through this messaging, DEMs can inspire urban congregations they engage with across the synod.
5. **Property Resource Utilization:** The ELCA should leverage the recently launched Church Property Resource Hub to facilitate discussions with urban ministries regarding property utilization and maintenance challenges.

VOTED:

EN BLOC

CC25.04.24I

To receive the final report on “Fortifying Urban Ministries in the Underserved Urban Areas” from the Christian Community and Leadership home area;

To thank the members of the Fortifying Urban Ministries Task Force for their faithful and comprehensive work in finding ways for this church to fortify the witness and service among people and communities in underserved urban areas;

To affirm the recommendations outlined in the final report and urge the churchwide organization to explore ways to implement them; and

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

M. Land Back

Churchwide Assembly Action [CA22.03.14]

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

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

To encourage all ELCA members, congregations, synods, ministries, colleges, campus ministries, seminaries, camps, associated organizations, and partners to become educated about the Indigenous peoples who thrived, prior to European contact, on the land they currently inhabit;

To learn about, learn from, and be in deepening relationship with Indigenous people and tribal nations;

To encourage all ELCA members, congregations, synods, ministries, colleges, campus ministries, seminaries, camps, associated organizations, and partners, to support creative programs of restorative justice in partnership with Indigenous people, including, but not limited to, whenever considering a transfer or sale of real property, including returning land (and any structures built on it) after satisfying any financial obligations, to the appropriate Native nations, and when direct return is not feasible or not desired by the Indigenous people, to return the proceeds from the sale of the land to the ELCA Native American Ministry Fund or other local Indigenous led ministries or organizations;

To call upon the appropriate home areas and offices of the churchwide organization to work collaboratively with the relevant local synods and their local Indigenous partners to explore sources and needs in funding for the more than 30 ELCA Indigenous congregations and service ministries; and

To direct the Resource Development and the Budget and Finance Committees of the Church Council to identify potential sources of sustainable funding for these congregations and service ministries; and for these synods, home areas, offices, and committees to present findings of possible funding of these ministries to the Church Council no later than its Spring 2025 meeting, with a commitment to implement proposed and sustainable actions for funding of these ministries during the 2026–2028 triennium budget cycle; and

To call upon the appropriate home areas and offices of the churchwide organization to first engage with the relevant local synods and their local Indigenous partners whenever planning or considering work related to Indigenous people or ministries.

Response from Churchwide Organization (April 2025)

The executive directors of the Christian Community and Leadership and Service and Justice home areas have visited on site, alone or together, several Native ministries for the purpose of listening and developing a better

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understanding of their funding and leadership strategies. This includes 16 out of the 24 Native ELCA ministries listed below:

Our Saviour Lutheran Church, Rocky Boy, Mont.
Navajo Evangelical Lutheran Mission, Rock Point, Ariz.
House of Prayer Lutheran Church, Rock Point, Ariz.
Alaska Native Lutheran Church, Anchorage, Alaska
Our Saviors Lutheran Church, Nome, Alaska
Kingigin (formerly Thornton Memorial) Lutheran Church, Wales, Alaska
Shishmaref Lutheran Church, Shishmaref, Alaska
Brevig Memorial Lutheran Church, Brevig, Alaska
Teller Lutheran Church, Teller, Alaska
Lutheran Church of the Great Spirit, Milwaukee, Wis.
* Woyatan Ministry, Rapid City, S.D.
* Wambli Ska (Woyatan Ministry), Rapid City, S.D.
* Lutheran Lakota Shared Ministry, (0LUTEP), Pine Ridge, S.D.
* Pine Ridge Reconciliation Center, Pine Ridge, S.D.
Open Circle, Portland, Ore.
Native American Urban Ministry, Phoenix, Ariz.
(*planned but not yet completed at the writing of this report)

The Office of the Treasurer worked with the Director for Indigenous Ministries and Tribal Relations to request copies of budgets from these ministries for the purpose of understanding their financial needs. Here is a summary of what has been received.

13 ministries submitted both revenue and expenditure budgets
Five ministries submitted expenditure budgets only
Two ministries declined to participate
Four ministries did not respond

The executive directors of the Christian Community and Leadership and Service and Justice home areas worked with the director for Indigenous Ministries and Tribal Relations and the Office of the Treasurer to develop a historic understanding of what resources each Native American ministry has received since the start of the ELCA in 1988 from all sources that staff could identify. The table below summarizes these grants.

Years	Grant money provided to ELCA Indigenous Ministries by:			Programmatic Staff Support	Totals
	<u>Churchwide</u>	<u>Synods</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Churchwide</u>	
1988–2013	\$7,261,299	No info	-	\$1,442,389	\$8,703,688
2014–2022	\$3,523,343	\$2,176,132	-	\$1,075,393	\$6,774,868
2023–2024 *	\$933,378	\$599,857	\$256,000	\$656,023	\$2,445,258
Total	\$11,718,020	\$2,775,989	\$256,000	\$3,173,805	\$17,923,814
* Represents years since 2022 CWA Action					

An **additional \$2.1 million** in grants has been provided to other organizations that relate to these Indigenous ministries, including Thunder Valley/Community Development Corporation (Pine Ridge), Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement, Northeastern Minnesota Synod, Pacifica Synod, and Oglala Lakota Housing Authority. Of this \$2.1 million in grants to other organizations, \$1.65 million has been given in 2023 and 2024. This brings the total support to **\$20.0 million since 1988** based on data that staff could recover.

Ongoing Support

In reviewing the thirteen complete budgets that were submitted, the range of annual support needed to breakeven ranged from \$0–\$307,000 annually. Here is a breakout:

Annual Profit/Loss	Number of Respondents
Break-even or better	5
Deficit less than \$10,000	2

Deficit between \$30,000–\$60,000	3
Deficit between \$70,000–\$100,000	2
Deficit over \$300,000	1

The director for Indigenous Ministries and Tribal Relations has reported that the two ministries that declined to respond have annual combined budgets of well over \$1 million, but does not know their revenues. The churchwide organization intends to continue supporting these 24 ELCA Indigenous ministries through a combination of current fund (unrestricted), World Hunger, and Lutheran Disaster Response funds. Given the current declines in both unrestricted revenues and World Hunger revenues, there is not current capacity to increase the funding support at this time without significantly compromising other work that the churchwide organization does on behalf of the ELCA.

In addition to the support provided by the churchwide organization, there are currently two endowments (one is permanently restricted with a fair-market value of over \$1.7 million and the other is temporarily restricted with a fair-market value of over \$676,000) held by the ELCA Foundation. Distributions from these endowments are 4% annually. Currently that income of just under \$100,000 annually is reinvesting but could be utilized. Withdrawals could also be made from the temporarily restricted endowment, provided the donor restrictions have been met. As far as is known, no withdrawals have been made since 2020.

The churchwide organization currently solicits grants from external agencies to support the work. Typically, these agencies do not allow for passthrough grants to other organizations; however, the churchwide organization staff is willing to provide assistance to the 24 ELCA Indigenous ministries including alerts to potential funding opportunities, training on researching and writing grant applications, and review of applications prepared by these ministries.

The churchwide organization continues to pray for these communities and provide resources on the ELCA.org website.

VOTED:

EN BLOC

CC25.04.24m

To receive the report on the “Land Back” memorial from the churchwide organization regarding its findings of possible funding for ELCA Indigenous congregations and services ministries;

To acknowledge the diminishing revenues to increase funding during the 2026–2028 triennium budget cycle;

To encourage the Service and Justice home area to utilize the available funds in the two identified endowments as a sustainable source of income to support the initiatives of ELCA Indigenous congregations and service ministries;

To urge the churchwide organization staff to provide assistance as requested to the identified ELCA Indigenous ministries by providing training, offering training on research and grant-writing applications and review of applications prepared by these ministries, and developing fundraising trainings that respond to the realities of each unique ministry context; and

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

N. Specialized Ministries and On-Leave-from-Call Status

Churchwide Assembly Action [CA22.04.26]

To receive with gratitude the memorials from the Southwest California Synod, South Dakota Synod, Metropolitan Chicago Synod, Northern Illinois Synod, La Crosse Area Synod, Indiana-Kentucky Synod, Northwestern Ohio Synod, and Lower Susquehanna Synod concerning specialized ministries and on-leave-from-call status;

To direct the Church Council to direct the appropriate churchwide unit to initiate a review process of the “Manual of Policies and Procedures for Management of the Rosters of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America” and the constitutional provisions and policies and procedures as they relate to interim, transition, bridge, specialized, non-parish-based, and innovative calls, as well as on-leave-from-call status, protocols for removal from the rosters, and communication protocols;

To direct the Church Council to ensure that this review process include in its scope of inquiry, but not be limited to: the time limits given for on-leave-from-call, steps for requesting a roster status, and a process by which an action or lack of recommendation from a bishop may be appealed, including the possibility of an appeal in a judicatory other than the synod from which they were removed from the roster;

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To require that those involved in the review process include a diverse group representing both the roster of Word and Sacrament and the roster of Word and Service who are or have recently been involved in specialized ministries (e.g., interim, transition, campus, outdoor, college or seminary faculty, chaplains, mission developers, etc.), and those currently or recently on leave from call for a variety of reasons (e.g., between calls, family, disability, study, healing from abuse, etc.);

To urge bishops and synod councils to use sparingly any action by which a minister is removed from the roster for non-disciplinary reasons, unless the minister requests removal, until this review is complete, especially for those serving contract calls, as supply preachers, and in other ELCA ministries that don't qualify as a call; and

To require that the appropriate unit of the churchwide organization prepare a report and recommendations for consideration by the Fall 2024 meeting of the ELCA Church Council.

* Report and recommendations to include above as well as response to the following resolutions:

- “Guidance on Retired or Retiring Ministers for the Roster of the ELCA” (CC22.11.34.ee.)
- “Extending Pastoral Counseling through Private Practice” (CC22.11.34.gg.)
- “Providing for Ordination of Candidates serving as Interim Pastors” (CC23.11.20cc)
- “Revisions to Roster Manual” regarding roster appeals (EC23.11.53c1)
- “Extending OLFC to six years” (EC22.03.10c); and
- recommendations to current discipline process shared by Task Force on the ELCA Discipline Process for Rostered Ministers of Color (CC23.04.05)

Response from the Office of the Secretary (November 2024)

A Task Force on On-Leave-from-Call and Specialized Ministry was appointed by the Executive Committee of the Church Council [EC23.09.40] to initiate the review process. The task force was also requested to address related topics as cited in the various resolutions listed above.

The Task Force on On-Leave-from-Call and Specialized Ministries has prepared a preliminary report and recommendations that are included in the materials for this meeting of the Church Council, along with proposed amendments to the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA* for presentation by the Church Council to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly. (The proposed amendments are included as an appendix to the task force’s report and also appear among the amendments proposed by the Office of the Secretary, which will be offered to the Church Council at this meeting by the Legal and Constitutional Review Committee.)

The current recommendations relate to the questions concerning On Leave from Call (OLFC) protocols and protocols for granting and continuing retired status that are included in the memorial and in the various resolutions listed above. They also were informed by and respond to the recommendations that came from the Task Force on the ELCA Discipline Process for Rostered Ministers of Color, as the recommendations of that task force included reform of the protocols for granting OLFC and retired status, given that the existing protocols hold potential for unfair application. The recommendations propose substantive changes to the existing policy, some of which will be addressed through bylaw changes while others will be addressed through policy changes to the *Manual of Policies and Procedures for Management of the Rosters* that will be presented for approval following successful adoption of the revised bylaws by the 2025 Churchwide Assembly.

Still to be addressed in the next few months are questions related to specialized ministry. In January, the task force will be convening listening sessions with rostered ministers engaged in specialized ministry, with a further report and recommendations to be presented to the Conference of Bishops for consultation at its February 2025 meeting and a final report and recommendations to be presented to the Church Council at the April 2025 meeting. The issues concerning pastoral counseling through private practice will be part of those recommendations, as will the question of allowing for candidates to be ordained to interim ministry.

Church Council Action [CC24.11.20s]

To receive the response and preliminary report on the memorial concerning specialized ministries and on-leave-from-call status from the Office of the Secretary and the Task Force on On-Leave-from-Call and Specialized Ministries;

To thank the Task Force on On-Leave-from-Call and Specialized Ministries for their faithful work in the review process;

To affirm the recommendations for On-Leave-from-Call Status, interim ministry, retired roster status, and average time requirements for calls that are identified in the preliminary report;

To anticipate another report and recommendations regarding specialized ministries to be presented at the April 2025 Church Council meeting; and

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

Response from the Office of the Secretary (April 2025)

Following submission to the Church Council of a preliminary report to the Church Council in November 2024, the Task Force on On Leave from Call and Specialized Ministry turned its attention to the remaining issues raised by the original Churchwide Assembly action, specifically those of specialized ministry and the three-year congregational service bylaw, as well as to remaining responses to the synod resolutions assigned to the task force by the council, including the questions of ordination directly to interim ministry and of calls to private pastoral counseling practice.

The final report of the task force was distributed to Church Council members prior to the meeting.

VOTED:

EN BLOC

CC25.04.24n

To receive the response and final report on the memorial concerning specialized ministries and on-leave-from-call status from the Office of the Secretary and the Task Force on On-Leave-from-Call and Specialized Ministries;

To thank the Task Force on On-Leave-from-Call and Specialized Ministries for their faithful work in the review process;

To affirm the recommendations for on-leave-from-call status, steps for requesting a roster status, interim ministry, retired roster status, average time requirements for calls, specialized ministry, and exceptions to the three-year congregational service bylaw that are identified in the final report;

To affirm the report as the response to the following:

- **“Guidance on Retired or Retiring Ministers for the Roster of the ELCA” (CC22.11.34.ee.)**
- **“Extending Pastoral Counseling through Private Practice” (CC22.11.34.gg.)**
- **“Providing for Ordination of Candidates serving as Interim Pastors” (CC23.11.20cc)**
- **“Revisions to Roster Manual” regarding roster appeals (EC23.11.53c1)**
- **“Extending OLFC to Six Years” (EC22.03.10c); and**
- **Recommendations regarding the current discipline process shared by the Task Force on the ELCA Discipline Process for Rostered Ministers of Color (CC23.04.05); and,**

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

O. Greenhouse Gas Reduction

Churchwide Assembly Action [CA22.04.25]

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

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

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

To direct the ELCA churchwide organization to set the goal of reducing its net greenhouse gas pollution 50% by 2030, and achieve net-zero emissions by 2050;

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

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

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

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

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

Executive Committee Action [EC22.09.23b2]

To refer the 2022 Churchwide Assembly action on “Greenhouse Gas Reduction” to the Service and Justice home area, in consultation with the Office of the Treasurer, Office of the Secretary, and Office of the Presiding Bishop, for a report or for a timeline on when this will receive further attention; and

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

Response from the Service and Justice home area (November 2022)

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

The memorials direct the ELCA churchwide organization to establish targets to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50% by 2030, and achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. This target is consistent with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 2018 report that states that, in order to prevent the worst climate damages, global net human-caused emissions of carbon dioxide (CO₂) need to fall by about 45% from 2010 levels by 2030, reaching net zero around 2050. The ELCA has supported these targets in its advocacy and creation care education work.

Representatives of the Service and Justice home area, the Office of the Treasurer, the Office of the Secretary, and the Office of the Presiding Bishop met to discuss implementation of the memorial directive. This discussion noted that the churchwide organization has already achieved reductions through reduced travel, more online collaboration, and hybrid work plans. The work to establish a 2005 baseline and to create emission and energy use reduction targets will require expertise beyond current churchwide staff capacity. Funding for a half-time position has been set aside in the Service and Justice home area, beginning in 2023. The churchwide organization sees this initiative as a witness to ELCA commitments to care for creation, and an initiative that can model what synods and congregations can do. The churchwide organization supports the reconstituting of the Creation Care Network that is currently underway.

A progress report will be made to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly.

Church Council Action [CC22.11.34.r]

To receive the response on “Greenhouse Gas Reduction” from the Service and Justice home area;

To urge the churchwide organization to continue its efforts to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions and commend it for its initiatives and commitments to creation care and environmental advocacy;

To request a progress report be provided by the Spring 2025 Church Council meeting with a report expected for the 2025 Churchwide Assembly; and

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

Response from Service and Justice (April 2025)

ELCA’s churchwide response to this memorial has been ongoing as various ministry representatives continually participate in visioning and implementation of sustainability efforts. The churchwide organization’s energy usage has been in a season of reduction as staff travel has been half as frequent since 2019. The main facility in Chicago remains in good standing with a 91% Energy Star rating as a LEED certified building. An institution-wide effort to consider human inclusivity and planetary health is expressed in a living reference document titled “Sustainable Event Guidelines” for use by all when planning gatherings.

Lutherans Restoring Creation (LRC) interviewed synod-wide leaders, reviewed reports from hundreds of congregations and a professional survey of over 593 members and identified numerous lessons learned in response to the call to action in this 2022 memorial (<https://lutheransrestoringcreation.org/climate-change-in-the-pews/>). While

data shows that 74% of ELCA members want their church to do more for climate justice, many people are still unaware of available education and worship resources. Very few churches or synods have been able to measure their greenhouse gas emissions rates, even though there are free and affordable tools. Lack of time, expertise, and consistent recording-keeping is a commonly referenced hindrance. Suggested resources and networking support are offered by energy auditing organizations, but rather than hyper-focus on *output*, this church's faith-based work has been re-directed to consistently implore a reduction of waste and share theological groundings for drastically reducing the collective input of energy pollution.

The World Hunger Education and Networking team has prioritized creation care and greenhouse gas reduction through two multi-year grants. One has gone to the Center for Climate Justice and Faith in support of their certificate programs for faith leaders (both rostered and lay-leaders) from around the world as they work to better understand how climate change disproportionately impacts communities that already are vulnerable to hunger, and that contributed to and benefitted the least from the greenhouse gas emissions that created the climate crisis. The second substantial multi-year grant was awarded to Lutherans Restoring Creation, a Social Ministry Organization of the ELCA, to support their stewardship as they host, manage, and report on the work of the ELCA's Creation Care Network.

Continued advocacy for reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions is encouraged and amplified by the full-time program director for environment and energy policy in the Service and Justice home area and colleagues throughout state public policy offices. This work and the related resources are continually updated on the website hub. ELCA Witness in Society team has taken numerous actions to support advocacy around creation care and the reduction of GHG emissions as well as events across the church to educate and equip congregants and rostered ministers to speak and act on the climate emergency. ELCA Climate advocacy works across various levels of government and institutions to call for change. Specifically, ELCA Witness in Society members work at the state level, across 16 states, on policies that address climate change. Federal policy staff in ELCA's Washington, D.C., office work directly with members of congress, across all 50 states and four territories, to advocate for policy to prevent climate change and promote climate justice. Additionally, the ELCA Witness in Society team addresses climate change by advocating at the global level through United Nations events, including UN General Assembly, UN Water Conference, UN High Level Political Forum, and the Annual United Nations Framework on Climate Change Conference of Parties. Each of these events reach all 193-member states of the United Nations.

Over the course of the last 5 years, the ELCA Advocacy offices in Washington, D.C., New York City, and across three states have dedicated substantial time and capacity toward advocating for policy-change in mitigating climate change (reducing GHG emissions). Here are examples of legislation or executive actions that have been worked on by ELCA advocacy staff and made significant headway politically.

1. Federal/International: Mitigation efforts include the Inflation Reduction Act, Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, Power Plant Regulations 2024, Vehicle Emissions Standards Rule, Methane Rule 2024, United States Updated GHG Reduction Commitment (NDC) 2025
2. States (California, Colorado, Wisconsin): 19 pieces of legislation to mitigate climate change

Witness in Society Federal staff have provided training on advocacy at various ELCA events including: Global Mission Summer Missionary Orientation, World Hunger Leaders Gathering, ELCA Youth Extravaganza, Lutheran Disaster Response Community of Practice Gathering, and the Youth Leadership Summit, reaching over 1,500 people at these events. Additionally, ELCA Witness in Society, collaborating with ELCA Young Adults, has organized an Advocacy Immersion trip as an annual gathering of young adults to discuss Climate Justice and engage in direct advocacy. This program has engaged over 35 young adults in the last two years. Finally, ELCA Witness in Society reaches people through State Public Policy Offices and their events on climate including annual Lobby Days that gather hundreds of Lutherans or Interfaith advocates to meet with state lawmakers about climate legislation.

The ELCA's Creation Care Network facilitates communication across all three expressions of the ELCA and ensures a spectrum of churchwide organization members and representatives from synods, congregations, and ecumenical organizations regularly assess emerging programs, event planning and procurement, and communications to consider long-term environmental impacts and opportunities for leveraging assets. Lutherans Restoring Creation maintains an abundance of resources and data collection as they connect with congregations and constituents across the nation. They offer creation care coaching and training services, along with an online searchable database of local and regional actions that ELCA members and congregations have made nationwide. LRC also supports and amplifies

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theologically grounded courses, training and resources for both pastoral and lay-leaders on the just use and sharing of Earth's resources.

This work is increasingly collaborative amongst this church's international and interfaith colleagues as climate change is a threat multiplier. From disaster relief to migrant support, God's call to love neighbor does not stay within the confines of staff portfolio obligations. This summer the World Hunger Education and Network team set up experiential learning opportunities at the National Youth Gathering and included elements of climate induced disaster that participants navigated through, as it exacerbated hunger and poverty both domestically and internationally. They also sponsored Lutherans Restoring Creation to come and set up a reflective education space at the conclusion of the World Hunger learning journey where youth were exposed to composting, revisioning the future through art, and had an opportunity to make a climate commitment.

Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR) has provided technical and financial support to congregations working to transform their physical spaces into climate resiliency hubs. They also integrate climate awareness and ways to mitigate and prepare for the increasing frequency and intensity of storms as a standard discussion point in all disaster trainings. LDR financially supported and participated in workshops and conferences regarding disaster response to climate-induced storms, including the 2024 Mid-Atlantic Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster with the theme "Impacts and Implications of a Warming World."

In spring of 2024, the ELCA released a study guide called "Our Kairos Moment" to dive deeper into the *Message on Earth's Climate Crisis*. The four-session study guide is for small groups and is available to inspire learning and action. It uses videos, storytelling, bible studies, and interactive activities to help groups explore the effects of climate change on communities in the United States and around the world and inspire one another to effective action.

VOTED:

EN BLOC

- CC25.04.24o** **To receive the report on "Greenhouse Gas Reduction" from the Service and Justice home area;**
 To commend the initiatives and efforts supported through the Creation Care Network to engage in creation care and environmental advocacy to guide this church in reducing its greenhouse gas emissions; and
 To request that the secretary inform the synods of this action.

RESPONSES TO SYNOD ACTIONS

P. Concurrent Calling of Pastors by More than One Congregation

Upstate New York Synod (7D) [2022]

WHEREAS, ELCA Constitution 7.44A19 "Sources of Calls for Ministers of Word and Sacrament" b. "Table of Sources of Calls for Ministers of Word and Sacrament," 1.2 reads:

Setting	Calling Body
1.2 <i>Multiple-congregation parish</i>	<i>Congregation meetings, acting on a common proposal</i>
1.21 <i>Pastor</i>	<i>One of the participating congregations</i>
1.22 <i>Other pastoral arrangements</i>	<i>One of the participating congregations</i>

and

WHEREAS, pastors more and more are being asked to serve more than one congregation; and

WHEREAS, each congregation, as a place where the Promises of Jesus are proclaimed to gathered people, has the authority to call a person to be their proclaimer of those promises of Jesus; therefore, be it

RESOLVED that the ELCA Church Council work up a resolution to be presented at the next ELCA Churchwide Assembly that allows more than one congregation concurrently to call the same person as pastor, and to make all necessary changes to its constitution.

Executive Committee action [EC22.06.19c3]

To refer the "Concurrent Calling of Pastors by More than One Congregation" resolution from the Upstate New York Synod to the Office of the Secretary, in consultation with the appropriate churchwide organization office or home area, for a report or for a timeline on when this will receive further attention; and

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

Response from the Office of the Secretary (November 2022)

This question will need to be discerned with the Conference of Bishops, in consultation with the Leadership Committee and the Roster Committee of that body. Any change would require amendments to the governing documents and revision of the roster manual.

After discussion with the Christian Community and Leadership home area, the Office of the Secretary plans to bring a report and proposed timeline to the Church Council at its November 2023 meeting, with a final report and recommendations to be brought to the Church Council at its November 2024 meeting.

Church Council action [CC22.11.34.ff.]

To receive the timeline on “Concurrent Calling of Pastors by More than One Congregation” from the Office of the Secretary on when the resolution will receive further attention;

To request a progress report by the Fall 2023 Church Council meeting, with a final report and recommendations by the Fall 2024 Church Council meeting; and

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

Response from the Office of the Secretary (November 2023)

The energy and focus of the Conference of Bishops (COB) and its Leadership Committee over the past year has been on the restructuring of the candidacy process. As that work is coming to fruition, it will be possible for the Leadership and Roster Committees of the COB to begin to address this question. Conversation with the bishops will be scheduled for the spring 2024 COB. As any change to these policies would require amendments to the ELCA Constitution, a report and recommendations will come to the Church Council at its November 2024 meeting.

Church Council action [CC23.11.20z]

To receive the progress report on “Concurrent Calling of Pastors by More than One Congregation” from the Office of the Secretary and to anticipate a report and recommendations at the November 2024 Church Council meeting; and

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

Response from the Office of the Secretary (November 2024)

Because of ongoing discernment about the candidacy process and about the protocols for leave, there has not been an opportunity for full discussion of the question of allowing for concurrent calls for rostered ministers. The question will be put before the Roster and the Leadership Committees of the Conference of Bishops in coming months. A report and recommendation will be made to the Church Council at its April 2025 meeting.

Church Council action [CC24.11.20v]

To receive the progress report on “Concurrent Calling of Pastors by More than One Congregation” from the Office of the Secretary;

To request a report and recommendation be presented at the April 2025 Church Council meeting; and

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

Response from the Office of the Secretary (April 2025)

More time is requested for full discussion of the question of allowing for concurrent calls for rostered ministers. The question will be put before the Roster and the Leadership Committees of the Conference of Bishops. Given the timing, the recommendation is for it to be considered along with other constitutional amendments that might be brought forward to the 2028 Churchwide Assembly.

VOTED:

EN BLOC

CC25.04.24p

To receive the progress report on “Concurrent Calling of Pastors by More than One Congregation” from the Office of the Secretary;

To request the Office of the Secretary and the Legal and Constitutional Review Committee consider it along with the proposed constitutional amendments that will be brought to the 2028 Churchwide Assembly; and

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

Q. Enhancing the Call Process

Greater Milwaukee Synod (5J) [2024]

WHEREAS, the ELCA has created a system whereby candidates for call can see a 75-word summary statement about any congregation in the call process, which enhances their ability to pursue promising matches; and

WHEREAS, congregations would benefit from having a similar capacity to review potential candidates, thus streamlining and focusing their efforts during the call process; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Greater Milwaukee Synod Council be instructed to request that the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America consider creating and implementing as soon as possible a procedure and system to allow congregations, after completing their Ministry Site Profile, to review brief (up to 75 words) summary statements that do not contain identifying information from potential candidates for called positions, with the possibility of requesting additional information on suitable candidates from their synod.

Executive Committee Action [EC25.01.02]

To refer the “Enhancing the Call Process” resolution from the Greater Milwaukee Synod to the Christian Community and Leadership home area, in consultation with the Office of the Secretary, for a report or a timeline on when this will receive further attention; and

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

Response from Christian Community and Leadership (April 2025)

On March 4, 2025, Christian Community and Leadership (CCL) home area called a meeting with IT and Office of the Secretary representatives to discuss the “Enhancing the Call Process” resolution [EC25.01.02]. While churchwide staff were sympathetic to the desire to offer ELCA congregations more agency in the call process, several concerns were raised with adding this functionality without wider due diligence. Namely, the concerns identified were with security for rostered ministers, lack of geographical screening, potential for coded language, increased ability to marginalize, and lack of buy-in from the Conference of Bishops. As a concession, staff wondered whether adding the personalized ministry statement, which is already included in the Rostered Ministers Profile, could be added to the results page of the search function at the synod expression.

CCL contacted the Greater Milwaukee Synod to discuss this response. It was received well, and the identified concerns were affirmed. The recommendation is to not implement any changes based on this request.

VOTED:

EN BLOC

CC25.04.24q

To receive the response on “Enhancing the Call Process” from the Christian Community and Leadership home area;

To decline to create and implement a procedure and system to allow congregations, after completing their Ministry Site Profile, to review brief summary statements from potential candidates for called positions; and

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

R. Full Funding for ELCA Ministries

Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod (4C) [2023]

[Originally submitted as a memorial to the Office of the Secretary but the resolution did not memorialize the Churchwide Assembly. The Secretary has determined that the action should be reclassified as a resolution.]

WHEREAS, at the 2022 Churchwide Assembly a memorial with regards to explore the sources and needs in funding for the various Indigenous ministries of the ELCA, to identify potential sources of sustainable funding for these ministries, and present findings of possible funding of these ministries to the Church Council with a commitment to implement proposed and sustainable actions for funding of these ministries during the 2026–2028 triennium budget cycle; and

WHEREAS, there are numerous other ministry areas of the ELCA that are suffering from the lack of sustainable funding for their ministries; and

WHEREAS, these ministry areas are vitally important to the life of the mission and ministry of the ELCA; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that similar explorations of the sources and needs in funding for the ministries of the ELCA listed below and identification of potential sources of funding for these ministries with presentation of findings of possible funding of these ministries to the Church Council no later than its Spring 2028 meeting with a commitment to implement proposed and sustainable actions for the funding of these ministries during the 2029–2031 triennium budget cycle: Youth and Young Adult ministries, College ministries, Latinx ministries, African descent ministries, Arab and

Middle Eastern ministries, Asian and Pacific Islander ministries, Disabled and differently abled person ministries, Urban ministries, Education ministries, LGBTQIA+ ministries, Congregational Renewal ministries.

Executive Committee action [EC23.07.35.d]

To refer the “Full Funding for Churchwide Ministries” resolution from the Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod to the Office of the Treasurer, in consultation with other appropriate churchwide units, for a report or for a timeline on when this will receive further attention; and

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

Response from the Office of the Treasurer (November 2023)

The Office of the Treasurer will complete this exploration work in conjunction with the review of funding for indigenous ministries [CA22.03.13] with a full report for the 2025 Churchwide Assembly.

Church Council Action [CC23.11.20ee]

To receive the timeline on “Full Funding for Churchwide Ministries” resolution from the Office of the Treasurer;

To request a report to present findings of possible funding of the Youth and Young Adult ministries, College ministries, Latinx ministries, African descent ministries, Arab and Middle Eastern ministries, Asian and Pacific Islander ministries, Disabled and differently abled person ministries, Urban ministries, Education ministries, LGBTQIA+ ministries, and Congregational Renewal ministries to the Church Council no later than its Spring 2025 meeting, with a commitment to implement proposed and sustainable actions for funding of these ministries during the 2026–2028 triennium budget cycle; and

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

Response from the Office of the Treasurer (April 2025)

The churchwide organization acknowledges that they do not fully understand how full funding of these ministries is defined and for what period this applies. The Office of the Treasurer reviewed the current work and a summary of the budgeted dollars to be spent on these ministries in FY2025 is shown below. This spending may come from more than one programmatic unit or office and includes spending from both unrestricted and restricted funds.

Ministry Area	FY25 Budgeted Spending in this area
Youth & Young Adults ministries	\$3,346,370
College/Campus ministries	\$1,246,801
Latin-x ministries	\$1,562,766
African Descent ministries	\$1,105,174
Arab & Middle Eastern ministries	\$262,303
Asian & Pacific Islander ministries	\$538,707
African Nationals ministries	\$175,143
Ministries of Diverse Communities and Cultures	\$1,448,895
Disabled and Differently Abled ministries	\$48,079
Education ministries	\$4,684,840
LGBTQIA+ ministries	\$118,750
Congregational Renewal, including urban ministries	\$5,738,851
New starts, including urban ministries	\$4,664,792
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Accessibility	\$468,443
Total	\$25,409,914

Ongoing Support

It is likely that these numbers may be even higher than presented because restricted funds, other than World Hunger, are not budgeted, so for most, staff were not able to identify what spending will be in FY25. Staff also did not include any withdrawals from endowments which may support this work.

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Many of these categories are already a priority for the churchwide organization, not only for spending from the unrestricted budget but also for spending from donors. Here are some ways that churchwide organization is prioritizing these areas in 2025:

- Youth gathering is currently in reassessment and strategy creation, with the intent of finding ways to drive attendance at the gathering in 2027 and to identify ways to continue the momentum experienced at the 2024 gathering. For example, in 2025 and 2026, external funding has been secured to test hosting pop-up gatherings in a variety of locations.
- The Gather (online worshipping community) has set a goal to increase the number of Gather Communities by 20 in 2025 and 20 in 2026. Various initiatives are underway to engage new individuals.
- The addition of a Young Adult Regional Representative position is being piloted in 2025. This individual will work with synod staff. One goal is to identify ways to coordinate effectively across regional networks for campus ministry, youth ministry, and young adult ministries.
- In 2025, directors in Ministries of Diverse Communities and Cultures are focused on setting clear strategies for their respective ethnic communities with a plan to host a full gathering for the associations in 2026 to expand this work.

It is hard to imagine that these categories will not remain priorities for the churchwide organization as the work is refined under the direction from a new presiding bishop and the Church Council. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that these ministries will continue to receive funding from the churchwide organization. The question that remains is whether this constitutes “full funding.” Regardless, given the current declines in both unrestricted revenues and World Hunger revenues, there is not current capacity to increase the funding support for all of these areas at this time without significantly compromising other work that the churchwide organization does on behalf of the ELCA.

There are other ways that the churchwide organization can support these ministries, including looking for other revenue streams. The churchwide organization currently solicits grants from external agencies to support the work. The churchwide organization staff is willing to provide assistance to diverse ELCA ministries including alerts to potential funding opportunities, training on researching and writing grant applications, and review of applications prepared by these ministries.

The churchwide staff trusts that their commitment to continue to fund these ministries is clear based on the current investments in the ministries.

VOTED:

EN BLOC

CC25.04.24r To receive the report on the “Full Funding for Churchwide Ministries” resolution from the churchwide organization;

To acknowledge the diminishing revenues to increase funding during the 2026–2028 triennium budget cycle;

To encourage the churchwide organization to look for additional revenue streams to continue its support of the work of the following ministries: Youth and Young Adult ministries, College ministries, Latin-x ministries, African Descent ministries, Arab and Middle Eastern ministries, Asian and Pacific Islander ministries, Disabled and Differently Abled Persons ministries, Urban ministries, Education ministries, LGBTQIA+ ministries, and Congregational Renewal ministries;

To urge the churchwide organization staff to provide assistance as requested to diverse ELCA ministries through means such as notifying them to potential funding opportunities, offering training on research and grant-writing applications, reviewing of applications prepared by these ministries, and developing fundraising trainings that respond to the realities of each unique ministry context; and

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

BRIEF REPORTS FROM VARIOUS COMMITTEES

(Agenda VI.E.)

Committees not bringing forward motions for action were invited to provide reports. Ms. Sheena R. Foster, chair of the Christian Community and Leadership Committee, provided an overview of the work of the committee and the

Christian Community and Leadership home area. The Rev. Joanne E. Engquist, chair of the Service and Justice Committee, provided the report of the committee, including an update on work of the Service and Justice home area.

UPDATE ON CHURCH PROPERTY RESOURCE HUB

(Agenda VI.B.)

The Rev. Timothy J. Brown, director for congregational stewardship, introduced the newly launched Church Property Resource Hub. The intention is for pastors and leaders across this church to use the hub to make wise, informed decisions about their properties that will extend their mission to the communities they serve.

NEW BUSINESS

(Agenda VII.C.)

Secretary Rothmeyer announced that there was no new business before the council.

PRIMER ON CHURCH COUNCIL ROLE AT 2025 CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY

(Agenda VII.F.)

At the recommendation of the Board Development Committee, Ms. Jodi L. Slattery, executive for governance and chair of the Churchwide Assembly Planning Committee, provided a primer on the role of the Church Council at the Churchwide Assembly. Church Council members provide leadership by facilitating hearings prior to the Churchwide Assembly, serving as a resource on actions recommended to the assembly by the Church Council, serving on assembly committees, and serving as liaisons for the presiding bishop and secretary nominees. Some council members expressed concern about the expectation that council members refrain from speaking against actions recommended by the entire Church Council.

EVALUATION AND DEBRIEFING

(Agenda VII.G)

Vice President Siddiqui led the council in discussion of the flow of the meeting and reflection on the work carried out during the meeting.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Secretary Rothmeyer and Vice President Siddiqui made announcements.

ADJOURNMENT

The 118th meeting of the Church Council of the ELCA adjourned at 2:05 p.m. on April 6, 2025, following prayer and a hymn.