



July 28 – August 2  
PHOENIX, ARIZONA



## Report of the Memorials Committee

### Consideration of Synod Memorials

The proposed Rules of Organization and Procedure (2025 *Bulletin of Reports*, Section I) define memorials as “proposals for action involving broad policy issues submitted by Synod Assemblies to the churchwide organization.” To assist the Churchwide Assembly in its task of responding to these proposals, the Memorials Committee reviews all memorials and proposes recommendations for assembly action.

The process for consideration of memorials outlined in this report is intended to assist the assembly in responding to a large number of memorials and will facilitate the scheduling of discussion. It also will make it possible to distribute substitute motions to assembly members prior to debate.

The Memorials Committee may recommend that the 2025 Churchwide Assembly:

- vote separately on the proposed responses to certain synod memorials, allowing the co-chairs to determine the order in which the recommendations are considered; and
- vote on the recommended responses to the remaining synod memorials as a group (*en bloc*). Note that some memorials are included in this *en bloc* action because the subject matter will come to the floor of the assembly for discussion elsewhere on the agenda.

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### Recommendation of the Memorials Committee

To approve *en bloc*, with the exception of those memorials considered separately, the following responses to 2023, 2024, and 2025 synod memorials printed in the Report of the Memorials Committee (2025 *Bulletin of Reports*, Section VII, pages as listed):

Category A1: Immigration Detention .....	8
Category A2: Support of the Transgender Community .....	9
Category A4: Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women .....	26
Category A5: Youth Gathering DEIA .....	33
Category A6: Affirm People of God of All Gender Identities .....	34
Category A7: Restoration of Funding of USAID .....	37
Category A8: Decarbonization of the Energy Grid .....	38
Category B1: Accompaniment and Accountability of Bishops .....	40
Category B2: Increasing Continuing Education Commitments .....	41
Category B3: Limiting Insurance Costs for Rostered Ministers .....	42
Category B4: Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection .....	44
Category B5: Interpretation for ELCA Churchwide Assembly and Youth Gathering .....	46
Category B6: Legal Action in Support of ELCA Communities .....	48
Category B7: Congregation Constitutions .....	53
Category B8: Evaluating and Updating the Call Process .....	54
Category B9: Becoming a Global Refuge Denomination .....	55
Category B10: Abuse Prevention and Reporting .....	56
Category B11: Boundary, Racial Justice, and LGBTQIA+ Cultural Competency Training .....	58
Category B12: Remove Gendered and Binary Language .....	59
Category B13: Review of ELCA Investments and Procurement .....	59
Category B15: Consideration of Full Report of the CRLC .....	64
Category C1: Council of Nicaea 1700th Anniversary .....	65
Category C3: Social Statement on Vulnerable Youth .....	68
Category C4: Confession of Faith in Our Time .....	70
Category C5: Reconsideration of Social Message on End-of-Life Decisions .....	73
Category C6: Educational Materials Regarding the Word and Service Roster .....	75
Category C7: Reconsideration of <i>Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust</i> .....	76
Category C8: Social Message on Rural Life and Ministry .....	79
Category D1: Justice for Palestinians and Israelis .....	80
Category D2: Palestinian Destruction Response .....	81
Category D3: Public Discourse on Palestine-Israel .....	83

## For separate consideration

The Memorials Committee recommends that the Churchwide Assembly consider separately the following responses to 2023, 2024, and 2025 synod memorials:

<b>Category A3: Indian Boarding School Remembrance .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Category B14: Consideration of Recommendation 1 of the CRLC.....</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Category C2: Update the Social Statement on Abortion.....</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>Category D4: Stand for Palestinian Rights and End to Occupation of Palestine.....</b>	<b>84</b>

If a voting member desires the assembly to discuss a synod memorial or the Memorials Committee's response that is proposed for *en bloc* consideration, the voting member may request that it be removed from the proposed *en bloc* resolution, provided the member's request is supported by 10 other voting members. The voting member must submit notification electronically (or on a paper form if the electronic form is unavailable) to the secretary of this church or the secretary's assistant no later than **9:15 p.m., Monday, July 28, 2025**, on the memorials form. The form is available in the ELCA Churchwide Assembly Guide. Paper forms will be used only if the electronic form is not functional; if needed, paper forms will be available from the secretary's assistant. The assembly then will consider separately the proposed response of the Memorials Committee.

A voting member who desires to offer an amendment or a substitute to a recommendation of the Memorials Committee must submit the memorials form electronically (or on a paper form if the electronic form is unavailable). The text of the proposed amendment or substitute also must be submitted on the motion form electronically (or on a paper form if the electronic form is unavailable) to the secretary or the secretary's assistant. Amendments and substitute recommendations must be submitted to the secretary of this church or the secretary's assistant no later than **9:15 p.m., Monday, July 28, 2025**, as established in the Rules of Organization and Procedure for this assembly.

Consultation with at least one of the co-chairs of the Memorials Committee is required when a substitute to the response recommended by the Memorials Committee will be proposed. Consultation with one of the co-chairs is recommended when proposing an amendment.

The Rev. Emily K. Hartner, *co-chair*  
Mr. Noah F. Roux, *co-chair*

## Synod memorials: A word of explanation

According to the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, the Churchwide Assembly shall “receive and consider proposals from synod assemblies” (ELCA 12.21.c.). To assist the assembly in carrying out this task, “A Memorials Committee, appointed by the Church Council, shall review memorials from synod assemblies and make appropriate recommendations for assembly action” (ELCA 12.51.02.).

A memorial is understood to mean an action of a Synod Assembly specifically addressed to the Churchwide Assembly, requesting that a particular action be taken by that body.

Meeting in late June 2025, the Memorials Committee reviewed the 87 memorials received from synod assemblies held during the triennium. The committee has grouped those memorials that address the same topic or related concerns in order to facilitate the assembly’s consideration. In each part of this Report of the Memorials Committee you will find three components:

### 1. Memorials received from synod assemblies

Memorials are listed by synod number, according to their constitutional designation. The year in which each memorial was adopted is listed in brackets. If more than one synod approved the same or a similar memorial, the synods taking such action are listed together.

The memorials are reproduced here in the form in which they were submitted to the secretary of this church, with only very minimal edits to formatting. The preamble (the “WHEREAS” clauses) provides information to assist readers in understanding the context of the synod’s discussion of the memorial. Attention should be focused, however, on the resolutions (the “RESOLVED” clauses), which make the actual request for action by the Churchwide Assembly. The resolved clauses are what inform the proposed action the assembly will vote on.

### 2. Background information provided by the Memorials Committee

The Memorials Committee received information and advice from churchwide staff and separately incorporated ministry staff on the subjects addressed in the various synod memorials. In reporting its recommendations, the committee provides this background information, which voting members may find helpful in making decisions related to the memorials. The Memorials Committee may provide a rationale for its recommendations to the Churchwide Assembly where appropriate.

### 3. Recommendation of the Memorials Committee for action by the Churchwide Assembly

In each section, the committee’s recommendation for assembly action is printed in boldface type. In certain instances, the proposed action may be to affirm or to decline to recommend the action proposed by the synod. In other instances, the committee may recommend referral to the Church Council or to a churchwide office or unit. In yet other instances, the recommendation may be to convey to the synod the material provided to the assembly as “background” as the assembly’s response to the memorial.

A synod memorial may address an issue that already is scheduled to be discussed by the assembly at an identified point on its agenda. Rather than suggesting that the Churchwide Assembly discuss an issue twice, the committee recommends that the assembly’s separate action on that issue also serve as the assembly’s response to the synod memorial on that topic.

The Memorials Committee will recommend that some memorials be considered *en bloc*. Action will be taken upon all of the memorials contained in the *en bloc* section by a single vote, without floor debate.

By **9:15 p.m., Monday, July 28, 2025**, voting members who wish to remove from the *en bloc* action the Memorial Committee’s response to a synod memorial must notify the secretary of this church or the secretary’s assistant. Likewise, persons intending to offer an amendment or substitution for the committee’s response must notify the secretary and submit a motion form with the text of the proposed amendment.

The Order of Business will indicate the times when the recommendations of the Memorials Committee are scheduled to be brought to the floor of the assembly.

**NOTE:** Synod assemblies also may adopt resolutions on churchwide issues that are not considered memorials since they do not address broad policy matters or the Churchwide Assembly directly. For example, a Synod Assembly may adopt a resolution addressed to a particular churchwide unit; the appropriate route for this action is through the Synod Council to the Church Council’s Executive Committee for appropriate referral to churchwide units. Those resolutions addressed to the Church Council will be considered by the Church Council at subsequent meetings. The reader, therefore, may not find in this report all synod assembly actions related to churchwide issues, since some are addressed through other channels.

## 2023, 2024, and 2025 synod memorials

### Section A

<b>Social Justice Concerns</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Category A1: Immigration Detention</b>	<b>8</b>
1. Southwest California Synod (2B) [2023]	8
2. Pacifica Synod (2C) [2023]	8
Background	8
Recommended for assembly action	9
<b>Category A2: Support of the Transgender Community</b>	<b>9</b>
1. Southwest California Synod (2B) [2023]	9
Background	9
Recommended for assembly action	10
<b>Category A3: Indian Boarding School Remembrance</b>	<b>11</b>
1. Alaska Synod (1A) [2025]	11
2. Montana Synod (1F) [2025]	11
3. Sierra Pacific Synod (2A) [2025]	12
4. Southwest California Synod (2B) [2025]	12
5. Pacifica Synod (2C) [2025]	13
6. Western North Dakota Synod (3A) [2025]	13
7. Northeastern Minnesota Synod (3E) [2025]	14
8. Saint Paul Area Synod (3H) [2025]	15
9. Metropolitan Chicago Synod (5A) [2025]	15
10. Northern Illinois Synod (5B) [2025]	16
11. Central-Southern Illinois Synod (5C) [2025]	17
12. Western Iowa Synod (5E) [2025]	18
13. Northeastern Iowa Synod (5F) [2025]	18
14. Northern Great Lakes Synod (5G) [2025]	19
15. Northwest Synod of Wisconsin (5H) [2025]	20
16. East-Central Synod of Wisconsin (5I) [2025]	20
17. Greater Milwaukee Synod (5J) [2025]	21
18. South-Central Synod of Wisconsin (5K) [2025]	22
19. Southeast Michigan Synod (6A) [2025]	22
20. North/West Lower Michigan Synod (6B) [2025]	23
21. Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod (8G) [2025]	24
22. Florida-Bahamas Synod (9E) [2025]	24
Background	25
Recommended for assembly action	26
<b>Category A4: Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women</b>	<b>26</b>
1. Alaska Synod (1A) [2025]	26
2. Montana Synod (1F) [2025]	27
3. Southwest California Synod (2B) [2025]	27
4. Pacifica Synod (2C) [2025]	28
5. Western North Dakota Synod (3A) [2025]	28
6. Northeastern Minnesota Synod (3E) [2025]	29
7. Minneapolis Area Synod (3G) [2025]	30
8. Metropolitan Chicago Synod (5A) [2025]	30
9. East-Central Synod of Wisconsin (5I) [2025]	31
10. Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod (8G) [2025]	31
Background	32
Recommended for assembly action	33
<b>Category A5: Youth Gathering DEIA</b>	<b>33</b>
1. Minneapolis Area Synod (3G) [2025]	33
Background	34
Recommended for assembly action	34

<b>Category A6: Affirm People of God of All Gender Identities.....</b>	<b>34</b>
1. Northwest Washington Synod (1B) [2025] .....	34
2. New Jersey Synod (7A) [2025] .....	35
3. Southeastern Synod (9D) [2025] .....	36
<i>Background</i> .....	36
<i>Recommended for assembly action</i> .....	37
<b>Category A7: Restoration of Funding of USAID .....</b>	<b>37</b>
1. Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod (8B) [2025] .....	37
<i>Background</i> .....	37
<i>Recommended for assembly action</i> .....	38
<b>Category A8: Decarbonization of the Energy Grid .....</b>	<b>38</b>
1. Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod (4C) [2025] .....	38
<i>Background</i> .....	38
<i>Recommended for assembly action</i> .....	40
<b>Section B</b>	
<b>Congregation, Synod, and Churchwide Organization Topics .....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Category B1: Accompaniment and Accountability of Bishops.....</b>	<b>40</b>
1. Saint Paul Area Synod (3H) [2024].....	40
2. Delaware-Maryland Synod (8F) [2024] .....	40
<i>Background</i> .....	41
<i>Recommended for assembly action</i> .....	41
<b>Category B2: Increasing Continuing Education Commitments .....</b>	<b>41</b>
1. Greater Milwaukee Synod (5J) [2024] .....	41
<i>Background</i> .....	41
<i>Recommended for assembly action</i> .....	42
<b>Category B3: Limiting Insurance Costs for Rostered Ministers .....</b>	<b>42</b>
1. Allegheny Synod (8C) [2024] .....	42
<i>Background</i> .....	43
<i>Recommended for assembly action</i> .....	44
<b>Category B4: Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection .....</b>	<b>44</b>
1. Minneapolis Area Synod (3G) [2025] .....	44
2. Saint Paul Area Synod (3H) [2025].....	45
<i>Background</i> .....	45
<i>Recommended for assembly action</i> .....	46
<b>Category B5: Interpretation for ELCA Churchwide Assembly and Youth Gathering .....</b>	<b>46</b>
1. Southeastern Iowa Synod (5D) [2025] .....	46
<i>Background</i> .....	47
<i>Recommended for assembly action</i> .....	48
<b>Category B6: Legal Action in Support of ELCA Communities .....</b>	<b>48</b>
1. Northwest Washington Synod (1B) [2025] .....	48
2. Sierra Pacific Synod (2A) [2025] .....	49
3. New England Synod (7B) [2025] .....	49
4. Delaware-Maryland Synod (8F) [2025] .....	50
<i>Background</i> .....	51
<i>Recommended for assembly action</i> .....	52
<b>Category B7: Congregation Constitutions.....</b>	<b>53</b>
1. Nebraska Synod (4A) [2025] .....	53
<i>Background</i> .....	53
<i>Recommended for assembly action</i> .....	54
<b>Category B8: Evaluating and Updating the Call Process .....</b>	<b>54</b>
1. Greater Milwaukee Synod (5J) [2025] .....	54
<i>Background</i> .....	54
<i>Recommended for assembly action</i> .....	55

<b>Category B9: Becoming a Global Refuge Denomination .....</b>	<b>55</b>
1. Southwest California Synod (2B) [2025] .....	55
<i>Background</i> .....	55
<i>Recommended for assembly action</i> .....	55
<b>Category B10: Abuse Prevention and Reporting.....</b>	<b>56</b>
1. East-Central Synod of Wisconsin (5I) [2025] .....	56
<i>Background</i> .....	56
<i>Recommended for assembly action</i> .....	58
<b>Category B11: Boundary, Racial Justice, and LGBTQIA+ Cultural Competency Training .....</b>	<b>58</b>
1. Lower Susquehanna Synod (8D) [2025] .....	58
<i>Background</i> .....	58
<i>Recommended for assembly action</i> .....	58
<b>Category B12: Remove Gendered and Binary Language .....</b>	<b>59</b>
1. New Jersey Synod (7A) [2025] .....	59
<i>Background</i> .....	59
<i>Recommended for assembly action</i> .....	59
<b>Category B13: Review of ELCA Investments and Procurement.....</b>	<b>59</b>
1. Indiana-Kentucky Synod (6C) [2025] .....	59
<i>Background</i> .....	60
<i>Recommended for assembly action</i> .....	60
<b>Category B14: Consideration of Recommendation 1 of the CRLC .....</b>	<b>60</b>
1. Pacifica Synod (2C) [2025].....	60
2. Metropolitan New York Synod (7C) [2025] .....	61
3. Delaware-Maryland Synod (8F) [2025] .....	61
4. Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod (8G) [2025] .....	62
<i>Background</i> .....	63
<i>Recommended for assembly action</i> .....	64
<b>Category B15: Consideration of Full Report of CRLC.....</b>	<b>64</b>
1. Southwest California Synod (2B) [2025] .....	64
<i>Background</i> .....	64
<i>Recommended for assembly action</i> .....	65
<b>Section C</b>	
<b>Social Teaching and Theological Topics .....</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>Category C1: Council of Nicaea 1700th Anniversary.....</b>	<b>65</b>
1. Slovak Zion Synod (7G) [2023] .....	65
<i>Background</i> .....	65
<i>Recommended for assembly action</i> .....	66
<b>Category C2: Update the Social Statement on Abortion.....</b>	<b>66</b>
1. Northern Illinois Synod (5B) [2023] .....	66
<i>Background</i> .....	67
<i>Recommended for assembly action</i> .....	68
<b>Category C3: Social Statement on Vulnerable Youth .....</b>	<b>68</b>
1. Greater Milwaukee Synod (5J) [2024] .....	68
<i>Background</i> .....	69
<i>Recommended for assembly action</i> .....	69
<b>Category C4: Confession of Faith in Our Time .....</b>	<b>70</b>
1. Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod (4C) [2025] .....	70
2. South-Central Synod of Wisconsin (5K) [2025] .....	70
<i>Background</i> .....	71
<i>Recommended for assembly action</i> .....	72
<b>Category C5: Reconsideration of Social Message on End-of-Life Decisions.....</b>	<b>73</b>
1. Saint Paul Area Synod (3H) [2025].....	73
<i>Background</i> .....	73
<i>Recommended for assembly action</i> .....	75



<b>Category C6: Educational Materials Regarding the Word and Service Roster .....</b>	<b>75</b>
1. Oregon Synod (1E) [2025] .....	75
<i>Background</i> .....	75
<i>Recommended for assembly action</i> .....	76
<b>Category C7: Reconsideration of <i>Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust</i> .....</b>	<b>76</b>
1. Southwest California Synod (2B) [2025] .....	76
<i>Background</i> .....	76
<i>Recommended for assembly action</i> .....	78
<b>Category C8: Social Message on Rural Life and Ministry.....</b>	<b>79</b>
1. Montana Synod (1F) [2025] .....	79
<i>Background</i> .....	79
<i>Recommended for assembly action</i> .....	80
<b>Section D</b>	
<b>Palestine and Israel Concerns.....</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>Category D1: Justice for Palestinians and Israelis .....</b>	<b>80</b>
1. Metropolitan Chicago Synod (5A) [2024].....	80
<i>Background</i> .....	80
<i>Recommended for assembly action</i> .....	81
<b>Category D2: Palestinian Destruction Response.....</b>	<b>81</b>
1. Minneapolis Area Synod (3G) [2025] .....	81
<i>Background</i> .....	82
<i>Recommended for assembly action</i> .....	83
<b>Category D3: Public Discourse on Palestine-Israel .....</b>	<b>83</b>
1. Northeastern Minnesota Synod (3E) [2025].....	83
<i>Background</i> .....	83
<i>Recommended for assembly action</i> .....	84
<b>Category D4: Stand for Palestinian Rights and End to Occupation of Palestine.....</b>	<b>84</b>
1. Northwest Washington Synod (1B) [2025] .....	84
2. Oregon Synod (1E) [2025] .....	85
3. Rocky Mountain Synod (2E) [2025] .....	86
4. Nebraska Synod (4A) [2025] .....	87
5. Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod (4C) [2025] .....	88
6. Metropolitan Chicago Synod (5A) [2025].....	88
7. Southeast Michigan Synod (6A) [2025] .....	89
8. New England Synod (7B) [2025] .....	90
9. Delaware-Maryland Synod (8F) [2025] .....	91
10. Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod (8G) [2025] .....	92
11. Southeastern Synod (9D) [2025] .....	93
<i>Background</i> .....	94
<i>Recommended for assembly action</i> .....	95

## Section A

### Social Justice Concerns

#### **Category A1: Immigration Detention**

##### **1. Southwest California Synod (2B) [2023]**

RESOLVED, that the Southwest California Synod Assembly memorialize the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to call for the end of the U.S. government practice of contracting management of U.S. immigration detention centers out to private for-profit companies, and that the ELCA urge the appropriate legislative authorities and agencies to cease this practice.

##### **2. Pacifica Synod (2C) [2023]**

WHEREAS, the Pacifica Synod in its May 2023 Assembly adopted the resolution entitled “Resolution Regarding Ending Private Immigration Detention Centers”; and

WHEREAS, the Pacifica Synod has a particular interest in seeing this change of policy for the immigration detention centers in our territory, yet there are some 200 immigration centers across the U.S., many of which are run by private for-profit companies, to which it is appropriate and needed for our national church to address this issue; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Pacifica Synod Assembly of 2023 memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), asking the ELCA to publicly call for an immediate end to the U.S. government practice of contracting management of U.S. immigration detention centers out to private for-profit companies; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Pacifica Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA to ask the appropriate officers of the ELCA to communicate this call to cease the use of private for-profit companies for immigration detention to all appropriate legislative authorities and federal and state agencies.

#### *Background*

In its social statement, *The Church and Criminal Justice: Hearing the Cries* (2013), the ELCA calls for the government to end use of private, for-profit prisons, based on theological, moral, and economic arguments. “Theologically speaking, the ELCA holds that it is the role of government, not the market, to restrain evil” (p. 44). Morally, the state may not abdicate its responsibility for custodial control to an entity motivated by profit. Economically, privatizing the criminal justice system creates a morally reprehensible economic incentive to treat humans as commodities.

As private prison corporations fell out of favor, they turned their attention to privatizing migrant detention as a form of profitable corporate activity. The social statement on criminal justice calls for an end to “arbitrary and indefinite detention and dehumanizing isolation of migrants” (p. 15) and the “Message on Immigration” calls for due process and humane conditions of detention for migrants. Working on the foundation laid by social teaching, in 2022 ELCA Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) developed, and Portico’s social purpose funds implemented, an investment screen for [privatized migration detention](#) to address this activity.

Through the whole-church strategy for ELCA AMMPARO (Accompanying Migrants with Protection, Advocacy, Representation, and Opportunities) adopted in 2016, the ELCA has a network of congregations and synods that accompany migrants in their communities. AMMPARO also collaborates with secular and religious partners, and ELCA companions around the world to support and advocate for the protection and rights of migrant youth, women, and families at every step of the migrant journey, including detention and incarceration. AMMPARO principles include the commitment to uphold and guarantee basic human rights and safety of migrant children and their families, and working towards just and humane policies affecting migrants in and outside of the U.S.

Members of the AMMPARO team as well as congregations and synods who are part of the AMMPARO US Network have had opportunities to enter various private detention facilities around the nation and have seen with their own eyes the major deficiencies in dignified humane treatment that detainees are subject to. Examples observed are the denial of medical care, crowded conditions, lack of nutritious food, and disrespectful treatment at these private facilities. Members of the AMMPARO network have engaged in local advocacy to close these facilities. The AMMPARO team has collaborated with Detention Watch Network on advocacy and was an active participant in the Family Liberation Abolitionist Network to abolish family detention until the previous administration stopped family detention. Together with the CSR, there is a current effort to produce a video that will assist ELCA members to learn about private immigration detention and encourage advocacy against it.

#### **Resources:**

CSR Screens - [Privatized Immigration Detention Screen](#), [Private Prison Screen](#)

ELCA social teaching: [Criminal Justice](#) and [Immigration](#)



*Recommended for assembly action*

**To receive with gratitude the memorials from the Southwest California Synod and the Pacifica Synod on ceasing the use of private for-profit companies for immigration detention;**

**To reaffirm this church's commitment to the AMMPARO strategy to accompany migrants and advocate for recognition and respect for their human dignity including through the protection of their human rights;**

**To affirm this church's ongoing screening out of private prison companies from social purpose funds and look for engagement opportunities with private prison companies;**

**To request that the Service and Justice unit identify and act on opportunities for this church to publicly call for an end to the U.S. government practice of contracting out the management of U.S. immigration detention centers to private for-profit companies; and**

**To request that the Service and Justice unit provide a report on the implementation of this work to the Church Council at its Spring 2026 meeting.**

### ***Category A2: Support of the Transgender Community***

#### **1. Southwest California Synod (2B) [2023]**

RESOLVED, that the Southwest California Synod, in Assembly, memorializes the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to publicly affirm that all people, including TGNCI (Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Individuals), are made in the image of God and are worthy of dignity in church and society; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwest California Synod, in Assembly, memorializes the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to denounce Anti-Transgender legislation in a public statement; and be it further

RESOLVED that the Southwest California Synod, in Assembly, memorializes the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to direct the Churchwide Office of the ELCA to revise the governing documents so that TGNCI (Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Individuals) may serve as voting members of assemblies or other committees for which participation has previously been defined by a male/female binary; and be it further

RESOLVED that the Southwest California Synod, in Assembly, memorializes the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to commit to reviewing ELCA policies and procedures for bias, especially in regard to TGNCI (Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Individuals).

### ***Background***

With gratitude to the Southwest California Synod for this memorial. This memorial calls on the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to affirm the full humanity of transgender and gender non-conforming individuals (TGNCI) who are being denied their dignity and denounce legislation that denies their human rights and dignity (RESOLVEDS 1 and 2). They further call on this church to affirm the full humanity of transgender and gender non-conforming individuals through its governance and policies and procedures. These are treated separately below (RESOLVEDS 3 and 4).

#### ***RESOLVEDS 1 and 2***

Public affirmation and guidance on legislation comes from ELCA social teaching and policy. The following theological overview and points from [Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Call to Action](#) (2019) may serve as the basis of the assembly's discernment on public affirmation of the human dignity of TGNCI, and they also guide all official public advocacy of this church. While an assembly may decide to make a public affirmation based on ELCA social teaching and policy, public advocacy on behalf of this church is done through Witness in Society staff members of the churchwide organization based on ELCA social teaching and policy.

More broadly, this church expresses its assessment of and denouncement of anti-transgender legislation by affirming this church's calling and call and its theological anthropology. In other words, this church's denouncement is made through its affirmation that ELCA members understand the church to be God's, that they understand their call in Christ is to love and serve neighbors, and that they believe and confess that the Christian interpretation of the human condition is that, in belonging to God, God's children are always both saint and sinner because they are redeemed by God's grace through Christ. As Lutheran Christians, they trust that they are always being made new and seek to live with God, neighbor, and self within the diversity God creates. While members of this church hold divergent views on gender identity (as delineated in the quote below), this church nevertheless remains committed through its teaching and action to support the human dignity and human rights of every person.

From *Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Call to Action*:

“31) This church teaches that the God who justifies expects all people to seek justice in earthly relationships, structures, and systems. The ELCA calls for sustained and renewed efforts through which women, girls, and

gender non-conforming people experience greater equity and justice. The following commitments express this church's firm hope for renewed social relationships and structures that benefit the common good. . . .

Social structures and institutions that fail to do justice are not fulfilling the purpose for which God created them. They must be challenged and held accountable; this is a matter of great urgency because human life depends upon them. (page 59)

*Please see the full explanation for Article 31 (above) on pages 59-60 of Faith, Sexism, and Justice. Above is only an excerpt. The text continues:*

“The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America commits itself to:

32) Advocate for and support laws, policies, and practices that respect diverse bodies rather than discriminating against, objectifying, or devaluing them. Women, girls, and people who identify as non-binary must not be deprived of their human or civil rights. (See the ELCA's “[Message on Human Rights](#)”)

ELCA social teaching supports human rights for all people, regardless of their sex (biological), gender, or sexuality. This stance is rooted in respect and welcome for all people as created in the image of God and evident in the ELCA's longstanding commitment to protecting civil and human rights. While members may hold differing views on matters related to sexual orientation or gender identity, this church is nevertheless united in opposing discrimination, objectification, abuse, or control of the bodies of women, girls, or individuals who identify as genderqueer. The ELCA's commitment to civil and political rights helps to orient the changes and challenges addressed in the following commitments. Minimal steps include developing and enforcing laws, policies, and practices that do not deprive any people of their human or civil rights.” (*Faith, Sexism, and Justice*, pp. 60-61)

#### *Resolves 3 and 4*

As the memorial pertains to ELCA governing documents and committees, the ELCA Church Council oversaw a review of the *Constitutions, Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA* in 2024. Now the ELCA representational principles include persons who are TGNCI. The continuing resolution reads, “For purposes of the representational principles set forth in 5.01.e. and f., the percentage of laypersons that is not allocated to women [45 percent] or men [45 percent] may be allocated to persons who identify as gender non-binary, gender fluid, genderqueer, transgender, women, men, or other gender identities” (5.01.G24).

Lastly, although churchwide assemblies are not able to review ELCA policies and procedures, the responsibility to request, guide, and hold accountable a process of review for bias regarding Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Individuals best resides with the ELCA Church Council. Clarity is needed if this call is for all ELCA policies and procedures (across the whole church) or only for the churchwide organization. Clarity is further needed if this review is for *all* bias or specifically for TGNCI because bias in general and specifically about TGNCI are referred to.

It is reasonable to call for the churchwide organization to review its employee and churchwide-directed policies and practices to be reviewed for bias against TGNCI by the Spring 2027 ELCA Church Council meeting. The recommendation is for the ELCA Church Council to be responsible for holding churchwide organization staff members accountable for this review. This review should involve a team of diverse advisors that includes persons who are TGNCI. The Office of the Presiding Bishop in collaboration with Human Resources should be the lead to coordinate this review.

#### *Recommended for assembly action*

**To receive with gratitude the memorial on “Support of the Transgender Community” from the Southwest California Synod;**

**To publicly affirm that all people, including Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Individuals (TGNCI) are made in the image of God and are worthy of dignity in church and society;**

**To direct the Witness in Society Advocacy Team to support legislation that protects human rights of persons who are transgender and gender non-conforming;**

**To recognize the previous adoption of the continuing resolutions in Chapter 5 of the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA* that addressed the inclusion of TGNCI serving as voting members of assemblies or other committees; and**

**To request that the Office of the Presiding Bishop (Human Resources in consultation with Gender Justice and Women's Empowerment) in consultation with the Office of the Secretary, review the ELCA policies and procedures for bias, especially in regard to TGNCI, and provide a report to the Church Council at its Fall 2027 meeting.**

### ***Category A3: Indian Boarding School Remembrance***

#### **1. Alaska Synod (1A) [2025]**

WHEREAS, from 1819 to 1969, countless Indian day schools and over 520 Indian boarding schools operated in the United States, with 417 receiving federal support, where Native children were forcibly taken from their families and communities, prohibited all expression of Native language and culture, and required to perform manual labor, with a goal to “Kill the Indian in him, and save the man”; and

WHEREAS, 26 boarding schools and orphanages operated in the State of Alaska, and the Wrangell Institute remained in operation until its closing in 1975; and

WHEREAS, religious organizations collaborated with the federal government in operating more than half of these federally-funded schools; and predecessor denominations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) operated Bethany Indian Mission Boarding School in Wittenburg, Wisconsin, and other non-federally funded boarding schools, day schools, and related institutions; and

WHEREAS, these schools were part of a larger strategy of physical and cultural genocide that included forcing Indigenous people and Tribal Nations off of their original homelands and onto reservations so that settlers and governments could claim the stolen land for themselves, undermining sovereignty, and perpetrating extermination in multiple other ways; and

WHEREAS, boarding school students, which at one point included over 83% of all Native children, often suffered physical, sexual, emotional, and psychological abuse that caused deep trauma for the children, their families, their tribal communities, and subsequent generations; and an untold number of children died while at boarding schools (nearly 1,000 identified to date); and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has committed to work against injustices and toward healing as stated in “The Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery” (2016) and the “Declaration to American Indian and Alaska Native People” (2021), therefore be it

**RESOLVED**, that the Alaska Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to address the legacies of our church’s role in Indian Boarding Schools through the following actions:

1. Actively invite and equip all congregations, synods, and affiliate ministries to commemorate the National Day of Remembrance for Indian Boarding Schools annually on or near September 30th;
2. Broaden and deepen awareness at congregation, synod, and churchwide levels of Christian and Lutheran roles in Indian boarding schools, through creation of adult and children/youth educational programs and materials and through consistent publishing of articles in all of the church’s publications;
3. Provide on-going recognition of and support for the growing network of lay people and clergy volunteering their time in the work of the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative on Indian Boarding Schools (see [www.elca.org/IndianBoardingSchools](http://www.elca.org/IndianBoardingSchools)) to locate all known records related to the ELCA’s predecessor bodies’ involvement with Indian boarding and day schools and to educate others about Indian boarding schools;
4. Encourage ELCA affiliate ministries to commit to learning the truth of their involvement with Indian boarding schools, in partnership with the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative; and to responsibly create paths to healing and repair;
5. Organize and care for all information in the ELCA’s possession that was recorded about Indian boarding and day schools and the students who attended them, forcibly or otherwise; carry out this work in partnership with the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative and the ELCA Archives; recognize that this information belongs to and is a source of healing for student survivors, their descendants, communities, and Tribal Nations; and ensure that the records and research are made accessible to Indian boarding school survivors and their families in a responsible manner; and
6. Identify sources of funding to sufficiently support research and organizing efforts; and to sufficiently support digitization and labeling of all ELCA Indian boarding school archival records.

#### **2. Montana Synod (1F) [2025]**

WHEREAS, from 1819 to 1969, Indian Boarding Schools and Day Schools operated in the United States, which: forcibly removed Native children from their families and communities, prohibited Native language and culture, and subjected them to harsh conditions as well as forced assimilation; and

WHEREAS, religious organizations, including predecessor bodies of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), operated over half of these schools and contributed to a system that caused: physical and cultural genocide, generational trauma, cultural erasure, as well as physical, emotional, and psychological abuse; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has committed to truth-seeking and justice through actions including the “Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery” (2016) and the “Declaration to American Indian and Alaska Native People” (2021); therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**, that the Montana Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to address the legacies of our church’s role in Indian Boarding Schools through the following actions:

1. Directing the Churchwide Office of the ELCA to prepare and distribute materials inviting and equipping all congregations, synods, and affiliate ministries to commemorate the National Day of Remembrance for Indian Boarding Schools annually on or near September 30th;
2. Creating adult and children/youth educational programs and materials through the Churchwide Office and Publishing House and consistently publishing of articles in all of the church's publications in order to broaden and deepen awareness at congregation, synod, and churchwide levels of Christian and Lutheran roles in Indian boarding schools.
3. Directing the Churchwide Organization of the ELCA to provide on-going recognition of and support for the growing network of lay people and clergy volunteering their time in the work of the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative on Indian Boarding Schools (see [www.elca.org/IndianBoardingSchools](http://www.elca.org/IndianBoardingSchools)) to locate all known records related to the ELCA's predecessor bodies' involvement with Indian boarding and day schools and to educate others about Indian boarding schools;
4. Directing the Churchwide Office of the ELCA to encourage ELCA affiliate ministries to commit to learning the truth of their involvement with Indian boarding schools, in partnership with the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative; and to responsibly create paths to healing and repair;
5. In partnership with the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative and the ELCA Archives organize and care for all information in the ELCA's possession that was recorded about Indian boarding and day schools and the students who attended them, forcibly or otherwise; recognizing that this information belongs to and is a source of healing for student survivors, their descendants, communities, and Tribal Nations; and ensure that the records and research are made accessible to Indian boarding school survivors and their families in a responsible manner; and
6. Directing the Churchwide Organization of the ELCA to identify sources of funding to support a 20 hour per week position to research and organize efforts; including digitization and labeling of all ELCA Indian boarding school archival records.

### **3. Sierra Pacific Synod (2A) [2025]**

WHEREAS, from 1819 to 1969, countless Indian day schools and over 520 Indian boarding schools operated in the United States, whereby Native children were forcibly taken from their families and communities, prohibited any and all expressions of Native language and culture, and required to perform manual labor, with a intention of "Kill[ing] the Indian in him, and sav[ing] the man"; and

WHEREAS, predecessor denominations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) operated Bethany Indian Mission Boarding School in Wittenburg, Wisconsin, as well as other boarding schools, day schools, and related institutions; and

WHEREAS, boarding school students (which at one point included over 83% of all Native children) often suffered physical, sexual, emotional, and psychological abuse; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has committed to work against injustices and toward healing as stated in "The Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery" (2016) and the "Declaration to American Indian and Alaska Native People" (2021); therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Sierra Pacific Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to address the legacies of our church's role in Indian Boarding Schools by:

- a) Actively inviting and equipping all expressions of our church to commemorate the National Day of Remembrance for Indian Boarding Schools annually on or near September 30th;
- b) Facilitating awareness at all levels of our church of Christian and Lutheran involvement in Indian boarding schools; and actively working to recognize and understand the continued impact of boarding school and day school historic trauma on Native people, Native families, and within Native communities;
- c) Recognizing and supporting the work of the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative on Indian boarding schools in locating records which relate to the ELCA's predecessor bodies' involvement with Indian boarding and day schools;
- d) Encouraging all members and expressions of our church to learn the truth of our shared involvement with Indian boarding schools;
- e) Preserving all information in the ELCA's possession that was recorded about Indian boarding and day schools and those students who attended them, forcibly or otherwise, in the awareness that such information may be a source of healing for student survivors, their descendants, communities, and Tribal Nations; and
- f) Identifying sources of funding to sufficiently support research into and digitization of all ELCA Indian boarding school archival records.

### **4. Southwest California Synod (2B) [2025]**

RESOLVED, that the Southwest California Synod, in Assembly, memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) to address the legacy of our church's role in Indian Boarding

Schools by broadening and deepening awareness at congregation, synod, and churchwide levels of Christian and Lutheran roles in Indian boarding schools; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwest California Synod, in Assembly, memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to identify, secure, and maintain funding to support ongoing truth-seeking efforts by the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative and other initiatives that foster healing and reconciliation with Native communities, including but not limited: to the location, preservation, and digitization of archival records; the organization of, care of, and access to all information about Indian Boarding Schools and Day Schools by students survivors, their descendants, communities, and Tribal Nations; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwest California Synod, in Assembly, memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to provide on-going support for and encouragement to congregations, synods, and ministries learning truth about Indian Boarding Schools to responsibly creating paths to healing and repair, such as by commemorating the National Day of Remembrance for Indian Boarding Schools annually near September 30.

## **5. Pacifica Synod (2C) [2025]**

RESOLVED, that the Pacifica Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to address the legacies of our church's role in Indian Boarding Schools and requests the following actions:

1. Actively invite and prepare all congregations, synods, and affiliated ministries to observe the National Day of Remembrance for Indian Boarding Schools each year on or around September 30th.
2. Broaden and deepen awareness at the congregation, synod, and churchwide levels regarding Christian and Lutheran roles in Indian boarding schools through the creation of educational programs and materials for adults and children/youth, as well as consistent publishing of articles in all church publications.
3. Provide ongoing recognition and support for the expanding network of lay people and clergy who volunteer their time in the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative on Indian Boarding Schools (see [www.elca.org/IndianBoardingSchools](http://www.elca.org/IndianBoardingSchools)). This initiative aims to locate all known records related to the involvement of the ELCA's predecessor bodies with Indian boarding and day schools and to educate others about these institutions.
4. Encourage ELCA affiliate ministries to commit to understanding the truth of their involvement with Indian boarding schools, in partnership with the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative, and to responsibly establish pathways for healing and repair.
5. Organize and care for all information in the ELCA's possession related to Indian boarding and day schools and the students who attended, both forcibly and otherwise. This work should be carried out in partnership with the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative and the ELCA Archives. It is important to recognize that this information belongs to, and serves as a source of healing for, student survivors, their descendants, communities, and Tribal Nations. Additionally, ensure that the records and research are made accessible to Indian boarding school survivors and their families in a responsible manner.
6. Identify adequate funding sources to effectively support research and organizing efforts, as well as to ensure proper digitization and labeling of all ELCA Indian boarding school archival records.

## **6. Western North Dakota Synod (3A) [2025]**

WHEREAS, from 1819 to 1969, countless Indian day schools and over 520 Indian boarding schools operated in the United States, with 417 receiving federal support, where Native children were forcibly taken from their families and communities, prohibited all expression of Native language and culture, and required to perform manual labor, with a goal to "Kill the Indian in him, and save the man"; and

WHEREAS, religious organizations collaborated with the federal government in operating more than half of these federally-funded schools; and predecessor denominations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) operated Bethany Indian Mission Boarding School in Wittenburg, Wisconsin, and other non-federally funded boarding schools, day schools, and related institutions; and

WHEREAS, these schools were part of a larger strategy of physical and cultural genocide that included forcing Indigenous people and Tribal Nations off of their original homelands and onto reservations so that settlers and governments could claim the stolen land for themselves, undermining sovereignty, and perpetrating extermination in multiple other ways; and

WHEREAS, boarding school students, which at one point included over 83% of all Native children, often suffered physical, sexual, emotional, and psychological abuse that caused deep trauma for the children, their families, their tribal communities, and subsequent generations; and an untold number of children died while at boarding schools (nearly 1,000 identified to date); and,

WHEREAS, the ELCA has committed to work against injustices and toward healing as stated in "The Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery" (2016) and the "Declaration to American Indian and Alaska Native People" (2021); and



WHEREAS, the Western North Dakota Synod Council, on April 8, 2025, unanimously approved sending this memorial to the 2025 Western North Dakota Synod Assembly for their affirmation; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Western North Dakota Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to address the legacies of our church's role in Indian Boarding Schools through the following actions:

1. Actively invite and equip all congregations, synods, and affiliate ministries to commemorate the National Day of Remembrance for Indian Boarding Schools annually on or near September 30th;
2. Broaden and deepen awareness at congregation, synod, and churchwide levels of Christian and Lutheran roles in Indian boarding schools, through creation of adult and children/youth educational programs and materials and through consistent publishing of articles in all of the church's publications;
3. Provide on-going recognition of and support for the growing network of lay people and clergy volunteering their time in the work of the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative on Indian Boarding Schools (see [www.elca.org/IndianBoardingSchools](http://www.elca.org/IndianBoardingSchools)) to locate all known records related to the ELCA's predecessor bodies' involvement with Indian boarding and day schools and to educate others about Indian boarding schools;
4. Encourage ELCA affiliate ministries to commit to learning the truth of their involvement with Indian boarding schools, in partnership with the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative; and to responsibly create paths to healing and repair;
5. Organize and care for all information in the ELCA's possession that was recorded about Indian boarding and day schools and the students who attended them, forcibly or otherwise; carry out this work in partnership with the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative and the ELCA Archives; recognize that this information belongs to and is a source of healing for student survivors, their descendants, communities, and Tribal Nations; and ensure that the records and research are made accessible to Indian boarding school survivors and their families in a responsible manner; and
6. Identify sources of funding to sufficiently support research and organizing efforts; and to sufficiently support digitization and labeling of all ELCA Indian boarding school archival records.

#### **7. Northeastern Minnesota Synod (3E) [2025]**

WHEREAS, from 1819 to 1969, countless Indian day schools and over 520 Indian boarding schools operated in the United States, with 417 receiving federal support where Native children were forcibly taken from their families and communities, prohibited all expression of Native language and culture, and required to perform manual labor, with a goal to "Kill the Indian in him, and save the man"; and

WHEREAS, religious organizations collaborated with the federal government in operating more than half of these federally-funded schools; and predecessor denominations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) operated Bethany Indian Mission Boarding School in Wittenburg, Wisconsin, and other non-federally funded boarding schools, day schools, and related institutions; and

WHEREAS, these schools were part of a larger strategy of physical and cultural genocide that included forcing Indigenous people and Tribal Nations off of their original homelands and onto reservations so that settlers and governments could claim the stolen land for themselves, undermining sovereignty, and perpetrating extermination in multiple other ways; and

WHEREAS, boarding school students, which at one point included over 83% of all Native children, often suffered physical, sexual, emotional, and psychological abuse that caused deep trauma for the children, their families, their tribal communities, and subsequent generations; and an untold number of children died while at boarding schools (nearly 1,000 identified to date); and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has committed to work against injustices and toward healing as stated in "The Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery" (2016) and the "Declaration to American Indian and Alaska Native People" (2021); therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Minnesota Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to address the legacies of our church's role in Indian Boarding Schools through the following actions:

1. Actively invite and equip all congregations, synods, and affiliate ministries to commemorate the National Day of Remembrance for Indian Boarding Schools annually on or near September 30th;
2. Broaden and deepen awareness at congregation, synod, and churchwide levels of Christian and Lutheran roles in Indian boarding schools, through creation of adult and children/youth educational programs and materials and through consistent publishing of articles in all of the church's publications;
3. Provide on-going recognition of and support for the growing network of lay people and clergy volunteering their time in the work of the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative on Indian Boarding Schools (see [www.elca.org/IndianBoardingSchools](http://www.elca.org/IndianBoardingSchools)) to locate all known records related to the ELCA's predecessor bodies' involvement with Indian boarding and day schools and to educate others about Indian boarding schools;



4. Encourage ELCA affiliate ministries to commit to learning the truth of their involvement with Indian boarding schools, in partnership with the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative; and to responsibly create paths to healing and repair;
5. Organize and care for all information in the ELCA's possession that was recorded about Indian boarding and day schools and the students who attended them, forcibly or otherwise; carry out this work in partnership with the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative and the ELCA Archives; recognize that this information belongs to and is a source of healing for student survivors, their descendants, communities, and Tribal Nations; and ensure that the records and research are made accessible to Indian boarding school survivors and their families in a responsible manner; and
6. Identify sources of funding to sufficiently support research and organizing efforts; and to sufficiently support digitization and labeling of all ELCA Indian boarding school archival records.

## **8. Saint Paul Area Synod (3H) [2025]**

WHEREAS, from 1819 to 1969, countless Indian day schools and over 520 Indian boarding schools operated in the United States, with 417 receiving federal support, where Native children were forcibly taken from their families and communities, prohibited all expression of Native language and culture, and required to perform manual labor, with a goal to "Kill the Indian in him, and save the man"; and

WHEREAS, religious organizations collaborated with the federal government in operating more than half of these federally-funded schools; and predecessor denominations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) operated Bethany Indian Mission Boarding School in Wittenberg, Wisconsin, and other non-federally funded boarding schools, day schools, and related institutions; and

WHEREAS, these schools were part of a larger strategy of physical and cultural genocide that included forcing Indigenous people and Tribal Nations off of their original homelands and onto reservations so that settlers and governments could claim the stolen land for themselves, undermining sovereignty, and perpetrating extermination in multiple other ways; and

WHEREAS, boarding school students, which at one point included over 83% of all Native children, often suffered physical, sexual, emotional, and psychological abuse that caused deep trauma for the children, their families, their tribal communities, and subsequent generations; and an untold number of children died while at boarding schools (nearly 1,000 identified to date); and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has committed to work against injustices and toward healing as stated in "The Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery" (2016) and the "Declaration to American Indian and Alaska Native People" (2021); therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Saint Paul Area Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to address the legacies of our church's role in Indian Boarding Schools through the following actions:

1. Actively invite and equip all congregations, synods, and affiliate ministries to commemorate the National Day of Remembrance for Indian Boarding Schools annually on or near September 30th;
2. Broaden and deepen awareness at congregation, synod, and churchwide levels of Christian and Lutheran roles in Indian boarding schools, through creation of adult and children/youth educational programs and materials and through consistent publishing of articles in all of the church's publications;
3. Provide on-going recognition of and support for the growing network of lay people and clergy volunteering their time in the work of the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative on Indian Boarding Schools (see [www.elca.org/IndianBoardingSchools](http://www.elca.org/IndianBoardingSchools)) to locate all known records related to the ELCA's predecessor bodies' involvement with Indian boarding and day schools and to educate others about Indian boarding schools;
4. Encourage ELCA affiliate ministries to commit to learning the truth of their involvement with Indian boarding schools, in partnership with the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative; and to responsibly create paths to healing and repair;
5. Organize and care for all information in the ELCA's possession that was recorded about Indian boarding and day schools and the students who attended them, forcibly or otherwise; carry out this work in partnership with the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative and the ELCA Archives; recognize that this information belongs to and is a source of healing for student survivors, their descendants, communities, and Tribal Nations; and ensure that the records and research are made accessible to Indian boarding school survivors and their families in a responsible manner; and
6. Identify sources of funding to sufficiently support research and organizing efforts; and to sufficiently support digitization and labeling of all ELCA Indian boarding school archival records.

## **9. Metropolitan Chicago Synod (5A) [2025]**

WHEREAS, from 1819 to 1969, countless Indian day schools and over 520 Indian boarding schools operated in the United States, with 417 receiving federal support, where Native children were forcibly taken from their families and communities, prohibited all expression of Native language and culture, and required to perform manual labor, with a goal to "Kill the Indian in him, and save the man"; and

WHEREAS, religious organizations collaborated with the federal government in operating more than half of these federally-funded schools; and predecessor denominations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) operated Bethany Indian Mission Boarding School in Wittenburg, Wisconsin, and other non-federally funded boarding schools, day schools, and related institutions; and

WHEREAS, these schools were part of a larger strategy of physical and cultural genocide that included forcing Indigenous people and Tribal Nations off of their original homelands and onto reservations so that settlers and governments could claim the stolen land for themselves, undermining sovereignty, and perpetrating extermination in multiple other ways; and

WHEREAS, boarding school students, which at one point included over 83% of all Native children, often suffered physical, sexual, emotional, and psychological abuse that caused deep trauma for the children, their families, their tribal communities, and subsequent generations; and an untold number of children died while at boarding schools (nearly 1,000 identified to date); and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has committed to work against injustices and toward healing as stated in “The Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery” (2016) and the “Declaration to American Indian and Alaska Native People” (2021); therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**, that the Metropolitan Chicago Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to address the legacies of our church’s role in Indian Boarding Schools through the following actions:

1. Actively invite and equip all congregations, synods, and affiliate ministries to commemorate the National Day of Remembrance for Indian Boarding Schools annually on or near September 30th;
2. Broaden and deepen awareness at congregation, synod, and churchwide levels of Christian and Lutheran roles in Indian boarding schools, through creation of adult and children/youth educational programs and materials and through consistent publishing of articles in all of the church’s publications;
3. Provide on-going recognition of and support for the growing network of lay people and clergy volunteering their time in the work of the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative on Indian Boarding Schools (see [www.elca.org/IndianBoardingSchools](http://www.elca.org/IndianBoardingSchools)) to locate all known records related to the ELCA’s predecessor bodies’ involvement with Indian boarding and day schools and to educate others about Indian boarding schools;
4. Encourage ELCA affiliate ministries to commit to learning the truth of their involvement with Indian boarding schools, in partnership with the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative; and to responsibly create paths to healing and repair;
5. Organize and care for all information in the ELCA’s possession that was recorded about Indian boarding and day schools and the students who attended them, forcibly or otherwise; carry out this work in partnership with the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative and the ELCA Archives; recognize that this information belongs to and is a source of healing for student survivors, their descendants, communities, and Tribal Nations; and ensure that the records and research are made accessible to Indian boarding school survivors and their families in a responsible manner; and
6. Identify sources of funding to sufficiently support research and organizing efforts; and to sufficiently support digitization and labeling of all ELCA Indian boarding school archival records.

## **10. Northern Illinois Synod (5B) [2025]**

WHEREAS, from 1819 to 1969, countless Indian day schools and over 520 Indian boarding schools operated in the United States, with 417 receiving federal support, where Native children were forcibly taken from their families and communities, prohibited all expression of Native language and culture, and required to perform manual labor, with a goal to “Kill the Indian in him, and save the man”; and

WHEREAS, religious organizations collaborated with the federal government in operating more than half of these federally-funded schools; and predecessor denominations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) operated Bethany Indian Mission Boarding School in Wittenburg, Wisconsin, and other non-federally funded boarding schools, day schools, and related institutions; and

WHEREAS, these schools were part of a larger strategy of physical and cultural genocide that included forcing Indigenous people and Tribal Nations off of their original homelands and onto reservations so that settlers and governments could claim the stolen land for themselves, undermining sovereignty, and perpetrating extermination in multiple other ways; and

WHEREAS, boarding school students, which at one point included over 83% of all Native children, often suffered physical, sexual, emotional, and psychological abuse that caused deep trauma for the children, their families, their tribal communities, and subsequent generations; and an untold number of children died while at boarding schools (nearly 1,000 identified to date); and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has committed to work against injustices and toward healing as stated in “The Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery” (2016) and the “Declaration to American Indian and Alaska Native People” (2021); therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**, that the Northern Illinois Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to address the legacies of our church’s role in Indian Boarding Schools, through the following actions:

1. Actively invite and equip all congregations, synods, and affiliate ministries to commemorate the National Day of Remembrance for Indian Boarding Schools annually on or near September 30th;

2. Broaden and deepen awareness at the congregation, synod, and churchwide levels of Christian and Lutheran roles in Indian boarding schools, through the creation of adult and children/youth educational programs and materials, and through consistent publishing of articles in all of the church's publications;
3. Provide on-going recognition of and support for the growing network of lay people and clergy volunteering their time in the work of the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative on Indian Boarding Schools (see [www.elca.org/IndianBoardingSchools](http://www.elca.org/IndianBoardingSchools)) to locate all known records related to the ELCA's predecessor bodies' involvement with Indian boarding and day schools and to educate others about Indian boarding schools;
4. Encourage ELCA affiliate ministries to commit to learning the truth of their involvement with Indian boarding schools, in partnership with the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth Telling Initiative; and to responsibly create paths to healing and repair;
5. Organize and care for all information in the ELCA's possession that was recorded about Indian boarding and day schools and the students who attended them, forcibly or otherwise; carry out this work in partnership with the ELCA Truth-Seeking & TruthTelling Initiative and the ELCA Archives; recognize that this information belongs to and is a source of healing for student survivors, their descendants, communities, and Tribal Nations; and ensure that the records and research are made accessible to Indian boarding school survivors and their families in a responsible manner; and
6. Identify sources of funding to sufficiently support research and organizing educational efforts, and to sufficiently support digitization and labeling of all ELCA Indian boarding school archival records.

#### **11. Central-Southern Illinois Synod (5C) [2025]**

WHEREAS, from 1819 to 1969, countless Indian day schools and over 520 Indian boarding schools operated in the United States, with 417 receiving federal support, where Native children were forcibly taken from their families and communities, prohibited all expression of Native language and culture, and required to perform manual labor, with a goal to "Kill the Indian in him, and save the man"; and

WHEREAS, religious organizations collaborated with the federal government in operating more than half of these federally funded schools; and predecessor denominations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) operated Bethany Indian Mission Boarding School in Wittenburg, Wisconsin, and other non-federally funded boarding schools, day schools, and related institutions; and

WHEREAS, these schools were part of a larger strategy of physical and cultural genocide that included forcing Indigenous people and Tribal Nations off of their original homelands and onto reservations so that settlers and governments could claim the stolen land for themselves, undermining sovereignty, and perpetrating extermination in multiple other ways; and

WHEREAS, boarding school students, which at one point included over 83% of all Native children, often suffered physical, sexual, emotional, and psychological abuse that caused deep trauma for the children, their families, their tribal communities, and subsequent generations; and an untold number of children died while at boarding schools (nearly 1,000 identified to date); and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has committed to work against injustices and toward healing as stated in "The Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery" (2016) and the "Declaration to American Indian and Alaska Native People" (2021); therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Central/Southern Illinois Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to address the legacies of our church's role in Indian Boarding Schools through the following actions:

1. Actively invite and equip all congregations, synods, and affiliate ministries to commemorate the National Day of Remembrance for Indian Boarding Schools annually on or near September 30th;
2. Broaden and deepen awareness at congregation, synod, and churchwide levels of Christian and Lutheran roles in Indian boarding schools, through creation of adult and children/youth educational programs and materials and through consistent publishing of articles in all of the church's publications;
3. Provide on-going recognition of and support for the growing network of lay people and clergy volunteering their time in the work of the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative on Indian Boarding Schools (see [www.elca.org/IndianBoardingSchools](http://www.elca.org/IndianBoardingSchools)) to locate all known records related to the ELCA's predecessor bodies' involvement with Indian boarding and day schools and to educate others about Indian boarding schools;
4. Encourage ELCA affiliate ministries to commit to learning the truth of their involvement with Indian boarding schools, in partnership with the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative; and to responsibly create paths to healing and repair;
5. Organize and care for all information in the ELCA's possession that was recorded about Indian boarding and day schools and the students who attended them, forcibly or otherwise; carry out this work in partnership with the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative and the ELCA Archives; recognize that this information belongs to and is a source of healing for student survivors, their descendants, communities, and

Tribal Nations; and ensure that the records and research are made accessible to Indian boarding school survivors and their families in a responsible manner; and

6. Identify sources of funding to sufficiently support research and organizing efforts; and to sufficiently support digitization and labeling of all ELCA Indian boarding school archival records.

## **12. Western Iowa Synod (5E) [2025]**

WHEREAS, from 1819 to 1969, countless Indian day schools and over 520 Indian boarding schools operated in the United States, with 417 receiving federal support, where Native children were forcibly taken from their families and communities, prohibited all expression of Native language and culture, and required to perform manual labor, with a goal to “Kill the Indian in him, and save the man”; and

WHEREAS, religious organizations collaborated with the federal government in operating more than half of these federally-funded schools; and predecessor denominations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) operated Bethany Indian Mission Boarding School in Wittenburg, Wisconsin, and other non-federally funded boarding schools, day schools, and related institutions; and

WHEREAS, these schools were part of a larger strategy of physical and cultural genocide that included forcing Indigenous people and Tribal Nations off of their original homelands and onto reservations so that settlers and governments could claim the stolen land for themselves, undermining sovereignty, and perpetrating extermination in multiple other ways; and

WHEREAS, boarding school students, which at one point included over 83% of all Native children, often suffered physical, sexual, emotional, and psychological abuse that caused deep trauma for the children, their families, their tribal communities, and subsequent generations; and an untold number of children died while at boarding schools (nearly 1,000 identified to date); and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has committed to work against injustices and toward healing as stated in “The Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery” (2016) and the “Declaration to American Indian and Alaska Native People” (2021); therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**, that the Western Iowa Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to address the legacies of our church’s role in Indian Boarding Schools through the following actions:

1. Actively invite and equip all congregations, synods, and affiliate ministries to commemorate the National Day of Remembrance for Indian Boarding Schools annually on or near September 30th;
2. Broaden and deepen awareness at congregation, synod, and churchwide levels of Christian and Lutheran roles in Indian boarding schools, through creation of adult and children/youth educational programs and materials and through consistent publishing of articles in all of the church’s publications;
3. Provide on-going recognition of and support for the growing network of lay people and clergy volunteering their time in the work of the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative on Indian Boarding Schools (see [www.elca.org/IndianBoardingSchools](http://www.elca.org/IndianBoardingSchools)) to locate all known records related to the ELCA’s predecessor bodies’ involvement with Indian boarding and day schools and to educate others about Indian boarding schools;
4. Encourage ELCA affiliate ministries to commit to learning the truth of their involvement with Indian boarding schools, in partnership with the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative; and to responsibly create paths to healing and repair;
5. Organize and care for all information in the ELCA’s possession that was recorded about Indian boarding and day schools and the students who attended them, forcibly or otherwise; carry out this work in partnership with the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative and the ELCA Archives; recognize that this information belongs to and is a source of healing for student survivors, their descendants, communities, and Tribal Nations; and ensure that the records and research are made accessible to Indian boarding school survivors and their families in a responsible manner; and
6. Identify sources of funding to sufficiently support research and organizing efforts; and to sufficiently support digitization and labeling of all ELCA Indian boarding school archival records.

## **13. Northeastern Iowa Synod (5F) [2025]**

WHEREAS, from 1819 to 1969, numerous Indian day schools and over 520 Indian boarding schools operated in the United States, with 417 receiving federal support, where Native children were forcibly separated from families, prohibited from using Native languages and practicing cultures, and compelled to perform manual labor, to “Kill the Indian in him, and save the man”; and

WHEREAS, religious organizations collaborated with the federal government in operating more than half of these federally-funded schools; and the Norwegian Synod, a predecessor body of the ELCA, operated Bethany Indian Mission Boarding School (1884) in Wittenburg, WI, founded by Luther College alumni, supported by Northeastern Iowa area congregations, and the only Lutheran school contracting with the federal Indian Boarding School system; and

WHEREAS, these schools were part of a larger strategy of cultural genocide that included forcing Indigenous people off their original homelands onto reservations so settlers and governments could claim the stolen land, undermining tribal sovereignty, and perpetrating harm in multiple other ways; and

WHEREAS, boarding school students, which at one point included over 83% of all Native children, suffered physical, sexual, emotional, and psychological abuse causing intergenerational trauma; and an untold number of children died while at boarding schools, with nearly 1,000 deaths identified to date; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has committed to work against injustices and toward healing as stated in “The Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery” (2016) and the “Declaration to American Indian and Alaska Native People” (2021); therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Iowa Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct the churchwide organization to address the legacies of our church’s role in Indian Boarding Schools through the following actions:

1. Develop and distribute resources to all congregations, synods, and affiliate ministries to commemorate the National Day of Remembrance for Indian Boarding Schools annually on or near September 30th;
2. Create and publish by adult and children/youth educational materials about Christian and Lutheran roles in Indian boarding schools, and commit to publishing at least quarterly articles in Living Lutheran and other ELCA publications;
3. Allocate staff time and resources to support the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative on Indian Boarding Schools ([www.elca.org/IndianBoardingSchools](http://www.elca.org/IndianBoardingSchools)) in their work to document the ELCA’s predecessor bodies’ involvement with Indian boarding and day schools;
4. Establish a process to help ELCA congregations and affiliated ministries to assess their historical involvement with Indian boarding schools, in partnership with the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative, and develop paths to healing and repair;
5. Direct the ELCA Archives to establish a comprehensive preservation plan for all records and artifacts related to Indian boarding and day schools, recognizing that this information belongs to student survivors, their descendants, communities, and Tribal Nations, and ensure these records are accessible to them in a culturally appropriate manner;
6. Allocate specific funding in the churchwide budget to support the research, digitization, and proper labeling of all ELCA Indian boarding school archival records, with regular progress reports to the Church Council.

#### **14. Northern Great Lakes Synod (5G) [2025]**

WHEREAS, from 1819 to 1969, countless Indian day schools and over 520 Indian boarding schools operated in the United States, with 417 receiving federal support, where Native children were forcibly taken from their families and communities, prohibited all expression of Native language and culture, and required to perform manual labor, with a goal to “Kill the Indian in him, and save the man”; and

WHEREAS, religious organizations collaborated with the federal government in operating more than half of these federally-funded schools; and predecessor denominations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) operated Bethany Indian Mission Boarding School in Wittenburg, Wisconsin, and other non-federally funded boarding schools, day schools, and related institutions; and

WHEREAS, these schools were part of a larger strategy of physical and cultural genocide that included forcing Indigenous people and Tribal Nations off of their original homelands and onto reservations so that settlers and governments could claim the stolen land for themselves, undermining sovereignty, and perpetrating extermination in multiple other ways; and

WHEREAS, boarding school students, which at one point included over 83% of all Native children, often suffered physical, sexual, emotional, and psychological abuse that caused deep trauma for the children, their families, their tribal communities, and subsequent generations; and an untold number of children died while at boarding schools (nearly 1,000 identified to date); and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has committed to work against injustices and toward healing as stated in “The Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery” (2016) and the “Declaration to American Indian and Alaska Native People” (2021); therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Northern Great Lakes Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to address the legacies of our church’s role in Indian Boarding Schools through the following actions:

1. Actively invite and equip all congregations, synods, and affiliate ministries to commemorate the National Day of Remembrance for Indian Boarding Schools annually on or near September 30th;
2. Broaden and deepen awareness at congregation, synod, and churchwide levels of Christian and Lutheran roles in Indian boarding schools, through creation of adult and children/youth educational programs and materials and by regularly posting articles in the church’s publications;
3. Provide on-going recognition of and support for the growing network of lay people and clergy volunteering their time in the work of the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative on Indian Boarding Schools (see [www.elca.org/IndianBoardingSchools](http://www.elca.org/IndianBoardingSchools)) to locate all known records related to the ELCA’s predecessor bodies’ involvement with Indian boarding and day schools and to educate others about Indian boarding schools;



4. Encourage ELCA affiliate ministries to commit to learning the truth of their involvement with Indian boarding schools, in partnership with the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative; and to responsibly create paths to healing and repair;
5. Organize and care for all information in the ELCA's possession that was recorded about Indian boarding and day schools and the students who attended them, whether they were forcibly removed or not; carry out this work in partnership with the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative and the ELCA Archives; recognize that this information belongs to and is a source of healing for student survivors, their descendants, communities, and Tribal Nations; and ensure that the records and research are made accessible to Indian boarding school survivors and their families in a responsible manner; and
6. Identify sources of funding to sufficiently support research and organizing efforts; and to sufficiently support digitization and labeling of all ELCA Indian boarding school archival records.

#### **15. Northwest Synod of Wisconsin (5H) [2025]**

WHEREAS, from 1819 to 1969, countless Indian day schools and over 520 Indian boarding schools operated in the United States, with 417 receiving federal support, where Native children were forcibly taken from their families and communities, prohibited all expression of Native language and culture, and required to perform manual labor, with a goal to "Kill the Indian in him, and save the man"; and

WHEREAS, religious organizations collaborated with the federal government in operating more than half of these federally-funded schools; and predecessor denominations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) operated Bethany Indian Mission Boarding School in Wittenburg, Wisconsin, and other non-federally funded boarding schools, day schools, and related institutions; and

WHEREAS, these schools were part of a larger strategy of physical and cultural genocide that included forcing Indigenous people and Tribal Nations off of their original homelands and onto reservations so that settlers and governments could claim the stolen land for themselves, undermining sovereignty, and perpetrating extermination in multiple other ways; and

WHEREAS, boarding school students, which at one point included over 83% of all Native children, often suffered physical, sexual, emotional, and psychological abuse that caused deep trauma for the children, their families, their tribal communities, and subsequent generations; and an untold number of children died while at boarding schools (nearly 1,000 identified to date); and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has committed to work against injustices and toward healing as stated in "The Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery" (2016) and the "Declaration to American Indian and Alaska Native People" (2021); therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**, that the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to address the legacies of our church's role in Indian Boarding Schools through the following actions:

1. Actively invite and equip all congregations, synods, and affiliate ministries to commemorate the National Day of Remembrance for Indian Boarding Schools annually on or near September 30th;
2. Broaden and deepen awareness at congregation, synod, and churchwide levels of Christian and Lutheran roles in Indian boarding schools, through creation of adult and children/youth educational programs and materials and through consistent publishing of articles in all of the church's publications;
3. Provide on-going recognition of and support for the growing network of lay people and clergy volunteering their time in the work of the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative on Indian Boarding Schools (see [www.elca.org/IndianBoardingSchools](http://www.elca.org/IndianBoardingSchools)) to locate all known records related to the ELCA's predecessor bodies' involvement with Indian boarding and day schools and to educate others about Indian boarding schools;
4. Encourage ELCA affiliate ministries to commit to learning the truth of their involvement with Indian boarding schools, in partnership with the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative; and to responsibly create paths to healing and repair;
5. Organize and care for all information in the ELCA's possession that was recorded about Indian boarding and day schools and the students who attended them, forcibly or otherwise; carry out this work in partnership with the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative and the ELCA Archives; recognize that this information belongs to and is a source of healing for student survivors, their descendants, communities, and Tribal Nations; and ensure that the records and research are made accessible to Indian boarding school survivors and their families in a responsible manner; and
6. Identify sources of funding to sufficiently support research and organizing efforts; and to sufficiently support digitization and labeling of all ELCA Indian boarding school archival records.

#### **16. East-Central Synod of Wisconsin (5I) [2025]**

WHEREAS, from 1819 to 1969, countless Indian day schools and over 520 Indian boarding schools operated in the United States, with 417 receiving federal support, where Native children were forcibly taken from their families and communities, prohibited all expression of Native language and culture, and required to perform manual labor, with a goal to "Kill the Indian in him, and save the man"; and



WHEREAS, religious organizations collaborated with the federal government in operating more than half of these federally-funded schools; and predecessor denominations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) operated Bethany Indian Mission Boarding School in Wittenburg, Wisconsin, and other non-federally funded boarding schools, day schools, and related institutions; and

WHEREAS, these schools were part of a larger strategy of physical and cultural genocide that included forcing Indigenous people and Tribal Nations off of their original homelands and onto reservations so that settlers and governments could claim the stolen land for themselves, undermining sovereignty, and perpetrating extermination in multiple other ways; and

WHEREAS, boarding school students, which at one point included over 83% of all Native children, often suffered physical, sexual, emotional, and psychological abuse that caused deep trauma for the children, their families, their tribal communities, and subsequent generations; and an untold number of children died while at boarding schools (nearly 1,000 identified to date); and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has committed to work against injustices and toward healing as stated in “The Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery” (2016) and the “Declaration to American Indian and Alaska Native People” (2021); therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**, that the East Central Synod Wisconsin Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to address the legacies of our church’s role in Indian Boarding Schools through the following actions:

1. Actively invite and equip all congregations, synods, and affiliate ministries to commemorate the National Day of Remembrance for Indian Boarding Schools annually on or near September 30th;
2. Broaden and deepen awareness at congregation, synod, and churchwide levels of Christian and Lutheran roles in Indian boarding schools, through creation of adult and children/youth educational programs and materials and through consistent publishing of articles in all of the church’s publications;
3. Provide on-going recognition of and support for the growing network of lay people and clergy volunteering their time in the work of the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative on Indian Boarding Schools (see [www.elca.org/IndianBoardingSchools](http://www.elca.org/IndianBoardingSchools)) to locate all known records related to the ELCA’s predecessor bodies’ involvement with Indian boarding and day schools and to educate others about Indian boarding schools;
4. Encourage ELCA affiliate ministries to commit to learning the truth of their involvement with Indian boarding schools, in partnership with the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative; and to responsibly create paths to healing and repair;
5. Organize and care for all information in the ELCA’s possession that was recorded about Indian boarding and day schools and the students who attended them, forcibly or otherwise; carry out this work in partnership with the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative and the ELCA Archives; recognize that this information belongs to and is a source of healing for student survivors, their descendants, communities, and Tribal Nations; and ensure that the records and research are made accessible to Indian boarding school survivors and their families in a responsible manner; and
6. Identify sources of funding to sufficiently support research and organizing efforts; and to sufficiently support digitization and labeling of all ELCA Indian boarding school archival records

#### **17. Greater Milwaukee Synod (5J) [2025]**

WHEREAS, from 1819 to 1969, countless Indian Day Schools and over 520 Indian Boarding Schools operated in the United States, where Native American children were forcibly taken from their families and communities, prohibited from using their Native languages and expressing their cultures, and were subjected to manual labor and other disciplinary measures that forced their compliance and assimilation into the dominant White culture; and

WHEREAS, religious organizations and denominations, including predecessor bodies of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), operated over half of these schools and contributed to a system that caused: sexual, emotional and psychological abuse; the death of many children through suicide or physical abuse; and subsequent multi-generational trauma in their tribal communities during and after the boarding school period; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has committed to work against injustices and toward healing as stated in “The Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery” (2016) and the “Declaration to American Indian and Alaska Native People” (2021); therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**, that the Greater Milwaukee Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA to:

1. Request that it address the legacies of our Church’s participation in Indian Boarding Schools by broadening and deepening our awareness at the congregational, synodical and churchwide levels, and explore our role as Lutheran Christians in this injustice; and
2. Identify, secure, and maintain funding to support the ongoing truth-seeking efforts by the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative and affiliate ministries that foster healing and reconciliation with Native communities—including, but not limited to: the location, preservation, and digitization of archival records;

the organization of, care of, and access to all information about Indian Boarding Schools and Day Schools by survivors, their descendants, communities, and Tribal Nations; and

3. Provide on-going recognition of and support for the growing network of lay people and clergy volunteering their time in the work of truth-seeking and truth-telling about Indian Boarding Schools to responsibly creating paths to healing and repair, such as commemorating the National Day of Remembrance for Indian Boarding Schools annually near September 30th.

#### **18. South-Central Synod of Wisconsin (5K) [2025]**

WHEREAS, from 1819 to 1969, countless Indian day schools and over 520 Indian boarding schools operated in the United States, with 417 receiving federal support, where Native children were forcibly taken from their families and communities, prohibited all expression of Native language and culture, and required to perform manual labor, with a goal to “Kill the Indian in him, and save the man”; and

WHEREAS, religious organizations collaborated with the federal government in operating more than half of these federally-funded schools; and predecessor denominations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) operated Bethany Indian Mission Boarding School in Wittenburg, Wisconsin, and other non-federally funded boarding schools, day schools, and related institutions; and

WHEREAS, these schools were part of a larger strategy of physical and cultural genocide that included forcing Indigenous people and Tribal Nations off of their original homelands and onto reservations so that settlers and governments could claim the stolen land for themselves, undermining sovereignty, and perpetrating extermination in multiple other ways; and

WHEREAS, boarding school students, which at one point included over 83% of all Native children, often suffered physical, sexual, emotional, and psychological abuse that caused deep trauma for the children, their families, their tribal communities, and subsequent generations; and an untold number of children died while at boarding schools (nearly 1,000 identified to date); and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has committed to work against injustices and toward healing as stated in “The Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery” (2016) and the “Declaration to American Indian and Alaska Native People” (2021); therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the ELCA South Central Synod of Wisconsin Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to address the legacies of our church’s role in Indian Boarding Schools through the following actions:

1. Actively invite and equip all congregations, synods, and affiliate ministries to commemorate the National Day of Remembrance for Indian Boarding Schools annually on or near September 30th;
2. Broaden and deepen awareness at congregation, synod, and churchwide levels of Christian and Lutheran roles in Indian boarding schools, through creation of adult and children/youth educational programs and materials and through consistent publishing of articles in all of the church’s publications;
3. Provide on-going recognition of and support for the growing network of lay people and clergy volunteering their time in the work of the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative on Indian Boarding Schools (see [www.elca.org/IndianBoardingSchools](http://www.elca.org/IndianBoardingSchools)) to locate all known records related to the ELCA’s predecessor bodies’ involvement with Indian boarding and day schools and to educate others about Indian boarding schools;
4. Encourage ELCA affiliate ministries to commit to learning the truth of their involvement with Indian boarding schools, in partnership with the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative; and to responsibly create paths to healing and repair;
5. Organize and care for all information in the ELCA’s possession that was recorded about Indian boarding and day schools and the students who attended them, forcibly or otherwise; carry out this work in partnership with the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative and the ELCA Archives; recognize that this information belongs to and is a source of healing for student survivors, their descendants, communities, and Tribal Nations; and ensure that the records and research are made accessible to Indian boarding school survivors and their families in a responsible manner; and
6. Identify sources of funding to sufficiently support research and organizing efforts; and to sufficiently support digitization and labeling of all ELCA Indian boarding school archival records.

#### **19. Southeast Michigan Synod (6A) [2025]**

WHEREAS, Indian Boarding Schools were institutions that forcibly took Native children from their families and communities, prohibited Native language and culture, subjected them to harsh conditions, forced labor, and abuse. They were part of a larger system of physical and cultural genocide; and

WHEREAS, from 1819 to 1969, 520 Indian Boarding Schools operated in the United States, with over 1,000 additional institutions operated as day schools, orphanages, etc. Almost 19,000 children were forcibly enrolled, and enrollment comprised over 80% of all Native children at one point. In Michigan, there were five Indian Boarding Schools and over 30 similar institutions (with one possible Indian Day School being investigated within Synodical boundaries); and

WHEREAS, religious communities operated over 50% of these nationally institutions, and eight had Lutheran affiliation. A predecessor denomination of the ELCA (the Norwegian Synod) operated one from 1883 to 1933 as the Bethany Indian Mission

Boarding School in Wittenburg, Wisconsin; and

WHEREAS, over 9,000 students died at over 50 Indian Boarding Schools, with more deaths still being discovered. Native Children also suffered physical, sexual, emotional, and psychological abuse at these institutions. This abuse traumatized the children, their families, their tribal communities, and subsequent generations; and

WHEREAS, previously, the ELCA Churchwide Assembly has committed to truth-seeking, anti-racism, and justice including the “Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery” in 2016. This work continued with the “Declaration to American Indian and Alaska Native People” in 2021 and the launch of the Truth and Healing movement in 2023; and

WHEREAS, since 2007, racial reconciliation has been a priority for the Southeast Michigan Synod, such as Synod Council’s “Covenant of Racial Reconciliation.” The Synod further resolved to promote additional anti-racism work in 2017; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the 2025 Southeast Michigan Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to address the legacies of our church’s role in Indian Boarding Schools by broadening and deepening awareness at congregational, synod, and churchwide levels of Christian and Lutheran roles in Indian boarding schools; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2025 Southeast Michigan Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to identify, secure, and maintain funding to support ongoing truth-seeking efforts by the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative and other initiatives that foster healing and reconciliation with Native communities, including but not limited: to the location, preservation, and digitization of archival records; the organization of, care of, and access to all information about Indian Boarding Schools and Day Schools by students survivors, their descendants, communities, and Tribal Nations; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2025 Southeast Michigan Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct the ELCA to provide on-going support for and encouragement to congregations, synods, and ministries learning truth about Indian Boarding Schools to responsibly create paths to healing and repair, such as by commemorating the National Day of Remembrance for Indian Boarding Schools annually near September 30th.

## **20. North/West Lower Michigan Synod (6B) [2025]**

WHEREAS, from 1819 to 1969, countless American Indian Day Schools and over 520 American Indian Boarding Schools operated in the United States; and

WHEREAS, religious organizations and denominations (including the predecessor bodies of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) operated over half of these schools; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has committed to work against injustice and toward healing as stated in “The Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery” (2016) and the “Declaration to American Indian and Alaska Native People” (2021), therefore, be it

RESOLVED that the 2025 North/West Lower Michigan Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to continue to address the legacies of our church’s role in American Indian Boarding Schools through the following actions:

1. Actively invite and equip all congregations, synods, and affiliate ministries to commemorate the National Day of Remembrance for Indian Boarding Schools annually on or near September 30;
2. Broaden and deepen awareness at congregation, synod, and churchwide levels of Christian and Lutheran roles in American Indian boarding schools, through the creation of adult, children, and youth educational programs and materials, and through consistent publishing of articles in the church’s publications;
3. Provide on-going recognition of and support for the growing network of lay people and clergy volunteering their time in the work of the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative on American Indian boarding schools to locate all known records related to the ELCA’s predecessor bodies’ involvement with American Indian boarding and day schools and to educate others about American Indian boarding schools;
4. Encourage ELCA affiliate ministries to commit to learning the truth of their involvement with Indian boarding schools in partnership with the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative; and to responsibly create paths to healing and repair;
5. Organize and care for all information in the ELCA’s possession that was recorded about American Indian boarding and day schools and the students who attended them, forcibly or otherwise; carry out this work in partnership with the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative and the ELCA Archives; recognize that this information belongs to and is a source of healing for student survivors, their descendants, communities, and Tribal Nations; and ensure that the records and research are made accessible to American Indian boarding school survivors and their families in a responsible manner; and
6. Identify sources of funding to sufficiently support research and organization efforts, and to sufficiently support the digitization and labeling of all ELCA American Indian boarding school archival records.

## **21. Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod (8G) [2025]**

WHEREAS, from 1819 to 1969, countless Indian day schools and over 520 Indian boarding schools operated in the United States, with 417 receiving federal support, where Native children were forcibly taken from their families and communities, prohibited all expression of Native language and culture, and required to perform manual labor, with a goal to “Kill the Indian in him, and save the man”; and

WHEREAS, religious organizations collaborated with the federal government in operating more than half of these federally-funded schools; and predecessor denominations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) operated Bethany Indian Mission Boarding School in Wittenburg, Wisconsin, and other non-federally funded boarding schools, day schools, and related institutions; and

WHEREAS, these schools were part of a larger strategy of physical and cultural genocide that included forcing Indigenous people and Tribal Nations off of their original homelands and onto reservations so that settlers and governments could claim the stolen land for themselves, undermining sovereignty, and perpetrating extermination in multiple other ways; and

WHEREAS, boarding school students, which at one point included over 83% of all Native children, often suffered physical, sexual, emotional, and psychological abuse that caused deep trauma for the children, their families, their tribal communities, and subsequent generations; and an untold number of children died while at boarding schools (nearly 1,000 identified to date); and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has committed to work against injustices and toward healing as stated in “The Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery” (2016) and the “Declaration to American Indian and Alaska Native People” (2021); therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**, that the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod in assembly memorialize the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to address the legacies of our church’s role in Indian Boarding Schools through the following actions:

1. Actively invite and equip all congregations, synods, and affiliate ministries to commemorate the National Day of Remembrance for Indian Boarding Schools annually on or near September 30th;
2. Broaden and deepen awareness at congregation, synod, and churchwide levels of Christian and Lutheran roles in Indian boarding schools, through creation of adult and children/youth educational programs and materials and through consistent publishing of articles in all of the church’s publications;
3. Provide on-going recognition of and support for the growing network of lay people and clergy volunteering their time in the work of the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative on Indian Boarding Schools to locate all known records related to the ELCA’s predecessor bodies’ involvement with Indian boarding and day schools and to educate others about Indian boarding schools;
4. Encourage ELCA affiliate ministries to commit to learning the truth of their involvement with Indian boarding schools, in partnership with the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative; and to responsibly create paths to healing and repair;
5. Organize and care for all information in the ELCA’s possession that was recorded about Indian boarding and day schools and the students who attended them, forcibly or otherwise; carry out this work in partnership with the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative and the ELCA Archives; recognize that this information belongs to and is a source of healing for student survivors, their descendants, communities, and Tribal Nations; and ensure that the records and research are made accessible to Indian boarding school survivors and their families in a responsible manner; and
6. Identify sources of funding to sufficiently support research and organizing efforts; and to sufficiently support digitization and labeling of all ELCA Indian boarding school archival records.

## **22. Florida-Bahamas Synod (9E) [2025]**

WHEREAS, from 1819 to 1969, Indian Boarding Schools and Day Schools operated in the United States, which: forcibly removed Native children from their families and communities, prohibited Native language and culture, and subjected them to harsh conditions as well as forced assimilation; and

WHEREAS, religious organizations, including predecessor bodies of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), operated over half of these schools and contributed to a system that caused: physical and cultural genocide, generational trauma, cultural erasure, as well as physical, emotional, and psychological abuse; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has committed to truth-seeking and justice through actions including the “Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery” (2016) and the “Declaration to American Indian and Alaska Native People” (2021); therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**, that the Florida-Bahamas Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to address the legacies of our church’s role in Indian Boarding Schools by broadening and deepening awareness at congregational, synod, and churchwide levels of Christian and Lutheran roles in Indian boarding schools; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, that the ELCA identify, secure, and maintain funding to support ongoing truth-seeking efforts by the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative and other initiatives that foster healing and reconciliation with Native communities, including but not limited to: the location, preservation, and digitization of archival records; the organization of, care of, and access to all information about Indian Boarding Schools and Day Schools by students, survivors, their descendants, communities, and Tribal Nations; and be it further



RESOLVED, that the ELCA provide on-going support for and encouragement to congregations, synods, and ministries learning truth about Indian Boarding Schools to responsibly create paths to healing and repair, such as by commemorating the National Day of Remembrance for Indian Boarding Schools annually near September 30th.

### *Background*

The work of identifying the myriad ways that Lutheran church bodies, ELCA predecessor church bodies in particular, were involved in supporting or operating Indian boarding schools has been happening for three-plus years by the ELCA's Truth-Seeking and Truth-Telling Initiative (TSTTI). The initiative, commissioned in part by the ELCA's Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery Task Force, has been led and organized by co-leads Vance Blackfox, the director of the ELCA's Indigenous Ministries and Tribal Relations, and Elizabeth Andress, volunteer lay leader and primary organizer. Nearly 200 Lutherans have volunteered their time and engaged in the work at varying levels, and the TSTTI has partnered with multiple ministries and organizations as well, including the ELCA Archives. The work accomplished thus far is deep and impressive considering that the TSTTI has only rolled out to 27 synods/10 states, with plans to roll out to all remaining synods later in 2025.

The TSTTI first worked closely with Luther Seminary and Region 3 Archives (ELCA), and its former archivist, Paul Daniels, to review the records of the Bethany Indian Mission Boarding School that had been kept secure for many years at the archives. Paul Daniels and a team of TSTTI volunteers worked very hard to catalogue the numerous boxes of records before deciding to relocate the records to the ELCA Archives where they would be housed and digitized for potential accessibility by Indian boarding school students, survivors, and their descendants. Bethany was the only boarding school operated by Lutherans listed by the Department of Interior's federal report on Indian boarding schools as federally funded. There are additional Indian boarding and day schools that were operated or supported by Lutherans that were not federally funded. One of the next projects of the TSTTI will be to research those schools and locate any records that might still exist.

The actual work related to Indian boarding school records and research is being done by those already engaged with the TSTTI and those who will answer the invitation to engage in the future.

It appears that what the memorial is requesting is support regarding education, awareness, and resources. "The following actions" are opportunities that are not yet supported fully by this church:

1. Awareness building by actively asking for participation in the National Day of Remembrance for Indian Boarding Schools by the entire ELCA.
2. Education resources and consistent communication about the work in ELCA publications.
3. Consistent recognition of the TSTTI for the sake of awareness building and education.
4. Encouraging deeper partnerships between ELCA ministries and the TSTTI for the sake of education and greater advocacy/action.
5. Affirming continued partnership between the TSTTI and the ELCA Archives and affirm that the records and research in the church's possession belong to Indigenous people.
6. A request for funding to support the ongoing work of TSTTI and related archival work.

Although the original memorial used the term "commemorate" for the National Day of Remembrance for Indian Boarding Schools, a better descriptor might be "observe," so as to avoid confusion with this church's calendar of commemorations that lists persons who have been witnesses to Christ in church, community, and society. This church also observes important days that are set apart in other ways, such as Juneteenth or the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

While educational resources and communication/awareness building will require financial support to accomplish respectfully and effectively, churchwide staff can raise general awareness through social media and through articles in publications such as *Living Lutheran*. However, it is the final opportunity (no. 6) that requests altogether new financial support to expand the work and accomplish the goals of the TSTTI and archival support. The ELCA Archives team has been a strong partner in the work already, having begun caring for and digitizing the Bethany records, but the amount of funding that would be needed beyond the immediate need to digitize the Bethany Indian Mission records is unknown as the records that might exist within ELCA repositories and elsewhere that relate directly to Indian boarding and day schools are unknown. Funding to support the work of locating and collecting records by the TSTTI and the organizing and digitizing by the ELCA Archives will be necessary.

It is important to note that the work of the TSTTI is expansive and is not only about searching for records, though that work is primary. Within its sphere of influence and the 27 synods the TSTTI has already begun educating and building awareness. The Episcopal Church U.S.A. at its 80th General Convention in 2022 resolved to allocate \$2.5M for the work of telling the truth about The Episcopal Church's history with Indian boarding schools. While the TSTTI does not expect similar financial support, receiving some support, financial and otherwise, for the growth and reach of the TSTTI and its network is definitely its hope.

*Recommended for assembly action*

To receive with gratitude the memorials on “Indian Boarding School Remembrance” from Alaska Synod, Montana Synod, Sierra Pacific Synod, Southwest California Synod, Pacifica Synod, Western North Dakota Synod, Northeastern Minnesota Synod, Saint Paul Area Synod, Metropolitan Chicago Synod, Northern Illinois Synod, Central-Southern Illinois Synod, Western Iowa Synod, Northeastern Iowa Synod, Northern Great Lakes Synod, Northwest Synod of Wisconsin, East-Central Synod of Wisconsin, Greater Milwaukee Synod, South-Central Synod of Wisconsin, Southeast Michigan Synod, North/West Lower Michigan Synod, Metropolitan Washington DC Synod, and the Florida-Bahamas Synod;

To address the legacies of this church’s role in Indian boarding schools through the following actions:

1. Encourage and equip all congregations, synods, and ministries affiliated with or related to the ELCA to observe the National Day of Remembrance for Indian Boarding Schools annually on or near September 30th;
2. Urge Augsburg Fortress and the Service and Justice unit, in consultation with other appropriate churchwide organization home areas, to create adult and children/youth educational programs and materials concerning Christian and Lutheran roles in Indian boarding schools to broaden and deepen awareness at congregations, synods, and ministries affiliated with or related to the ELCA; and to consistently publish articles in all of this church’s publications;
3. Provide on-going recognition of and support for the growing network of lay people and rostered ministers volunteering their time in the work of the ELCA Truth-Seeking and Truth-Telling Initiative on Indian Boarding Schools (see [www.elca.org/IndianBoardingSchools](http://www.elca.org/IndianBoardingSchools)) to locate all known records related to the ELCA’s predecessor bodies’ involvement with Indian boarding and day schools and to educate others about Indian boarding schools;
4. Encourage ministries affiliated with or related to the ELCA to commit to learning the truth of their involvement with Indian boarding schools, in partnership with the ELCA Truth-Seeking and Truth-Telling Initiative and to responsibly create paths to healing and repair;
5. Organize and care for all information in the ELCA’s possession that was recorded about Indian boarding and day schools and the students who attended them, forcibly or otherwise; carry out this work in partnership with the ELCA Truth-Seeking and Truth-Telling Initiative and the ELCA Archives; recognize that this information belongs to and is a source of healing for student survivors, their descendants, communities, and Tribal Nations; and ensure that the records and research are made accessible to Indian boarding school survivors and their families in a responsible manner; and
6. Direct the churchwide organization to identify the revenue source(s) to sufficiently support research and organizing efforts, and to sufficiently support digitization and labeling of all Indian boarding school records in the ELCA Archives.

***Category A4: Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women***

**1. Alaska Synod (1A) [2025]**

WHEREAS, in the United States, violence against American Indian and Alaska Native women has reached devastating levels, with over 5,700 reported missing in 2016 according to FBI data, and approximately 4,200 missing and murdered cases remain unsolved according to the Bureau of Indian Affairs; and

WHEREAS, American Indian and Alaska Native women face disproportionate rates of violence compared to non-Hispanic White women, being three times more likely to experience murder, twice as likely to experience rape, and five times more likely to experience physical violence by an interracial intimate partner, with over 96% of sexual violence perpetrated by non-Indigenous men; and

WHEREAS, American Indian and Alaska Native families seeking justice face a complex maze of jurisdictional barriers between federal, state, and tribal authorities, with this jurisdictional confusion often serving as justification for inadequate investigation of cases, insufficient data collection, and lack of accountability, particularly affecting Indigenous women in urban areas; and

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has committed to addressing injustices against Indigenous peoples through its “Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery” (2016) and “Declaration to American Indian and Alaska Native People” (2021), while also addressing gender-based violence through various Social Statements and Messages; and

WHEREAS, the Women of the ELCA have shown leadership through their work on human trafficking, child protection, and Truth and Healing Movement activities; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Alaska Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct the churchwide organization to address the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) through the following actions:

- To strengthen education by requesting Augsburg Fortress, ELCA Hunger Appeal, and the ELCA communications and service and justice staff work together to:



- Develop educational resources about the prevalence and origins of this crisis
- Commemorate MMIW Awareness Day annually on May 5
- Promote the wearing of red and participation in educational opportunities and advocacy opportunities for missing and murdered Indigenous women
- To lament and repent by requesting Augsburg Fortress and the ELCA worship staff work together to:
  - Provide prayers of repentance and intercession for congregational and synodical use
  - Plan a public service at the 2028 Churchwide Assembly of lament and repentance that leads to further actions toward healing people
- To advance advocacy and partnership by requesting the ELCA service and justice, witnessing in society, and advocacy staff to:
  - Support legislation at state, local, and national levels addressing MMIW
  - Collaborate with governmental, ecclesiastical, and non-profit organizations to increase public awareness and provide concrete ways for congregations to support affected families through prayer, search efforts, and appropriate outreach.

## **2. Montana Synod (1F) [2025]**

WHEREAS, in the United States, violence against American Indian and Alaska Native women has reached devastating levels, with over 5,700 reported missing in 2016 according to FBI data, and approximately 4,200 missing and murdered cases remain unsolved according to the Bureau of Indian Affairs; and

WHEREAS, American Indian and Alaska Native women face disproportionate rates of violence compared to non-Hispanic White women, being three times more likely to experience murder, twice as likely to experience rape, and five times more likely to experience physical violence by an interracial intimate partner, with over 96% of sexual violence perpetrated by non-Indigenous men; and

WHEREAS, American Indian and Alaska Native children and men also face disproportionate rates of violence and are reported missing or murdered at higher rates than non-Native children and men; and

WHEREAS, American Indian and Alaska Native families seeking justice face a complex maze of jurisdictional barriers between federal, state, and tribal authorities, with this jurisdictional confusion often serving as justification for inadequate investigation of cases, insufficient data collection, and lack of accountability, particularly affecting Indigenous women in urban areas; and

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has committed to addressing injustices against Indigenous peoples through its “Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery” (2016) and “Declaration to American Indian and Alaska Native People” (2021), while also addressing gender-based violence through various Social Statements and Messages; and

WHEREAS, the Women of the ELCA have shown leadership through their work on human trafficking, child protection, and Truth and Healing Movement activities; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Montana Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct the churchwide organization to address the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous People through the following actions:

- To strengthen education by requesting Augsburg Fortress, ELCA Hunger Appeal, and the ELCA communications and service and justice staff work together to:
  - Develop educational resources about the prevalence and origins of this crisis
  - Commemorate MMIP Awareness Day annually on May 5
  - Promoting the wearing of red and participation in educational opportunities and advocacy opportunities for missing and murdered Indigenous women, children and men
- To lament and repent by requesting Augsburg Fortress and the ELCA worship staff work together to:
  - Provide prayers of repentance and intercession for congregational and synodical use
  - Plan a public service at the 2028 Churchwide Assembly of lament and repentance that leads to further actions toward healing
- To advance advocacy and partnership by requesting the ELCA service and justice, witnessing in society, and advocacy staff to:
  - Support legislation at state, local, and national levels addressing MMIP
  - Collaborate with governmental, ecclesiastical, and non-profit organizations to increase public awareness and provide concrete ways for congregations to support affected families through prayer, search efforts, and appropriate outreach.

## **3. Southwest California Synod (2B) [2025]**

RESOLVED, that the Southwest California Synod, in Assembly, memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct the churchwide organization to address the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women; and be it further

RESOLVED, the ELCA will strengthen education by requesting Augsburg Fortress, ELCA Hunger Appeal, and the ELCA communications, and service and justice staff work together to develop educational resources about the prevalence and origins of this crisis, commemorate MMIW Awareness Day annually on May 5, and promote the wearing of red and participation in educational opportunities and advocacy opportunities for missing and murdered Indigenous women; and be it further

RESOLVED, the ELCA will lament and repent by requesting Augsburg Fortress and the ELCA worship staff work together to provide prayers of repentance and intercession for congregational and synodical use, plan a public service at the 2028 Churchwide Assembly of lament and repentance that leads to further actions toward healing people; and be it further

RESOLVED, the ELCA will advance advocacy and partnership by requesting the ELCA service and justice, witnessing in society, and advocacy staff to support legislation at state, local, and national levels addressing MMIW and collaborate with governmental, ecclesiastical, and non-profit organizations to increase public awareness and provide concrete ways for congregations to support affected families through prayer, search efforts, and appropriate outreach.

#### **4. Pacifica Synod (2C) [2025]**

RESOLVED, that the Pacifica Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to request the churchwide organization to address the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2S implementing the following actions:

- In order to enhance educational initiatives, it is proposed that Augsburg Fortress, the ELCA Hunger Appeal, and the staff involved in communications, service, and justice within the ELCA collaborate on the following objectives:
  - To create educational resources that elucidate the prevalence and origins of this crisis.
  - To commemorate Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls Awareness Day on an annual basis, specifically on May 5.
  - To advocate for the wearing of red and encourage engagement in educational and advocacy activities aimed at addressing the issues faced by missing and murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2S.
- To express lament and seek repentance by inviting Augsburg Fortress and the ELCA worship staff to collaborate on:
  - Offering prayers of repentance and intercession for congregational and synodical use.
  - Organizing a public service at the 2028 Churchwide Assembly of Lament and Repentance that fosters further actions toward healing individuals.
- To promote advocacy and partnership through the engagement of the ELCA Service and Justice, while witnessing within society, the advocacy staff is requested to:
  - Support legislation at state, local, and national levels that addresses Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2S.
  - Collaborate with governmental, ecclesiastical, and non-profit organizations to enhance public search initiatives, and suitable outreach efforts.

#### **5. Western North Dakota Synod (3A) [2025]**

WHEREAS, in the United States, violence against American Indian and Alaska Native women has reached devastating levels, with over 5,700 reported missing in 2016 according to FBI data, and approximately 4,200 missing and murdered cases remain unsolved according to the Bureau of Indian Affairs; and

WHEREAS, American Indian and Alaska Native women face disproportionate rates of violence compared to non-Hispanic White women, being three times more likely to experience murder, twice as likely to experience rape, and five times more likely to experience physical violence by an interracial intimate partner, with over 96% of sexual violence perpetrated by non-Indigenous men; and

WHEREAS, American Indian and Alaska Native families seeking justice face a complex maze of jurisdictional barriers between federal, state, and tribal authorities, with this jurisdictional confusion often serving as justification for inadequate investigation of cases, insufficient data collection, and lack of accountability, particularly affecting Indigenous women in urban areas; and

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has committed to addressing injustices against Indigenous peoples through its “Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery” (2016) and “Declaration to American Indian and Alaska Native People” (2021), while also addressing gender-based violence through various Social Statements and Messages; and

WHEREAS, the Women of the ELCA have shown leadership through their work on human trafficking, child protection, and Truth and Healing Movement activities; and

WHEREAS, the Western North Dakota Synod Council, on April 8, 2025, unanimously approved sending this memorial to the 2025 Western North Dakota Synod Assembly for their affirmation; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Western North Dakota Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of

the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct the churchwide organization to address the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women through the following actions:

- To strengthen education by requesting Augsburg Fortress, ELCA Hunger Appeal, and the ELCA communications and service and justice staff work together to:
  - Develop educational resources about the prevalence and origins of this crisis,
  - Commemorate MMIW Awareness Day annually on May 5,
  - Promote the wearing of red and participation in educational opportunities and advocacy opportunities for missing and murdered Indigenous women.
- To lament and repent by requesting Augsburg Fortress and the ELCA worship staff work together to:
  - Provide prayers of repentance and intercession for congregational and synodical use,
  - Plan a public service at the 2028 Churchwide Assembly of lament and repentance that leads to further actions toward healing people.
- To advance advocacy and partnership by requesting the ELCA service and justice, witnessing in society, and advocacy staff to:
  - Support legislation at state, local, and national levels addressing MMIW,
  - Collaborate with governmental, ecclesiastical, and non-profit organizations to increase public awareness and provide concrete ways for congregations to support affected families through prayer, search efforts, and appropriate outreach.

#### **6. Northeastern Minnesota Synod (3E) [2025]**

WHEREAS, in the United States, violence against American Indian and Alaska Native women has reached devastating levels, with over 5,700 reported missing in 2016 according to FBI data, and approximately 4,200 missing and murdered cases remain unsolved according to the Bureau of Indian Affairs; and

WHEREAS, American Indian and Alaska Native women face disproportionate rates of violence compared to non-Hispanic White women, being three times more likely to experience murder, twice as likely to experience rape, and five times more likely to experience physical violence by an interracial intimate partner, with over 96% of sexual violence perpetrated by non-Indigenous men; and

WHEREAS, American Indian and Alaska Native families seeking justice face a complex maze of jurisdictional barriers between federal, state, and tribal authorities, with this jurisdictional confusion often serving as justification for inadequate investigation of cases, insufficient data collection, and lack of accountability, particularly affecting Indigenous women in urban areas; and

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has committed to addressing injustices against Indigenous peoples through its “Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery” (2016) and “Declaration to American Indian and Alaska Native People” (2021), while also addressing gender-based violence through various Social Statements and Messages; and

WHEREAS, the Women of the ELCA have shown leadership through their work on human trafficking, child protection, and Truth and Healing Movement activities; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Minnesota Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct the churchwide organization to address the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) through the following actions:

- Strengthen education by requesting Augsburg Fortress, ELCA Hunger Appeal, and the ELCA communications and service and justice staff work together to:
  - Develop educational resources about the prevalence and origins of this crisis;
  - Commemorate MMIW Awareness Day annually on May 5; and
  - Promote the wearing of red and participation in educational opportunities and advocacy opportunities for missing and murdered Indigenous women.
- Lament and repent by requesting Augsburg Fortress and the ELCA worship staff work together to:
  - Provide prayers of repentance and intercession for congregational and synodical use; and
  - Plan a public service at the 2028 Churchwide Assembly of lament and repentance that leads to further actions toward healing people.
- Advance advocacy and partnership by requesting the ELCA service and justice, witnessing in society, and advocacy staff to:
  - Support legislation at state, local, and national levels addressing MMIW; and
  - Collaborate with governmental, ecclesiastical, and non-profit organizations to increase public awareness and provide concrete ways for congregations to support affected families through prayer, search efforts, and appropriate outreach.

## **7. Minneapolis Area Synod (3G) [2025]**

WHEREAS, in the United States, violence against American Indian and Alaska Native women has reached devastating levels, with over 5,700 reported missing in 2016 according to FBI data, and approximately 4,200 missing and murdered cases remain unsolved according to the Bureau of Indian Affairs; and

WHEREAS, American Indian and Alaska Native women face disproportionate rates of violence compared to non-Hispanic White women, being three times more likely to experience murder, twice as likely to experience rape, and five times more likely to experience physical violence by an interracial intimate partner, with over 96% of sexual violence perpetrated by non-Indigenous men; and

WHEREAS, American Indian and Alaska Native families seeking justice face a complex maze of jurisdictional barriers between federal, state, and tribal authorities, with this jurisdictional confusion often serving as justification for inadequate investigation of cases, insufficient data collection, and lack of accountability, particularly affecting Indigenous women in urban areas; and

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has committed to addressing injustices against Indigenous peoples through its “Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery” (2016) and “Declaration to American Indian and Alaska Native People” (2021), while also addressing gender-based violence through various Social Statements and Messages; and

WHEREAS, the Women of the ELCA have shown leadership through their work on human trafficking, child protection, and Truth and Healing Movement activities; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Minneapolis Area Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct the churchwide organization to address the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (“MMIW”) through the following actions:

- To strengthen education by requesting Augsburg Fortress, ELCA Hunger Appeal, and the ELCA communications and service and justice staff work together to:
  - Develop educational resources about the prevalence and origins of this crisis;
  - Commemorate MMIW Awareness Day annually on May 5;
  - Promote the wearing of red and participation in educational opportunities and advocacy opportunities for missing and murdered Indigenous women.
- To lament and repent by requesting Augsburg Fortress and the ELCA worship staff work together to:
  - Provide prayers of repentance and intercession for congregational and synod use;
  - Plan a public service at the 2028 Churchwide Assembly of lament and repentance that leads to further actions toward healing people.
- To advance advocacy and partnership by requesting the ELCA service and justice, witnessing in society, and advocacy staff to:
  - Support legislation at state, local, and national levels addressing MMIW;
  - Collaborate with governmental, ecclesiastical, and non-profit organizations to increase public awareness and provide concrete ways for congregations to support affected families through prayer, search efforts, and appropriate outreach.

## **8. Metropolitan Chicago Synod (5A) [2025]**

WHEREAS, in the United States, violence against American Indian and Alaska Native women has reached devastating levels, with over 5,700 reported missing in 2016 according to FBI data, and approximately 4,200 missing and murdered cases remain unsolved according to the Bureaus of Indian Affairs; and

WHEREAS, American Indian and Alaska Native women face disproportionate rates of violence compared to non-Hispanic White women, being three times more likely to experience murder, twice as likely to experience rape, and five times more likely to experience physical violence by an interracial intimate partner, with over 96% of sexual violence perpetrated by non-Indigenous men; and

WHEREAS, American Indian and Alaska Native families seeking justice face a complex maze of jurisdictional barriers between federal, state, and tribal authorities, with this jurisdictional confusion often serving as justification for inadequate investigation of cases, insufficient data collection, and lack accountability, particularly affecting Indigenous women in urban areas; and

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has committed to addressing injustices against Indigenous peoples through its “Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery” (2016) and “Declaration to American Indian and Alaska Native People” (2021), while also addressing gender-based violence through various Social Statements and Messages; and

WHEREAS, the Women of the ELCA have shown leadership through their work on human trafficking, child protection, and Truth and Healing Movement activities; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan Chicago Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct the churchwide organization to address the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women through the following actions:

1. To strengthen education by requesting Augsburg Fortress, ELCA Hunger Appeal, Women of the ELCA, and the ELCA communications and service and justice staff work together to:
  - a. Develop educational resources about the prevalence and origins of this crisis
  - b. Commemorate MMIW Awareness Day annually on May 5

- c. Promote the wearing of red and participation in educational opportunities and advocacy opportunities for missing and murdered Indigenous women
2. To lament and repent by requesting Augsburg Fortress and the ELCA worship staff work together to:
  - a. Provide prayers of repentance and intercession for congregational and synodical use
  - b. Plan a public service at the 2028 Churchwide Assembly of lament and repentance that leads to further actions toward healing
3. To advance advocacy and partnership by requesting the ELCA service and justice, witnessing in society, and advocacy staff to:
  - a. Support legislation at local, state, and national levels addressing MMIW
  - b. Communicate ways for ELCA congregations to support such legislation
  - c. Collaborate with governmental, ecclesiastical, and non-profit organizations to increase public awareness and provide concrete ways for congregations to support affected families through prayer, search efforts, and appropriate outreach.

## **9. East-Central Synod of Wisconsin (5I) [2025]**

WHEREAS, in the United States, violence against American Indian and Alaska Native women has reached devastating levels, with over 5,700 reported missing in 2016 according to FBI data, and approximately 4,200 missing and murdered cases remain unsolved according to the Bureau of Indian Affairs; and

WHEREAS, American Indian and Alaska Native women face disproportionate rates of violence compared to non-Hispanic White women, being three times more likely to experience murder, twice as likely to experience rape, and five times more likely to experience physical violence by an interracial intimate partner, with over 96% of sexual violence perpetrated by non-Indigenous men; and

WHEREAS, American Indian and Alaska Native families seeking justice face a complex maze of jurisdictional barriers between federal, state, and tribal authorities, with this jurisdictional confusion often serving as justification for inadequate investigation of cases, insufficient data collection, and lack of accountability, particularly affecting Indigenous women in urban areas; and

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has committed to addressing injustices against Indigenous peoples through its "Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery" (2016) and "Declaration to American Indian and Alaska Native People" (2021), while also addressing gender-based violence through various Social Statements and Messages; and

WHEREAS, the Women of the ELCA have shown leadership through their work on human trafficking, child protection, and Truth and Healing Movement activities; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the East Central Synod of Wisconsin memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct the churchwide organization to address the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) through the following actions:

- To strengthen education by requesting Augsburg Fortress, ELCA World Hunger, and the ELCA communications and service and justice staff work together to:
  - Develop educational resources about the prevalence and origins of this crisis
  - Commemorate MMIW Awareness Day annually on May 5
  - Promote the wearing of red and participation in educational opportunities and advocacy opportunities for missing and murdered Indigenous women
- To lament and repent by requesting Augsburg Fortress and the ELCA worship staff work together to:
  - Provide prayers of repentance and intercession for congregational and synodical use
  - Plan a public service at the 2028 Churchwide Assembly of lament and repentance that leads to further actions toward healing people
- To advance advocacy and partnership by requesting the ELCA service and justice, witnessing in society, and advocacy staff to:
  - Support legislation at state, local, and national levels addressing MMIW
  - Collaborate with governmental, ecclesiastical, and non-profit organizations to increase public awareness and provide concrete ways for congregations to support affected families through prayer, search efforts, and appropriate outreach.

## **10. Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod (8G) [2025]**

WHEREAS, in the United States, violence against American Indian and Alaska Native women has reached devastating levels, with over 5,700 reported missing in 2016 according to FBI data, and approximately 4,200 missing and murdered cases remain unsolved according to the Bureau of Indian Affairs; and

WHEREAS, American Indian and Alaska Native women face disproportionate rates of violence compared to non-Hispanic White women, being three times more likely to experience murder, twice as likely to experience rape, and five times more likely



to experience physical violence by an interracial intimate partner, with over 96% of sexual violence perpetrated by non-Indigenous men; and

WHEREAS, American Indian and Alaska Native families seeking justice face a complex maze of jurisdictional barriers between federal, state, and tribal authorities, with this jurisdictional confusion often serving as justification for inadequate investigation of cases, insufficient data collection, and lack of accountability, particularly affecting Indigenous women in urban areas; and

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has committed to addressing injustices against Indigenous peoples through its “Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery” (2016) and “Declaration to American Indian and Alaska Native People” (2021), while also addressing gender-based violence through various Social Statements and Messages; and

WHEREAS, the Women of the ELCA have shown leadership through their work on human trafficking, child protection, and Truth and Healing Movement activities; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod in Assembly memorialize the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to direct the churchwide organization to address the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) through the following actions:

1. To strengthen education on this issue by requesting Augsburg Fortress, ELCA Hunger Appeal, and the ELCA communications and service and justice staff work together to:
  - a. Develop educational resources about the prevalence and origins of this crisis.
  - b. Commemorate MMIW Awareness Day annually on May 5.
  - c. Promote the wearing of red and participation in educational opportunities and advocacy opportunities for missing and murdered Indigenous women.
2. To lament and repent by requesting Augsburg Fortress and the ELCA worship staff work together to:
  - a. Provide prayers of repentance and intercession for congregational and synodical use.
  - b. Plan a public service at the 2028 ELCA Churchwide Assembly of lament and repentance that leads to further actions toward healing people.
3. To advance advocacy and partnership by requesting the ELCA service and justice, witnessing in society, and advocacy staff to:
  - a. Support legislation at state, local, and national levels addressing MMIW.
  - b. Collaborate with governmental, ecclesiastical, and non-profit organizations to increase public awareness and provide concrete ways for congregations to support affected families through prayer, search efforts, and appropriate outreach.

### *Background*

The Declaration of the ELCA to American Indian and Alaska Native People, adopted in 2021, reads, “we commit to advocacy for and being in solidarity with Tribal nations, MMIWGR (missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and relatives) organizations, families, and friends who have long been searching for their loved ones—Indigenous women, girls, and relatives—who have gone missing or who have been murdered.”

Since that time, the ELCA’s Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery Task Force has formed an MMIW Sub-Task Force that has begun to plan for future education about the MMIW and the National Day of Awareness. In addition, the MMIW Sub-Task Force has partnered with Women of the ELCA and Lutheran Men in Mission to expand their reach and network.

May 5 has been designated internationally as the National Day of Awareness for MMIW. May has become known informally as MMIW Awareness Month by many national organizations and Tribal groups. The ELCA’s Truth and Healing Movement, produced by ELCA’s Indigenous Ministries and Tribal Relations, has for the past three years promoted the National Day, encouraged local participation, and hosted educational events. The wearing of red in conjunction with an MMIW activity helps bring greater awareness to MMIW.

Although the original memorial used the term “commemorate” for the MMIW Awareness Day, a better descriptor might be “observe,” so as to avoid confusion with this church’s calendar of commemorations that lists persons who have been witnesses to Christ in church, community, and society. This church also observes important days that are set apart in other ways, such as Juneteenth or the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

It appears that outside of redirecting staff time, the only financial consideration would be the development of educational resources, yet that would also be minimal if the resources were provided electronically. Churchwide staff can promote general awareness of MMIW activities and educational resources through social media and through publications such as *Living Lutheran*.

The commitment and the efforts that the ELCA has made regarding MMIW so far is unique amongst the ELCA’s communion partners, or any other Christian denomination or faith community. While the efforts made thus far are vital to the ELCA’s committing “to advocacy for and being in solidarity with,” the actions requested in this memorial are all new requests and would indeed further the church’s ministry as it relates to MMIW and their families, communities, and Tribal Nations.

*Recommended for assembly action*

**To receive with gratitude the memorials on “Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women” from the Alaska Synod, Montana Synod, Southwest California Synod, Pacifica Synod, Western North Dakota Synod, Northeastern Minnesota Synod, Minneapolis Area Synod, Metropolitan Chicago Synod, East-Central Synod of Wisconsin, and Metropolitan Washington D.C., Synod; and**

**To direct the churchwide organization to address the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) through the following actions:**

- **Encourage congregations, synods and the churchwide organization to observe annually MMIW Awareness Day on May 5 and to promote the wearing of red to raise awareness of MMIW;**
- **Strengthen education by urging Augsburg Fortress, the ELCA World Hunger Education and Network’s team, and ELCA Service and Justice unit staff to work together to develop educational resources about the prevalence and origins of this crisis;**
- **Increase awareness by requesting the ELCA Strategic Communications team to promote participation in educational opportunities and advocacy opportunities for missing and murdered Indigenous women;**
- **Lament and repent by urging Augsburg Fortress and the ELCA worship team to work together to provide worship resources to include prayers of repentance and intercession for congregation and synod use;**
- **Plan a public service at the 2028 Churchwide Assembly of lament and repentance that leads to further actions toward healing people;**
- **Advance partnership by requesting the ELCA Service and Justice unit staff to collaborate with governmental, ecclesiastical, and non-profit organizations to increase public awareness and provide concrete ways for congregations to support affected families through prayer, search efforts, and appropriate outreach; and**
- **Advance advocacy by requesting the ELCA Witness in Society team to support legislation at state, local, and national levels addressing MMIW.**

#### ***Category A5: Youth Gathering DEIA***

##### **1. Minneapolis Area Synod (3G) [2025]**

WHEREAS, when asked about the greatest commandment Jesus responds, “love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these (Mark 12:29-31)”;

and, WHEREAS, institutions embracing DEIA policies (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility) have come under attack from the federal government with funding reduced, staffing drastically cut, and vulnerable populations experiencing the greatest impact;

and WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), with a membership that is approximately 96% white and 95% of the ELCA’s clergy are white; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA adopted a social message on *Human Rights* in November 2017 and a social statement entitled *Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture* in 1993 and adopted, “HOW STRATEGIC AND AUTHENTIC IS OUR DIVERSITY: A Call for Confession, Reflection, and Healing Action” in 2019. This adopted work has outlined clear theological framing, strategic goals, and concrete recommendations that provide a roadmap for our continued work; and

WHEREAS, racial injustices in the Midwest resulted in the public murder of George Floyd on May 25, 2020, an incident that requires more healing and reconciliation; and

WHEREAS, ELCA Youth Gatherings have been reflective of our larger churchwide body as noted above and there have been reports each cycle of structural and systemic injustice and racial harm; therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**, that the Minneapolis Area Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA to request that the 2027 ELCA Youth Gathering Team work with the Minneapolis Area Synod as the synod creates a rapid response team to be available throughout the 2027 ELCA Youth Gathering to increase cultural awareness and decrease harm during the event; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, that the Minneapolis Area Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA to request that the ELCA Youth Gathering Team continue to expand and require all gathering staff, volunteers and participant leaders to participate in authentic diversity training prior to the start of 2027 ELCA Youth Gathering and future gathering cycles; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, that the Minneapolis Area Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA to request that the ELCA Youth Gathering Team explore options to implement a racial equity audit for the Youth Gathering that would address barriers for participation with the goal of increasing and strengthening the leadership of our youth participants with nonwhite and intersecting identities.

## *Background*

The ELCA commits deeply to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) efforts as referenced in the social statement [\*Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture\*](#) (1993) and “[How Strategic and Authentic is Our Diversity: A Call for Confession, Reflection and Healing Action](#)” document adopted at the 2019 Churchwide Assembly. The Youth Gathering, a ministry of the ELCA, also commits deeply to DEIA policies. The ELCA’s commitment to racial justice is “inclusive, not exclusive” in creating a climate of peace, justice, freedom, and dignity that embraces all people, a climate that provides opportunities for growth, leadership, empowerment, and advocating for policies and programs that are socially and racially just. In addition to race, people of color live at the intersections and complexity of identities (age, gender, sexual orientation, ability, socio-economic status, etc.). This church’s commitment to lead with race is not at the exclusion of the fullness of identities. As stated in the social policy resolution “[Condemnation of White Supremacy and Racist Rhetoric](#)” [CA19.04.18], the ELCA calls all congregations to engage in communal study of the structures and rhetoric that empower and fuel racism and white supremacy and to take to heart the teaching of Scriptures, so all may be better equipped to speak boldly about the equal dignity of all persons in the eyes of God.

From this commitment, the ELCA Youth Gathering provided mandatory Anti-Racism training for all 2024 ELCA Youth Gathering adult leaders and provided Anti-Racism training for Team Leaders. During Fall 2024, MYLE (Multicultural Youth Leadership Event) leaders past and present were convened to recount the history of MYLE, name the systematic racism, create space for healing, and provide vision for the future. From this historical accounting and in a continued commitment to expand DEIA-centered trainings, resources, policies, procedures and structures, the ELCA Youth Gathering staff will partner directly with churchwide staff, particularly the director for racial justice, senior director for diversity, equity, and inclusion, director for gender justice and women’s empowerment, coordinator for disability ministries, coordinator for deaf ministries, and the colleagues and director of Ministries of Diverse Cultures and Communities. Through these partnerships, expanded training, resources, assessments, and audits will be implemented throughout the leadership and structure of the ELCA Youth Gathering, leading up to and including the 2027 event.

## *Financial Impact*

A racial equity audit for the Youth Gathering that would address barriers for participation would involve considerable time from churchwide organization employees and, given that there is not currently designated staff, would require the use of outside organization and facilitation. It is estimated that this would involve \$10,000-\$20,000 to hire an outside company for this work, in addition to the indirect costs for in-house work to conceptualize the survey, review drafts, provide feedback, and review the analysis and draft of the deliverables.

Additionally, to expand DEIA-centered policies, procedures and structures within the ELCA Youth Gathering through online and in-person trainings and resources for Gathering staff, team leaders, team members, volunteers, adult leaders, and youth participants would require an estimated \$15,000-\$30,000 to cover the expenses beyond what is already planned for this work in the current Gathering cycle.

## *Recommended for assembly action*

**To receive with gratitude the memorial on “Youth Gathering Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA)” from the Minneapolis Area Synod;**

**To reaffirm the commitment of the ELCA Youth Gathering team to continue and expand DEIA-centered trainings, resources, policies, procedures, and structures for the gathering staff, volunteers, and participant leaders;**

**To affirm the desire for a Rapid Response team for the 2027 ELCA Youth Gathering in partnership with the Minneapolis Area Synod and led by the ELCA director for racial justice, so that it will be replicated at all ELCA Youth Gatherings beyond 2027; and**

**To request the ELCA Youth Gathering team explore options to implement a racial equity audit for the Youth Gathering that would address barriers for participation with the goal of increasing and strengthening the leadership of the youth participants with persons of color and intersecting identities.**

## *Category A6: Affirm People of God of All Gender Identities*

### **1. Northwest Washington Synod (1B) [2025]**

WHEREAS, in “A Social Statement on Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust,” we read: “this church must work toward greater understanding of sexual orientation and gender identity...” and “such individuals are disproportionately and negatively affected by patterns of stigma, discrimination, and abuse”; and

WHEREAS, in “A Social Message on Gender-based Violence,” the ELCA stated that “Gender-based violence is sin. While it takes many forms, in all its variations gender-based violence attacks, violates and often destroys the good that God brings to life”; and

WHEREAS, the “Social Message on Human Rights” declares, “The ELCA will support domestic and international human rights institutions, foster deliberation, and engage in sustained action that seek rights for any neighbors—especially the vulnerable—who are not being treated with the dignity that is God’s gift”; and

WHEREAS, the Northwest Washington Synod, along with twenty-eight other synods and 1,093 congregations across the ELCA, are Reconciling in Christ partners with ReconcilingWorks: Lutherans for Full Participation that has advocated for the full welcome of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual/aromantic (LGBTQIA+) Lutherans in all aspects of the life of their Church, congregations, and community; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the ELCA be encouraged to speak out against harmful policies and language towards transgender, nonbinary, gender expansive, two-spirit, and genderqueer people perpetrated by government leaders and agencies, and wherever it is encountered; and be it further

RESOLVED that the ELCA, in partnership with long-time advocacy and education organization ReconcilingWorks, along with ecumenical and community partners, equip congregations, ministries, and rostered and lay leaders with information and theological background to empower us to public witness, as specified in the Strategy Towards Authentic Diversity; and be it further

RESOLVED that this church continually seek guidance from transgender, nonbinary, gender expansive, two-spirit, and genderqueer leaders both inside the Church (ReconcilingWorks, seminary scholars and students, synod staff, conference of Bishops, rostered leaders, lay leaders) and outside the Church for how to best advocate on their behalf.

## **2. New Jersey Synod (7A) [2025]**

WHEREAS, the Judeo-Christian tradition teaches that “God created humankind in God’s image” and “God saw everything that God had made, and indeed, it was very good”; and

WHEREAS, in Jesus Christ, we know that “God loves human life so much that ‘the Word became Flesh’ (John 1:14), and we know, therefore, that God’s love embraces us totally, including our sexuality” and gender identity; and

WHEREAS, in “A Social Statement on Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust,” we read: “this church must work toward greater understanding of sexual orientation and gender identity. It must seek that which is positive and life-giving while protecting from all that is harmful and destructive,” and “this church also will attend to the need for equal protection, equal opportunities, and equal responsibilities under the law, and just treatment for those with varied sexual orientation and gender identity. Such individuals are disproportionately and negatively affected by patterns of stigma, discrimination, and abuse. Likewise, it will attend to the particular needs of children and the families of those with actual or perceived differences in sexual orientation or gender identity because they are especially vulnerable to verbal, physical, emotional, spiritual, psychological, and sexual abuse”; and

WHEREAS, in “A Social Message on Gender-based Violence,” the ELCA stated that “Gender-based violence is sin. While it takes many forms, in all its variations gender-based violence attacks, violates and often destroys the good that God brings to life”; and

WHEREAS, the Social Message on Human Rights declares, “The ELCA will support domestic and international human rights institutions, foster deliberation, and engage in sustained action that seek rights for any neighbors – especially the vulnerable – who are not being treated with the dignity that is God’s gift”; and

WHEREAS, the New Jersey Synod, along with twenty-eight other synods and 1,093 congregations across the ELCA, are Reconciling in Christ partners with ReconcilingWorks: Lutherans for Full Participation that has advocated for the full welcome of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual/aromantic (LGBTQIA+) Lutherans in all aspects of the life of their Church, congregations, and community; and

WHEREAS, the current executive branch of the federal government has targeted transgender, nonbinary, gender expansive, two-spirit and genderqueer people with multiple executive orders and policies, and

WHEREAS, these executive orders and policies are harming the rights and lives of transgender, nonbinary, gender expansive, two-spirit and genderqueer people, especially children and youth, with regards to healthcare, mental health, employment, sports participation, social services, housing, and more; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the New Jersey Synod Assembly memorialize the Churchwide Assembly to publicly affirm the divinely-created goodness and beauty in all transgender, nonbinary, gender expansive, two-spirit and genderqueer people of all ages, races, ethnicities, abilities, religions, and beliefs; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the New Jersey Synod Assembly memorialize the Churchwide Assembly to commit this church to speak out against the harmful policies and language towards transgender, nonbinary, gender expansive, two-spirit and genderqueer people perpetrated by government leaders and agencies wherever it is encountered; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the New Jersey Synod Assembly memorialize the Churchwide Assembly to direct this church, in partnership with long-time advocacy and education organization ReconcilingWorks, along with ecumenical and community partners, to equip congregations, ministries, and rostered and lay leaders with information and theological background in order to empower us to public witness, as specified in the Strategy Towards Authentic Diversity; and be it further



RESOLVED, that the New Jersey Synod Assembly memorialize the Churchwide Assembly to direct this church continually to seek guidance from transgender, nonbinary, gender expansive, two-spirit and genderqueer leaders both inside the Church (ReconcilingWorks, seminary scholars and students, synod staff, Conference of Bishops, rostered leaders, lay leaders, and youth) and outside the Church for how to best advocate on their behalf in this time.

### 3. Southeastern Synod (9D) [2025]

WHEREAS, the Judeo-Christian tradition teaches that “God created humankind in God’s image” and “God saw everything that God had made, and indeed, it was very good”; and

WHEREAS, in Jesus Christ, we know that “God loves human life so much that ‘the Word became Flesh’ (John 1:14), and we know, therefore, that God’s love embraces us totally, including our sexuality” and gender identity; and

WHEREAS, in “A Social Statement on Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust,” we read: “this church must work toward greater understanding of sexual orientation and gender identity. It must seek that which is positive and life-giving while protecting from all that is harmful and destructive,” and “this church also will attend to the need for equal protection, equal opportunities, and equal responsibilities under the law, and just treatment for those with varied sexual orientation and gender identity. Such individuals are disproportionately and negatively affected by patterns of stigma, discrimination, and abuse. Likewise, it will attend to the particular needs of children and the families of those with actual or perceived differences in sexual orientation or gender identity because they are especially vulnerable to verbal, physical, emotional, spiritual, psychological, and sexual abuse”; and

WHEREAS, in “A Social Message on Gender-based Violence,” the ELCA stated that “Gender-based violence is sin. While it takes many forms, in all its variations gender-based violence attacks, violates and often destroys the good that God brings to life”; and

WHEREAS, the Social Message on Human Rights declares, “The ELCA will support domestic and international human rights institutions, foster deliberation, and engage in sustained action that seek rights for any neighbors—especially the vulnerable—who are not being treated with the dignity that is God’s gift”; and

WHEREAS, the Southeastern Synod, along with twenty-eight other synods and 1,093 congregations across the ELCA, are Reconciling in Christ partners with ReconcilingWorks: Lutherans for Full Participation that has advocated for the full welcome of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual/aromantic (LGBTQIA+) Lutherans in all aspects of the life of their Church, congregations, and community; and

WHEREAS, the current executive branch of the federal government has targeted transgender, nonbinary, gender expansive, two-spirit and genderqueer people with multiple executive orders and policies; and

WHEREAS, these executive orders and policies are harming the rights and lives of transgender, nonbinary, gender expansive, two-spirit and genderqueer people, especially children and youth, with regards to healthcare, mental health, employment, sports participation, social services, housing, and more; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that this Church publically affirms the divinely-created goodness and beauty in all transgender, nonbinary, gender expansive, two-spirit and genderqueer people of all ages, races, ethnicities, abilities, religions, and beliefs; and be it further

RESOLVED, that this Church speak out against the harmful policies and language towards transgender, nonbinary, gender expansive, two-spirit and genderqueer people perpetrated by government leaders and agencies wherever it is encountered; and be it further

RESOLVED, that this Church, in partnership with long-time advocacy and education organization ReconcilingWorks, along with ecumenical and community partners, equip congregations, ministries, and rostered and lay leaders with information and theological background in order to empower us to public witness, as specified in the “Strategy Towards Authentic Diversity”; and be it further

RESOLVED, that this Church continually seek guidance from transgender, nonbinary, gender expansive, two-spirit and genderqueer leaders both inside the Church (ReconcilingWorks, seminary scholars and students, synod staff, conference of Bishops, rostered leaders, lay leaders) and outside the Church for how to best advocate on their behalf in this time.

### *Background*

We express gratitude to the Northwest Washington Synod, New Jersey Synod, and Southeastern Synod for their memorials. The memorials call on this whole church (“the ELCA”) to speak against harmful rhetoric and policy in government and society. The New Jersey Synod and Southeastern Synod memorials also specifically call on the 2025 Churchwide Assembly “to publicly affirm the divinely created goodness and beauty in all transgender, nonbinary, gender expansive, two-spirit and genderqueer people, [and] to ‘commit this church’ to speak against harmful rhetoric and policy in government and society. The memorials also call on this whole church to collaborate with ReconcilingWorks, ecumenical partners, and community partners in faith-based education and advocacy to support persons who are transgender, nonbinary, gender expansive, two-spirit, and genderqueer—and to furthermore seek counsel from persons who so identify.



The theological bases and polity bases for certain RESOLVEDS are addressed in the response to the “Support of the Transgender Community” memorial. In short, no matter the divergences of views on gender identities within this church, this church affirms the full humanity and human rights of all persons.

One of the RESOLVEDS calls on this whole church (“the ELCA”) to be in partnership with ReconcilingWorks. The assembly can encourage all spheres of the ELCA to collaborate with them and other partners, yet due to polity and ELCA social teaching, the assembly does not have the authority to require it. However, the ELCA churchwide organization, through the Human Resources Team, collaborates with ReconcilingWorks for staff training and education, relationship, and counsel. Theological and practical education and formation related to sex, gender, and sexuality within many spheres of this church is ongoing through Gender Justice and Women’s Empowerment in the Office of the Presiding Bishop.

#### *Recommended for assembly action*

**To receive with gratitude the memorials on “Affirm Transgender, Nonbinary, Gender Expansive, Two-Spirit, and Genderqueer People of God” from the Northwest Washington Synod, New Jersey Synod, and Southeastern Synod;**

**To affirm the intent to support this church to advance public discourse and advocacy grounded in information and theological background that supports persons who are transgender, nonbinary, gender expansive, two-spirit, and genderqueer in consultation with persons who so identify; and**

**To refer continuing collaboration between the ELCA churchwide organization and ReconcilingWorks to the Office of the Presiding Bishop and the ELCA Church Council.**

#### ***Category A7: Restoration of Funding of USAID***

##### **1. Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod (8B) [2025]**

WHEREAS, the Trump administration’s termination of foreign aid projects distributed through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has adversely affected between 200 and 300 million people; and

WHEREAS, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), these detrimental effects include

- the closure of clinics around the world that serve the nearly 36 million people in “acute” malnutrition and 10 million in “severe” malnutrition
- increasing global malnutrition
- over 10,000 food grants and contracts being dissolved by the Department of Government Efficiency and the Trump administration, negatively impacting the world’s most destitute populations as well as farmers in the United States of America (USA) who sell their agricultural commodities to USAID;

and

WHEREAS, Nicolas Enrich, acting assistant administrator for global health at USAID has estimated that a year-long pause in lifesaving aid from this agency would cause between 71,000 and 166,000 additional malaria deaths (a nearly 40% increase), an increase of between 28% and 32% in tuberculosis cases worldwide, and up to 28,000 cases of emerging infectious diseases such as Ebola; and

WHEREAS, the FAO has stated that assistance from USAID is also used to care for those who have been abused, maimed, and enslaved, and that these foreign aid projects serve to establish trust between nations and continents; and

WHEREAS, deliberate and intentional withdrawing of food will cause mass starvation, which is paramount to genocide on a scale unparalleled in history; and

WHEREAS, we are commanded by Jesus to love our neighbor (Matthew 22:39, Mark 12:31, Luke 10:27), it becomes morally incumbent upon the USA to restore its financial aid and humanitarian commitment to impoverished people globally in order to ease their suffering and provide them with hope; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod in assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) to communicate to the President of the United States, the United States Congress, and other governmental offices and agencies, the ELCA’s profound dissatisfaction with the termination of USAID’s foreign aid projects, and the ELCA’s commitment to financial and food assistance for our global neighbor; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA implore the President of the United States, the United States Congress, and other governmental offices and agencies, immediately to restore any and all foreign aid projects distributed through USAID.

#### *Background*

The ELCA social statement [For Peace in God’s World](#) (1995) affirms that “...our nation has responsibility to contribute a portion of its wealth to people in poorer nations through effective economic assistance. Assistance should come in the form of both humanitarian aid needed to relieve the consequences of disasters and development assistance that contributes to improvements in the quality of life in developing economies. While the United States has been generous in providing humanitarian aid, our nation dramatically trails the rest of the industrialized world in providing

development assistance relative to our production of wealth.” (p. 16) As a church, ELCA shares its wealth through World Hunger and other ministries that enable this church to support people in need across the world.

Since the Trump administration announced closure of USAID and ensued termination of programs, Witness in Society (WiS) has been meeting with both Democratic and Republican members of Congress to express concerns about the impact of USAID closure on communities in need around the world. To date, more than 80% of humanitarian and development programs have been terminated, including those that were being implemented by ELCA companion churches. In addition to ongoing congressional meetings, WiS staff were able to bring a companion church partner from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT) to Washington, D.C., for advocacy meetings with congressional offices. In these meetings, the Health and *Diakonia* programs director conveyed how cancellations of USAID projects impacted the communities served by the ELCT.

Restoration of USAID work continues to be a priority of the ELCA’s international advocacy work. Witness in Society is continuously activating ELCA advocacy networks through [action alerts](#) that encourage members to contact their senators and representatives and express their support for humanitarian and development assistance administered by USAID. WiS staff have seen high levels of engagement from ELCA constituents on this issue and interest in [educational resources](#) on foreign aid. WiS staff have also given presentations to various ELCA groups about the issues and have utilized tools such as the advocacy [podcast](#) to raise awareness about the impact of actions taken by the administration.

*Recommended for assembly action*

**To receive with gratitude the memorial on “Restoration of Funding of USAID” from the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod;**

**To reaffirm this church’s commitment to advocacy in support of international humanitarian aid; and**

**To direct the Witness in Society Advocacy Team to seek and promote occasions for timely and impactful advocacy on restoration of USAID, including opportunities for the presiding bishop to address this issue.**

### ***Category A8: Decarbonization of the Energy Grid***

#### **1. Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod (4C) [2025]**

WHEREAS, the climate crisis is an urgent threat to all of creation, disproportionately impacting low-income communities, Indigenous peoples, communities of color, and future generations; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has long affirmed our responsibility to care for creation and has adopted numerous social statements and resolutions calling for faithful stewardship of the Earth and action on climate change (e.g., *Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice*, 1993); and

WHEREAS, the scientific consensus indicates that decarbonizing the electrical grid is one of the most immediate and impactful ways to mitigate global climate disruption; and

WHEREAS, our commitment to justice calls us not only to reduce emissions but to ensure that the transition to clean energy is rapid, equitable, and prioritizes those who have historically been marginalized or harmed by extractive industries; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has the moral authority, organizational reach, and theological grounding to act boldly in the face of environmental degradation; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Arkansas Oklahoma Synod memorializes the Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to take direct practical steps to support and push for the rapid, equitable decarbonization of the energy grid in the United States and globally; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA Churchwide Organization create a plan to assess and publicly report the current carbon footprint of its own operations—including offices, events, and travel—and a goal of transitioning to carbon-free electricity, prioritizing community-based energy sources that do not perpetuate environmental injustice; and be it further

RESOLVED, that synods and congregations be encouraged and supported in pursuing similar carbon-reduction strategies, including but not limited to transitioning to renewable energy sources, engaging in local climate justice initiatives, advocating for public policies that support equitable grid decarbonization, and forming green teams or creation care ministries with measurable goals.

#### *Background*

The ELCA churchwide organization (CWO) report on the Greenhouse Gas Reduction memorial adopted by the 2019 Churchwide Assembly is informative for this memorial. Reporting on the Greenhouse Gas Reduction memorial has been ongoing through regular visioning and review of the CWO’s sustainability efforts. The implementation of the 2019 Churchwide Assembly action on the Greenhouse Gas memorial resulted in an institution-wide effort to consider human inclusivity and planetary health in CWO activities and is expressed in a living reference document titled “Sustainable Event Guidelines” available for use in event planning.

While it has not been possible to establish a baseline from which to calculate the CWO's carbon emissions, the CWO's energy usage has been in a season of reduction. This has happened through reduced staff travel of up to 50% since 2019 as well as in the upgrades to LED lighting throughout the Lutheran Center and the ELCA Archives building in Chicago. In 2025, more than 2,100 fluorescent fixtures were replaced in both buildings. The replacement of these fixtures is projected to reduce the kilowatt hours usage from 454,131 kWh to 48,000 kWh. The project's annual energy savings are expected to offset its costs within three years. Greenhouse gas reduction is projected to be reduced by 259,140 kgCO<sub>2</sub>e. Additional savings will include less maintenance and reduction of used items in landfills and the cessation of the use of the mercury contained in typical fluorescent tubes, thus reducing the concern of hazardous materials within these facilities. Staff recently began conversations to look at the feasibility of using solar energy or wind energy on the building's rooftop. There is not enough land and ground space to install geothermal systems because of zoning. Currently, the Lutheran Center remains in good standing with a 91% Energy Star rating as a LEED-certified building.

The Meetings and Events Team in the Office of the Secretary continues to work with the many groups, synods, and units who hold meetings and events in both the Lutheran Center in Chicago and across the country. Over the past year, staff have been working with the [Creation Care Network](#) to address the many questions about reducing the ELCA's carbon footprint in the Lutheran Center.

To further address the issue of reducing the CWO's carbon footprint, the Meetings and Events Team welcomes discussion as an organization concerning its own operations. For example, small meetings of fewer than 15 people might be conducted as a virtual meeting rather than an in-person meeting to reduce travel emissions, building usage, and the overall environmental impact. Additionally, synods are encouraged to engage the Meetings and Events Team when they are planning larger meetings, events, and assemblies. The ELCA's overall outreach to hotels and conference centers, etc., is greater than what synods can do separately and thus the churchwide staff could assist them with lowering their costs and prioritizing environmental justice in their areas.

Continued advocacy for reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions is encouraged and amplified by the Witness in Society Team and colleagues. This work and the related resources are continually updated on the website hub: [Creation Care Network](#). 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. The ELCA Advocacy offices in Washington, D.C., New York City, and across three states dedicate 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 that have 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; and
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 more than 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 more than 35 young adults in the last two years. Finally, ELCA Witness in Society reaches people through the 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.

Lutherans Restoring Creation interviewed synod leaders, reviewed reports from hundreds of congregations and from a professional survey of 593 members and identified numerous lessons learned in response to this [call to action](#). While data show that 74 percent 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 congregations or synods have been able to measure their greenhouse gas emissions rates, even though there are free and affordable tools to help them do so. Lack of time, expertise, and consistent record-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 to share theological groundings for drastically reducing the collective input of energy pollution.

To support ELCA congregations and ministries in their transition to clean energy, the Mission Investment Fund of the ELCA (MIF) and the ELCA Federal Credit Union continue to provide financing and other resources to advance solar energy and other efficiency upgrades at church buildings and properties. First enacted in 2022, the Inflation

Reduction Act (IRA) expanded in 2024 to include a unique opportunity for houses of worship and other nonprofit organizations to access direct rebates (instead of tax credits) through a new Direct Pay Program. That same year, MIF launched a new webpage (<https://www.mif.elca.org/solar>) and has generated a series of communications to customers and congregations to encourage taking advantage of impactful energy and resiliency improvements while realizing energy cost savings for the long-term.

*Recommended for assembly action*

**To receive with gratitude the memorial on “Decarbonization of the Energy Grid” from the Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod;**

**To reaffirm the work of Lutherans Restoring Creation and encourage congregations and ministries to connect with its network and explore its resources for sustainable living;**

**To recognize the current efforts of the churchwide organization to reduce its carbon footprint and to request the churchwide organization consider transitioning to carbon-free electricity in its buildings by prioritizing community-based energy sources that do not perpetuate environmental injustice; and**

**To urge all expressions of the ELCA to make and continue commitments to decarbonization through adopting sustainable practices, carbon reduction goals, and environmental policy advocacy.**

## Section B

### Congregation, Synod, and Churchwide Organization Topics

#### ***Category BI: Accompaniment and Accountability of Bishops***

##### **1. Saint Paul Area Synod (3H) [2024]**

WHEREAS, “this church . . . derives its character and powers both from the sanction and representation of its congregations and from its inherent nature as an expression of the broader fellowship of the faithful.” (ELCA Constitution and Bylaws, 3.03.); and

WHEREAS, this church shall, “call forth, equip, certify, set apart, and oversee a ministry of Word and Sacrament, a ministry of Word and Service, and such other forms of ministry that will enable this church to fulfill its mission.” (ELCA Constitution and Bylaws, 4.03.c.); and

WHEREAS, responsibilities of synods of this church include “providing for pastoral care of congregations, ministers of Word and Sacrament, and ministers of Word and Service in the synod” (ELCA Constitution and Bylaws, 10.21.01.) and “encouraging and supporting persons on the rosters of this church in stewardship of their abilities, care of self, and pursuit of continuing education to undergird their effectiveness of service” (ELCA Constitution and Bylaws, 10.21.01.b.4); and

WHEREAS, our bishops are ordained ministers of Word and Sacrament, gifted and flawed; and

WHEREAS, the Church Council of the ELCA, through its adoption of Future Directions 2025, has called for a “well-governed, connected, and sustainable church;” and

WHEREAS, there is currently no documentation or policy from the ELCA for our synods to accompany, care for, and hold our bishops accountable to their actions, self-care, and responsibilities; therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**, that the Saint Paul Area Synod in assembly memorializes the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct the Church Council to create guidelines for Synod governing documents around the mutual accountability of Synod Council and bishop, specifically designed to manage and resolve conflict and promote the well-being of the bishop and the Synod Council; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, that the ELCA Church Council recommend changes to our governing documents that allow greater oversight of the actions of our synod bishops by their respective Synod Councils and the ELCA Church Council.

##### **2. Delaware-Maryland Synod (8F) [2024]**

WHEREAS, “this church... derives its character and powers both from the sanction and representation of its congregations and from its inherent nature as an expression of the broader fellowship of the faithful” (*Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* [ELCA], 3.03.); and

WHEREAS, this church shall “call forth, equip, certify, set apart, and oversee a ministry of Word and Sacrament, a ministry of Word and Service, and such other forms of ministry that will enable this church to fulfill its mission” (*ELCA Constitution and Bylaws*, 4.03.c.); and

WHEREAS, the responsibilities of synods of this church include “providing for pastoral care of congregations, ministers of Word and Sacrament, and ministers of Word and Service in the synod” (*ELCA Constitution and Bylaws*, 10.21.01.) and “encouraging and supporting persons on the rosters of this church in stewardship of their abilities, care of self, and pursuit of continuing education to undergird their effectiveness of service” (*ELCA Constitution and Bylaws*, 10.21.01.b.4); and

WHEREAS, ELCA bishops are ordained ministers of Word and Sacrament, gifted and flawed; and

WHEREAS, the Church Council of the ELCA, through its adoption of Future Directions 2025, has called for a “well-governed, connected, and sustainable church; and

WHEREAS, there is currently no documentation or policy from the ELCA for our synods to accompany, care for, and hold our bishops accountable for their actions, self-care, and the carrying out of their responsibilities; therefore, be it



RESOLVED, that the Delaware-Maryland Synod of the ELCA memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct the Church Council to create guidelines for synod governing documents around the mutual accountability of Synod Council and bishop, designed to manage and resolve conflict between and promote the well-being of the bishop and Synod Council; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA Church Council recommend changes to our governing documents that allow greater oversight of the actions of our synod bishops by their respective Synod Councils and the ELCA Church Council.

#### *Background*

The staff of the churchwide organization expresses its appreciation to the Saint Paul Area Synod and the Delaware-Maryland Synod for the concerns they raise about the mutual accountability of bishops and synod councils, changes to governance documents to increase oversight of bishops by synod councils, and for reduction of conflict in synods and attention to the wellbeing of synod bishops.

The *Constitution for Synods* in ¶S17.02. outlines a basic consultation process for simple resolution of conflict when there are concerns about a bishop's actions, and in ¶S8.57. delineates a formal process for more serious issues. Synods are often unaware of the consultation method described in ¶S17.02., however. In addition, ¶S11.04. requires the establishment of a synod Mutual Ministry Committee to provide "support and counsel" to the synod bishop.

The Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church (CRLC) raised some of these same concerns in the [report and recommendations](#) it presented to the Church Council in April of this year. In response, the Church Council took two actions that directly address the concerns expressed in the memorials. The first (p. 2, Recommendation 2.2) asks the Committee on Appeals to develop resources to help synods identify and train members of synod consultation committees in conflict resolution. The second (p. 4, Recommendation 3) established a Task Force on Interdependence and Purpose that will be recommending governance and structural improvements, among other tasks.

Because the Committee on Appeals and the Task Force on Interdependence and Purpose have already been given responsibility for addressing the broader issues addressed in the memorial, it would be the recommendation of the Office of the Secretary that it be referred to the same groups for consideration as they work on the tasks already given them by the Church Council.

#### *Recommended for assembly action*

**To receive with gratitude the memorial on "Accompaniment and Accountability of Bishops" from the Saint Paul Area Synod and the Delaware-Maryland Synod;**

**To refer the memorial to the Task Force on Interdependence and Purpose for matters concerning governance, with a report to the Church Council by Fall 2027;**

**To refer the memorial to the Committee on Appeals for matters concerning accountability and conflict resolution resources, with a report to the Church Council by Fall 2026; and**

**To encourage synods to make use of the existing consultation process, Mutual Ministry Committees, and conflict resolution training.**

#### *Category B2: Increasing Continuing Education Commitments*

##### **1. Greater Milwaukee Synod (5J) [2024]**

WHEREAS, the 1997 ELCA Churchwide Assembly set expectations for congregations and agencies to budget \$700 to \$1,000 on continuing education annually per rostered minister; and

WHEREAS, these monetary commitments have not changed in over 25 years; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Greater Milwaukee Synod Assembly memorializes the 2025 Churchwide Assembly to increase the guidelines for financial commitments by congregations and agencies for continuing education, and to create a process for these guidelines to be regularly revised.

#### *Background*

The ELCA has a long history of supporting and encouraging rostered ministers to engage in holistic and systematic approaches to lifelong learning and development as essential for effective community and congregational leadership. Moreover, the ELCA affirms that continuing education allows rostered ministers to supplement their post-seminary or theological education training to respond to a rapidly changing world. Furthermore, the fact is that rostered ministers today are facing complex challenges in society, plus the daily ministry challenges that can be emotionally and physically taxing, which often leads to ministry burnout. Equally important, rostered ministers can set the tone for their congregations and agencies by continuous education for church leaders who model the value of lifelong learning, inspiring their staff, congregation, and agency to do the same. Moreover, the ELCA affirms that continuing education is a vital investment in all rostered ministers' ongoing growth and effectiveness. It is important to note many professions in the United States require continuing education (CE) to maintain licensure, stay current with industry



standards, and ensure public safety. For example, healthcare professions, legal processes, education, finance and accounting, and engineering and architecture, to name a few, require continuing education.

It is recommended and encouraged that all ELCA rostered ministers participate in annual continuing educational courses. Second, it is recommended that the Christian Community and Leadership unit form a CE Advisory Committee using CCL staff, synod bishops, and congregational leaders tasked with yearly review and recommending appropriate increases for continuing education support in consultation with the Conference of Bishops. The CE Advisory Committee should be tasked with reviewing continuing education financial guidelines at least every three years (or more frequently if significant economic changes occur based on the Consumer Price Index [CPI]). The advisory committee should collect data on current continuing education costs, including tuition, travel, and required resources. Based on the gathered data and feedback, the advisory committee would propose updates every three years to synod financial commitment guidelines, including recommended increases and adjustments for inflation or regional differences. This process would ensure that this church's continuing education support for rostered ministers remains fair, effective, and aligned with the CPI and the mission of the ELCA.

By drawing on the skills and dedication of CCL staff, congregational leaders across this church's nine regions, plus bishops can ensure responsible stewardship of resources while still allowing for thoughtful and regular review of continuing education. Moreover, this collaborative approach leverages existing ELCA staff leadership and volunteers who demonstrate commitment to fiscal responsibility plus good stewardship. Therefore, the aforementioned would have less of an impact on the ELCA annual budget, synods and local congregations, and agencies.

*Recommended for assembly action*

**To receive with gratitude the memorial on “Increasing Continuing Education Commitments” from the Greater Milwaukee Synod;**

**To encourage congregations and agencies to increase the guidelines for financial commitments for continuing education; and**

**To refer the memorial to the Church Council, in consultation with the Christian Community and Leadership unit, to create a process for these guidelines by establishing a “Continuing Education Advisory Committee” tasked with regular reviews of the guidelines and recommending appropriate increases for continuing education support.**

### ***Category B3: Limiting Insurance Costs for Rostered Ministers***

#### **1. Allegheny Synod (8C) [2024]**

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (“ELCA”) states that “to participate in God’s mission, this church shall worship God in proclamation of the Word and administration of the sacraments” (4.02.d) and that to fulfill this purpose individuals are to oversee the ministries of Word and Sacrament, Word and Service, and such other forms (4.03.c); and

WHEREAS, the ELCA “is committed to the principle that ‘healthy leaders enhance lives’” and that to implement this philosophy “the design and administration of [this church’s] benefit programs should respond to changing societal and economic realities,” and that benefits “should be administered efficiently in order to both enhance the well-being of rostered ministers and lay employees and capture value and savings where possible,” (ELCA Philosophy of Benefits); and

WHEREAS, the overall price of health insurance is determined by the age and statistical health challenges of the individuals who are paying to pool their risk with the cost rising with age; and

WHEREAS, the average and median age of a minister in the ELCA is higher than that of the general population; and

WHEREAS, the Affordable Care Act (ACA) mandated health insurance plans to cover preexisting conditions; and

WHEREAS, the ACA created a federal health insurance marketplace and encouraged the establishment state level marketplaces (ACA marketplaces) with premium tax credits of up to four (4) times the federal poverty line for families and individuals based on their Modified Adjusted Gross Income; and

WHEREAS, individual Coverage Health Reimbursement Arrangement (ICHRA) plans now exist to allow employers to provide tax free money to their employees to pay for a health insurance plan on the ACA marketplaces; and

WHEREAS, the current cost of insurance offered through Portico is a burden to many ELCA congregations by either preventing them from being able to call a rostered minister or eroding the congregation’s financial resources; and

WHEREAS, health insurance plans comparable to Portico’s Gold+ plan can frequently be found for lower prices on the ACA marketplaces before including the premium tax credit; therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**, that the Allegheny Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly to request the Portico Benefit Services Board of Trustees to review and potentially update the ELCA Philosophy of Benefits after a review of the levels of consistency and support provided by health insurance plans in the ACA marketplaces; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, that the Allegheny Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly to request Portico Benefit Services to provide to signatories of the ELCA Philosophy of Benefits a numeric and statistical

comparison between Portico's offered health plans to those found on the ACA marketplaces factoring in expected premium tax credits; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Allegheny Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly to request the ELCA Office of the Secretary to provide signatories of the ELCA Philosophy of Benefits an estimation of ELCA congregations unable to call a rostered minister due to the price of Portico's health insurance plans; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Allegheny Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly to request Portico Benefit Services to evaluate its ability to offer ELCA ministries ICHRA plans alongside supplemental, vision, and dental insurance plans as add-ons; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Allegheny Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly to find a way for rostered ministers to have less expensive health insurance.

### *Background*

As the non-profit separately incorporated ministry responsible for providing benefits coverage options for ELCA rostered ministers, affiliated staff, and their families, Portico Benefit Services creates and administers the ELCA Health Plan to meet the needs of both sponsoring employers and those who serve this church. As indicated in the memorial, Portico is guided by principles outlined in the [Philosophy of Benefits](#). The health plan embodies the ELCA's "church together" principle—a foundational belief that this church functions best as one body with many members.

While an individual might find a seemingly better deal elsewhere in the short term, Portico's community-based approach ensures sustainability, stability, and consistent care for all ministers across their lifelong service. By maintaining this collective approach, Portico honors the commitment to care for each other as one church, acknowledging that what benefits the whole ultimately serves each individual member over their full ministry journey.

Since Portico's last substantive plan redesign in 2014, there have been significant changes in both the health care marketplace and in the state of the church as a whole. In Spring 2024, Portico undertook a comprehensive review of its current offerings, with a strong eye to industry and enrollment trends, economic changes, church staffing, and regulatory developments.

This process—called Benefits reExamined—aimed to create a sustainable path forward for the ELCA Health Plan. Over a 15-month period, Portico invested considerable time gathering input in a variety of ways from more than 3,000 plan members and 1,100 sponsoring employers. Bishops participated in multiple feedback sessions, including a dedicated survey where they strongly reaffirmed the community-based approach and nationwide consistency of benefits. These efforts, coupled with comprehensive financial analysis in collaboration with actuarial perspective from Willis Towers Watson, led to benefit recommendations for 2026 which addressed the top two priorities named by both members and employers: affordability and flexibility. These changes were approved by Portico's board of trustees, affirmed by the Conference of Bishops, and endorsed by the ELCA Church Council in Spring 2025.

It is important to note that the ELCA Health Plan and plans that can be purchased on the Affordable Care Act (ACA) exchange serve fundamentally different purposes within different contexts. A numerical and statistical comparison between Portico's plans and ACA plans is not possible for several important reasons:

- Because every state's ACA exchange is created and administered by the specific state regulatory body, it is difficult to paint a picture that accurately reflects the nationwide population covered by the ELCA Health Plan.
- The ELCA Health Plan is built specifically for church workers within a community-based approach, not designed for individuals in state-specific markets. The ELCA Health Plan allows smaller congregations to access benefits they couldn't secure on their own. It aims for economies of scale and equity among plan members regardless of where they serve.
- Portico designed the ELCA Health Plan to exceed ACA minimum requirements with additional benefits that reflect ELCA social statements and ministry needs. The ELCA Health Plan covers more preventive services than legally required as a way to enhance whole-person well-being. It also includes wellness programs and support resources designed specifically for church workers. Because rostered ministers often remain on the plan for decades, this broader investment in wellness can improve health outcomes and potentially reduce costs over the long term.
- The ELCA Health Plan is designed to support mobility in the call process. When a rostered minister receives a call in a different synod, state, or region, its nationwide coverage moves with them seamlessly. This is significantly different from ACA exchange plans, which are state-specific and would require starting over with new coverage, deductibles, networks, and benefits when crossing state boundaries. During Benefits reExamined, church leaders clearly reaffirmed that maintaining this mobility during the call process remains essential, even while acknowledging this feature comes with additional costs. This mobility support remains a core component of the ELCA Philosophy of Benefits.

It is also important to note that members whose income levels qualify them for a subsidy on their state health exchange may receive a valid waiver of Portico coverage that does allow them to continue to participate in the remainder of Portico's bundled benefits, including disability, survivor, and retirement benefits. Individuals who have a valid waiver are also currently able to purchase supplemental vision coverage through Portico.

There is a fundamental difference between how the ELCA Health Plan and Individual Coverage Health Reimbursement Arrangement (ICHRA) are administered. The ELCA Health Plan is designed to be an employer-purchased health plan. In an ICHRA, the employee purchases the benefit directly with pre-tax dollars. Because Portico's traditional benefits plan is bundled, members who purchase benefits directly from a state health exchange would be ineligible to purchase individual dental coverage from Portico.

Finally, in 2022, 45% of all ELCA congregations reported they could not "comfortably afford a full-time rostered minister" (see "Research Report: The Future Need for Pastoral Leaders in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America," ELCA, 2025) due to a variety of economic factors. Though these factors may include the cost of benefits, respondents did not share specifics. Therefore, neither the Office of the Secretary nor Portico is able to provide an estimate to the request outlined in the memorial.

*Recommended for assembly action*

**To receive with gratitude the memorial on "Limiting Insurance Costs for Rostered Ministers" from the Allegheny Synod;**

**To acknowledge that the concerns raised in the memorial are part of a larger issue of affordability of and commitment to rostered ministers;**

**To affirm the comprehensive review of the ELCA Health Plan previously conducted by Portico Benefit Services through the Benefits reExamined process;**

**To recognize Portico's collective approach ensures sustainability, stability, and consistent care for all rostered ministers across their lifelong service yet prevents the ability to provide a numeric and statistical comparison with the Affordable Care Act exchange or to administer coverage through an Independent Coverage Health Reimbursement Arrangement;**

**To recognize that neither the Office of the Secretary nor Portico Benefit Services obtain information from ELCA congregations regarding the specific cost of benefits;**

**To commend the Guiding Principles outlined in the ELCA Philosophy of Benefits for the health and wellness of this whole church and its leaders; and**

**To urge Portico to continue providing benefits that both address the needs of employers and plan members and recognizes the realities of the contexts of their ministries, and to encourage employers and plan members to choose a health insurance option that best meets their needs.**

#### *Category B4: Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection*

##### **1. Minneapolis Area Synod (3G) [2025]**

WHEREAS, one in four women and one in six men are sexually abused or assaulted by their 18th birthday, and there are survivors and perpetrators in our churches; and

WHEREAS, all people are created by God in the divine image, and human sexuality is a gracious gift of God. The family of God is called to stand firmly and pastorally against all forms of abuse. Sexual abuse and harassment betray God's creation, inflict grievous suffering on the victims, and rend the fabric of the whole community of the people of God; and

WHEREAS, sexual abuse and harassment in the church has been a matter of concern to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) since it formed in 1988. The first churchwide assembly in 1989 passed a resolution on making the church a safe place, free from sexual abuse and harassment. Synods, seminaries, congregations, colleges, social ministry organizations and the churchwide expression have struggled with these issues since our beginnings; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA's social message on gender-based violence states that "Christian churches and individuals too often have contributed to gender-based violence through denial, resistance and a lack of preparation...operating with inadequate policies and practices contribute to the problem"; and

WHEREAS, all forms of sexual abuse and harassment are unacceptable within the life of this church. This church should be a safe place where people can worship, learn, work, love and receive care in a manner that is free from sexual misconduct; and

WHEREAS, when sexual abuse and harassment occurs, not only the victim and their family suffer; but the entire congregation suffers emotionally, spiritually, and financially; and

WHEREAS, a written policy statement is an important first step toward preventing sexual abuse or harassment; and education and training are among the chief means of prevention; therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**, that the Minneapolis Area Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA to direct that all synods of the ELCA oversee the implementation and maintenance of policies and procedures in their congregations, including regular training and resources, which safeguard children and vulnerable adults; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2025 Minneapolis Area Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly to forward this memorial to the ELCA Church Council's Executive Committee for referral and disposition to the appropriate unit or office of the churchwide organization in accordance with the bylaws and continuing resolutions of this church.

## **2. Saint Paul Area Synod (3H) [2025]**

WHEREAS, one in four women and one in six men are sexually abused or assaulted by their 18th birthday, and there are survivors and perpetrators in our churches; and

WHEREAS, all people are created by God in the divine image, and human sexuality is a gracious gift of God. The family of God is called to stand firmly and pastorally against all forms of abuse. Sexual abuse and harassment betray God's creation, inflict grievous suffering on the victims, and rend the fabric of the whole community of the people of God; and

WHEREAS, sexual abuse and harassment in the church has been a matter of concern to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) since it formed in 1988. The first churchwide assembly in 1989 passed a resolution on making the church a safe place, free from sexual abuse and harassment. Synods, seminaries, congregations, colleges, social ministry organizations and the churchwide expression have struggled with these issues since our beginnings; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA's social message on Gender-based Violence states that "Christian churches and individuals too often have contributed to gender-based violence through denial, resistance and a lack of preparation...operating with inadequate policies and practices contribute to the problem"; and

WHEREAS, all forms of sexual abuse and harassment are unacceptable within the life of the church. The church should be a safe place where people can worship, learn, work, love and receive care in a manner that is free from sexual misconduct; and

WHEREAS, when sexual abuse and harassment occurs, not only the victim and their family suffer; but the entire congregation suffers emotionally, spiritually, and financially; and

WHEREAS, a written policy statement is an important first step toward preventing sexual abuse or harassment; and education and training are among the chief means of prevention; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Saint Paul Area Synod (SPAS), in assembly, memorializes the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA to urge all synods of the ELCA to provide for the implementation and maintenance of policies and procedures available to their congregations, which safeguard children and vulnerable adults; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2025 SPAS Assembly asks the ELCA Churchwide Assembly to refer support for synods in doing this work to the appropriate unit or office of the churchwide organization in accordance with the bylaws and continuing resolutions of this church; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA urge synods of the ELCA to require triennial training for all rostered leaders in their synod to protect children and vulnerable adults; that this training be open to members of congregations in their synods who work with children and vulnerable adults; and that synods urge their congregations to adopt policies requiring this training triennially for those who work with children and vulnerable adults.

### *Background*

The memorials submitted name the sad reality of child abuse and provide rationale for the need for child and vulnerable adult protection. The preamble expresses the concerns theologically and socially as well as indicating the pastoral and personal implications evident in the lack of attention to this unhappy reality. Others in the ELCA have shared these concerns, as evident in the current development of a [social message on child protection](#), which is scheduled for ELCA Church Council action in November 2025. Many of the memorial's concerns that are not already addressed in ELCA teaching will be covered there.

Child or vulnerable adult abuse can be emotional/spiritual, physical, or sexual. Widely available statistics indicate it is much more prevalent than generally recognized. Children and other members of the vulnerable population are unable to protect themselves nor do they have the power to stop stronger people from continuing the abuse. The abuse in childhood affects the survivors into adult life and sometimes contributes to survivors becoming abusers in the next generation.

The memorial only indicates some of what is already in place within the ELCA. [Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline](#) (2021) addresses child abuse in the section about abusive activity perpetrated by rostered ministers. It provides specific definitions regarding abuse. Some synod boundary workshops on abuse address the matter, and some synods occasionally provide "safe church" education.

It is also the case that some congregations have developed "safe church" policies and some ELCA-related social ministry organizations (SMOs) attend to issues of child abuse. The educational organization Evangelical Lutheran Education Association (ELEA) provides guidance and resources to aid schools and learning centers, which are legally required to have a policy. The ELEA is an Independent Lutheran Organization serving as the office of schools and as a membership organization with over 1,300 schools and early learning centers operating as ministries. For example, the [ELEA website lists this resource for preparing policy](#).



Many synods have adopted a three-year cycle of training on boundaries, gender justice, and racial justice. As previously mentioned, some synods do include protection of children and vulnerable adults in their boundary workshops through such means as the “safe church” education. However, since lay leaders change more frequently than rostered ministers, a triennial cycle could leave gaps.

One idea to address such gaps is the consideration of a toolkit to accompany the forthcoming [social message on child protection](#). A toolkit for the social message could include training resources (e.g., modules, handouts, etc.) to be accessed whenever the congregation deems necessary, such as when orienting a new youth leader.

It is worth highlighting the social statement [Our Calling in Education](#) (2007) contains a subsection on the unique value of children that names the responsibilities of the church and all adults to care for and nurture children (pp. 14-16). In addition, both [Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Call to Action](#) (2019) and [Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust](#) (2009) name responsibilities to protect children from violence and abuse. Other social teachings address the specific vulnerabilities of children related to [immigration](#), [juveniles in the criminal justice system](#), and [disabilities](#). These prior social teachings inform the current draft social message on child protection.

Importantly, several implementing resolutions (CA19.05.20) of *Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Call to Action* (2019) speak to some of the concerns raised in the memorial. Implementing Resolution 3 encourages members to urge “their congregations to implement policies and to become intentional sites of advocacy and support for local efforts that service those affected by [gender-based] violence.” Implementing Resolution 16 “call[s] on the church in all its expressions and related agencies, organizations, and institutions” to adapt boundaries training for rostered ministers to include anti-sexism training and protocols and “to create resources to support rostered ministers who experience sexual misconduct or gender-based harassment.”

These implementing resolutions build on the “[Message on Gender-Based Violence](#).” In this social message, the ELCA states, “Every agency, organization, and institution should review its policies, or absence of such, to assess how well it provides for prevention [of gender-based violence], safety and adequate response” (p. 15).

#### *Recommended for assembly action*

**To receive with gratitude the memorials on “Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection” from the Minneapolis Area Synod and the Saint Paul Area Synod;**

**To urge synods to apply the existing policies and implementing resolutions available in *Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Call to Action* (2019) to ensure protections for vulnerable adults and for synods and congregations to provide for the implementation and maintenance of policies and procedures, including regular trainings and resources;**

**To refer the specific concerns addressed in the memorial regarding protection of children to the Theological Discernment Team in the Office of the Presiding Bishop for their continued work on strengthening the forthcoming social message on child protection; and**

**To urge synods to include the protection of children and vulnerable adults in their training for all rostered ministers and other leaders in their synods; that such training be open to members of congregations and other ministries in their synods who work with children and vulnerable adults; and that synods urge their congregations and other ministries to adopt policies requiring training and other background checks for those who work with children and vulnerable adults.**

#### *Category B5: Interpretation for ELCA Churchwide Assembly and Youth Gathering*

##### **1. Southeastern Iowa Synod (5D) [2025]**

WHEREAS, the apostle Paul wrote to the Romans, “...how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? ... So faith comes from what is heard,” (Romans 10:14, 17a); and

WHEREAS, the ELCA “Find a Congregation” directory lists 509 congregations with a Spanish language service and the ELCA Latino Ministries community contains approximately 147 communities; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA includes members, congregations, and pastors whose language is American Sign Language (ASL), and

WHEREAS, the ELCA Future Church project set a goal to engage “new, younger, and more diverse people”; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA Youth Gathering and ELCA Churchwide Assembly are two of the largest and most influential events of the ELCA; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Iowa Synod in assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA to request the churchwide organization provide all official print materials of the ELCA Youth Gathering and ELCA Churchwide Assembly in Spanish translation at all future ELCA Youth Gatherings and ELCA Churchwide Assemblies; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Iowa Synod in assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA to request the churchwide organization provide simultaneous interpreters for both Spanish and ASL at all Churchwide Assembly events and all Youth Gatherings; and be it further



RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Iowa Synod in assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA to request the churchwide organization provide the funding for translation and interpretation services at Churchwide Assembly events and ELCA Youth Gatherings.

### *Background*

The churchwide organization staff expresses appreciation to the Southeastern Iowa Synod for its inclusive memorial to ensure that voting members of churchwide assemblies and youth at the ELCA Youth Gathering whose language is Spanish or American Sign Language (ASL) receive official materials and experience the events in their respective languages.

For purposes of this background, “translation” refers to written documents and “interpretation” refers to the spoken word. Written documents are translated into standardized language. Interpretation provides for linguistic variations.

### *Translation Services*

The churchwide organization currently has limited capacity for providing Spanish translation services, given the high volume of official Churchwide Assembly materials that need to be electronically accessible through the ELCA Churchwide Assembly (CWA) Guide within a very constrained timeframe. Spanish translation of Churchwide Assembly official materials is upon voting member request. The current practice is that, upon such a request, staff translate the recommended assembly actions in-house and collaborate with synods to find a Spanish interpreter to assist Spanish-speaking voting members with translating any other related Churchwide Assembly materials. If this memorial were to be adopted, churchwide staff would need to consider the appropriate path for translating the CWA Bulletin of Reports (roughly 900 pages) and other assembly-related materials. There is an extremely tight turnaround from receiving the report materials in English to then translating them into Spanish. Constitutionally, the Bulletin of Reports needs to be prepared and distributed to each congregation and to voting members-elect at least 20 days prior to an assembly. In addition, during the assembly, there are reports, ballots, legislative updates, etc., that would need immediate translation. One option might be to contract with a professional Spanish translation team. Another option could be to work with a company such as [DeepL](#) or [Malinalli Language and DTP Studio](#), which The Episcopal Church uses in some of its translation and interpretation services. Machine translation requires relevant data, specific ELCA vocabulary, continuous training, and sufficient time to process, stay updated, and improve its accuracy. The machine translation must be proofread by a human to ensure its content is appropriate and accurate. It is also recommended to employ a churchwide organization staff person to coordinate all documents that need to be translated.

The ELCA Youth Gathering provides Spanish translation for materials published for congregation use. The planners also provide Spanish translation services for the core materials, curriculums, logos, and theme design. The Gathering further strives to provide Spanish translation for on-site materials within the limited deadlines for the printing and production companies.

The churchwide organization must continue to address the needs of the Spanish-speaking community and adapt to evolving technology in order to steward the budget well and improve operational efficiencies.

### *Interpretation Services*

For the 2025 Churchwide Assembly, staff are collaborating with the Latino Ministries Association of the ELCA to hire simultaneous Spanish interpreters. The interpretation will include all plenary sessions, sermons, and announcements during worship services, and other major events that take place during the assembly week that require interpretation. The live Spanish interpretation will be processed using a headphone system that offers audio via FM transmission for attendees who request it. During the CWA online registration process, voting members are asked to identify if they need Spanish interpretation services during the assembly.

English captioning is provided on plenary screens for ASL interpretation. English captioning on plenary screens benefits those who are deaf and hard of hearing, as well as those who speak English as a Second Language, when there are microphone problems or noisy venues, etc. The coordinator of Deaf Ministries in the ELCA cautioned that a large percentage of the deaf population may not read beyond an elementary level or cannot read fast enough to truly appreciate captions. While captions do send a strong welcome message, ASL interpretation is preferred when possible. If requested, an ASL interpreter is contracted to assist with ASL interpretation during worship at the assembly.

The plan is to provide these language interpretation services for future Churchwide Assemblies if they are requested through the online registration system.

The ELCA Youth Gathering works with the host synod office and the staff of the Latino Ministries Association of the ELCA to hire simultaneous Spanish interpreters. The interpretation includes Mass Gathering, MYLE programs, and worship. Each Gathering has specific needs that are outlined in the registration system that the Gathering staff and teams work to accommodate.

ASL is provided at the ELCA Youth Gathering based on specific needs requested within the registration system. If requested, ASL interpreters are contracted to assist with ASL interpretation during Mass Gathering, worship, and other large Gathering activities.

#### *Financial implications*

The memorial requests the churchwide organization to provide funding for translation and interpretation services at Churchwide Assembly events and ELCA Youth Gatherings. A very rough estimate of a minimum of 416 hours of Spanish translation of the Youth Gathering documents (1,000+ pages and 600+ event signs) and CWA documents (900+ pages and 30+ event signs) can range from \$20 per hour to upwards of \$5 per minute. The estimate does not include the cost of additional design time and additional production costs if printing is involved, nor does it include any rush fees that might be needed to complete the work in a timely manner. Other factors that will increase costs are additional reviews for highly technical or theological documents. As a point of reference, The Episcopal Church provides reports to its General Convention, also known as the “Blue Book,” that cost approximately \$125,000 for translation.

For interpretation services, using freelance interpreters rather than an agency is a more cost-efficient means of obtaining qualified interpreters. Best practice is to have at least two interpreters working at a time, so they can trade off every 15 minutes or so. For ASL, it is recommended to ask a local Deaf ELCA congregation or another local Christian Deaf congregation to recommend top interpreters they would use in the city. Interpreters often do not know, nor are they even aware of, specific religious vocabulary. The cost for ASL interpretation services for a week-long event is approximately \$500 per day, per interpreter, plus travel, lodging, and meal expenses. The cost for Spanish interpretation for a week-long event is approximately \$10,000 for four interpreters, plus travel, lodging, and meal expenses.

#### *Recommended for assembly action*

**To receive with gratitude the memorial on “Interpretation for ELCA Churchwide Assembly and Youth Gathering” from the Southeastern Iowa Synod;**

**To acknowledge the importance of inclusivity through translation of official materials before, during, and after Churchwide Assemblies and Youth Gatherings;**

**To encourage use of local interpreters at Churchwide Assemblies and Youth Gatherings;**

**To direct the planning teams of the Churchwide Assembly and Youth Gathering to commit to investigating and finding the most responsible means to provide translation and interpretation services.**

#### ***Category B6: Legal Action in Support of ELCA Communities***

##### **1. Northwest Washington Synod (1B) [2025]**

WHEREAS, on January 20, 2025, the United States of America’s Department of Homeland Security (DHS) issued a directive allowing immigration enforcement and police to conduct detainment and arrest actions in “sensitive areas” such as churches, schools, and healthcare facilities; and

WHEREAS, it is the view of numerous other religious bodies, organizations, and churches throughout the United States of America that this action constitutes a violation of First Amendment rights as it prevents the free expression and gathering of religious assembly by instigating fear among congregants and especially immigrant populations; and

WHEREAS, we recognize that twenty-seven Christian and Jewish denominations and religious organizations, including four out of six of the ELCA’s Full Communion partners, filed a lawsuit on February 11, 2025, by the Georgetown Law Institute for Constitutional Advocacy and Protection; and

WHEREAS, on February 14th, 2025, Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton announced that the ELCA would not join this legal effort because “given the ELCA’s denominational structure and polity, the churchwide organization would not be an appropriate plaintiff in these actions,” and “congregations can demonstrate that they can be harmed by this decision, and they would have standing in this lawsuit”; and

WHEREAS, *Constitutions, Bylaws, And Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA* calls for the three expressions of this Church to “function as people of God through congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization, all of which shall be interdependent,” and does not explicitly forbid the churchwide organization from entering into legal action on behalf of the denomination; and

WHEREAS, ELCA congregations and synodically-authorized ministries who are most at risk by the DHS directive are most likely to be mission developments and ethnic-specific ministries who may lack the resources to bring suit against the federal government on their own or are not willing to compromise their own safety risk with the exposure a federal lawsuit might bring, and would greatly benefit from care and solidarity from the interdependent relationship of the Church as specified throughout *Constitutions, Bylaws, And Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA*; therefore, be it

RESOLVED that the Northwest Washington Synod request the churchwide organization to develop educational and legal materials to help synods and congregations participate in national legal matters when needed; and be it further

RESOLVED that the Northwest Washington Synod request leadership of the churchwide organization, with prayerful discernment, to evaluate the constitutions of the three expressions of the ELCA, for the purpose of empowering faithful engagement in legal advocacy as a sign of solidarity with our most vulnerable congregations and ministries.

## **2. Sierra Pacific Synod (2A) [2025]**

WHEREAS, at its 2019 Churchwide Assembly, the ELCA declared itself to be a sanctuary church body, committed to serving and supporting migrant children and families in communities across the country, and

WHEREAS, on January 20, 2025, the United States of America's Department of Homeland Security (DHS) issued a directive allowing immigration enforcement and police to conduct detainment and arrest actions in "sensitive areas" such as churches, schools, and healthcare facilities, and

WHEREAS, twenty-seven Christian and Jewish denominations and national religious organizations (including four of the ELCA's six 'Full Communion' partners) became plaintiffs in a legal action which asserts that DHS's directive constitutes a violation of First Amendment rights as it prevents the free expression and gathering of religious assembly by instigating fear among congregants and especially immigrant populations; and

WHEREAS, on February 14th, 2025, Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton announced that the ELCA would not join this legal effort because "given the ELCA's denominational structure and polity, the Churchwide Organization would not be an appropriate plaintiff in these actions," and "congregations can demonstrate that they can be harmed by this decision, and they would have standing in this lawsuit;" and

WHEREAS, the Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA calls for the three expressions of this Church to function as people of God through congregations, synods, and the Churchwide Organization, all of which shall be interdependent, and does not explicitly forbid the Churchwide Organization from entering into legal action on behalf of the denomination; and

WHEREAS, ELCA congregations and synodically-authorized ministries who are most at risk by the DHS directive are most likely to be mission developments and ethnic-specific ministries who may lack the resources to bring suit against the federal government on their own or are not willing to compromise their own safety risk with the exposure a federal lawsuit might bring, and would greatly benefit from care and solidarity from the interdependent relationship of the Church as specified throughout the Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA, be it

RESOLVED, that the Sierra Pacific Synod requests that the churchwide organization, with immediacy and haste and if possible within 30 days of passage of this resolution, develop educational and legal materials to help synods and congregations participate in national legal matters when needed; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Sierra Pacific Synod requests that leadership of the churchwide organization, with prayerful discernment and urgency, evaluate the constitutions of the three expressions of the ELCA, for the purpose of empowering faithful engagement in legal advocacy as a sign of solidarity with our most vulnerable congregations and ministries and as a concrete expression of our shared commitment to becoming a sanctuary church body; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the leadership of the churchwide organization, which may comprise the Presiding Bishop, Vice President, Secretary, the Church Council, the Conference of Bishops, and legal staff, be fully authorized to represent the ELCA in national legal matters when needed; and be it further

RESOLVED, that said leadership of the churchwide organization, with prayerful discernment, may choose to engage the ELCA churchwide organization in national legal matters in the future, especially in partnership with ecumenical and interfaith religious organizations, as a sign of solidarity with our most vulnerable individuals, congregations and ministries.

## **3. New England Synod (7B) [2025]**

WHEREAS, on January 20, 2025, the United States of America's Department of Homeland Security (DHS) issued a directive allowing immigration enforcement and police to conduct detainment and arrest actions in "sensitive areas" such as churches, schools, and healthcare facilities; and

WHEREAS, it is the view of numerous other religious bodies, organizations, and churches throughout the United States of America that this action constitutes a violation of First Amendment rights as it prevents the free expression and gathering of religious assembly by instigating fear among congregants and especially immigrant populations; and

WHEREAS, leadership of the ELCA Churchwide Organization had the opportunity to confront this First Amendment violation by becoming a plaintiff in a lawsuit along with 27 Christian and Jewish denominations and religious organizations, including four out of six of the ELCA's Full Communion partners, submitted on February 11, 2025, by the Georgetown Law Institute for Constitutional Advocacy and Protection; and

WHEREAS, in a video published online by the ELCA on February 14, 2025, Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton announced that the ELCA would not join this legal effort because "given the ELCA's denominational structure and polity, the Churchwide organization would not be an appropriate plaintiff in these actions"; and

WHEREAS, Presiding Bishop Eaton stated in that video that "congregations can demonstrate that they can be harmed by this recission, and they would have standing in this lawsuit," putting the onus on individual congregations to undertake a lawsuit against the federal government; and

WHEREAS, *Constitutions, Bylaws, And Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA* calls for the three expressions of this Church to “function as people of God through congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization, all of which shall be interdependent”; and

WHEREAS, *Constitutions, Bylaws, And Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA* does not explicitly forbid the Churchwide Organization from entering into legal action on behalf of the denomination; and

WHEREAS, *Constitutions, Bylaws, And Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA* Chapter 4 calls this Church to “serve in response to God’s love to meet human needs, caring for the sick and the aged, advocating dignity, justice, and equity for all people, working for peace and reconciliation among the nations, caring for the marginalized, embracing and welcoming racially and ethnically diverse populations, and standing in solidarity with the poor and oppressed and committing itself to their needs,”

and

“provide structures and decision-making processes for this church that foster mutuality and interdependence and that involve people in making decisions that affect them”; and

WHEREAS, the *Constitutions, Bylaws, And Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA* Chapter 11 provides that the Churchwide Organization shall:

- Establish and reflect this church’s ecumenical stance and its relationship to other churches, and direct this church’s policy for relationship with persons of other faiths.
- Develop and administer policies for this church’s relationship to social ministry organizations and cooperate with public and private agencies that enhance human dignity and justice.
- Determine and implement policy for this church’s relationship to governments;

and

WHEREAS, the document approved by the Churchwide Assembly in 2019, “*How Strategic and Authentic is Our Diversity*,” calls the ELCA to investigate “ELCA policies, governance, related structures, agencies, and organizations, so that they might serve the goals and initiatives of an authentically diverse church in society”; and

WHEREAS, ELCA congregations and synodically-authorized ministries who are most at risk by the DHS directive are most likely to be mission developments and ethnic-specific ministries who may lack the resources to bring suit against the federal government on their own or are not willing to compromise their own safety risk with the exposure a federal lawsuit might bring, and would greatly benefit from care and solidarity from the interdependent relationship of the Church as specified throughout *Constitutions, Bylaws, And Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA*; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the leadership of the Churchwide Organization, which may comprise the Presiding Bishop, Vice President, Secretary, the Church Council, the Conference of Bishops, and legal staff, be fully authorized to represent the ELCA in national legal matters when needed; and be it further

RESOLVED, that said leadership of the Churchwide Organization, with prayerful discernment, may choose to engage the ELCA Churchwide Organization in national legal matters in the future, especially in partnership with ecumenical and interfaith religious organizations, as a sign of solidarity with our most vulnerable congregations and ministries.

#### **4. Delaware-Maryland Synod (8F) [2025]**

WHEREAS, on Jan. 20, 2025, the United States of America’s Department of Homeland Security (DHS) issued a directive allowing immigration enforcement and police to conduct detainment and arrest actions in “sensitive areas” such as churches, schools, and healthcare facilities; and

WHEREAS, it is the view of numerous other religious bodies, organizations, and churches throughout the United States of America that this action constitutes a violation of First Amendment rights as it prevents the free expression and gathering of religious assembly by instigating fear among congregants and especially immigrant populations; and

WHEREAS, leadership of the ELCA Churchwide Organization had the opportunity to confront this First Amendment violation by becoming a plaintiff in a lawsuit along with 27 Christian and Jewish denominations and religious organizations, including four out of six of the ELCA’s Full Communion partners, submitted on Feb. 11, 2025, by the Georgetown Law Institute for Constitutional Advocacy and Protection; and

WHEREAS, in a video published online by the ELCA on Feb. 14, 2025, Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton announced that the ELCA would not join this legal effort because “given the ELCA’s denominational structure and polity, the Churchwide organization would not be an appropriate plaintiff in these actions”; and

WHEREAS, Presiding Bishop Eaton stated in that video that “congregations can demonstrate that they can be harmed by this decision, and they would have standing in this lawsuit,” putting the onus on individual congregations to undertake a lawsuit against the federal government; and

WHEREAS, *Constitutions, Bylaws, And Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA* calls for the three expressions of this Church to “function as people of God through congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization, all of which shall be interdependent”; and

WHEREAS, *Constitutions, Bylaws, And Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA* does not explicitly forbid the Churchwide Organization from entering into legal action on behalf of the denomination; and

WHEREAS, *Constitutions, Bylaws, And Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA* Chapter 4 calls this Church to

“serve in response to God’s love to meet human needs, caring for the sick and the aged, advocating dignity, justice, and equity for all people, working for peace and reconciliation among the nations, caring for the marginalized, embracing and welcoming racially and ethnically diverse populations, and standing in solidarity with the poor and oppressed and committing itself to their needs,” and “provide structures and decision-making processes for this church that foster mutuality and interdependence and that involve people in making decisions that affect them”;

and

WHEREAS, the *Constitutions, Bylaws, And Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA* Chapter 11 provides that the Churchwide Organization shall:

- Establish and reflect this church’s ecumenical stance and its relationship to other churches, and direct this church’s policy for relationship with persons of other faiths.
- Develop and administer policies for this church’s relationship to social ministry organizations and cooperate with public and private agencies that enhance human dignity and justice.
- Determine and implement policy for this church’s relationship to governments;

and

WHEREAS, the document approved by the Churchwide Assembly in 2019, “*How Strategic and Authentic is Our Diversity*,” calls the ELCA to investigate “ELCA policies, governance, related structures, agencies, and organizations, so that they might serve the goals and initiatives of an authentically diverse church in society”; and

WHEREAS, ELCA congregations and synodically-authorized ministries who are most at risk by the DHS directive are most likely to be mission developments and ethnic-specific ministries who may lack the resources to bring suit against the federal government on their own or are not willing to compromise their own safety risk with the exposure a federal lawsuit might bring, and would greatly benefit from care and solidarity from the interdependent relationship of the Church as specified throughout *Constitutions, Bylaws, And Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA*; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the leadership of the churchwide organization, which may comprise the presiding bishop and legal staff, be reminded of and encouraged to exercise their authority to represent the ELCA in national legal matters when needed; and be it further

RESOLVED, that said leadership of the churchwide organization, with prayerful discernment, be encouraged to engage the ELCA churchwide organization in national legal matters in the future, especially in partnership with ecumenical and interfaith religious organizations, as a sign of solidarity with our most vulnerable congregations and ministries.

### *Background*

This memorial seeks to empower the leadership of the ELCA churchwide organization to join lawsuits on behalf of the entire denomination. As proposed, however, it appears to be ineffective and contrary to the *Constitutions, Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA* (CBCR).

One RESOLVED seeks to authorize the leadership of the churchwide organization to “represent the ELCA in national legal matters” (although some memorials incorrectly include the Conference of Bishops as part of the leadership of the churchwide organization; the conference has no legislative authority in the churchwide organization). It is unclear what is meant by “the ELCA” in this context. It does not appear to mean the ELCA churchwide organization, as that is the subject of another RESOLVED. One interpretation is that it means the ELCA as a denomination, that is, “this church” (see CBCR 1.01.01 and 1.02), which includes not only congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization, but also separately incorporated ministries, camps, social ministry organizations, educational institutions, etc. If this is the intended meaning, then the resolve is ineffective. The whole denomination does not have separate legal existence. It can neither sue nor be sued nor be a party to a lawsuit.

Alternatively, the RESOLVED could be understood as seeking to authorize the churchwide organization to bring lawsuits on behalf of the thousands of separate entities that are part of this church, including congregations and synods. If this is what is intended, it is contrary to both law and the CBCR. In order to bring a lawsuit, parties must have legal standing. That is, they must seek to redress a concrete and particularized injury that they themselves have suffered. With limited exceptions, parties cannot sue to redress injuries suffered by others, even if they are related in some way. The doctrine of “associational standing” allows membership associations to sue on behalf of their members in certain narrowly defined circumstances. But, unlike the former American Lutheran Church (ALC), the churchwide organization is not an association of congregations (or synods). Neither congregations nor synods nor other ministries are members of the churchwide organization, so the churchwide organization cannot sue on behalf of congregations, synods, and others. Moreover, parties cannot create standing by their own actions; the churchwide organization cannot change the law and create standing to sue on behalf of other entities simply by asserting that it has the power to do so. A fuller discussion of standing and its limits can be found in the unanimous decision of the U.S. Supreme Court in *FDA v. Alliance for Hippocratic Medicine*, 602 U.S. 367 (2024), which held that groups of anti-abortion doctors lacked standing to challenge the FDA’s approval of the drug mifepristone for pregnancy termination.



Even if the legal standing hurdles could be overcome, the proposed RESOLVED is contrary to the CBCR. Specifically, 5.01.c, which sets forth the principle of interdependence, provides that “Each congregation, synod, and separately incorporated ministry, as well as the churchwide organization itself, is a separate legal entity and is responsible for exercising its powers and authorities.” One of the powers and authorities of any legal entity is the ability to sue (and be sued). Each congregation, synod, and other incorporated ministry has the authority to decide for itself whether it wants to sue; the churchwide organization cannot do so on their behalf.

The proposed RESOLVED is also contrary to CBCR 8.17, which disclaims “the creation of partnerships, co-ventures, agencies, or other legal relationships recognized in civil law” between the expressions of the church. Partners, co-venturers, and agents have the ability to act for each other and on each other’s behalf. By disclaiming these relationships, the CBCR is disclaiming the ability of one expression of the church to act on behalf of the other expressions.

In addition, the creation of an agency relationship requires the consent of the person on whose behalf the action is taken. It cannot be created by the person seeking to take the action. While Jack can give Jill the power of attorney to act on Jack’s behalf, Jill cannot create her own authority simply by asserting that she has power of attorney to act for Jack. Here, the proposed RESOLVED would have the churchwide organization declare that it has the authority to act on behalf of synods, congregations, and others.

Although not intended, the first RESOLVED could also be understood as undermining congregational control of property. The referenced lawsuits challenge the administration’s revocation of the sensitive locations policy as it relates to churches, raising the question of the circumstances in which government agents can access church property. Congregations own and control their own property. CBCR 9.71; *see also* \*C5.03.g.,h.,i. and C12.05. They, and not the churchwide organization, have the authority to determine who may and may not enter.

The second RESOLVED seeks to authorize the leadership of the churchwide organization to engage in litigation on behalf of the churchwide organization. The churchwide organization already has this authority; it can and does engage in litigation. But, following standing doctrine and the CBCR, it can only do so on its own behalf, not on behalf of congregations, synods, or others.

The memorial cites provisions in Chapter 11 of the CBCR which authorize the churchwide organization to speak on behalf of “this church,” that is, on behalf of the denomination, not on behalf of the individual congregations and other ministries. Relying on these provisions, the churchwide organization engages in advocacy, speaks out publicly, and files *amicus* briefs in significant litigation. Recently, the churchwide organization has filed or joined *amicus* briefs supporting humanitarian parole for refugees from Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua, and Venezuela (CHNV), supporting the free exercise rights of the Apache people, opposing the creation of religious public charter schools, and opposing the posting of the Ten Commandments in public schools.

But there is a large gulf between filing *amicus* briefs and joining as a party. Filing an *amicus* brief does not require legal standing; it only requires having an interest in the subject matter of the litigation. And it does not require the ability to act on behalf of and bind other expressions of the church.

The memorial also incorrectly states that four of the ELCA’s full communion partners have joined one of the underlying lawsuits—only three have. The United Church of Christ (UCC) did not join for substantially the same reasons as the ELCA. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, a strong supporter of migrants, likewise declined to join for similar reasons. Many of the full communion partners that did join not only have different polities but also house their immigration ministries within the national organization itself, potentially changing the standing analysis.

At the same time, the memorial raises important questions about how this church engages in civil society to address injustice and the relationship between the expressions of this church. The Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church recommended (Recommendation #3), and the Church Council adopted [CC25.04.07], the creation of a Task Force on Interdependence and Purpose to “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.” Consideration of what authority the churchwide organization should have to act nationally on behalf of other expressions to address societal and systemic injustice falls squarely within the scope of that work.

*Recommended for assembly action*

**To receive with gratitude the memorial on “Legal Action in Support of ELCA Communities” from the Northwest Washington Synod, Sierra Pacific Synod, New England Synod, and Delaware-Maryland Synod; and  
To refer it to the Task Force on Interdependence and Purpose to be addressed in its work.**

## **Category B7: Congregation Constitutions**

### **1. Nebraska Synod (4A) [2025]**

WHEREAS, the *Model Constitution for Congregations* contains numerous required provisions concerning Confession of Faith, Nature of the Church, Statement of Purpose, Powers of the Congregation, Church Affiliation, Property Ownership, Membership, Rostered Ministers, Discipline of Members and Adjudication, Amendments, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions; and

WHEREAS, it is reasonable and desirable that there be uniformity among congregations on most if not all of the subjects required; and

WHEREAS, the *Model Constitution for Congregations* is amended every three years at the Churchwide Assembly; and

WHEREAS, congregations are then tasked with updating their constitutions to conform with the *Model Constitution*, a task that is routinely followed in some congregations, deferred for a period of time in other congregations, and ignored entirely by other congregations; and

WHEREAS, leaders of congregations that do update their constitutions devote countless hours to the task, which could otherwise be devoted to carrying out the congregations' mission, and synod leaders devote considerable hours to the process of reviewing and approving congregation constitutions; and

WHEREAS, the church is best served when congregations have the freedom to organize themselves to best fulfill their mission; and

WHEREAS, this may be the time to consider a change in how the ELCA influences the content of the governing documents of its congregations depending on the recommendations of the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the 2025 Nebraska Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly to consider an alternative to the current practice of producing a *Model Constitution for Congregations* with numerous requirements, and instead, simply require of congregations that they include in their governing documents provisions that incorporate by reference to churchwide and/or synod governing documents language on those subjects where uniformity is desirable, such as the Confession of Faith, Nature of the Church, Statement of Purpose, Powers of the Congregation, Church Affiliation, Property Ownership, Membership, Rostered Ministers, Discipline of Members and Adjudication, Amendments, and other provisions, and that the Office of the Secretary would simply notify congregations when those provisions have been amended by a Churchwide Assembly, eliminating the need for constant revision of congregational constitutions; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2025 Nebraska Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly to consider producing a set of Model Governing Documents that would, if the above changes were to be implemented, simply list those subjects typically addressed in the bylaws of religious non-profit organizations, with few requirements, one requirement being a description of the subjects to be incorporated by reference to churchwide governing documents.

### *Background*

While the goal of simplifying the process of updating congregation constitutions is a worthy one, the proposed solution poses significant issues both from a polity standpoint and from a practical one.

This church's polity, from the beginning of this church, and reaching back to the model constitutions of the predecessor church bodies, has recognized the agency of the congregation in establishing and maintaining its constitution, seeking unity in the essentials and diversity in those things that are largely a matter of local context, local preference, and local history. For this reason, Chapters 2–9 and 15–20 of the *Model Constitution for Congregations*, which deal with the matters listed in the memorial's first "RESOLVED," are composed almost entirely of required provisions (marked with an asterisk) and are common to most of this church's congregations—though there are congregation constitutions that were grandfathered at the formation of this church that differ. In general, though, these are the matters that this church agrees are essential for the smooth functioning of life together as a church. Chapters 10–14 are concerned with the organization and functioning of the local community in all the variety known to exist in this church.

Because of this church's polity, though, which recognizes the centrality of the authority of the congregation, the ELCA has always maintained the position that even the "required" provisions of the Model Constitution must be voted on and adopted by the congregation, since the congregation has agency. Currently, the ELCA Constitution in Ch. 9 mandates only a limited number of provisions that are applicable to every congregation, whether or not those provisions have been incorporated into a congregation's constitution. With the exception of those items listed in Ch. 9, if a congregation has not updated its constitution for a given provision, the previous version continues in effect until the congregation votes to adopt the new version.

The memorial calls for all the required provisions of the Model Constitution to reside in the ELCA and synod constitutions and to be incorporated simply by reference. This poses the practical issue of "out of sight, out of mind," because it would force congregations to look at two different sources in order to determine what the rules are. It would also mean that the Churchwide Assembly would be imposing a large number of mandates on all congregations, which would face significant resistance as it would be contrary to current polity and would be perceived as a move to enforce uniformity on congregations and remove agency.

The second “RESOLVED” is problematic because, by merely giving a listing of “those subjects typically addressed in the bylaws of religious non-profit organizations,” it would in effect leave the congregations entirely to their own devices in having to figure out what those provisions might look like. One of the benefits of the Model Constitution is that, for non-required provisions, it offers helpful models to follow so that congregations don’t have to start from scratch.

The Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church recommended (Recommendation #3), and the Church Council adopted [CC25.04.07], the creation of a Task Force on Interdependence and Purpose to “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.” Because there are fundamental questions of polity involved, the Office of the Secretary would recommend that this memorial be referred to the Task Force on Interdependence and Purpose for consideration as part of its deliberation and discernment.

*Recommended for assembly action*

**To receive with gratitude the memorial on “Congregation Constitutions” from Nebraska Synod; and  
To refer it to the Task Force on Interdependence and Purpose to be addressed in its work.**

### ***Category B8: Evaluating and Updating the Call Process***

#### **1. Greater Milwaukee Synod (5J) [2025]**

WHEREAS, research into non-profit organizations has shown that they, like other organizations, suffer negatively during extended leadership transitions, with the effects most pronounced in smaller organizations; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA call process routinely leaves congregations without settled pastors for over a year; and

WHEREAS, research is needed into the impact of the length of various types of vacancies (e.g. a long interim or a relatively short one); and

WHEREAS, the Holy Spirit always guides the call process but should not be expected to carry the work of discernment when we ourselves have not done all in our power to widely network and share information; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Greater Milwaukee Synod memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to:

1. Request the creation of a task force to evaluate and update the call process; and
2. That the task force would research the median length of pastoral vacancies in congregations, including congregations that have filled their vacancy(s) within the last 3 years and congregations that have not; and
3. That the task force use simple measures including, but not limited to, worship attendance, giving, and member involvement, to assess the correlation between length of settled pastoral vacancy and vitality of the congregation; and
4. That the task force initiate conversation with synodical bishops and staff, ecumenical partners, congregational call teams, interim ministry organizations, as well as businesses and nonprofits, to better discern what is and is not helpful for congregations, synodically authorized worshipping communities, and other ministry sites in the current call process; and
5. That based on the findings from the above work, the churchwide organization would revise the call process in a way that is equitable to all stakeholders (congregations/ministry sites/worshipping communities, rostered ministry candidates, and synodical leaders), maximizing creativity and flexibility for the sake of the Gospel; and
6. That the task force be empowered to make recommendations towards updating the Ministry Site Profile and Rostered Minister Profile based on the above research; and
7. That this work begin as soon as possible.

### ***Background***

Fundamentally, the congregation owns the process of calling a rostered minister to serve it. Practically, synods play a significant role in managing and directing the process and organize transitions within the synod, but the recommended process varies widely from synod to synod. Most synods have some kind of call process manual or policy document that they use when working with congregations, and the synods own those documents. Some congregations do not follow the synod process to varying degrees and “do their own thing.” In addition, rostered ministers are the third party in the process.

Beyond the constitutional requirements concerning call votes and requirements for issuance of letters of call in Ch. 7 of the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA*, Ch. 14 of the *Constitution for Synods*, and Ch. 9 of the *Model Constitution for Congregations*, each synod realistically “owns” its own recommended process, and since the primary relationship is between congregation and rostered minister, ultimately each congregation has its

own pattern for how it arrives at choosing a candidate—though they do rely heavily on the synod to guide them in the process. The churchwide organization has no significant role in the process, from a polity standpoint.

The call process is described in \*C9.01. for pastors and \*C9.21. for deacons, mandating only that a 2/3 vote of a specially called meeting is required and that either the officers or a call committee need to seek the advice and help of the synod bishop before a call is issued. The appointment of an interim pastor is described in \*C9.06., and requires both bishop and congregation or Congregation Council approval. Finally, †S14.16. requires the congregation to consult with the bishop, have a 2/3 vote, and obtain the bishop’s attestation of the letter of call, and †S14.17. requires the pastor to consult with the bishop before accepting the call. †S14.41. and S14.42. are the parallel provisions for deacons.

While there has been research carried out for the Quality of Call Initiative and for the Task Force on Quality of Call for Rostered Ministers of Color that has assessed certain issues in the call process for those groups of rostered ministers, the churchwide organization does not have specific data to know more generally where the “pain points” are in the transition process for synods, congregations, or rostered ministers, and how best to address those issues. A study like this would need to test the hypothesis of this memorial and then pilot responses with the three constituencies. It could then be possible to develop a set of “best practices” to recommend to synods for guiding congregations and rostered ministers through the call process.

It should also be mentioned that the Rostered Minister Profile (RMP) and the Ministry Site Profile (MSP), the documents required of all rostered ministers and congregations participating in the call process, are currently being revised by the Christian Community and Leadership unit of the churchwide organization.

This memorial would require commitment from Research and Evaluation, Innovation, and a staff person from Christian Community and Leadership unit to organize and lead the team that would guide the work. There would need to be financial resources dedicated to a research project and the development of a “best practices” document. At present, Research and Evaluation does not have capacity for taking on such a project.

#### *Recommended for assembly action*

**To receive with gratitude the memorial on “Evaluating and Updating the Call Process” from the Greater Milwaukee Synod;**

**To affirm the importance of the call process in the relationship among congregations, synods, and candidates; and**

**To acknowledge work underway concerning substantial revision of the Rostered Minister Profile and the Ministry Site Profile.**

#### ***Category B9: Becoming a Global Refuge Denomination***

##### **1. Southwest California Synod (2B) [2025]**

RESOLVED, that the Southwest California Synod, in Assembly, memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to designate the ELCA as a global refuge denomination.

#### *Background*

As ELCA predecessor bodies were part of the founding of Global Refuge (formerly known as Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service [LIRS] and previously by other names), the ELCA has had a long-standing relationship and collaboration with this non-governmental organization (NGO) over its many years of existence. When the ELCA was constituted, LIRS was recognized as an Independent Lutheran Organization as outlined in the ELCA Constitution and remains in that status today. The ELCA Constitution contains the appropriate language defining the characteristics of the relationship, as well as the process for regular reviews of the relationship. Since none of that is specified in this memorial, the meaning of this memorial is unclear.

Further, on February 10, 2025, Bishop Eaton and Global Refuge signed a Memorandum of Understanding that clearly defines how the ELCA and Global Refugee will continue to relate to each other, providing the needed clarity to strengthen and maintain the relationship.

#### *Recommended for assembly action*

**To receive with gratitude the memorial from the Southwest California Synod on “Becoming a Global Refuge Denomination” but respectfully decline to be identified as a “Global Refuge denomination” as Global Refuge is already identified as an Independent Lutheran Organization through ELCA constitutional language;**

**To reaffirm this church's commitment to the AMMPARO strategy to accompany migrants globally and advocate for recognition and respect for their human dignity including through the protection of their human rights; and**

**To request the Service and Justice unit to continue the ELCA's relationship with Global Refuge as an Independent Lutheran Organization and the work contemplated by the Memorandum of Understanding signed by both the ELCA and Global Refuge dated February 10, 2025.**

### ***Category B10: Abuse Prevention and Reporting***

#### **1. East-Central Synod of Wisconsin (5I) [2025]**

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has faced challenges in addressing abuse by clergy, and currently lacks holistic systems and processes for reporting and addressing misconduct consistently and transparently as a national body, leading to failures in holding abusers accountable and protecting victims; and

WHEREAS, there is a need for a clear, consistent reporting system across all synods, including a path and requirements for reporting misconduct by synod-level leaders and the retention and transmission of disciplinary records, including a shared database accessible to all bishops and synod staff members that would help track patterns of behavior and improve the current system; and

WHEREAS, there is a need for mandatory reporting requirements for synod staff and churchwide employees to notify both churchwide officials and law enforcement when notified of physical, sexual, or domestic abuse; and

WHEREAS, there is a need to preserve and centrally maintain disciplinary records and ensure their submission to the churchwide organization; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the East Central Synod of Wisconsin Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to request that the ELCA develop and implement a clear, consistent reporting system across all synods for reporting misconduct by current and former rostered leaders, along with appropriate supporting systems to drive accountability for abusive actors, transparency throughout the churchwide body, and provide compassion, support and healing for victims of abuse; and

That the ELCA establish requirements to preserve, maintain and report allegations of physical, sexual, or other instances of clergy abuse, to the churchwide office for inclusion in a central database. This would include victim statements, notes, supporting evidence/records, and applicable disciplinary committee records, findings and recommendations; and

That the ELCA establish an ombudsperson to lead efforts with reporting and compliance, including the creation of a shared database accessible to all bishops and synod staff members which documents all allegations to ensure that rostered leaders with a history of abuse, misconduct, or criminal activity are barred from seeking calls in other synods/districts; and research the possibility and potentially implement a process for disclosing that database with other denominations upon request; and

That the ELCA prioritize competent crisis response, consistent information-sharing about rostered leaders with concerning histories, and provide resources for people who have suffered abuse by clergy; and

That the ELCA offer training and resources to all synod staff regarding a trauma-informed approach to receiving reports of misconduct including the implementation of mandatory reporting requirements for allegations of abusive, exploitive, or illegal behavior to the churchwide organization and law enforcement.

### ***Background***

This memorial raises important concerns about how this church documents and communicates reports of abuse and misconduct. In 1989, the first Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA passed a resolution on making the church a safe place, free from sexual abuse and harassment. The Churchwide Assembly called upon each synod to create policies and procedures to empower victims to report incidents of sexual abuse, provide healing for victims, and safeguard the rights of those accused. In 1992, the Church Council followed through on that resolution by adopting "An ELCA Strategy for Responding to Sexual Abuse in the Church" ("Response Strategy"), [https://resources.elca.org/wp-content/uploads/ELCA\\_Strategy\\_for\\_Sexual\\_Abuse\\_in\\_Church.pdf](https://resources.elca.org/wp-content/uploads/ELCA_Strategy_for_Sexual_Abuse_in_Church.pdf).

The Response Strategy recommends key components for synod policies, including how to respond to and investigate allegations of misconduct. The Response Strategy also recommends an extensive program of training and education on these issues for synod staff, rostered ministers, candidates, and lay members. New bishops receive extensive training on responding to and investigating allegations of misconduct. This training specifically addresses providing support for and protecting victims.

Pursuant to the Response Strategy, the synods have adopted and implemented detailed misconduct policies, which are available on the respective synod websites. For example, the Minneapolis Area Synod's misconduct page can be found here: <https://mpls-synod.org/reporting-misconduct/>. Synods' policies have been refined and revised over the years. The policies include provisions for confidentiality and protection of all victims, as well as mandatory reporting.



The churchwide organization employs a director for misconduct prevention, whose duties include receiving and responding to allegations of misconduct, advising bishops and synod staff who are addressing misconduct, and developing trainings and resources for synods and others. In addition, the legal staff at the churchwide office provides assistance to bishops and synods in responding to allegations of misconduct. The churchwide organization also provides resources and sample policies for congregations and other ministries, which can be found here: <https://www.elca.org/about/churchwide/office-of-the-secretary/legal-issues/sexual-misconduct-prevention>.

Synods maintain roster files on rostered ministers that include information on misconduct. The churchwide organization provides [guidance](#) on maintaining roster files. If a rostered minister seeks a call in another synod, the bishop is required to provide a recommendation on the rostered minister profile (RMP) which would reference this information. Also, rostered ministers seeking a new call are required to disclose any allegations of misconduct on the RMP, and the synod bishop does not activate the RMP in the system unless appropriate disclosure is made. If a rostered minister takes a call in another synod, the roster file, including information regarding misconduct, follows them to the new synod. When rostered ministers resign or are removed from the roster, the synod sends their roster files to the churchwide office, where they are maintained in the Office of the Secretary, so that all synod offices can have access to them.

The 2019 Churchwide Assembly (CA19.02.06p) affirmed the prior assembly actions, encouraged synods to review and update their misconduct policies, and encouraged synods to accurately record and share information regarding misconduct. Many synods updated their policies in response. More recently, the Boundaries Education Working Group released guidelines and templates for a three-year cycle of training for synods and rostered ministers on boundaries, gender justice, and racial justice. In addition, recommendation 2.2 from the Commission on a Renewed Lutheran Church (CRLC), adopted by the Church Council (CC25.04.06), charged the Committee on Appeals with developing resources for identifying and training members of synod consultation committees.

The synods' primary responsibility for preventing and responding to sexual misconduct by rostered ministers is consistent with 5.01.c. and 20.11. of the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA* (CBCR). Provision 5.01.c. states that, "Whenever possible, the entity most affected by a decision shall be the principal party responsible for the decision and implementation, with the other entities facilitating and assisting." Provision 20.11. states that, "Since synods have responsibility for admittance of persons into the rostered ministries of this church and have oversight of pastoral and congregational relationships, the disciplinary process shall be a responsibility of the synod on behalf of this church."

While no policy or strategy can eliminate all sexual abuse in the church, the Response Strategy has been remarkably effective as an aid and guide in responding to sexual misconduct by rostered ministers.

#### *Analysis of Proposed Actions:*

1. and 2. The first two proposed actions would set up a required reporting system from synods and create a database of abuse allegations at the churchwide organization. As drafted, these actions are beyond the authority of the Churchwide Assembly. Due to the polity provided for through the ELCA Constitution, the Churchwide Assembly has no authority to require the synods (or congregations or other institutions in this church) to report misconduct, and no ability to enforce such a rule. As a result, any reporting system or database would be incomplete and unreliable.

The proposed actions are also not necessary. The roster files for rostered ministers who have been removed or have resigned are already maintained in the churchwide office, so if there is a question regarding any former pastors or deacons, that information is already available. When rostered ministers seek calls in other synods, that information is shared between bishops and the roster file follows the pastor to the new synod. Further, rostered ministers are required to disclose any allegations of misconduct on their RMP.

These proposed actions also create substantial risks to the churchwide organization that the churchwide organization has no ability to control. The proposed reporting system would be incomplete and unreliable because there is no enforcement mechanism and because it would not include past abuse (absent an extensive and expensive effort to review historic files). If someone relies on absence of a report in the system, and it turns out that there was a prior case of abuse which was not reported, the churchwide organization could be exposed to substantial liability within a system that is, as stated above, incomplete and unreliable. At a minimum, these files would give rise to additional litigation, in which the identities of victims and their stories could be revealed. These risks will substantially increase the churchwide office's insurance, litigation, and liability costs.

At the same time, the first two proposed actions illustrate the importance of diligence, thoroughness, and transparency when synods document and communicate reports of misconduct. The churchwide organization can assist synods to more comprehensively approach misconduct of all kinds, fostering a spirit of continuous improvement by providing resources, templates, and training to synods on best practices for documenting and reporting misconduct.

3. The third proposed action would establish an ombudsperson at the churchwide organization to address abuse and reporting. This position would largely be duplicative of the existing director for misconduct prevention, whose responsibilities include receiving reports of abuse, assisting synods in responding, and providing resources and training. The director is well-positioned to develop the resources and improve the processes discussed above.

4. The fourth proposed action asks the churchwide organization to prioritize crisis response, consistent information-sharing, and provide resources to victims. The churchwide organization does the first by assisting bishops and synod staff in responding to misconduct, and the synods do the third through the implementation of their misconduct policies. As discussed above, working through the director of misconduct prevention, the churchwide organization can support and assist the synods to improve the consistency of information sharing.

5. The fifth proposed action asks the churchwide organization to offer training and resources to all synod staff regarding a trauma-informed approach to receiving reports of misconduct. This overlaps with existing activities including, but not limited to, the training provided to bishops, the resources provided by the churchwide organization for the three-year training cycle of rostered ministers, and the training provided by synods to all their rostered ministers. In addition, it overlaps with the training and resources that the Church Council has already instructed the Committee on Appeals to develop for synod consultation committees. As requested by the action, these trainings can be improved by the inclusion of trauma-informed approaches.

#### **Note on Costs**

The memorial does not address costs. Building and maintaining a database of past abuse would require an extensive review of past files that would likely require the addition of a full-time person for a significant period of time, in addition to the ombudsperson called for in the memorial.

#### *Recommended for assembly action*

**To receive with gratitude the memorial on “Abuse Prevention and Reporting” from the East Central Synod of Wisconsin;**

**To affirm the importance of abuse prevention and reporting;**

**To direct the Christian Community and Leadership unit and the Office of the Secretary to continue to identify resources, trainings, and other materials to assist synods in using best practices to document and share reports of abuse and misconduct comprehensively and transparently;**

**To direct the Christian Community and Leadership unit and the Office of the Secretary to include trauma-informed approaches to the trainings and resources provided to synods regarding misconduct; and**

**To direct the Christian Community and Leadership unit and the Office of the Secretary to report on the progress of these tasks to the Fall 2026 Church Council meeting.**

#### *Category B11: Boundary, Racial Justice, and LGBTQIA+ Cultural Competency Training*

##### **1. Lower Susquehanna Synod (8D) [2025]**

RESOLVED, that the Lower Susquehanna Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly to mandate all ELCA rostered leaders and synod authorized lay ministers complete boundary, racial justice, and LGBTQIA+ cultural competency trainings; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Lower Susquehanna Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly to establish all churchwide required trainings for ELCA rostered leaders and synod authorized lay ministers be completed at least every three years.

#### *Background*

In 2024, the ELCA Boundaries Education Working Group recommended a three-year cycle of training on boundaries, gender justice, and racial justice for rostered ministers. (Gender justice training includes, but is not limited to, training on LGBTQIA+ justice.) In addition, the group developed guidelines and resources for these trainings. These training resources are grounded in Lutheran theology and the social statements of this church and can be adapted to each synod’s unique context. These recommendations and resources were received enthusiastically by the Conference of Bishops and many synods have already adopted a three-year cycle of boundaries, gender justice, and racial justice competency trainings. In this church’s polity, however, the Churchwide Assembly does not have the authority to dictate what trainings synods provide or how they use these resources.

#### *Recommended for assembly action*

**To receive with gratitude the memorial on “Boundary, Racial Justice, and LGBTQIA+ Cultural Competency Training” from the Lower Susquehanna Synod;**

**To affirm the three-year training cycle that is being utilized by synods as well as the training resources developed for synods to use for their boundary, racial justice, gender justice, and LGBTQIA+ cultural competency trainings by the Boundaries Education Working Group;**

**To encourage synods to use and adapt these resources for their specific contexts; and**

**To encourage all rostered ministers and other leaders to participate in a regular process of training in order to enhance their ministry skills.**

### ***Category B12: Remove Gendered and Binary Language***

#### **1. New Jersey Synod (7A) [2025]**

WHEREAS, the ELCA strives to be a welcoming and inclusive church and the use of genderbased language in our governing documents is not consistent with this aspiration, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the New Jersey Synod Assembly memorialize the ELCA Churchwide Assembly to review all of its governing documents including the *Constitution, By Laws, and Continuing Resolutions* to remove gendered and binary language so that all persons are seen and included.

#### ***Background***

The Office of the Secretary (OS) appreciates the importance of the memorial from the New Jersey Synod concerning gendered and binary language in the governing documents of the ELCA. In 2021-2022, OS undertook a thorough review of the constitutions of the ELCA for such language and proposed inclusive replacements for every instance that staff found. The 2022 Churchwide Assembly approved those amendments to the governing documents.

In addition, the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) audit of the governing documents made recommendations concerning gender inclusivity. As a consequence, OS put forward continuing resolutions to the Church Council for inclusive specification of percentages of gender identity representation in Chapter 5 of the ELCA Constitution, where the representational principles for assemblies, boards, committees, task forces, etc., are laid out. The Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church also made recommendations based on the DEIA audit and the Church Council acted in November 2024 to create a category of representation for Historically Underrepresented Groups that very specifically includes persons of diverse gender identities. To staff's knowledge, the representational principles in Chapter 5 are the only instances of gender-specific language that remain in the constitutions, and in that case, the naming of gender identities is vital to ensuring the inclusion of the range of those identities in leadership of this church.

The Office of the Secretary encourages synods to report to staff any further improvements to the governing documents that people may find in the future.

#### ***Recommended for assembly action***

**To receive with gratitude the memorial on “Remove Gendered and Binary Language” from the New Jersey Synod; and**

**To affirm the work of the Office of the Secretary to remove gendered binary language in the ELCA Constitution and to encourage synods to report to the Office of the Secretary any further improvements to the governing documents.**

### ***Category B13: Review of ELCA Investments and Procurement***

#### **1. Indiana-Kentucky Synod (6C) [2025]**

WHEREAS, Christ identifies his disciples as those who feed the hungry, satisfy the thirsty, clothe the naked, care for the sick, and visit the prisoner (Matthew 25:31-46); and

WHEREAS, Lutheran Services in America (LSA) and its affiliates, and Global Refuge (formerly Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service) are partners in ministry with the ELCA and its predecessor bodies; and

WHEREAS, public posts on X (formerly Twitter) in February, 2025 claimed that “Lutheran Family Services and affiliated organizations” are a “money laundering operation” that “must end”; and

WHEREAS, LSA, its affiliates, and Global Refuge as nonprofits are subject to oversight as required by law to maintain said status; and

WHEREAS, LSA, its affiliates, and Global Refuge have been given legitimate, congressionally appropriated grants and contracts for the work they do in the social service arena; and

WHEREAS, Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton released a public statement “ELCA Responds to False Accusations on X” on February 7, 2025; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA’s Office of Corporate Social Responsibility has an established “Social Criteria Investment Screen: Policies and Procedures” that “assist[s] this church in evaluating the types of investments it wishes to hold” as approved by the ELCA Church Council; and

WHEREAS, the Office of Corporate Social Responsibility's "Boycott Policy: Policies and Procedures" identifies issues and criteria as well as appropriate procedures for decisions related to boycotts; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the 2025 Indiana-Kentucky Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly as follows:

- To instruct the Church Council to review its investments and their alignment with the screening and boycott policies of the ELCA in light of Bishop Eaton's rejection of the false public claims on X;
- To instruct the Church Council to report a summary of findings and proposed solutions, made available by video via the ELCA's social media channels as well as by written report, with links to both to be emailed to all ELCA email list subscribers no later than March 1, 2026.

#### *Background*

"Corporate Social Responsibility in the ELCA uses the tools of screening of investments, shareholder advocacy and community investing to work with corporations, calling them to ensure that people are treated fairly and with dignity and to create sustainable communities" ([Corporate Social Responsibility Overview](#)).

ELCA Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) develops screens as part of the ELCA's strategy of exercising shareholder rights on issues of social concern. Social Criteria Investment Screens draw from the ELCA's strong foundation of social teaching, and include screens on topics such as human rights, military weapons, and the environment. They assist ELCA-related institutions in describing the area of concern and focusing on the most egregious problems. These screens do not constitute binding mandates or determine individual companies to be excluded—it is up to financial actors to determine portfolios, guided by ELCA social teaching as delineated in the screens (see: [ELCA Social Criteria Investment Screen Policies and Procedures](#)).

In a process that is separate from screens and investing, the ELCA also has a boycott policy which defines a boycott as "A collective effort to abstain from the purchase or use of products or services provided by a targeted firm, government, or other agency. The purpose of a boycott is to persuade the targeted entity to cease certain practices judged to be unjust, and/or to perform certain practices deemed to be just" (see: [ELCA Boycott Policy Policies and Procedures](#)). Boycotts refer to a corporation's products or services rather than equity in that corporation. The policy goes on to ask the ELCA to consider certain ethical questions, institutional/procedural questions, and pastoral questions prior to determining a boycott. ELCA CSR reviews active boycotts annually at its January review team meeting and creates a report for synod bishops. To initiate a boycott by the ELCA, the director for advocacy would call an inter-unit meeting to address the questions in the boycott policy and determine whether a boycott is warranted.

#### *Recommended for assembly action*

**To receive with gratitude the memorial on "Review of ELCA Investments and Procurement" from the Indiana-Kentucky Synod;**

**To reaffirm this church's commitment to using the tools of corporate social responsibility to call corporations to treat people fairly and with dignity and create sustainable communities through the screening of social purpose funds through social criteria investment screen; and**

**To direct the Service and Justice unit and ELCA Corporate Social Responsibility Review Team to provide guidance in regard to current concerns and advice on best practices to encourage responsible and just corporate behavior and provide to the ELCA Church Council a summary of findings and options for action.**

#### *Category B14: Consideration of Recommendation 1 of the CRLC*

##### **1. Pacifica Synod (2C) [2025]**

RESOLVED, that the Pacifica Synod Assembly adopt this memorial and submit it to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and request it to consider and debate the full text of Recommendation 1 of the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church as part of its agenda; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Pacifica Synod Assembly memorialize the Churchwide Assembly and request that the Churchwide Assembly adopt the CRLC's Recommendation 1 in full, including its call for the establishment of mutual accountability measures, compliance incentives across all expressions of the ELCA, and, if these measures are not implemented by 2028, the convening of a special meeting of the Churchwide Assembly to enact necessary revisions to the church's governing documents.

##### **Recommendation 1**

The Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church recommends that the ELCA Church Council immediately begin identifying and acting upon mutual accountability measures and compliance incentives across all expressions of the ELCA to ensure the proactive centering of dismantling racism within the

denomination. These measures and incentives shall be guided by the recommendations outlined in the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) Audit and the Strategy Toward Authentic Diversity.

To ensure timely action, all constitution and bylaw amendments needed for the development and implementation of these accountability measures and compliance incentives must be developed and advanced in time for consideration by the 2028 Churchwide Assembly. If by that time such measures and incentives have not been adequately identified or enacted, we recommend the ELCA Church Council call for a special meeting of the Churchwide Assembly to evaluate and enact necessary constitutional revisions that will enable and advance the ELCA's commitment to anti-racism work.

## **2. Metropolitan New York Synod (7C) [2025]**

WHEREAS, the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) established the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church (CRLC) with the charge 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

WHEREAS, the CRLC undertook an extensive process of discernment, consultation, and listening across the ELCA, resulting in a final report in early 2025 that included Recommendation 1: Immediate Action on Dismantling Racism; and

WHEREAS, the CRLC's Recommendation 1 states:

The Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church recommends that the ELCA Church Council immediately begin identifying and acting upon mutual accountability measures and compliance incentives across all expressions of the ELCA to ensure the proactive centering of dismantling racism within the denomination. These measures and incentives shall be guided by the recommendations outlined in the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) Audit and the Strategy Toward Authentic Diversity.

To ensure timely action, all constitution and bylaw amendments needed for the development and implementation of these accountability measures and compliance incentives must be developed and advanced in time for consideration by the 2028 Churchwide Assembly. If by that time such measures and incentives have not been adequately identified or enacted, we recommend the ELCA Church Council call for a special meeting of the Churchwide Assembly to evaluate and enact necessary constitutional revisions that will enable and advance the ELCA's commitment to anti-racism work;

and

WHEREAS, the Church Council of the ELCA received the recommendation with appreciation and took action to encourage internal processes and reports, but did not adopt the full substance of Recommendation 1—including the mechanisms for mutual accountability, compliance incentives, or the provision for calling a special Churchwide Assembly in 2028 if progress stalls; and

WHEREAS, the failure to act on the full scope of Recommendation 1 limits the authority of the Churchwide Assembly to directly consider and vote on a proposal that speaks to the heart of the ELCA's commitment to anti-racism, and undermines the urgency and structural accountability called for by the CRLC; and

WHEREAS, the Churchwide Assembly is the highest legislative authority of this church and must be able to deliberate on recommendations that concern the spiritual and institutional integrity of the ELCA in the face of systemic racism and exclusion; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Metro New York Synod Assembly adopt this memorial and submit it to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, urging it to consider and debate the full text of Recommendation 1 of the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church as part of its agenda; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Metro New York Synod Assembly memorialize the Churchwide Assembly to adopt the CRLC's Recommendation 1 in full, including its call for the establishment of mutual accountability measures, compliance incentives across all expressions of the ELCA, and, if these measures are not implemented by 2028, the convening of a special meeting of the Churchwide Assembly to enact necessary revisions to the church's governing documents; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Metro New York Synod express its deep commitment to structural change in service of becoming an anti-racist church, and that the work of dismantling racism shall be pursued not only as a moral and spiritual imperative, but as a matter of ecclesial governance, institutional design, and gospel faithfulness.

## **3. Delaware-Maryland Synod (8F) [2025]**

WHEREAS, the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) established the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church (CRLC) with the charge 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

WHEREAS, the CRLC undertook an extensive process of discernment, consultation, and listening across the ELCA, resulting in a final report in early 2025 that included Recommendation 1: Immediate Action on Dismantling Racism; and

WHEREAS, the CRLC's Recommendation 1 states:

The Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church recommends that the ELCA Church Council immediately begin identifying and acting upon mutual accountability measures and compliance incentives across all expressions of the ELCA to ensure the proactive centering of dismantling racism within the denomination. These measures and incentives shall be guided by the



recommendations outlined in the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) Audit and the Strategy Toward Authentic Diversity.

To ensure timely action, all constitution and bylaw amendments needed for the development and implementation of these accountability measures and compliance incentives must be developed and advanced in time for consideration by the 2028 Churchwide Assembly. If by that time such measures and incentives have not been adequately identified or enacted, we recommend the ELCA Church Council call for a special meeting of the Churchwide Assembly to evaluate and enact necessary constitutional revisions that will enable and advance the ELCA's commitment to anti-racism work;

and

WHEREAS, the Church Council of the ELCA received the recommendation with appreciation and took action to encourage internal processes and reports, but did not adopt the full substance of Recommendation 1—including the mechanisms for mutual accountability, compliance incentives, or the provision for calling a special Churchwide Assembly in 2028 if progress stalls; and

WHEREAS, the failure to act on the full scope of Recommendation 1 limits the authority of the Churchwide Assembly to directly consider and vote on a proposal that speaks to the heart of the ELCA's commitment to anti-racism, and undermines the urgency and structural accountability called for by the CRLC; and

WHEREAS, the Churchwide Assembly is the highest legislative authority of this church and must be able to deliberate on recommendations that concern the spiritual and institutional integrity of the ELCA in the face of systemic racism and exclusion; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Delaware-Maryland Synod Assembly adopt this memorial and submit it to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, urging it to consider and debate the full text of Recommendation 1 of the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church as part of its agenda; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Delaware-Maryland Assembly memorialize the Churchwide Assembly to adopt the CRLC's Recommendation 1 in full, including its call for the establishment of mutual accountability measures, compliance incentives across all expressions of the ELCA, and, if these measures are not implemented by 2028, the convening of a special meeting of the Churchwide Assembly to enact necessary revisions to the church's governing documents; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Delaware-Maryland Synod express its deep commitment to structural change in service of becoming an anti-racist church, and that the work of dismantling racism shall be pursued not only as a moral and spiritual imperative, but as a matter of ecclesial governance, institutional design, and gospel faithfulness.

#### **4. Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod (8G) [2025]**

WHEREAS, the 2022 Churchwide Assembly (CWA) of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) established the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church (CRLC) with the charge 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

WHEREAS, the CRLC undertook an extensive process of discernment, consultation, and listening across the ELCA, resulting in a final report in early 2025 that included Recommendation 1: Immediate Action on Dismantling Racism; and

WHEREAS, the CRLC's Recommendation 1 states:

"The Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church recommends that the ELCA Church Council immediately begin identifying and acting upon mutual accountability measures and compliance incentives across all expressions of the ELCA to ensure the proactive centering of dismantling racism within the denomination. These measures and incentives shall be guided by the recommendations outlined in the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) Audit and the Strategy Toward Authentic Diversity."

"To ensure timely action, all constitution and bylaw amendments needed for the development and implementation of these accountability measures and compliance incentives must be developed and advanced in time for consideration by the 2028 Churchwide Assembly. If by that time such measures and incentives have not been adequately identified or enacted, we recommend the ELCA Church Council call for a special meeting of the Churchwide Assembly to evaluate and enact necessary constitutional revisions that will enable and advance the ELCA's commitment to anti-racism work."

WHEREAS, the ELCA Church Council received the recommendation with appreciation and took action to encourage internal processes and reports, but did not adopt the full substance of Recommendation 1—including the mechanisms for mutual accountability, compliance incentives, or the provision for calling a special Churchwide Assembly in 2028 if progress stalls; and

WHEREAS, the failure to act on the full scope of Recommendation 1 limits the authority of the CWA to directly consider and vote on a proposal that speaks to the heart of the ELCA's commitment to anti-racism, and undermines the urgency and structural accountability called for by the CRLC; and

WHEREAS, the CWA is the highest legislative authority of this church and must be able to deliberate on recommendations that concern the spiritual and institutional integrity of the ELCA in the face of systemic racism and exclusion; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod Assembly memorializes the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to consider and debate the full text of Recommendation 1 of the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church (CRLC) as part of its agenda; and, be it further

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod Assembly memorializes the 2025 Churchwide Assembly to adopt the CRLC's Recommendation 1 in full, including its call for the establishment of mutual

accountability measures, compliance incentives across all expressions of the ELCA, and, if these measures are not implemented by 2028, the convening of a special Churchwide Assembly to enact necessary revisions to the church's governing documents; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod Assembly expresses its deep commitment to structural change in service of becoming an anti-racist church and that the work of dismantling racism shall be pursued not only as a moral and spiritual imperative, but as a matter of ecclesial governance, institutional design, and faithfulness to the Gospel.

### *Background*

This memorial seeks to have the Churchwide Assembly reconsider the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church's (CRLC) Recommendation 1 in full, in place of the Church Council's response to the CRLC's recommendation.

The 2022 Churchwide Assembly passed the following resolution:

“To direct the Church Council to establish a Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church comprised of leaders of diverse representation from all three expressions that, working in consultation with the Conference of Bishops and the Church Council, shall 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 will present its findings and recommendations to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly in preparation for a possible reconstituting convention to be called under the rules for a special meeting of the Churchwide Assembly.” [CA22.01.06]

The Church Council then selected members of the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church in Spring 2023. The CRLC submitted its final report and recommendations to the Church Council in April 2025 [EN][SP]. The Report of the CRLC included 13 recommendations, including Recommendation 1. Similar to the process for forwarding social statements to the assembly, the work of the commission needed to be presented to the Church Council for consideration and possible action. The Church Council reviewed the CRLC's recommendations and, with prayerful consideration, discussed the report and took actions appropriate to the CRLC's recommendations.

Many of the CRLC's recommendations called upon the Church Council to establish task forces, direct development of various resources, adopt continuing resolutions, establish policy measures, and recommend certain constitutional amendments to the Churchwide Assembly.

In its review of Recommendation 1, the Church Council dealt with each of the two paragraphs separately.

Regarding paragraph 1, the Church Council found the recommendation vague and wanted to add specific language to put into place recommendations outlined in the Strategy Toward Authentic Diversity (STAD). Recommendations from the Report on the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) Audit were included in the governing documents by continuing resolution. In addition, the Church Council used the DEIA Audit to set forth the defined term, “historically underrepresented groups.” A proposed bylaw amendment will be before the 2025 Churchwide Assembly to increase future Churchwide Assembly voting membership by allowing each synod to send one additional member who is a member of a historically underrepresented group. In addition, the churchwide organization staff is tasked with developing handbooks and employee manuals to assist with all expressions of this church in achieving DEIA goals.

The intent of the Church Council's response to Recommendation 1 was to strengthen the work already done by the STAD Advisory Team and to renew the team's purpose and vision for the recommended work. Further, in order that the STAD Advisory Team's work is received by and acted upon by the Church Council, the Church Council recommendation requires regular reporting on behalf of the STAD Advisory Team. The intent was to deepen the work of the CRLC, building on their recommendations with increased specific actions to be undertaken. The original Recommendation 1 lacked specificity, which the Church Council felt would delay the process unnecessarily.

Regarding paragraph 2, the Church Council was concerned by the request that the Church Council would determine whether or not it had complied with Recommendation 1. Also, there was question about the CRLC's unspecified term “mutual accountability measures.” The Church Council agreed that including a call in its own action for a special meeting of the Churchwide Assembly was redundant as the council already has the constitutional authority to do so (see ELCA Constitution 12.31.), should it determine that a special meeting is needed. By its action, the Church Council attempted to address issues of concern raised by the CRLC toward an end of greater mutual accountability within existing ELCA polity.

*Recommended for assembly action*

**To receive with gratitude the memorials on “Consideration of Recommendation 1 of the CRLC” from the Pacifica Synod, Metropolitan New York Synod, Delaware-Maryland Synod, and Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod;**

**To acknowledge the importance of accountability in addressing racism within all structures of the ELCA;**

**To affirm the work of the Strategy Toward Authentic Diversity Advisory Team and request that the Church Council continue to work with the team to clarify the nature of mutual accountability as referenced in Recommendation 1 of the CRLC Report; and**

**To direct the Church Council to add a timeline to its actions taken in response to CRLC Recommendation 1 and to provide progress updates to this church with a final report by Fall 2027, including possible constitutional changes.**

***Category B15: Consideration of Full Report of CRLC***

**1. Southwest California Synod (2B) [2025]**

RESOLVED, that the Southwest California Synod in Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, urging it to consider and debate the full text of the unedited report and recommendations of the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church as part of its agenda.

*Background*

This memorial seeks to have the Churchwide Assembly consider and debate the full text of the unedited report and recommendations of the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church (CRLC) [\[EN\]](#)[\[SP\]](#), in place of the Church Council’s responses to the CRLC’s recommendations.

The 2022 Churchwide Assembly passed the following resolution:

“To direct the Church Council to establish a Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church comprised of leaders of diverse representation from all three expressions that, working in consultation with the Conference of Bishops and the Church Council, shall 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 will present its findings and recommendations to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly in preparation for a possible reconstituting convention to be called under the rules for a special meeting of the Churchwide Assembly.” [CA22.01.06]

The Church Council then selected members of the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church in Spring 2023. The CRLC performed its work from mid-2023 until the final report and recommendations were submitted to the Church Council in April 2025. Similar to the process for forwarding social statements to the assembly, the work of the commission needed to be presented to the Church Council for consideration and possible action. The Church Council reviewed the CRLC’s recommendations and, with prayerful consideration, discussed the report and took actions appropriate to the CRLC’s recommendations.

Many of the CRLC’s recommendations called upon the Church Council to establish task forces, direct development of various resources, adopt continuing resolutions, establish policy measures, and recommend certain constitutional and bylaw amendments to the Churchwide Assembly.

The Report of the CRLC included 13 recommendations. Recommendations 7, 8, and 10–12, which involve constitutional and bylaw matters, were received by the council at its November 2024 meeting in advance of the final report of the CRLC, and resulted in proposed constitutional and bylaw amendments that were forwarded to the synods in January, as required by the ELCA Constitution. These amendments will be considered by the 2025 Churchwide Assembly. Action was taken to defer consideration of Recommendation 13 until after the assembly.

At its April meeting, the Church Council received and responded to Recommendations 1–6. The council also responded to Recommendation 9, related to the Association of Synod Vice Presidents, by adopting a continuing resolution establishing the association.

As part of the work of the Church Council, in-depth discussions were had regarding feasibility, resource constraints (both staff and financial), and polity impacts of the CRLC recommendations. In certain instances, such as Recommendations 1, 3, and 4, the Church Council wanted to add more measurable items and clarify goals to unclear mandates. In other instances, such as Recommendation 6, members discussed the difficulty of creating a one-size-fits-all approach to very different synods. In certain instances, such as Recommendation 5, it was noted that the materials in the CRLC’s recommendations already existed, though perhaps not in the most accessible way. In all instances, the Church Council responded to each CRLC recommendation with seriousness, prayer, and deep discussion.

### **Rationale of the Memorials Committee:**

The Memorials Committee recommends declining to act on the “Consideration of Full Report of CRLC” memorial because the full CRLC report was already acted on by the Church Council when it was presented this April. The work on the Church Council actions is currently in progress. The Church Council’s response is included in the full CRLC report, which you can find in the [“Resources” section](#) on ELCA.org/CWA. A discussion of the full report at the Churchwide Assembly would extend beyond the scope of this assembly’s work.

#### *Recommended for assembly action*

**To receive with gratitude the memorial on “Consideration of Full Report of CRLC” from the Southwest California Synod; and**

**To affirm the work of the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church (CRLC) and the response of the Church Council, and to respectfully decline to act on this memorial.**

## Section C

### Social Teaching and Theological Topics

#### **Category C1: Council of Nicaea 1700th Anniversary**

##### **1. Slovak Zion Synod (7G) [2023]**

WHEREAS, the year 2025 will mark the 1700th anniversary of the first ecumenical council of the Church, commonly known as the Council of Nicaea; and,

WHEREAS, the sainted members of this council produced certain pronouncements of the faith that, being faithful expositions of the Holy Scriptures and of Christian truth, became the rule and norm of the entire Christian Church, foremost among them the Nicene Creed; and,

WHEREAS, the Lutheran Confessions declare that we “unanimously hold and teach, in accordance with the decree of the council of Nicaea” (AC 1), and that we “pledge ourselves to [the ecumenical symbols]” which were “accepted as the unanimous, catholic, Christian faith and confessions of the orthodox and true church” (Formula of Concord, Epitome, Rule and Norm, 3), etc.; and,

WHEREAS, the constitution of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America likewise states that this church accepts, teaches, and confesses the Apostles’, Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds as true declarations of the faith of this church (2.04); and,

WHEREAS, we believe the teaching of the ancient church has much to teach us about the meaning of Holy Scripture and the apostolic faith, and aids the increase in the unity of the Church; and,

WHEREAS, the Nicene Creed is the norm and rule of faith for the many Eastern, Oriental, and Western Christian Churches; and,

WHEREAS, this anniversary will be the first such centenary of the council since the wider reception of the modern ecumenical movement that has occurred in the last century; and,

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has committed to “manifest the unity given to the people of God by living together in the love of Christ and by joining with other Christians in prayer and action to express and preserve the unity which the Spirit gives” (4.02.f) and “fostering Christian unity by participating in ecumenical activities, contributing its witness and work and cooperating with other churches which confess God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” (4.03.e); therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Slovak Zion Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to acknowledge and celebrate this anniversary with thanksgiving to Almighty God who gives the Church its unity; and, be it further

RESOLVED, that the Synod Council communicate to the Church Council the request that, in the interim, the Office of the Presiding Bishop arrange for the development of resources to assist congregations and synods in observing this anniversary, especially in ecumenical settings, and encourage study of the Nicene Creed and canons as an opportunity for deepening Lutheran identity and as an impetus to nourish ecumenical relationships between churches and congregations.

#### *Background*

This memorial is received by the Office of the Presiding Bishop (OPB) with gratitude to the Slovak Zion Synod for its faithful recognition of this historic and forward-looking opportunity to reaffirm the ELCA’s Lutheran self-understanding and ecumenical commitments.

First and foremost, the OPB has been lifting up and inviting the people of the ELCA to connect with the global initiatives planned by the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). These initiatives have included scholarship and scholarly events, and study and prayer resources for use at the local level especially. Key examples include:

- The WCC’s international ecumenical conference, [“Towards Nicaea 2025: Exploring the Council’s Ecumenical Significance Today,”](#) held at the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey in November 2024. ELCA teaching theologian Rev. Dr. H. Ashley Hall was a presenter.

- The 2025 [Week of Prayer for Christian Unity](#), a joint initiative of the WCC and the Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity, focused on the 1700th anniversary through the lens of Jesus' conversation with Martha in John 11: "Do you believe this?"
- The WCC's upcoming [Sixth World Conference on Faith and Order](#), "Where Now for Visible Unity?" at which the ELCA will be represented by the Rev. Carmelo Santos and two other ELCA teaching theologians who were nominated, but yet to be confirmed.
- The "[Lutheran-Orthodox Common Statement on the Filioque](#)" of the Joint International Commission on Theological Dialogue between the LWF and the Orthodox Church, adopted in May 2024 as a fruit of 40-plus years of dialogue. The LWF issued a [resource for congregational use](#), and the ELCA developed a [study guide](#) for individual and congregation use and to support local dialogue efforts. A special formation opportunity was also provided for ELCA bishops, and future events are in planning for Lutheran Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Representatives (synod-appointed leaders), rostered ministers, and lay persons.

Building on these efforts, Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations (EIR) in the OPB appointed a planning team of ELCA teaching theologians to develop ELCA-specific initiatives, including:

- The publication of an article in *The Living Lutheran* by the Rev. H. Ashley Hall, titled: "[We believe in ... Commemorating the 1,700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea.](#)"
- A forthcoming (early Summer 2025) study guide on Nicaea which will explore both the content of the formula and its context, with attention to church and state relations from a post-colonial perspective.
- A conference (Winter 2025) to discuss similar issues at the end of the year.

The Churchwide Assembly (CWA) theme, "[For the Life of the World](#)," was selected with regard for the 1700th anniversary, and will be explored further in CWA online Bible studies in July, and the in-person theological presentation in Phoenix.

The ELCA Church Council also recommended that the Churchwide Assembly "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." (CC25.04.03) This action will be considered in the presence of the ELCA's ecumenical partners, whom this church expects to uplift the significance of this anniversary and its implications for the common life together in Christ.

*Recommended for assembly action*

**To receive with gratitude the memorial on the "Council of Nicaea 1700th Anniversary" from the Slovak Zion Synod;**

**To thank the Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations in the Office of the Presiding Bishop for its proactive efforts in the development of resources to assist congregations and synods in observing this anniversary, especially in ecumenical settings; and**

**To acknowledge the proposed actions of the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America as the response of the Churchwide Assembly to the memorial.**

### *Category C2: Update the Social Statement on Abortion*

#### **1. Northern Illinois Synod (5B) [2023]**

WHEREAS, the 1991 Social Statement on Abortion (SSoA) may have been adequate for its time allowing for and addressing diversity of perspectives; and

WHEREAS, SSoA does not directly address more current medical perspectives; and

WHEREAS, SSoA does not address the historical ecclesiastical understanding of when human life begins; and

WHEREAS, SSoA does not address the broader understanding of 'family' – regarding sexual orientation and 21<sup>st</sup> century family units; and

WHEREAS, SSoA might consider expanding on how to right the injustices regarding life before and after birth – namely such things as pre-natal care, a living wage, family leave, social networks to support children and their families; and

WHEREAS, SSoA might consider expanding the extenuating circumstances that may call for an abortion in the light of more recent social conditions; therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**, that the Northern Illinois Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America memorializes the 2025 Churchwide Assembly to revise, update, or create a new Social Statement on Abortion; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, this process should include the partnership of clergy, deacons, and lay people who have or have had uterus as well as medical professionals, including genetic counselors, perinatologist/maternal fetal medicine doctors, NICU providers, fetal palliative care providers, and OBGYNs of our synods and congregations.



## Background

This memorial speaks to the existing social statement entitled *Abortion* (1991) as one that has served the ELCA in the past, but also requests some degree of revision, asking “to revise, update, or create a new social statement.” Any of these actions fall under the technical category of a *reconsideration*” that is, this church will *reconsider* teaching adopted in the past. A two-thirds vote of voting members was required for the adoption of the 1991 social statement, and any action for reconsideration requires a similar level of support.

The memorial does not directly question the statement’s central theological convictions, framing, or commitments. It also does not seem to object to the social statement’s portrayal of the personal struggles and pastoral challenges named therein. It does rightly note that some contemporary factors date the message or are not addressed. These include some developments in the field of medicine and some acceptance of varied and broader understandings of family and sexual orientation, though it does not specify concrete developments or how these changes would alter the moral teachings of the 1991 social statement. At the same time, the memorial asks for significant expansion about injustices and extenuating circumstances surrounding parenthood and raising children.

The memorial suggests that the social statement does not address how human life begins, which is incorrect (see pp. 2 and 3). However, the memorial seems to suggest that any ethical analysis ought to address the varied and complicated perspectives about when life begins, as found in the long history of theological perspectives on abortion. It is true that the current social statement does not do this. At the same time, it should be recognized that to address such controversial questions and interpretations would require extensive length and much churchwide discernment.

The memorial’s last WHEREAS clause asks for attention to “recent social conditions,” but it is not clear or specific about which conditions are meant. It could imply conditions since the 2022 U.S. Supreme Court decision to revert laws governing abortion services from the federal level to individual states. It could imply changes since 1991 in levels of social acceptance of abortion, which have fluctuated. It could mean economic social conditions and the impact for availability of legal, safe, and accessible reproductive healthcare. It could imply other social conditions.

The current ELCA social statement on *Abortion* stands out among Christian bodies globally and nationally as a moderating voice in Christian teaching on abortion. It does so in part because it does not stand exclusively for or against abortion. Said another way, it is a model providing a nuanced teaching on a complex topic.

Instead, the social statement speaks theologically, pastorally, and ethically, while arguing for nuance and contextual discernment. Theologically, what is imperative in the current statement is this church’s confession that identity is through the Triune life. All belong to Christ, which is then the statement’s grounding to speak pastorally. The statement underscores that God’s people will care for each other and all pregnant persons, even when as individuals there is disagreement on something as divisive as questions over abortion. Lastly, the current statement outlines this church’s ethical commitments—to support persons who need to have abortion services or who have an unexpected pregnancy; to encourage other options to abortion; to work to mitigate the social and other circumstances that create hardship in having and raising children; and to ensure legal, safe, and accessible abortion and other reproductive healthcare.

The memorial requests the 2025 Churchwide Assembly to authorize a reconsideration (the technical terminology) of the social statement on *Abortion*. “Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns” (2018) provides for such options. It should be noted that any authorization does not determine the outcome but simply initiates a process. Final adoption rests with the subsequent churchwide assembly.

The memorial does not specify which of the three possible kinds of reconsideration it seeks:

- “a. Edit, the update of particular wording for the sake of accuracy and relevance to the contemporary social context involving no change in substantive meaning.
- b. Revise, changes to designated paragraphs or sections of a message involving substantive alteration.
- c. Archive, assigning the whole statement to the category of historical documents as an archive of the ELCA. Archive reconsideration may or may not entail development of a new statement.

Presumably, though, the memorial is asking for either b) a substantive revision or c) a new statement, each of which involves a task force providing leadership for an ELCA-wide discernment process of roughly three years.

Three sets of standard questions help assess whether reconsideration is called for. These questions and key observations are given here.

*What is the most appropriate vehicle for addressing the concerns expressed in the memorial?*

The options for response include reconsiderations, but other options also are available. These include addressing the concern through the development of study and discernment materials or fresh emphasis on existing ones. It also is possible to refer the concern to the Church Council as a request for a social message or social policy resolution.

In this case there are significant reasons, as expressed above, to suggest that existing study or discernment resources or the development of new ones would satisfactorily enable discernment on many of the concerns raised. The final whereas clause speaks to unspecified “social conditions” of which many are addressed in other ELCA social statements. For instance, economic matters are the subject of *Sufficient, Sustainable, Livelihood for All* (1999). Elements that are not addressed may well be addressed through a Social Policy Resolution (SPR) process overseen by the ELCA Church Council.

There are two types of SPRs. One type is a standard one and an example of a standard SPR would be:

- <https://resources.elca.org/faith-and-society/suicide-prevention-research-spr16/>
- <https://resources.elca.org/faith-and-society/justice-for-holy-land-through-responsible-investment-spr16/>

The other type is more descriptive and elaborate and an example of a ‘descriptive’ SPR would be:

- <https://resources.elca.org/faith-and-society/organ-tissue-donation-spr03/>
- <https://resources.elca.org/faith-and-society/legal-gambling-sponsorship-spr07/>

*What is the capacity of this church at this time, and what is the level of urgency in light of already existing commitments?*

A reconsideration involves significant staff time by members of Theological Ethics, of course, but also involves others in the churchwide organization who do communications, copy-editing, and the like. In addition, reconsideration significantly relies on the efforts of the ELCA Church Council and the Conference of Bishops, as well as participation across the whole ecology of the ELCA. All of these actors are involved because the ELCA is committed to being a community of moral deliberation. Following the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly, this church will be engaged in the substantive reconsiderations of *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* (2009). Typically, the ELCA as a whole church has the capacity for the development of one social statement between assemblies. This means the initiation of another reconsideration would need to be managed by the Church Council, either through additional funding for staff and process expenses or through a delay until 2028.

The urgencies expressed in the memorial appear to pertain to the “injustices regarding life before and after birth” and to “the extenuating circumstances that may call for an abortion in the light of more recent social conditions.” These needs may be met with means other than a revision or new social statement.

*What precisely would be the costs and budget implications involved?*

The memorial’s request for a reconsideration process has budgetary implications of approximately \$120,000 over a three-year period, plus staff time. The budget dollars would be used for two-and-a-half years of in-person task force meetings, for study resources, design, translation, and printing. The reconsideration process involves at least a draft comment period but usually includes other efforts to allow widespread participation across this church.

*Recommended for assembly action*

**To receive with gratitude the memorial from the Northern Illinois Synod on updating the social statement on *Abortion* (1991) or to create a new social statement on this issue;**

**To re-affirm the theological and ethical teachings of the social statement on *Abortion* and its study guide because of its attention to complexity and nuance and its continued use in discernment and conversation;**

**To encourage study of recent resources such as the book *ReEngaging ELCA Social Teaching on Abortion* by Caryn D. Riswold (Augsburg Fortress, 2024) that analyzes the foundations and contemporary applications of this social statement;**

**To refer the memorial to churchwide organization staff members of Theological Ethics and Gender Justice and Women’s Empowerment to develop additional study resources to address the concerns expressed in this memorial;**

**To decline at this time the request to update, revise, or create a new social statement on *Abortion*; and**

**To direct that the ELCA Church Council authorize the development of a social policy resolution that applies the ELCA statement on *Abortion* to the challenging personal struggles and pastoral issues brought about because some social conditions have changed since 1991.**

### ***Category C3: Social Statement on Vulnerable Youth***

#### **1. Greater Milwaukee Synod (5J) [2024]**

WHEREAS, there is currently an active debate in our society centered on children and vulnerable youth; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA social statements and social messages contain little about the unique value and vulnerability of children, and are inadequate to speak to the current moment; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Greater Milwaukee Synod Assembly memorializes the 2025 Churchwide Assembly to authorize the development and adoption of a social statement on children and vulnerable youth.

## Background

The request of the memorial is rightly concerned for the vulnerability of children and youth, who face many serious risks. These include physical, sexual, and emotional maltreatment by adults, exposure to violence, and vulnerability to exploitation. Their care and protection are of significant concern to the church, as noted in several ELCA social teachings referenced below. The request points to this concern and to the need for robust ELCA social teaching on the unique value of children and the church's responsibilities to children and youth.

At the time of the request, the synod may not have been aware that there is a current social message already in progress to address similar concerns. [A social message on "Child Protection"](#) was requested by the 2022 ELCA Churchwide Assembly (CA22.01.05r) and authorized by the ELCA Church Council in April 2024 (CC24.04.05). The draft of this social message was published for public comment in March 2025, with the intention of requesting ELCA Church Council action on a proposed message in Fall 2025.

This draft social message addresses the concerns named in these memorials and even exceeds them. The draft includes significant attention to types of child maltreatment, factors that increase vulnerability, and long-term trauma resulting from child abuse and neglect. It also names specific demands of justice as related to children and youth, such as protection from child labor and early marriage. It further discusses principles of justice as related to children and outlines elements of a Lutheran theology of childhood that directly ground the unique value, dignity, and rights of children. Lastly, it provides policy recommendations for the protection of children.

The "whereas" clauses in this request neglect awareness of this current process and relevant social teaching on the subject. The social policy resolution ["Safe Haven for Children"](#) (CA99.03.03) urges congregations to "pray for the well-being of all children, but in particular for the poorest and most at risk; declare ELCA congregations as 'safe havens' for all children;" advocate for policies that advance the well-being of children and their families; and work collaboratively with other congregations and Lutheran social ministry organizations that help children thrive. Likewise, the social policy resolution ["Youth Violence"](#) (CA99.03.05) expresses "deep concern" for youth, especially those at risk from racism, sexism, hunger, violence, abuse, drugs, and poverty."

[Our Calling in Education](#) (2007) contains a subsection on the unique value of children that names the responsibilities of the church and all adults to care for and nurture children (p. 14-16). In addition, both [Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Call to Action](#) (2019) and [Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust](#) (2009) name responsibilities to protect children from violence and abuse. Other social teachings address the specific vulnerabilities of children related to [immigration](#), [juveniles in the criminal justice system](#), and [disabilities](#). These prior social teachings inform the current draft social message on child protection.

These memorials call for the development of a social statement. The request that a Churchwide Assembly authorize a social statement falls under the purview of [Policies and Procedures of the ELCA for Addressing Social Concerns](#) (2018). There are three questions for assessment of a request for a social statement:

1. What precisely would be the costs involved?
2. What is the capacity of this church at this time?
3. Is a social statement the most appropriate vehicle necessary to address the concerns?

To the first question, a typical social statement involves a six-year cycle with a cost of approximately \$250,000 plus staff time. The cost includes providing for in-person meetings of a task force and provision of resources (including contracting with subject matter experts) to support their work.

To the second question, the capacity of this church involves significant leadership commitment and effort across the ELCA because of the communal moral deliberation process. Following the 2025 Churchwide Assembly, the ELCA will already be in the process of reconsideration of *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* (2009), and there are pending requests for reconsideration of two additional social messages and development of a new social message on white supremacy.

To the third question, social statements are undertaken to address either the most controversial questions or the great social institutions of contemporary life, such as systems of health care, economics, or criminal justice. An alternative means for developing social teaching is through social messages, which are narrower in scope, generally briefer, and typically developed within a year.

The topic of vulnerable children and youth is important but is more appropriately addressed through a social message, which as indicated above, is already in development. The memorial is likely to be addressed if this [draft social message](#) is adopted in Fall 2025.

## Recommended for assembly action

**To receive with gratitude the memorial from the Greater Milwaukee Synod for development of a social statement on children and vulnerable youth; and**

**To decline the request for a social statement in light of work underway on a social message on child protection that is intended for consideration by the ELCA Church Council in Fall 2025.**

**Category C4: Confession of Faith in Our Time**

**1. Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod (4C) [2025]**

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) proclaims that Jesus Christ—not any nation, political party, race, or ruler—is Lord of all (Philippians 2:10–11), and confesses the Gospel as liberation for the oppressed and justice for the nations (Luke 4:18–19; Isaiah 1:17); and

WHEREAS, the global rise of authoritarianism, nationalism, oligarchy, and white Christian supremacy—often wrapped in religious language—threatens both the integrity of the Gospel and the dignity of God’s beloved across borders; and

WHEREAS, movements rooted in Christian nationalism and political idolatry actively endanger migrants, LGBTQIA+ people, racial minorities, and democratic institutions; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA’s Confession of Faith affirms the church’s responsibility to speak publicly in society with theological clarity and prophetic courage, especially when religious language is used to bless oppression; and

WHEREAS, the Lutheran legacy includes the *Barmen Declaration* (1934), which resisted the co-opting of the church by state ideology, and the courageous witness of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the Confessing Church, who remind us that silence in the face of tyranny is itself a form of betrayal; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod memorialize the Churchwide Assembly to:

1. Publicly declare that authoritarianism, political idolatry, and Christian nationalism represent grave theological errors and global threats to human dignity and democratic life;
2. Call upon the Presiding Bishop and synodical bishops to exercise a courageous and unifying public moral voice in defense of the marginalized and in opposition to the misuse of Christian faith for authoritarian ends;
3. Commission the Office of the Presiding Bishop, in consultation with global Lutheran partners and the Lutheran World Federation, to develop a theological and public statement naming the ELCA’s opposition to authoritarianism, in continuity with the *Barmen Declaration* and consistent with Lutheran commitments to neighbor-love, pluralism, and resistance to unjust power;
4. Encourage ELCA congregations, pastors, and lay leaders to utilize theological tools, preaching resources, and ecumenical partnerships to publicly resist political violence, voter suppression, racial scapegoating, and any use of faith to justify autocracy;
5. Encourage ELCA bishops and synods to create spaces for discernment, lament, and repentance for the church’s own complicity in systems of political idolatry, and to accompany congregations seeking to rediscover their prophetic vocation in this time.

**2. South-Central Synod of Wisconsin (5K) [2025]**

WHEREAS, the promises and responsibilities of our baptismal liturgy and affirmation of baptism (or confirmation) ask if we promise to “proclaim Christ through word and deed, care for others and the world God made, and work for justice and peace in all the earth”; and

WHEREAS, our profession of faith at baptism also asks us to “renounce the powers of this world that rebel against God”; and

WHEREAS, when we proclaim “Jesus is Lord”, it is a Lord who said, “You know that the rulers of the gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you, but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave, just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many” and “Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another”; and

WHEREAS, decisions and actions in our country continue to affect negatively some of our most vulnerable neighbors and have the potential of worsening negative impacts on individuals, families, communities, and across the globe; and

WHEREAS, some of these policies are promoted by those who seek Christian dominion over politics—or use Christianity as a tool for their own gain—in a Christian Nationalism which conflates God and country while actually obscuring the person of Jesus Christ and his message and form of authority; and

WHEREAS, we have the historical precedent and witness of the “confessing church” movement through the 1934 Theological Declaration of Barmen, written and adopted by a group of pastors, lay leaders, and theologians from the German church with the purpose of providing a theological and creedal foundation for nonviolent resistance to the heretical teachings of the so-called “German Christians,” for whom patriotism and faithfulness to the German nation displaced faithfulness to Christ; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that now is the time to publicly declare ourselves a “confessing church” by reaffirming our belief that the life and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth as found in the New Testament is the sole and inviolable foundation of the Church and the norm for its life and teaching, and we therefore must reject all forms of religion and government that misuse Christianity, create idols, and do harm to our neighbor; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2025 Assembly of the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin adopts “A Confession of Faith for Our Time” in the form submitted with and attached to this resolution; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2025 Synod Assembly of the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin strongly encourage our congregations to strive publicly and nonviolently to resist all governmental actions and policies that demean the God-given dignity of all human beings by committing to practices such as the following:

- nurture healthy forms of our faith and baptismal renewal, as well as citizenship, through prayer and study;
- support one another as witnesses to God's love in our interactions with others and in every dimension of our lives, as well as together in public witness;
- boldly offer support in welcoming refugees, caring for the vulnerable, creating inclusive communities, and seeking understanding, through conversations as well as through forms of financial or direct assistance, advocacy, and nonviolent resistance;
- prepare to counter public attitudes, behaviors, and policies that are hostile to love and that inflict unnecessary and undeserved suffering on many, especially the most vulnerable among us;
- review and discuss the ELCA Conference of Bishops' statement on the Need to Speak the Truth, as they identified needs "to condemn the hateful, deceptive, violent speech that has too readily found a place in our national discourse" and a "pledge to be vigilant guardians of truth, refusing to perpetuate lies or half-truths that further corrode the fabric of our society";
- study and discuss our theology and identity discerned in ELCA Social Statements such as Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective, Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All, For Peace in God's World, and the most recent Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Call to Action;
- utilize resources and networking from organizations such as synod ministry teams, the Lutheran Office for Public Policy in Wisconsin, ELCA AMMPARO, the Wisconsin Council of Churches, and Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice;

and be it finally

RESOLVED, that this Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to adopt "A Confession of Faith for Our Time" in the form submitted with and attached to this Resolution, or in a similar form acceptable to the Churchwide Assembly.

### *Background*

The spirit of these memorials speaks to upheaval in the nation and they are taut with the grief and fear of many in this church and in this country. Their intent clearly is aimed at serving God and neighbor for the sake of Christ through bold proclamation and a faith active in love. They express the conviction that public witness to God's love, justice, and peace is required for this church to meet the moment. The ELCA has spoken and acted in ways commensurate with these concerns.

For example, on Jan. 24, 2025, Presiding Bishop Eaton [issued a statement](#) to the ELCA sharing concerns that many of President Trump's executive actions "have the potential to profoundly impact our lives, the well-being of our neighbors and the future of the planet. Therefore, I am concerned about the ways that many of the executive actions have created uncertainty and fear in our communities among neighbors struggling to survive, neighbors struggling to provide for their children, and neighbors struggling to be seen. As a church, we are called to speak up when the government distorts or denies the image of God ... by endangering access to protection, peace and daily bread. Where harm or inequity occur, we are called by God to respond with love and advocacy."

Bishop Eaton also shared a reminder from ELCA social teaching: "To evaluate how well agencies of government are doing their proper work of providing for the safety and well-being of those within their borders and/or jurisdiction, Lutherans ask one simple but all-encompassing question: Is the neighbor being served?" (ELCA's ["Message on Government and Civic Engagement in the United States,"](#) p. 7) When neighbors, which the ELCA teaches includes all of creation, are not being well-served by the state, ELCA social teaching supports faithful action to "publicly and nonviolently resist government actions and policies that deny the God-given dignity of each person and hurt God's whole beloved creation."

In March, Bishop Eaton also convened an "interfaith summit" of key ecumenical and inter-religious partners, and refugee resettlement agencies for information sharing, collaborative efforts, and common witness in response to executive orders with detrimental impact on people who are immigrants and refugees. Cooperative work has included an ["Interfaith Solidarity Statement on Refugees and Immigrants,"](#) engagement through the Church World Service ["Ecumenical Declaration"](#) and co-sponsoring the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) ["Together in Welcome"](#) campaign. The summit continues to meet biweekly. ELCA Witness in Society has provided opportunities and support for public witness to the impact of executive actions through timely updates, training and action alerts.

The memorials call for several actions, but central to both memorials is the adoption of "A Confession of Faith for Our Time" or "a theological and public statement in opposition to authoritarianism." Chapter 2 of the ELCA's Constitution specifies what confessions of faith this church affirms, naming specifically three creeds and the



confessional writings in the *Book of Concord*. Elsewhere it is clear that contemporary ELCA writings of the type called for by these memorials are grounded in ELCA social teaching. Social teaching governs the institutional life of the ELCA and this church public witness and messaging. To be clear, such documents are “not new creeds or confessions” (“[Policies and Procedures of the ELCA Addressing Social Concerns](#)”, p. 11). Moreover, the ELCA Constitution reserves to the ELCA as a community of moral deliberation the creation of official documents through a process of widespread discernment. This includes all theological statements or declarations of this church. Synods, then, are encouraged to bring memorials calling for the development of such documents to this whole church, rather than presenting a document to be considered or adopted by a Churchwide Assembly.

One of the memorials urges “consultation with global Lutheran partners and the Lutheran World Federation, to develop a theological and public statement naming the ELCA’s opposition to authoritarianism in continuity with the Barmen Declaration...” There certainly are increasing authoritarian realities affecting our global communion and its world service, as well as specific member churches. However, there is no LWF structure designed to enable a consultation with one communion to develop any kind of statement on the ELCA’s behalf. Member communions are responsible for their own social teaching and public messaging, which enables address to each distinct context even while developed in awareness of international realities. That awareness is enhanced through formal and informal consultation and communication. For example, the ELCA provides regular updates to the communion office through the Ecumenical and Interreligious team’s (OB) established communication patterns and in informal consultation with LWF staff and elected leadership. International consultation and conversation also regularly occurs through the churchwide organization’s Service and Justice home area via its multiple relationships with individual member churches across the globe.

In considering the calls for developing a confession, it should be noted that the ELCA’s official Confession of Faith identifies the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments; the Apostles’, Nicene and Athanasian Creeds; and the Lutheran confessional writings in the *Book of Concord* as true witnesses to the gospel and the basis for this church’s proclamation, faith, and life. Further, the ELCA teaches the gospel “as the power of God for the salvation of all who believe.” (ELCA Constitution 2.02.) This church confesses that we are Christ’s because of the work of the Holy Spirit in us to form faith. God changes us through Word and Sacrament to be Christ to others.

While we believe that it is not through our own efforts to follow Jesus’ life that we are redeemed, we confess and trust that God works in and through us to love as Jesus Christ loves in word and action. What we do in the public sphere is shaped by what we believe and confess as Lutheran Christians about God’s law and the gospel. “The gospel does not overthrow the secular government, public order, and marriage but instead intends that a person keep all this as a true order of God and demonstrate in these walks of life Christian love and true good works according to each person’s calling; Christians, therefore, are obliged to be subject to political authority and to obey its commands and laws in all that may be done without sin. But if a command of the political authority cannot be followed without sin, one must obey God rather than any human beings (Acts 5[:29])” (Augsburg Confession, XVI, German text, Kolb and Wengert, pp. 48, 50). In fact, it is God’s will that Christians do good works. (See Articles VI and XX.)

In this time, the ELCA has and continues to make declarations about U.S. civic life because of its confession that Jesus Christ is Lord and its teaching “that the God who justifies expects all people to do justice” (*Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective*, p. 3). This church has indicated repeatedly that there are certain proceedings and decisions of the current administration that are contrary to God’s intention for the well-being of all since they dramatically harm rather than serve neighbors, especially the oppressed and vulnerable. The concerns expressed and the urgency felt in these memorials are palpable and certainly speak for others besides those who crafted and supported them in synod assembly. In this case, many of the concerns named are declared already in existing social teaching or public messaging, and a significant number of others are front and center in the proposed social statement before this assembly, *Faith and Civic Life: Seeking the Well-being of All*.

#### *Recommended for assembly action*

**To receive with gratitude the memorials on “A Confession of Faith for Our Time” from the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin and on “Theological Imagination and ELCA Public Witness” from the Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod;**

**To reaffirm the ELCA’s official Confession of Faith as described in this church’s constitution and the use of ELCA social teaching as speaking for the ELCA in its public witness, and as a guide to moral deliberation among members about societal issues and challenges;**

**To consider action taken by the 2025 Churchwide Assembly on the recommended proposed social statement,, *Faith and Civic Life: Seeking the Well-being of All* as the response to these memorials, since it addresses many of the concerns it lifted up, such as authoritarianism, political idolatry, deceptive speech, and Christian Nationalism;**

To request that the Office of the Presiding Bishop consider the concerns expressed in these memorials in future social writing processes and social teaching resources;

To refer the memorials' concerns to the Theological Discernment, Justice, and Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations teams in the Office of the Presiding Bishop and the Witness in Society Team for assessment and a report to the Church Council by its Spring 2026 meeting;

To encourage ELCA congregations, rostered ministers, and lay leaders to utilize social teaching, preaching resources, and ecumenical and interreligious partnerships to publicly resist political violence, voter suppression, racial scapegoating, and any use of faith to justify autocracy; and

To encourage ELCA bishops and synods to create spaces for discernment, lament, and repentance for the church's complicity in systems of political idolatry, and to accompany congregations seeking to rediscover their prophetic vocation in this time.

### *Category C5: Reconsideration of Social Message on End-of-Life Decisions*

#### **1. Saint Paul Area Synod (3H) [2025]**

WHEREAS, this church shall...study social issues and trends...and develop programs of ministry and advocacy to further human dignity, freedom, justice, and peace...." (ELCA Constitution and Bylaws, 4.03.1.); and

WHEREAS, the Florida-Bahamas Synod has already asked the ELCA Church Council to reconsider the ELCA's 1992 Social Message on End-of-Life ("the Message"). Specifically, this Synod cited as problematic, given the number of states in the U.S. that now allow by statute, "Medical Aid in Dying", the following statement in the Message: "We oppose the legalization of physician-assisted death, which would allow the private killing of one person by another...." *Message* pg. 4." In response, the ELCA Church Council "...defer[ed] the question of reconsidering the selected paragraph)." (ELCA Church Council, Nov. 9–12, 2023, *Reconsideration of Message on End-of-Life Decisions*, page 1 of 1); and

WHEREAS, the Message states that "hope and meaning in life are possible even in times of suffering and adversity...." It is reasonable to ask whether this takes into account, adequately, severe dementia, an increasingly common problem at the end of life, which makes difficult an expression of a person's hope and meaning in life and warrants more discussion. (*Message*, A Christian Perspective, item 6, pg. 2); and

WHEREAS, the Message makes a single mention of Hospice care which "...offers promise of more humane treatment at the end of life." It is reasonable to point out that since 1992 significant changes have occurred in medical technology, hospice and palliative care, including sedation, the use of advance directives and more – changes that warrant more discussion in the Message, especially as it aims to reduce pain and suffering at the end of life (*Message*, pg. 4); and

WHEREAS, the Message opposes the legalization of medical aid in dying (MAiD) due to concern for "the potential for abuse, especially of people who are most vulnerable...." It is critical to point out that MAiD have strict eligibility requirements to protect all patients and over a dozen safeguards to prevent abuse. Since 1992, MAiD is legal now in ten states and the District of Columbia; and another 18 states have introduced legislation to enable MAiD. (*Message*, pg. 4; *Compassion & Choices Fact Sheet - [https://www.compassionandchoices.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/fact-sheet-laws-are-safe-final-10-05-20-pdf.pdf?sfvrsn=7f2dda9b\\_0](https://www.compassionandchoices.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/fact-sheet-laws-are-safe-final-10-05-20-pdf.pdf?sfvrsn=7f2dda9b_0)*); and

WHEREAS, "...communion with God, not life per se, is the greatest good, ...[which] strengthens a Christian's willingness not to hold onto life at all costs, certain of our final resting place with God made possible by our Baptism."; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Saint Paul Area Synod in Assembly requests the Churchwide Assembly to authorize a reconsideration of the ELCA Message on End-of-Life Decisions (1992).

#### *Background*

The "Message on End-of-Life Decisions" adopted in 1992 sketches a basic theological approach to the moral complexities in this technological society at the end of life. It then treats three topics under the heading of "Allowing Death and Taking Life:" Withholding or withdrawing artificially-administered nutrition and hydration, refusal of beneficial treatment, and physician-assisted death. The message concludes with a section focused on "Ministry in Preparation for the End of Life."

This memorial does not seem to raise substantive concerns about the basic theological approach, Christian perspectives, and ministry insights sketched in the message. The focus, rather, is a request to reconsider the message because of significant changes since 1992.

Such changes include legal rulings, medical technology, social perspectives, and others. Perhaps the most obvious change is that eleven jurisdictions in the United States, beginning with Oregon in 1994, have legalized physician-assisted death either through legislation or court-ordered removal of restrictions. As the preamble notes, legislation in these jurisdictions typically includes some criteria to reduce the likelihood of harm to vulnerable populations or cognitively incompetent patients.

Advocacy within movements for the "right to die" or "death with dignity" has raised new and important ethical questions about life, death, and patient autonomy. Prominent cases of prolonged life, such as the Terri Schiavo case (2005), spotlighted for the nation additional complex considerations to moral discernment about end-of-life decisions. The "WHEREAS" clauses also rightly point to advances in hospice care in the United States that provide a different

landscape 30 years later. Hospice now is a vital source of patient and family care for many people. That said, fresh ethical concerns arise because of increasing hospice ownership by private firms since the early 1990s.

The memorial requests authorization of the Churchwide Assembly for reconsideration of the social message in light of these changes. ["Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns"](#) (2018) provides for such a process. It should be noted that this does not determine the outcome but opens up a reconsideration process. The memorial does not specify which of the three kinds of reconsideration it seeks:

- a. *Edit*, the update of particular wording for the sake of accuracy and relevance to the contemporary social context involving no change in substantive meaning.
- b. *Revise*, changes to designated paragraphs or sections of a message involving substantive alteration.
- c. *Archive*, assigning the whole to the category of historical documents as an archive of the ELCA." Archive reconsideration may or may not entail the development of a new message.

However, given the language of the memorial, the request clearly indicates a desire for either a substantive revision (b) or the message's archiving (c), with the latter initiating development of a new message, as well. If the request is for a substantive reconsideration, specific paragraphs or sections of an existing social message will need to be specified. This clearly would focus on the section on "Physician-Assisted Death" (p. 4) but might also look at other sections.

It should be noted that, while a two-thirds majority of the Churchwide Assembly can request reconsideration of a social statement, "Policies and Procedures" stipulates that "a two-thirds vote of the Church Council shall be required to edit, revise, or archive a social message" (p. 25). Thus, the action of the assembly does not direct that a reconsideration will happen but makes the case and forwards the request to the ELCA Church Council. The Church Council has responsibility to manage all requests for social messages and is the legislative body responsible for adopting social messages.

Three sets of standard questions help assess whether reconsideration is called for. These questions and key observations are given here.

*What is the most appropriate vehicle for addressing the concerns expressed in the memorial?*

Reconsideration is a means to allow the church to engage in moral discernment on an issue given significant changes or developments since the social message's initial adoption. There are other vehicles, however, such as the development of new study materials or the reemphasis on existing ones. It could be possible to develop materials that invite the ELCA into studying the issues. However, the "WHEREAS" clauses rightly note that the Florida-Bahamas Synod Council has already requested the ELCA Church Council to authorize a substantive reconsideration of the physician-assisted death subsection, and that subsection alone, prior to this memorial. The decision at that time was deferred in light of the development of social messages on "Gun-related Violence and Trauma" and on "Child Protection and Maltreatment." That request remains pending.

*What is the capacity of this church at this time, and what is the level of urgency in light of already existing commitments?*

A reconsideration involves significant staff time by members of the Theological Ethics team, of course, but also involves others in the churchwide organization who do communications, copyediting, and the like. In addition, reconsideration significantly relies on the efforts of the ELCA Church Council and the Conference of Bishops, as well as participation across the whole ecology of the ELCA. All of these actors are involved because the ELCA is committed to being a community of moral deliberation. Following the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly, this church will be engaged in the substantive reconsiderations of *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* (2009), and typically, has capacity for development of one social message per calendar year. As with cost, the scope of leadership energies is less with a substantive revision than with archiving and developing a new message.

*What precisely would be the costs and budget implications involved?*

The financial costs of reconsideration for a social message are far less than the development of a new one. The cost would be approximately \$7,500 for a substantive revision while it is approximately \$15,000 for archiving and developing a new message. Costs in both instances include a writer's contract and research, consulting group expenses, research during the comment period, design, translation, copyediting, and potential staff travel. The cost difference arises from the scope of the work entailed.

Given these cumulative factors and the clear concern for this church's stance on physician-assisted death, a substantive reconsideration devoted primarily to that subsection seems to be the appropriate process to request. That approach seems more warranted than the development of a new message.

*Recommended for assembly action*

**To receive with gratitude the memorial on “Reconsideration of the social message on End-of-Life Decisions” from the Saint Paul Area Synod;**

**To forward this memorial to the ELCA Church Council, acting in consultation with the Theological Discernment staff of the Office of the Presiding Bishop, as the appropriate body to authorize a reconsideration; and**

**To identify the section titled “Physician-Assisted Death” for a substantive reconsideration in light of legal, medical, and social changes in end-of-life care and medical assistance in dying. While focused on that section, other references connected to that topic in the social message could be reconsidered.**

***Category C6: Educational Materials Regarding the Word and Service Roster***

**1. Oregon Synod (1E) [2025]**

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has recognized the significant role of deacons in the ministry of Word and Service within the Church, serving as vital leaders and advocates in areas such as education, social justice, and pastoral care; and

WHEREAS, deacons are called to serve within a unique and important ministry that directly engages with both the church and the broader community, yet the role of the deacon is often not as widely understood or clearly communicated within the ELCA; and

WHEREAS, there is a lack of clear, comprehensive, and easily accessible materials—both in electronic and print formats—that communicate the roles, responsibilities, and opportunities for deacons within the ELCA. The absence of effective communication regarding the roster of Word and Service (deacon) results in confusion and a lack of awareness among the wider church community, including both current and prospective members of the deacon roster, as well as those in leadership positions within congregations and synods; and

WHEREAS, the Churchwide Assembly ensures that all rostered leaders, including deacons, are recognized and supported in their ministries and that adequate resources are made available to promote these ministries; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Oregon Synod Assembly requests the Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA request the churchwide organization to create and disseminate comprehensive and user-friendly materials, both electronic and in-print, that outline the role, ministry, and responsibilities of the roster of Word and Service (deacon); and be it further

RESOLVED, that these materials should be designed to be accessible and understandable for all members of the ELCA, including congregations, synods, seminaries, and churchwide staff, to ensure that the role of the deacon is well understood and appreciated across the church; and be it further

RESOLVED, that these materials be made accessible and understandable in any applicable languages used within the ELCA, to ensure inclusivity for all members; and be it further

RESOLVED, that these resources be regularly updated and evaluated for effectiveness in meeting the needs of the church and be made available in a variety of formats to accommodate different learning preferences and technological access; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the funding for the implementation of this memorial will be derived from the regular staffing resources of the churchwide staff. Additionally, a printing and dissemination budget of \$700 to \$1,500 with a further translation budget of \$500 per language translated would be requested of the churchwide annual budget; and be it further

RESOLVED, that this be addressed at the earliest opportunity and resolved by the next Churchwide Assembly, and that a report be made to the synods regarding its progress.

*Background*

In 2016, the Churchwide Assembly created the unified roster of Ministers of Word and Service, bringing together the former lay rosters of Associates in Ministry, Diaconal Ministers, and Deaconesses.

The 2019 Churchwide Assembly approved the recommendation of the Entrance Rite Discernment Group to adopt ordination as the entrance rite for deacons. This decision aligned the ELCA more closely with global Lutheran and ecumenical partners and affirmed the lifelong, public, and accountable nature of this ministry. As the ELCA continues to live into the unified roster of Ministers of Word and Service, a broader awareness and consistent understanding of this ministry are essential.

The request in this memorial aligns with a related recommendation from the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church. The Church Council acted in April 2025 [CC25.04.10] to affirm existing educational resources about the theology and practice of Word and Service ministry and direct the churchwide organization to make available such resources.



While some resources already exist for use in candidacy, formation, theological education, and worship leader formation, there remains a need for more accessible and widely usable materials particularly those designed for congregations, synod staff, and the broader church.

*Recommended for assembly action*

**To receive with gratitude the memorial on “Educational Materials Regarding the Word and Service Roster” from the Oregon Synod;**

**To direct the Christian Community and Leadership unit, Office of the Presiding Bishop, and Office of the Secretary to collaborate on the development of additional educational resources designed for congregations, synods, and other church settings that clearly communicate the roles and responsibilities of ministers of Word and Service in varied contexts; and**

**To provide an update to the Church Council on the status or completion of this work no later than the Spring 2027 meeting.**

### ***Category C7: Reconsideration of Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust***

#### **1. Southwest California Synod (2B) [2025]**

RESOLVED, that the Southwest California Synod, in Assembly, memorialize the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly and the Taskforce for the Revision of “Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust” to preserve a category for relationships beyond legal marriage or validate the experience of those who wish not to have a legal marriage; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwest California Synod, in Assembly, memorialize the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly and the Taskforce for the Revision of “Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust” to direct Portico Benefits Services to establish a corresponding category for healthcare coverage for relationships beyond legal marriage including registered Domestic Partnerships and Significant Others; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwest California Synod, in Assembly, memorialize the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly and the Taskforce for the Revision of “Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust” to adopt an inclusive definition for marriage to include same-gender and gender-non-conforming partnerships; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwest California Synod, in Assembly, memorialize the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly and the Taskforce for the Revision of “Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust” to direct the creation of education and pastoral care materials for people in relationships beyond legal marriage including polyamorous, non-monogamous, and care for singles; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwest California Synod, in Assembly, memorialize the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly and the Taskforce for the Revision of “Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust” to clarify that bound conscience can only apply to individual clergy who decide not to perform a marriage rite and not to ELCA churches who intend to preclude the safety of LGBTQIA+ individuals; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwest California Synod, in Assembly, memorialize the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly and the Taskforce for the Revision of “Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust” to clarify “grave public scandal” so that rostered leaders may know exactly what private behaviors are to be prohibited; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwest California Synod, in Assembly, memorialize the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly and the Taskforce for the Revision of “Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust” to clarify this church’s unequivocal support for the well-being of transgender and gender expansive individuals, their families, and partners to live free of public torment and discrimination.

### ***Background***

This memorial contains seven RESOLVEDS clustered loosely around ELCA teaching and policy regarding marriage, which is framed by the social statement *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* (HS:G&T). The first three must be interpreted as calling for a major reconsideration of current social teaching specifically encouraging discernment around “relationships beyond legal marriage or [validation of] the experience of those who wish not to have a legal marriage.” The fourth RESOLVED asks for educational and pastoral care materials. The fifth and sixth speak to ministry policy practices of the ELCA, and the final one asks for this church to clarify its unequivocal support for the well-being of “transgender and gender expansive individuals, their families, and partners.”

There is some ambiguity as to meaning and terminology throughout the memorial, and the resolutions are sometimes unclear in their requests. For example, regarding terminology, the first RESOLVED identifies a grouping of any who wish relationships beyond legal marriage. Other RESOLVEDS, however, identify different groupings ranging from significant others to polyamorous relationships to gender-non-conforming partnerships. Each of these three, and others in the resolutions, have different standings and the terms have varied meanings in the vernacular. It is also important to note that the preamble points to a legal category within the European Union. ELCA social teachings,



while developed in awareness of international contexts, are written specifically for and in the United States context. It is unclear what civil frameworks within the United States the memorial urges, especially given the decline in states providing civil unions as a legal option.

#### *Clarifying which ELCA leadership group is intended*

The RESOLVEDS each address the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly (CWA) and the “Taskforce for Revision of *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*.” Memorials are rightly addressed from a synod only to the Churchwide Assembly, since only the CWA as the highest legislative body can direct appropriate leadership groups to carry out specific tasks on behalf of this church. However, the ELCA Task Force for Reconsiderations of *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* (HS:G&T) cannot be memorialized. More critically, the task force is not the appropriate leadership group for these resolutions. The existing task force was charged with two reconsiderations and selected to represent a diversity of ELCA members on those two matters.

RESOLVEDS 1–3, whether intended or not, effectively represent a request to reconsider the entire HS:G&T, since they ask that relationships be legitimated by this church beyond those described in the social statement and as legally defined in the United States. While individuals in the ELCA could provide educational and pastoral materials, it is unclear where RESOLVED 4 could be addressed within the churchwide organization (CWO) since non-monogamous sexual relationships beyond legal marriage are contrary to ELCA teaching. RESOLVEDS 5 and 6 speak to policies governing rostered ministers, not to social teaching, and therefore would need to be considered by the Office of the Secretary and the CWO’s Christian Community and Leadership unit (CCL) in consultation with the Conference of Bishops. These leadership groups are responsible for ministry policy.

For clarity, current ministry policy is not spelled out in HS:G&T, as suggested in the memorial, but derive from ministry policy directives adopted by the 2009 Churchwide Assembly. Church policies are governed by social teaching and are to operate within the frame of social statements, but HS:G&T does not determine specific ministry practices. Current policy directives would need to be changed, or at least adapted, by a future Churchwide Assembly, perhaps after reconsideration of a social statement. Further, it should be noted that bound conscience, within the range of convictions specified in the statement, applies to *all* members of the ELCA, not to individual rostered ministers alone. To restrict the exercise of conscience solely to rostered ministers would contradict the individual freedom of conscience that the memorial notes in its own preamble. It should be noted that the current social statement already contains provisions that reject abuse, harassment, or discrimination based on sex, gender, or sexuality. It is unclear, however, if these are the actions that the memorial infers as intentions that “preclude the safety of LGBTQIA+ individuals.” Finally, RESOLVED 7 can be, and has been, addressed within the ELCA on several occasions and there are additional actions in this vein under consideration by the 2025 CWA.

This background doesn’t try to settle the meaning of the ambiguities identified, but addresses the general requests, which seem to be three in number.

#### *Addressing the general requests*

1. The memorial asks for this church to reconsider core tenets of the current social statement. HS:G&T affirms that the Lutheran Confessions identify marriage as foundational structures that support human community while the resolutions seek teaching “beyond marriage.” HS:G&T further describes marriage as a covenant of mutual promises, commitment, and hope authorized *legally by the state* (italics added) and blessed by God. Therefore, these resolutions effectively request reconsideration of the entire social statement. Such an authorization could be accomplished by the CWA in calling for development of an entirely new social statement and the archiving of HS:G&T. Such a request would be germane. However, the memorial seems to request a specific outcome for this process, which contravenes the communal moral discernment by which social teaching is developed. This memorial, at most then, could request the 2025 Churchwide Assembly to authorize a new development process, and the outcome would depend on the decision of a subsequent Churchwide Assembly after an ELCA-wide discernment, as governed by [ELCA Policies and Procedures for Addressing Social Issues](#) (2018).

A set of standard questions helps assess whether reconsideration is called for.

- a.) Is reconsideration warranted for addressing the concerns expressed in the memorial?

The two reconsiderations authorized by the 2022 CWA, now represented by the recommended proposed edits before this assembly, were specific and narrow. One involved an editorial process and the other focused on one substantive aspect, but did not challenge core tenets. The nature of this memorial is obviously far more extensive, as explained just above. The request, whether intended or not, is for an Archive Reconsideration.

[https://elcamediaresources.blob.core.windows.net/cdn/wp-content/uploads/Policies\\_and\\_Procedures.pdf](https://elcamediaresources.blob.core.windows.net/cdn/wp-content/uploads/Policies_and_Procedures.pdf) (see p. 19).

- b.) What is the capacity of this church at this time, and what is the level of urgency in light of already existing documents and commitments?

The development of a new social statement would involve seating a new task force chosen to deal with the concerns expressed in the RESOLVEDS and would involve a five-year process. A new social statement obviously involves significant staff time by members of the Theological Ethics team, but also affects others in the churchwide organization who do communications, copyediting, and the like. In addition, it would draw significantly on the Church Council and the Conference of Bishops, as well as participation across the whole ecology of the ELCA. All of these actors are involved because the ELCA is committed to being a community of moral deliberation.

Following the 2025 Churchwide Assembly, this church will be engaged in the substantive reconsiderations of *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* (2009). Typically, the ELCA as a whole church has the capacity for the development of one social statement between assemblies. This means the initiation of an Archive Reconsideration would need to be managed by the Church Council providing significant additional budget dollars for the process and additional staff.

- c.) What precisely would be the costs and budget implications involved?

The memorial's request for a reconsideration process has budgetary implications of approximately \$240,000 over a five-year period, plus staff time. The budget dollars would be used for task force meetings, study resources, research design, translation, and printing. Standard protocol involves listening events, the development of study resources, and a draft comment period with feedback vehicles such as in-person hearings, but usually includes other efforts to encourage widespread participation across the church. To note the point again, authorizing another task force also would involve hiring an additional director for Theological Ethics.

2. The second kind of request involves revisiting ministry policy (RESOLVEDS 5 and 6). However, there remains a lack of clarity as to what precisely is intended. The term “who intend to preclude safety” has a wide range of possible meanings. The source of the quote “grave public scandal” is not given and does not appear in HS:G&T or [Definitions and Guidelines](#) for Discipline. It is the latter in which any clarification would need to be developed. Moreover, it is possible that a social statement reconsideration would need to come first before ministry policy could be determined, since there is to be correspondence with existing social teaching. There are also the capacity and cost questions for revisiting ministry policy, though figures would depend on the kind of effort involved. It rightly would involve noticeable time and energy from ELCA leaders. It should also be noted that a revision of Definitions and Guidelines was completed in 2021.
3. The memorial's final RESOLVED requests that this church indicate its “unequivocal support for the well-being of transgender and gender expansive individuals, their families, and partners to live free of public torment and discrimination.” The ELCA has indicated its support in several official teaching and policy documents (HS:G&T; [Faith, Sexism, and Justice](#) (2019); and in a number of social policy resolutions, in [2013](#) and [2022](#) for example). Based on these documents, the presiding bishop's messaging has consistently expressed support and concern, most recently in Bishop Eaton's early [June video](#). While this church remains in discernment around differing religious convictions “regarding lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships,” the documents named oppose all forms of verbal abuse, physical harassment, and assault. They likewise call for legislation and policies to protect civil rights and to prohibit discrimination in housing, employment, and public services. Voting members also should note that the question of support is addressed by Memorial A06 and the recommended proposed edits to *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* brought by the Reconsiderations task force pending before this assembly.

*Recommended for assembly action*

**To receive with gratitude the memorial concerning a reconsideration of *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* (2009) and related issues from the Southwest California Synod;**

**To acknowledge the reconsideration process currently underway by the “ELCA Taskforce for Reconsiderations of Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust”;**

**To consider actions taken by this assembly on the Recommended, Proposed Edits of *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* and on the “Affirm Transgender, Nonbinary, Gender Expansive, Two-spirit, and Genderqueer People of God” memorial as the response to this memorial's RESOLVED 7;**

**Given the process and timeline in place, to decline to direct the Office of the Secretary and the Christian Community and Leadership unit, in consultation with the ELCA Conference of Bishops, to take up the tasks of revisiting ministry policies at this time;**

**To refer this memorial's RESOLVED 4 to the ELCA Conference of Bishops to work on and develop education and pastoral care materials; and**

**To decline the request for an Archive Reconsideration of *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* entailing the authorization of a new social statement on the topic.**

#### ***Category C8: Social Message on Rural Life and Ministry***

##### **1. Montana Synod (1F) [2025]**

WHEREAS, nearly one-third of ELCA congregations minister in rural and remote communities; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Census marks a significant population movement from rural to urban communities indicating challenges for rural congregations to maintain membership and giving; and

WHEREAS, rural communities face significant inequities in health, education, and economic opportunity when compared to urban communities; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has not produced materials for theological reflection on the challenges facing and gifts provided by rural communities since its inception; and

WHEREAS, rural and remote congregations offer models of innovation and adaptation to economic and sociological constraints for ministry; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Montana Synod memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly to commission a study and the production of a social message on the challenges facing rural and remote communities and gifts provided by ministry in rural and remote contexts; furthermore, be it

RESOLVED, that Montana Synod memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly to encourage and equip synods and member congregations to dedicate a time of study on rural and remote issues and rural ministry; and be it further

RESOLVED that this message reflect the diversity of rural communities across geographic regions to include consideration of remote communities and sovereign tribal nations.

#### ***Background***

As the preamble of this memorial notes, a significant percentage of ELCA congregations are in rural communities. These congregations and communities face significant challenges and present unique learning opportunities for ministry.

Since 2020, rural communities in the US have experienced modest growth in population. However, rural congregations continue to face the challenges identified in this memorial, including maintaining and growing members in remote areas. In addition, the inequities listed in the memorial present significant challenges that should be addressed.

Yet, as the memorial also notes, rural communities and congregations have gifts to offer for theological and ecclesial reflection, including models of innovative and adaptive ministry. The memorial thus calls for development of a social message that addresses both the challenge and promise of the context of rural life and ministry.

The memorial does not indicate awareness of the establishment of a Rural and Small-Town Ministry Desk by the ELCA in 1998. However, it rightly notes a lack of current resources and ELCA social teaching on the topic.

There are few references to rural congregations and communities in current ELCA social teaching. Most often, these references only describe the challenges faced by rural or farming communities, without attention to the gifts rural ministry provides. For example, the social statement *Caring for Health: Our Shared Endeavor* (2003) calls for priority in addressing rural health inequities. Social policy resolutions on “Family Farms” (CA95.05.44) and “Economic Crisis in Rural America” (CA99.03.09) call for prayer, advocacy, and education about family farms. A 2001 social policy resolution on “The Family Farm” (CA01.05.21) echoes these earlier documents and calls for support of rural congregations and ministries.

There are three questions for assessment of a request for a new social message: 1) Is a social message the most appropriate vehicle to address the concerns? 2) What is the capacity of this church for this process? 3) What would be the costs involved?

To the first question, social messages “address the contemporary situation in light of the prophetic and compassionate traditions of the Scriptures,” are “narrower in scope and complexity or of less controversy than social statements,” and “expand theological and pastoral address and analysis” of contemporary issues ([Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns](#) (2018)). Given the nature of the topic of rural and remote ministry, a social message would be the most appropriate resource for addressing the needs identified in this memorial. However, social messages address social issues. Such a social message, thus, would address the context in which rural ministry happens, rather than congregational ministry more narrowly.

To the second question, the capacity of the church involves significant leadership commitment and effort across the church because of the communal moral deliberation process. This also includes the significant investment of time needed from Theological Discernment staff in the Office of the Presiding Bishop. In general, there is capacity for development of one social message per year. There are already requests for a new social message on White Supremacy and for reconsideration of the social messages on “Homelessness” and “End-of-Life Decisions.”

To the third question, development of a new social message would cost approximately \$10,000-15,000. This would include compensation and potential travel for a contract writer, design, editing, translation, and printing.

#### *Recommended for assembly action*

**To receive with gratitude the memorial from the Montana Synod for development of a new social message on the challenges facing rural, remote communities, and sovereign Tribal Nations, and gifts provided by ministry in rural and remote contexts;**

**To direct Theological Discernment staff in the ELCA churchwide organization to review the request for a new social message on rural, remote communities, and sovereign Tribal Nations and bring a recommendation to the ELCA Church Council no later than the Spring 2026 meeting on what means should be authorized to address the questions involved; and**

**To direct Christian Community and Leadership staff in the ELCA churchwide organization to assess available resources on rural congregations and communities and to provide a report and recommendation for resource development to the ELCA Church Council no later than Fall 2026.**

## Section D

### Palestine and Israel Concerns

#### *Category D1: Justice for Palestinians and Israelis*

##### **1. Metropolitan Chicago Synod (5A) [2024]**

WHEREAS, the ELCA in its Social Statement *For Peace in God’s World* has committed to serve as “a reconciling presence” and to promote respect for human rights, particularly for “groups most susceptible to violations, especially all minorities, women, and children”; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has denounced the attacks and hostage-taking on October 7, 2023, by Hamas and has denounced the subsequent disproportionate death toll among Palestinian civilians; and

WHEREAS, we deplore the illegal settlements and the Israeli military occupation in Palestine and the killing of more than 34,000 civilians in Gaza since October 7, 2023; and we lament both the destruction of Gaza’s infrastructure, housing, schools and universities, hospitals, and places of worship – and the reality that 2.2 million people are experiencing displacement and facing malnutrition and starvation, as a result primarily of Israel’s continuing air strikes and blocking entry of humanitarian aid trucks; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA Presiding Bishop and Conference of Bishops have expressed sorrow over the loss of innocent lives on both sides and have called for a ceasefire and for resumption of negotiations toward an overall political resolution; therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**, that the Metropolitan Chicago Synod memorialize the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in assembly to lament the trauma experienced by Palestinians and Israelis over the course of the past two years, as well as the resurrected historic traumas experienced by both peoples; and to confess that as Americans we share responsibility for what has taken place; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, that the Metropolitan Chicago Synod memorialize the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in assembly to urge the United States Administration and Congress to work to end the Israeli occupation in Palestine; to stop the unconditional supply of weapons and military aid to Israel; and to support and participate fully in the restoration of infrastructure in the Gaza Strip.

#### *Background*

As the memorial notes, the ELCA has engaged in active and ongoing response to the 2023 Hamas attacks and hostage-taking, Israel’s invasion of Gaza, ongoing destruction, war and humanitarian crisis, and the ongoing Israeli military occupation in Palestine. This work has been ongoing for decades, rooted in accompaniment of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) and furthered through the 2005 Churchwide Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine. In October 2023, following an in-depth review by ELCA staff and leadership from the Palestinian Lutheran church, the ELCA announced a new initiative, Sumud: For Justice in Palestine and Israel, that guides accompaniment, awareness-raising, and advocacy.

Through the work of the ELCA Middle East North Africa (MENA) Desk including ELCA Sumud, the Witness in Society team and the MENA Policy Program, the ELCA has a long history of advocacy for an end to the Israeli occupation in Palestine and an end to unconditional military aid to Israel. This advocacy takes place through [statements from the Presiding Bishop](#), staff advocacy on Capitol Hill and [action alerts from Witness in Society](#) to ELCA networks,

with recent alerts affirming the [ELCA's support for a permanent ceasefire](#) in Gaza and [restoration of infrastructure in Gaza](#). It also takes place through ELCA participation in ecumenical coalitions and initiatives, for example, Churches for Middle East Peace.

The ELCA has created awareness-raising opportunities and events to “lament the trauma experienced by Palestinians and Israelis over the course of the past two years...” by holding [online events](#) for prayer and solidarity, producing [educational resources](#) for congregations, and issuing [statements](#) from Presiding Bishop Eaton addressing the trauma experienced by the local communities of the Holy Land. These resources pay special attention to the [role of American Christians](#) in a shared responsibility for current circumstances in Palestine and Israel as targeted by this memorial. The ELCA has also responded through continued accompaniment of Palestinian Lutheran companions and their neighbors on the ground through building leadership and ministry capacity in the church, schools, and community organizations in Jerusalem and the West Bank. As part of this, Lutheran Disaster Response, in consultation with the MENA Desk, provided more than \$800,000 in funding to the partners on the ground in Palestine and Israel in 2024, including funding for psychosocial support.

This memorial affirms both the existing ministry of the ELCA and encourages the urgent need for continued ministry and initiatives of this nature. The adverse conditions and extreme hardships addressed in this memorial have not ended; rather, conditions have worsened on the ground in Gaza and the [West Bank](#). There continues to be a great need for advocacy, awareness, and accompaniment from the ELCA to faithfully pursue justice in the Holy Land.

*Recommended for assembly action*

**To receive with gratitude the memorial on “Justice for Palestinians and Israelis” from the Metropolitan Chicago Synod;**

**To reaffirm this church’s commitment, set forth in the social statement *For Peace in God’s World* (1995), to serve as a reconciling presence, including through promoting respect for human rights, particularly for “groups most susceptible to violations, especially all minorities, women, and children”;**

**To lament the trauma experienced by Palestinians and Israelis and encourage congregations to recognize and respond to the need to confess shared responsibility for the suffering;**

**To reaffirm this church’s sense of urgency for ongoing advocacy, awareness, and accompaniment through the Sumud initiative;**

**To request that the Service and Justice unit, in consultation with the Office of the Presiding Bishop, implement the recommendations in the memorial for continuing accompaniment, awareness-raising, and advocacy efforts to end the Israeli occupation in Palestine, to stop the unconditional supply of weapons and military aid to Israel, and to support and participate fully in the restoration of infrastructure in the Gaza Strip; and**

**To request that the Service and Justice unit provide a report to the Church Council at its Spring 2026 meeting.**

### ***Category D2: Palestinian Destruction Response***

#### **1. Minneapolis Area Synod (3G) [2025]**

WHEREAS, the ceasefire in Gaza requires Christians to take urgent steps toward recovery and healing; and

WHEREAS, the church calls all disciples to be advocates for peacemaking that strives for human rights, political alternatives to war, social justice, control of the arms trade, and creative means of working for peace in God’s world; and

WHEREAS, 2024 was the deadliest year on record for Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, and the displacement of millions of people in Gaza and Lebanon occurred even while the ELCA has called for an end to unconditional aid to the State of Israel; and

WHEREAS, some definitions of antisemitism equate opposition to policies of the State of Israel with antisemitism, target political criticism of Israel on college campuses, and enable false claims of antisemitism making it difficult to identify real incidents of antisemitism; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA Churchwide Assembly in 2016 voted (with 90% in favor) to develop a human rights social criteria investment screen to apply to investments in the State of Israel, and voted (with 82% in favor) for the U.S. to link financial and military aid to Israel to Israel’s compliance with internationally recognized human rights standards and other criteria; therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**, that the Minneapolis Area Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA to direct the churchwide organization to increase awareness of the need for unity in a region that is home to Muslims, Jews and Christians, and use resources to support efforts that are needed to recover, rebuild, and unify by investing in humanitarian aid and rebuilding of Gaza and other impacted areas of occupied Palestine through support for established institutions and through gifts designated for “Middle East Crisis”, and

- to amplify demand for the US to cease financial support for arms and related technologies to Israel as we rebuke oppression and the senseless deaths of innocents; and



- to reject definitions of antisemitism that do not distinguish between hatred of Jews and criticism of the State of Israel, and all Islamophobia and antisemitism which harms our Muslim and Jewish neighbors locally and globally; and
- to direct the churchwide organization, in accordance with the 2016 screening decision, to ask the ELCA and its congregations to review current and future investments that profit from Israel's violations of Palestinian human rights.

### *Background*

The ELCA has engaged in active and ongoing response to the 2023 Hamas attacks and hostage-taking, Israel's invasion of Gaza, ongoing destruction, war and humanitarian crisis, and the ongoing Israeli military occupation in Palestine. This work has been ongoing for decades, rooted in accompaniment of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) and furthered through the 2005 Churchwide Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine. In October 2023, following an in-depth review by ELCA staff and leadership from the Palestinian Lutheran church, the ELCA announced a new initiative, [Sumud: For Justice in Palestine and Israel](#), that guides accompaniment, awareness-raising, and advocacy.

Through the work of the ELCA Middle East North Africa (MENA) Desk including ELCA Sumud, the Witness in Society team and the MENA Policy Program Director, the ELCA has a long history of advocacy for peace in the region, including an end to the Israeli occupation in Palestine and an end to unconditional military aid to Israel. This advocacy takes place through [statements from Presiding Bishop Eaton](#), staff advocacy on Capitol Hill and [action alerts from Witness in Society](#) to ELCA networks, with recent alerts affirming the [ELCA's support for a permanent ceasefire in Gaza](#) and [restoration of infrastructure in Gaza](#).

The ELCA also has responded through continued accompaniment of Palestinian Lutheran companions and their neighbors on the ground through building leadership and ministry capacity in the church, schools, and community organizations in Jerusalem and the West Bank. As part of this, Lutheran Disaster Response, in consultation with the MENA Desk, provided more than \$800,000 in funding to the partners on the ground in the Holy Land in 2024, including funding for psychosocial support.

### *ELCA Jewish and Muslim Relations*

The ELCA has strong Jewish and Muslim relations, nurtured directly and through work in various multi-religious coalitions and initiatives. This work is implemented on the basis of this church's declarations to each community and related resources.

"[A Declaration of the ELCA to the Jewish Community](#)," was adopted by the ELCA Church Council in 1994 and updated in 2021. This Declaration characterizes anti-Semitism as a tool "for the teaching of hatred and incitement to violence toward Judaism and the Jewish people." It goes on to say that the ideology and its manifestations are "a contradiction and affront to the Gospel" and "a violation of our hope and calling" and pledges that the ELCA will "oppose the deadly working of such bigotry [anti-Semitism]." This Declaration was developed by the ELCA Consultative Panel on Lutheran-Jewish Relations, which has also produced [resources for education and dialogue](#). The most recent, "[Preaching and Teaching 'with Love and Respect for the Jewish People'](#)," published in 2022, defines anti-Semitism as "opposition to the Jewish people as inherently inferior or harmful" (p. 31).

Similarly, the ELCA Consultative Panel on Lutheran-Muslim Relations developed "[A Declaration of the ELCA to the Muslim Community](#)," adopted by the Church Council in 2022. This Declaration acknowledges the "interlocking forms of hatred—anti-Muslim bigotry, anti-Semitism, racism and xenophobia (p.1)." It defines anti-Muslim bigotry as "subtle and not-so-subtle acts of aggression and violence, including vandalism." It goes on to say that the ideology and its manifestations are "antithetical to our Christian faith and counter to Lutheran teachings, which focus on God's good news for the world, and instill in us a love for the neighbor" (p. 1). This Panel also has developed [resources](#) to support the commitments made in the Declaration.

The [Churchwide Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine](#), adopted by the Churchwide Assembly in 2005, calls for clear differentiation "between theological understandings of what God wills for humankind and judgements about or critiques of political structures and government policies." The strategy goes on to name that "effective ELCA action will reflect respect for differing opinions and zero tolerance for anti-Jewish and/or anti-Muslim sentiments or actions." These and other commitments named in the Strategy are key considerations in the Presiding Bishop's statements and advocacy.

In recent years, several definitions of anti-Semitism have been issued by other entities, many of which are used for political purposes. Some of these definitions are controversial. This can include controversy because of the source, the definition itself, examples given to illustrate the definition, and/or subscribers to the definition. This church's

definitions and the incumbent commitments expressed in the Declarations, in concert with the clarity in the Engagement Strategy on these matters, have served the church's work and witness well.

The ELCA participates in the national dialogues co-convened by the National Council of Churches with Jews and with Muslims. The ELCA nurtures bilateral partnerships with the Union of Reform Judaism and the Islamic Society of North America. The ELCA also provides leadership in an inter-religious initiative called, "[Shoulder to Shoulder Campaign: Standing with American Muslims, Advancing American Ideals](#)." Since Oct. 7, 2023, this organization has been instrumental in addressing the connections between anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim hate. A key resource published in 2024 with input from the ELCA is the "[Faith Rooted Primer for Understanding and Addressing Bigotry in the US Amid the Violence in Israel-Palestine](#)."

#### *Corporate Social Responsibility*

After the 2016 Churchwide Assembly request, ELCA Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) developed a social criteria investment screen focusing on political and civil human rights. The social statements on [peace](#), [church in society](#), and [economic life](#), in addition to the "[Message on Human Rights](#)," give authority to this screen. In 2024, the [screen](#) was revised and the specificity around civil and political rights was replaced by screening based on human rights. The description of the screen states that "this screen focuses on egregious denials of human rights taking place in occupied or controlled territories." CSR and Portico Benefit Services have already discussed which categories of evaluation would be added on the basis of the new screening language and will continue to engage around this topic.

#### *Recommended for assembly action*

**To receive with gratitude the memorial on "Palestinian Destruction Response" from the Minneapolis Area Synod;**

**To reaffirm this church's commitment to advocacy that urges an end to unconditional financial support for arms and related technologies to Israel;**

**To reaffirm this church's sense of urgency for ongoing advocacy, awareness, and accompaniment through the Sumud initiative,**

**To reaffirm this church's commitments to reject anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim bigotry; to differentiate between criticism of the State of Israel's policies and hatred of the Jewish people; and to work with this church's ecumenical and inter-religious partners to address anti-Jewish, anti-Muslim, and other interlocking forms of hatred; and**

**To affirm continued dialogue with Portico Benefit Services around how the Human Rights Screen is implemented and encourage ELCA congregations to review its current and future investments.**

#### *Category D3: Public Discourse on Palestine-Israel*

##### **1. Northeastern Minnesota Synod (3E) [2025]**

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has deep, long-standing relationships with Lutheran churches around the world, including the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL); and

WHEREAS, the ELCA relates to companion church bodies, including the ELCJHL, through accompaniment: i.e., walking together in a solidarity that practices interdependence and mutuality; and

WHEREAS, accompaniment is lived out through listening to companion church bodies, seeking to build relationships across boundaries that exclude and divide, identifying and correcting imbalances of power; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA is committed to accompaniment, advocacy, and awareness-raising through Sumud: For Justice in Palestine and Israel; and

WHEREAS, Sumud Northland: For Justice in Palestine and Israel is a ministry of the Northeastern Minnesota Synod of the ELCA; and

WHEREAS, The Rev. Dr. Munther Isaac, pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church in Bethlehem, has challenged Christian church leaders and church bodies to use the language of apartheid and genocide in addressing the ongoing crisis in Palestine-Israel; therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**, that the Northeastern Minnesota Synod, ELCA, acting in assembly, memorialize the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to authorize the preparation of study/educational materials clarifying language used in public discourse regarding the ongoing crisis in Palestine-Israel and to make recommendations to the Churchwide organization and its affiliates regarding the use of language in public discourse and advocacy that reflects Palestinian reality.

#### *Background*

The ELCA has a long history of addressing the ongoing Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands and the subsequent discrimination, restriction of movement, forced displacement, and violence that affects this church's partners on the ground daily. This work is rooted in accompaniment of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land

(ELCJHL) and guided by the “[Churchwide Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine](#)” (2005). In October 2023, following an [in-depth review](#) by ELCA staff and leadership from the Palestinian Lutheran church, the ELCA announced a new initiative, [Sumud: For Justice in Palestine and Israel](#), that engages ELCA members in accompaniment, awareness-raising, and [advocacy](#).

Participants and experts consulted for this review process made an [official recommendation](#) regarding the “ELCA Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine” (2005) (see p. 32) to:

- “Determine language, goals, strategies and priorities that no longer fit the current realities in Palestine and Israel, the ELCA and/or the U.S., as well as those that are still applicable and should be pursued (e.g., ending the occupation).
- Develop a new or significantly revised strategy for engagement with the goal of bringing this strategy forward through the channels most appropriate and necessary for adoption, keeping in mind the timelines and dates of future ELCA Church Council meetings and churchwide assemblies if needed.”

While ELCA Sumud has made good progress engaging the ELCA by creating [awareness-building](#) and educational resources to enhance this church’s understanding of the context in Palestine and Israel, the work to review and update this church’s “ELCA Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine” (2005) would better reflect the current reality on the ground and would create deeper understanding and empower Sumud to expand its work for more meaningful engagement.

Since the official launch of Sumud in 2024 as an ELCA initiative under the umbrella of the ELCA MENA (Middle East and North Africa) Desk within the Service and Justice home area, in collaboration with the Arab and Middle East Ministries within MDCC (Ministries of Diverse Cultures and Communities) and the Witness in Society (WiS) advocacy office, Sumud has worked with local partners on the ground in the Holy Land, as well as Palestinians in the diaspora, to create [tools which foster deeper engagement, education, and understanding](#) about Palestine and Israel. Through these tools, Sumud has highlighted and amplified the voices of this church’s Palestinian partners so that ELCA communities may engage with the lived experiences of Palestinian Christians and their wider community on the ground in the Holy Land.

Additionally, the work and witness carried out through the Office of the Presiding Bishop is critical for this church’s accompaniment of the ELCJHL, and of this church’s ecumenical and inter-religious partners both globally and in the U.S. ELCA Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations, which includes the Presiding Bishop’s Consultative Panels on Lutheran-Jewish and Lutheran-Muslim Relations, supports the church’s relations and develops resources for education and dialogue. Continued mutual collaboration between Service and Justice, including ELCA Sumud, and the Office of the Presiding Bishop will be vital for upholding this church’s various commitments, including in the possible review of the “ELCA Strategy for Engagement” and in the determination of language, goals, strategies and priorities for the future of this church’s engagement.

*Recommended for assembly action*

**To receive with gratitude the memorial on “Public Discourse about Palestine-Israel” from the Northeastern Minnesota Synod;**

**To reaffirm the ELCA’s sense of urgency and action for ongoing advocacy, awareness, and accompaniment through the Sumud initiative and through the Office of the Presiding Bishop;**

**To reaffirm this church’s partners’ voices on the ground and their language of justice for their own people;**

**To commend the recommendation from the 2022-2023 Review Summary and Recommendations on Israel and Palestine document for formal review and update of the “Strategy for Engagement in Palestine and Israel” (2005) and to present a timeline for the consideration of the updated strategy, encouraging continued collaboration between ELCA Sumud and the Office of the Presiding Bishop; and**

**To direct the Office of the Presiding Bishop, in partnership with ELCA Sumud, to convene a consultation with representatives of the ELCA Conference of Bishops, Church Council, Palestinian partners from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, and other key stakeholders to discuss matters of language for addressing the injustice happening to the Palestinian people on the ground, and to report to the Church Council its findings and any recommendations.**

*Category D4: Stand for Palestinian Rights and End to Occupation of Palestine*

**1. Northwest Washington Synod (1B) [2025]**

WHEREAS, there is currently a war in Palestine that is affecting our siblings in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) and their neighbors; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA in its 2017 social message *On Human Rights* states that “concern for the wellbeing of others lies at the very heart of Christian faith (Matthew 22:36-40)”; and

WHEREAS, “in response to God’s call to comfort God’s people (Isaiah 40) ... our church seeks to accompany those among our global partners who suffer human rights violations”; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has committed to promote and defend human rights, support international organizations that work to safeguard human rights, advocate for ratification of international treaties and agreements that protect human rights, seek to understand and be sensitive to the needs of indigenous people, and provide resources to help deepen our understanding of and commitment to promoting human rights; and

WHEREAS, the United States occupies a pre-eminent position in the world but has failed to accept instruments of international human rights law or ratify many treaties and agreements of the United Nations, isolating itself and undermining the work of the international community; and

WHEREAS, the United Nations has declared Israel’s military occupation is illegal according to international law; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Northwest Washington Synod memorialize the 2025 ELCA Assembly to encourage its members continue to advocate for the human rights, justice, and peace for all Palestinians and Israelis; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northwest Washington Synod memorialize the 2025 ELCA Assembly to encourage the presiding bishop to direct a letter to the President of the United States, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House, calling for the U.S. to take action in its foreign policy that would support the recognition of Palestine as a legitimate state in the United Nations as other United Nation member states have done; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northwest Washington Synod memorialize the 2025 ELCA Assembly to encourage the presiding bishop to direct a letter to the President of the United States, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House, calling for the U.S. to take action in its foreign policy that will support the human rights of all Palestinians and Israelis by calling for an end of the illegal occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.

## **2. Oregon Synod (1E) [2025]**

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) in 2005 established the initiative, “Peace Not Walls: Stand for Justice in the Holy Land,” recently renamed “SUMUD: for Justice in Palestine and Israel”; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA in its 2017 social message *On Human Rights* states that “concern for the well-being of others lies at the very heart of Christian faith (Matthew 22:36-40)”; and that “The United States occupies a pre-eminent position on the world stage, and its failure to accept instruments of international human rights law isolates the United States and undermines the work of the international community. The failure of the U.S. government to ratify many treaties and agreements of the United Nations calls for action on the part of U.S. citizens” (p. 10); and that “The ELCA as a church also supports human rights around the globe in its work with global partners. In response to God’s call to comfort God’s people (Isaiah 40) and through the strategy of accompaniment, our church seeks to accompany those among our global partners who suffer human rights violations” (p. 10); and

WHEREAS, the United Nations in its Resolutions 446, 452, 465, 471 and 476 has already declared that the state of Israel’s military occupation of the West Bank is illegal according to international law; and

WHEREAS, Israel’s ongoing occupation of the Palestinian Territories of the West Bank and Gaza continues to endanger the security and well-being of both Palestinians and Israelis and makes peace in the region an unattainable goal; and

WHEREAS, illegal military occupation has included the following activities that contravene international human rights:

- Restriction of the freedom of movement within the Palestinian Territories due to checkpoints, and restricted residency cards;
  - Military incarceration without due process or a civil trial;
  - Demolition of family homes;
  - Restriction of the water usage that is administered by the state of Israel;
  - Restriction of electricity that is administered by the state of Israel;
  - Appropriation of Palestinian homes in Jerusalem,
  - Appropriation of Palestinian land by illegal Israeli settlements;
- therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Oregon Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to urge the presiding bishop to direct a letter to the President of the United States, to the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House, calling for the U.S. to take action in its foreign policy that would support the recognition of Palestine as a legitimate state in the United Nations as other United Nation member states have done; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Oregon Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to urge the Presiding Bishop to direct a letter to the President of the United States, to the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House, calling for the U.S. to take action in its foreign policy that will support the human rights of all Palestinians and Israelis by calling for an end of the illegal occupation of the West Bank and Gaza; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Oregon Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to encourage its members to recommit to advocate for the human rights, justice, and peace for all Palestinians and Israelis.

### 3. Rocky Mountain Synod (2E) [2025]

WHEREAS, the ELCA in its 2017 social message *On Human Rights* states that “concern for the well-being of others lies at the very heart of Christian faith (Matthew 22:36-40)”; and that “The ELCA as a church... supports human rights around the globe in its work with global partners” and “our church seeks to accompany those among our global partners who suffer human rights violations” (p. 10); and

WHEREAS, the United Nations in its Resolutions 446, 452, 465, 471 and 476 has already declared that the state of Israel’s military occupation of the West Bank is illegal according to international law; and

WHEREAS, Israel’s ongoing occupation of the Palestinian Territories of the West Bank and Gaza continues to endanger the security and well-being of both Palestinians and Israelis and makes peace in the region an unattainable goal; and

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) in 2005 established the initiative, “Peace Not Walls: Stand for Justice in the Holy Land” (recently renamed “SUMUD: for Justice in Palestine and Israel”) and continues to call for equality, human dignity, safety, and security for all the Jews, Christians, and Muslims of the Holy Land; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA, in its 1995 Social Statement “For Peace in God’s World,” states:

“Recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.” These words from the Preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) are consistent with our understanding of humans created in God’s image. Human rights provide a common universal standard of justice for living with our differences, and they give moral and legal standing to the individual in the international community.

We therefore will continue to teach about human rights, protest their violation, advocate their international codification, and support effective ways to monitor and ensure compliance with them. Our priorities are to:

- oppose genocide and other grievous violations of human rights such as torture, religious and racial oppression, forced conscription (impressment), forced labor, and war crimes (including organized rape);
- provide for the most basic necessities of the poor; and
- defend the human rights of groups most susceptible to violations, especially all minorities, women, and children;

and

WHEREAS, illegal military occupation has included the following activities that contravene these international human rights:

- Restriction of the freedom of movement within the Palestinian Territories due to checkpoints, and restrictive residency cards;
- Military incarceration without due process or a civil trial;
- Demolition of family homes;
- Restriction of electricity and water usage that is administrated by the state of Israel;
- Appropriation of Palestinian homes in Jerusalem;
- Appropriation of Palestinian land by illegal Israeli settlements;

and

WHEREAS, Israel’s human rights violations against Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, are egregious and include war crimes, crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing, and genocide, including

- Indiscriminate and disproportionate bombing resulting in tens of thousands of civilian deaths, including over 15,000 children since October 7, 2023, and the displacement of more than 1.9 million people;
- Deprivation of adequate access to safe drinking water, food, medical care, and electricity;
- Destruction of buildings—including hospitals, places of worship, homes, and schools—and the destruction of electricity, sewage and water infrastructure essential for survival;
- Expropriation of Palestinian land and the expansion of Israeli settlements;
- Settler violence and vandalism with the aim of instilling fear into Palestinian communities;
- Cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment of prisoners;
- Sexual and gender-based violence, including public stripping and nudity, sexual harassment and sexual assault;
- Demolition of homes;
- Administrative detention (being held without trial, without charges, without the disclosure of alleged evidence for periods ranging from several months to several years);
- Restrictions on the freedom of movement within the Palestinian Territories leading to a life of constant uncertainty and obstructing the development of a stable economy;

therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Rocky Mountain Synod memorialize the 2025 ELCA Assembly to encourage ELCA members, congregations, synods, and appropriate Churchwide units to advocate for human rights, justice, and peace



for all Palestinians and Israelis and support policies that bring to an end the occupation and promote a peaceful resolution of the conflict; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Rocky Mountain Synod memorialize the 2025 ELCA Assembly to urge the presiding bishop to direct a letter to the President of the United States, to the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House, calling on the U.S. government to

- recognize Palestine as a sovereign state and support Palestine's full membership in the United Nations;
- halt military assistance to Israel (especially bombs and equipment that have been used to devastate Gaza), investigate the use of U.S. military aid to Israel to ensure compliance with U.S. and international human rights law, and work to end the genocide against the Palestinians of Gaza;
- reject schemes to remove Palestinians from Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, address the catastrophic living conditions that could force Palestinians to leave, and work to end the rampant settler violence against Palestinians in the West Bank;

and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Rocky Mountain Synod memorialize the 2025 ELCA Assembly to encourage individuals and congregations of the ELCA to pray for Palestinians and Israelis as they work to create a future of justice, equality, reconciliation, and peace for all in both communities, including specifically our sisters and brothers of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL), Augusta Victoria Hospital operated by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), and the World Council of Churches/Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (WCC/EAPPI), as they bring comfort, support, accountability, and relief.

#### **4. Nebraska Synod (4A) [2025]**

WHEREAS, the Nebraska Synod has been enriched by the Nebraska Synod Holy Land Accompaniment (NSHLA) initiative led for many years by the late Rev. Dr. Mary Jensen, including traveling to Israel, Palestine and Jordan to meet and learn from our Lutheran World Federation partners, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, additional ecumenical and interfaith Israeli citizens and Palestinians under the decades-old occupation who have worked faithfully toward peaceful solutions and understanding; and

WHEREAS, the Nebraska Synod has recently renewed this invitation to learn and grow together through current NSHLA efforts of listening, accompanying, and advocating; and

WHEREAS, the Rev. Adam Miller-Stubbendick, originally from the Nebraska Synod, was serving with Global Mission as the Young Adults in Global Mission Coordinator alongside his wife, the Rev. Jordan Miller-Stubbendick, until the heinous attack on Israel by Hamas that escalated the war in Gaza in October, 2023, and will be touring the Nebraska Synod in June 2025 to tell their story; and

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) in 2005 established the initiative, "Peace Not Walls: Stand for Justice in the Holy Land," recently renamed "SUMUD: for Justice in Palestine and Israel"; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA in its 2017 social message *On Human Rights* states that "concern for the well-being of others lies at the very heart of Christian faith (Matthew 22:36-40)"; and that "The United States occupies a pre-eminent position on the world stage, and its failure to accept instruments of international human rights law isolates the United States and undermines the work of the international community. The failure of the U.S. government to ratify many treaties and agreements of the United Nations calls for action on the part of U.S. citizens" (p. 10); and that "The ELCA as a church also supports human rights around the globe in its work with global partners. In response to God's call to comfort God's people (Isaiah 40) and through the strategy of accompaniment, our church seeks to accompany those among our global partners who suffer human rights violations" (p. 10); and that in this social message the ELCA has already committed itself to

- uphold and foster human rights as described in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
- support international organizations such the United Nations, including its Security Council and Human Rights Council, and the International Labor Organization in working to develop and safeguard human rights;
- advocate for the United States to ratify international treaties and agreements that protect human rights;
- be sensitive to the needs of indigenous peoples, whose understandings of ownership, culture and community may be at odds with corporate notions of ownership—corporations and governments do not possess the absolute right to ignore those perspectives,
- practice accompaniment in its advocacy on human rights, and
- provide members, congregations and other ELCA entities with the resources needed to deepen their understanding of and commitment to promoting human rights (p 13);

and

WHEREAS, the United Nations in its Resolutions 446, 452, 465, 471 and 476 have already declared that the state of Israel's military occupation of the West Bank is illegal according to international law; and

WHEREAS, illegal military occupation has included the following activities that contravene international human rights:

- Restriction of the freedom of movement within the Palestinian Territories due to checkpoints, and restricted residency cards,
- Military incarceration without due process or a civil trial,

- Demolition of family homes,
- Restriction of the electricity and water usage that is administered by the state of Israel,
- Appropriation of Palestinian homes in Jerusalem,
- Appropriation of Palestinian land by illegal Israeli settlements;

therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Nebraska Synod memorialize the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to encourage its members continue to advocate for the human rights, justice, and peace for all Palestinians and Israelis; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Nebraska Synod memorialize the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to urge the presiding bishop to direct a letter to the President of the United States, to the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House, calling for the U.S. to take action in its foreign policy that would support the recognition of Palestine as a legitimate state in the United Nations as other United Nation member states have done; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Nebraska Synod memorialize the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to require the presiding bishop to direct a letter to the President of the United States, to the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House, calling for the U.S. to take action in its foreign policy that will support the human rights of all Palestinians and Israelis by calling for an end of the illegal occupation of the West Bank and Gaza; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Nebraska Synod encourage congregations, synods, and appropriate Churchwide units of the ELCA to pray for Palestinians and Israelis in the work to create a future of justice, equality, reconciliation, and peace for all in both communities, including specifically our siblings of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL), Augusta Victoria Hospital operated by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), and the World Council of Churches/Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (WCC/EAPPI) in bringing comfort, support, accountability, and relief.

## 5. Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod (4C) [2025]

WHEREAS, as followers of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, we are called to stand in solidarity with the oppressed and work for justice and peace for all peoples (Isaiah 1:17, Matthew 5:9); and

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has long expressed concern for justice and human rights in the Holy Land, including through the 2005 *Churchwide Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine*, and the 2016 memorials urging investment screens related to human rights violations; and

WHEREAS, Palestinian Christians, including our siblings in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL), have issued urgent appeals to the global church to act in solidarity with those suffering under military occupation and systemic violence; and

WHEREAS, the State of Israel's ongoing military occupation, illegal settlement expansion, and recent military campaigns in Gaza have resulted in the mass killing of civilians, displacement of communities, and the destruction of hospitals, schools, and sacred places, acts increasingly recognized by international human rights organizations as war crimes and apartheid; and

WHEREAS, the United States annually provides billions of dollars in military aid to the State of Israel, funds which directly support actions that result in the killing of innocent Palestinians and the continued violation of international law; and

WHEREAS, boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) are recognized nonviolent tools historically used by churches and civil society to resist injustice, such as in the South African anti-apartheid movement, and are increasingly called for by Palestinian civil society and global partners as a means to pressure for justice, human rights, and peace; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Arkansas Oklahoma Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America memorializes the ELCA Churchwide Assembly to call upon the ELCA Churchwide Organization to:

1. Publicly support the international BDS movement as a nonviolent tool for justice and human rights in Israel and Palestine;
2. Review and divest from corporations, investments, or institutions profiting from or complicit in the occupation, military action, or systemic discrimination against Palestinians;
3. Oppose and call for an end to U.S. military aid to Israel until such time as Israel complies with international law and human rights norms;
4. Advocate with elected officials, through ELCA Advocacy and partners such as Churches for Middle East Peace, for a just and lasting peace, an end to the occupation, and equal rights for all people in the region; and
5. Stand in solidarity with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land and other ecumenical and interfaith partners who are working nonviolently for justice, reconciliation, and peace;

and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Arkansas Oklahoma Synod commit to study, prayer, and ongoing engagement with Palestinian voices, including resources such as the *Kairos Palestine* document, and to create space for education and respectful dialogue on the call to faithful action in the face of injustice.

## 6. Metropolitan Chicago Synod (5A) [2025]

WHEREAS, the ELCA in its 2017 social message *On Human Rights* states that "concern for the well-being of others lies at the very heart of Christian faith (Matthew 22:36-40)"; and that "The ELCA as a church... supports human rights around the globe in

its work with global partners” and “our church seeks to accompany those among our global partners who suffer human rights violations” (p. 10); and

WHEREAS, the ELCA Churchwide Assembly has since 2001 repeatedly expressed support for an end to the Israeli occupation and for the formation of an independent Palestinian state; and

WHEREAS, the United Nations in its Resolutions 446, 452, 465, 471 and 476 has already declared that the state of Israel’s military occupation of the West Bank is illegal according to international law; and

WHEREAS, Israel’s ongoing occupation of the Palestinian Territories of the West Bank and Gaza continues to endanger the security and well-being of both Palestinians and Israelis and makes peace in the region an unattainable goal; and

WHEREAS, by the pervasive power of sin violence breeds more violence, including the recent assassination of two young Israeli embassy staffers in Washington, DC; hatred produces the world-wide escalation of anti-Jewish, anti-Arab, and anti-Muslim sentiment; and anger leads to a craving for vengeance with greater and greater indiscriminate and unspeakable acts of inhumanity in Gaza that mirror genocide—all of which incur God’s judgment and call to repentance; and

WHEREAS, illegal military occupation has included the following activities that contravene international human rights and in some cases constitute ethnic cleansing:

- Restriction of the freedom of movement within the Palestinian Territories due to checkpoints, and restrictive residency cards;
  - Military incarceration without due process or a civil trial;
  - Demolition of family homes;
  - Restriction of electricity and water usage that is administered by the state of Israel;
  - Appropriation of Palestinian homes in Jerusalem;
  - Appropriation of Palestinian land by illegal Israeli settlements;
- therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan Chicago Synod memorialize the 2025 ELCA Assembly to encourage ELCA members, congregations, synods, and appropriate churchwide units to advocate for human rights, justice, and peace for all Palestinians and Israelis; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan Chicago Synod memorialize the 2025 ELCA Assembly to urge the Presiding Bishop to direct a letter to the President of the United States, to the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House, calling for the U.S. to take foreign policy actions that will support the human rights of all Palestinians and Israelis by calling for an end to the illegal occupation of the West Bank and Gaza and by working toward the recognition of Palestine as a legitimate state in the United Nations, as other U.N. member states have done; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan Chicago Synod memorialize the 2025 ELCA Assembly to encourage individuals and congregations of the ELCA to pray ELCA members, congregations, synods, including specifically our sisters and brothers of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL), Augusta Victoria Hospital operated by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), and the World Council of Churches/Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (WCC/EAPPI), as they bring comfort, support, accountability, and relief.

## **7. Southeast Michigan Synod (6A) [2025]**

WHEREAS, the Southeast Michigan Synod is a companion synod with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Holy Land. The ELCA in 2005 established the initiative *Peace Not Walls: Stand for Justice in the Holy Land* recently renamed *SUMUD: for Justice in Palestine and Israel*. The name *sumud*, Arabic “steadfastness” was chosen at the suggestion of our Palestinian Lutheran companions. Receiving this word as a prophetic gift from our companions reminds us that God’s steadfastness calls us to steadfastness; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA’s 2017 social message *On Human Rights* states “The ELCA as a church supports human rights around the globe in its work with global partners. In response to God’s call to comfort God’s people (Isaiah 40) and through the strategy of accompaniment, our church seeks to accompany those among our global partners who suffer human rights violations”; and

WHEREAS, ELCA has committed itself to uphold and foster human rights as described in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; support international organizations such as the United Nations, including its Security Council and Human Rights Council; be sensitive to the needs of indigenous peoples...practice accompaniment in its advocacy on human rights; and provide members, congregations, and other ELCA entities the resources needed to deepen their understanding of and commitment to promoting human rights; and

WHEREAS, United Nations Resolutions 446, 452, 465, 471, and 476 have declared the state of Israel’s military occupation of the West Bank is illegal. The occupation includes: restriction of freedom of movement; military incarceration without due process; demolition of homes; restriction of the water usage that is administered by the State of Israel; appropriation of Palestinian homes in Jerusalem; and appropriation of Palestinian land by illegal Israeli settlements; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Southeast Michigan Synod 2025 Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to encourage its members to continue to pray, and advocate for human rights, justice, and peace for all Palestinians and Israelis; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southeast Michigan Synod 2025 Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to request the presiding bishop to direct a letter to the President of the United States, to the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House, calling for the U.S. to take action in its foreign policy supporting the recognition of Palestine as a legitimate state in the United Nations, as other United Nations member states have done; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southeast Michigan Synod 2025 Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly to request the presiding bishop to direct a letter to the President of the United States, to the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House, calling for the U.S. to take action in its foreign policy supporting the human rights of all Palestinians and Israelis by calling for an end of the illegal occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.

#### **8. New England Synod (7B) [2025]**

WHEREAS, the New England Synod is a companion synod with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL); and

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) in 2005 established the initiative, “Peace Not Walls: Stand for Justice in the Holy Land,” recently renamed “SUMUD: for Justice in Palestine and Israel”; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA in its 2017 social message *On Human Rights* states that “concern for the well-being of others lies at the very heart of Christian faith (Matthew 22:36-40)”; and that “The United States occupies a pre-eminent position on the world stage, and its failure to accept instruments of international human rights law isolates the United States and undermines the work of the international community. The failure of the U.S. government to ratify many treaties and agreements of the United Nations calls for action on the part of U.S. citizens” (p. 10); and that “The ELCA as a church also supports human rights around the globe in its work with global partners. In response to God’s call to comfort God’s people (Isaiah 40) and through the strategy of accompaniment, our church seeks to accompany those among our global partners who suffer human rights violations” (p. 10); and that in this social message the ELCA has already committed itself to

- uphold and foster human rights as described in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
- support international organizations such the United Nations, including its Security Council and Human Rights Council, and the International Labor Organization in working to develop and safeguard human rights;
- advocate for the United States to ratify international treaties and agreements that protect human rights;
- be sensitive to the needs of indigenous peoples, whose understandings of ownership, culture and community may be at odds with corporate notions of ownership – corporations and governments do not possess the absolute right to ignore those perspectives;
- practice accompaniment in its advocacy on human rights; and
- provide members, congregations and other ELCA entities the resources needed to deepen their understanding of and commitment to promoting human rights (p 13);

and

WHEREAS, the ELCA, in its 1995 Social Statement “For Peace in God’s World,” states:

“Recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.” These words from the Preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) are consistent with our understanding of humans created in God’s image. Human rights provide a common universal standard of justice for living with our differences, and they give moral and legal standing to the individual in the international community.

We therefore will continue to teach about human rights, protest their violation, advocate their international codification, and support effective ways to monitor and ensure compliance with them. Our priorities are to:

- oppose genocide and other grievous violations of human rights such as torture, religious and racial oppression, forced conscription (impressment), forced labor, and war crimes (including organized rape);
- provide for the most basic necessities of the poor; and
- defend the human rights of groups most susceptible to violations, especially all minorities, women, and children;

and

WHEREAS, the United Nations in its Resolutions 446, 452, 465, 471 and 476 have already declared that the state of Israel’s military occupation of the West Bank is illegal according to international law; and

WHEREAS, illegal military occupation has included the following activities that contravene international human rights:

- restriction of the freedom of movement within the Palestinian Territories due to checkpoints, and restricted residency cards,
  - military incarceration without due process or a civil trial,
  - demolition of family homes,
  - restriction of the water usage that is administered by the state of Israel,
  - restriction of electricity that is administered by the state of Israel,
  - appropriation of Palestinian homes in Jerusalem,
  - appropriation of Palestinian land by illegal Israeli settlements;
- therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the New England Synod memorialize the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to encourage its members continue to advocate for the human rights, justice, and peace for all Palestinians and Israelis; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the New England Synod memorialize the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to require the presiding bishop to direct a letter to the President of the United States, to the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House, calling for the U.S. to take action in its foreign policy that would support the recognition of Palestine as a legitimate state in the United Nations as other United Nation member states have done; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the New England Synod memorialize the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to require the presiding bishop to direct a letter to the President of the United States, to the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House, calling for the U.S. to take action in its foreign policy that will support the human rights of all Palestinians and Israelis by calling for an end of the illegal occupation of the West Bank and Gaza; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the New England Synod memorialize the 2025 ELCA Assembly to encourage individuals, congregations, and synods of the ELCA to pray for Palestinians and Israelis, Jews, Christians, and Muslims, who work to create a future of justice, equality, reconciliation, and peace for all, including our siblings of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL), Augusta Victoria Hospital operated by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), and the World Council of Churches/Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (WCC/EAPPI) who offer comfort, support, accountability, and relief.

## **9. Delaware-Maryland Synod (8F) [2025]**

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) in 2005 established the initiative, “Peace Not Walls: Stand for Justice in the Holy Land” (recently renamed “SUMUD: for Justice in Palestine and Israel”) and continues to call for equality, human dignity, safety, and security for all the Jews, Christians, and Muslims of the Holy Land; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA, in its 1995 Social Statement “For Peace in God’s World,” states:

“Recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world. These words from the Preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) are consistent with our understanding of humans created in God’s image. Human rights provide a common universal standard of justice for living with our differences, and they give moral and legal standing to the individual in the international community.

We therefore will continue to teach about human rights, protest their violation, advocate their international codification, and support effective ways to monitor and ensure compliance with them. Our priorities are to:

- oppose genocide and other grievous violations of human rights such as torture, religious and racial oppression, forced conscription (impressment), forced labor, and war crimes (including organized rape);
- provide for the most basic necessities of the poor; and
- defend the human rights of groups most susceptible to violations, especially all minorities, women, and children;

and

WHEREAS, the ELCA Churchwide Assembly in New Orleans in 2016 already passed a substantive similar document, 2016: FOR PEACE IN THE HOLY LAND CA16.05.15

WHEREAS, the ELCA has been clear in its condemnation of the Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas attack against Israelis and internationals in southern Israel, in its condemnation of the indiscriminate and disproportionate Israeli violence in response to the attack, and in its call for a permanent and comprehensive ceasefire and for the release of Israeli hostages and Palestinian political prisoners; and

WHEREAS, the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 called for the withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the 1967 war and UN Security Council Resolutions 446, 452, 465, 471, and 476 established that the Israeli settlements in the Palestinian territories have no legal validity and constitute a serious obstruction to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace for Palestinians and Israelis; and

WHEREAS, Israel’s human rights violations against Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, rise to the level of international definition of war crimes, crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing, and genocide, including

- Indiscriminate bombing resulting in tens of thousands of civilian deaths, including over 15,000 children just since Oct. 7, 2023, and the displacement of more than 1.9 million people;
- Deprivation of adequate access to safe drinking water, food, medical care, and electricity;
- Destruction of buildings—including hospitals, places of worship, homes, and schools—and the destruction of electricity, sewage and water infrastructure essential for survival;
- Expropriation of Palestinian land and the expansion of Israeli settlements;
- Settler violence and vandalism with the aim of instilling fear into Palestinian communities;
- Cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment of prisoners;
- Sexual and gender-based violence, including public stripping and nudity, sexual harassment including threats of rape;
- Demolition of homes;
- Administrative detention (being held without trial, without charges, without the disclosure of alleged evidence for periods ranging from several months to several years);
- Restrictions on the freedom of movement within the Palestinian Territories leading to a life of constant uncertainty and obstructing the development of a stable economy;

and



WHEREAS, our partners in the ELCJHL have repeatedly asked us to use the word “genocide” so much as it matches the reality on the ground, which is the intentional displacement of people and the excessive death toll of non-combatants; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Delaware-Maryland Synod memorialize the 2025 ELCA Assembly to encourage ELCA members to advocate for the human rights of all Palestinians and Israelis and support policies that bring an end to the occupation and promote a just and peaceful resolution of the conflict; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Delaware-Maryland Synod memorialize the 2025 ELCA Assembly to urge the presiding bishop to direct a letter to the President and Vice President of the United States, the Secretary of State, and the majority and minority leaders of the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives calling on the U.S. government to

- halt military assistance to Israel to devastate Gaza
  - investigate the use of U.S. military aid to Israel to ensure compliance with U.S. and international human rights law;
  - work to end the genocide against the Palestinians of Gaza;
  - reject plans to remove Palestinians from Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem while addressing the catastrophic living conditions that could force Palestinians to leave,
  - work to end the settler violence against Palestinians in the West Bank; and
  - recognize Palestine as a sovereign state and support Palestine’s full membership in the United Nations;
- and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Delaware-Maryland Synod memorialize the 2025 ELCA Assembly to encourage individuals, congregations, and synods of the ELCA to pray for Palestinians and Israelis, Jews, Christians and Muslims, who work to create a future of justice, equality, reconciliation, and peace for all, including our siblings of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL), Augusta Victoria Hospital operated by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), and the World Council of Churches/Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (WCC/EAPPI) who offer comfort, support, accountability, and relief.

## **10. Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod (8G) [2025]**

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) in 2005 established the initiative, “Peace Not Walls: Stand for Justice in the Holy Land” (recently renamed “SUMUD: for Justice in Palestine and Israel”) and continues to call for equality, human dignity, safety, and security for all the Jews, Christians, and Muslims of the Holy Land; and

WHEREAS, by the pervasive power of sin, violence breeds more violence, including the recent assassination of two young Israeli embassy staffers in Washington, DC. Hatred produces the worldwide escalation of anti-Jewish, anti-Arab, and anti-Muslim sentiment; and anger leads to a craving for vengeance with increasing indiscriminate and unspeakable acts of genocide—all of which incur God’s judgement and call to repentance; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA, in its 1995 Social Statement “For Peace in God’s World,” (p. 14) states:

“Recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.” These words from the Preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) are consistent with our understanding of humans created in God’s image. Human rights provide a common universal standard of justice for living with our differences, and they give moral and legal standing to the individual in the international community.

We therefore will continue to teach about human rights, protest their violation, advocate their international codification, and support effective ways to monitor and ensure compliance with them. Our priorities are to:

- oppose genocide and other grievous violations of human rights such as torture, religious and racial oppression, forced conscription (impressment), forced labor, and war crimes (including organized rape);
- provide for the most basic necessities of the poor; and
- defend the human rights of groups most susceptible to violations, especially all minorities, women, and children;

and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has been clear in its condemnation of the October 7, 2023 Hamas attack against Israelis and internationals in southern Israel, in its condemnation of the indiscriminate and disproportionate Israeli violence in response to the attack, and in its call for a permanent and comprehensive ceasefire and for the release of Israeli hostages and Palestinian political prisoners; and

WHEREAS, United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 called for the withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the 1967 war and UN Security Council Resolutions 446, 452, 465, 471 and 476 established that the Israeli settlements in the Palestinian territories have no legal validity and constitute a serious obstruction to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace for Palestinians and Israelis; and

WHEREAS, Israel’s human rights violations against Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, are egregious and include war crimes, crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing, and genocide, including

- Indiscriminate bombing resulting in tens of thousands of civilian deaths, including over 15,000 children since October 7, 2023, and the displacement of more than 1.9 million people;
- Deprivation of adequate access to safe drinking water, food, medical care, and electricity;
- Destruction of buildings – including hospitals, places of worship, homes, and schools – and the destruction of electricity, sewage and water infrastructure essential for survival;

- Expropriation of Palestinian land and the expansion of Israeli settlements;
- Settler violence and vandalism with the aim of instilling fear into Palestinian communities;
- Cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment of prisoners;
- Sexual and gender-based violence, including public stripping and nudity, sexual harassment and sexual assault;
- Demolition of homes;
- Administrative detention (being held without trial, without charges, without the disclosure of alleged evidence for periods ranging from several months to several years);
- Restrictions on the freedom of movement within the Palestinian Territories leading to a life of constant uncertainty and obstructing the development of a stable economy;

therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod in assembly memorialize the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to encourage ELCA members to advocate for the human rights of all Palestinians and Israelis and support policies that bring an end to the occupation and promote a just and peaceful resolution of the conflict; and, be it further

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod in assembly memorialize the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to urge the Presiding Bishop of the ELCA to direct a letter to the President and Vice President of the United States, the Secretary of State, and the majority and minority leaders of the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives condemning the human rights violations listed above and calling on the U.S. government to

- recognize Palestine as a sovereign state and support Palestine's full membership in the United Nations;
- halt military assistance to Israel used to devastate Gaza, investigate the use of U.S. military aid to Israel to ensure compliance with U.S. and international human rights law, and work to end the genocide against the Palestinians of Gaza;
- reject schemes to remove Palestinians from Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, address the catastrophic living conditions that could force Palestinians to leave, and work to end the rampant settler violence against Palestinians in the West Bank;

and, be it further

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod in assembly memorialize the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to encourage individuals, congregations, and synods of the ELCA to pray for Palestinians and Israelis, Jews, Christians and Muslims, who work to create a future of justice, equality, reconciliation, and peace for all, including our siblings of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL), Augusta Victoria Hospital operated by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), and the World Council of Churches/ Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (WCC/EAPPI) who offer comfort, support, accountability, and relief.

## 11. Southeastern Synod (9D) [2025]

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) in 2005 established the initiative, "Peace Not Walls: Stand for Justice in the Holy Land" (recently renamed "Sumud: for Justice in Palestine and Israel") and continues to call for equality, human dignity, safety, and security for all the Jews, Christians, and Muslims of the Holy Land; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA, in its 1995 Social Statement "For Peace in God's World," states:

"Recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world." These words from the Preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) are consistent with our understanding of humans created in God's image. Human rights provide a common universal standard of justice for living with our differences, and they give moral and legal standing to the individual in the international community.

We therefore will continue to teach about human rights, protest their violation, advocate their international codification, and support effective ways to monitor and ensure compliance with them. Our priorities are to:

- oppose genocide and other grievous violations of human rights such as torture, religious and racial oppression, forced conscription (impressment), forced labor, and war crimes (including organized rape);
- provide for the most basic necessities of the poor; and
- defend the human rights of groups most susceptible to violations, especially all minorities, women, and children;

and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has been clear in its condemnation of the October 7, 2023, Hamas attack against Israelis and internationals in southern Israel, in its condemnation of the indiscriminate and disproportionate Israeli violence in response to the attack, and in its call for a permanent and comprehensive ceasefire and for the release of Israeli hostages and Palestinian political prisoners; and

WHEREAS, the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 called for the withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the 1967 war and UN Security Council Resolutions 446, 452, 465, 471 and 476 established that the Israeli settlements in the Palestinian territories have no legal validity and constitute a serious obstruction to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace for Palestinians and Israelis; and

WHEREAS, Israel's human rights violations against Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, are egregious and include war crimes, crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing, and genocide, including

- Indiscriminate bombing resulting in tens of thousands of civilian deaths, including over 15,000 children since October 7, 2023, and the displacement of more than 1.9 million people;
- Deprivation of adequate access to safe drinking water, food, medical care, and electricity;
- Destruction of buildings—including hospitals, places of worship, homes, and schools—and the destruction of electricity, sewage and water infrastructure essential for survival;
- Expropriation of Palestinian land and the expansion of Israeli settlements;
- Settler violence and vandalism with the aim of instilling fear into Palestinian communities;
- Cruel, inhumane, and degrading treatment of prisoners;
- Sexual and gender-based violence, including public stripping and nudity, sexual harassment, and sexual assault;
- Demolition of homes;
- Administrative detention (being held without trial, without charges, without the disclosure of alleged evidence for periods ranging from several months to several years);
- Restrictions on the freedom of movement within the Palestinian Territories leading to a life of constant uncertainty and obstructing the development of a stable economy;

therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod memorialize the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to encourage ELCA members to advocate for the human rights of all Palestinians and Israelis and support policies that bring an end to the occupation and promote a just and peaceful resolution of the conflict; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southeast Synod memorialize the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to urge the Presiding Bishop to direct a letter to the President and Vice President of the United States, the Secretary of State, and the majority and minority leaders of the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives condemning the human rights violations listed above and calling on the U.S. government to

- recognize Palestine as a sovereign state and support Palestine's full membership in the United Nations;
- Halt military assistance to Israel used to devastate Gaza. Investigate the use of U.S. military aid to Israel to ensure compliance with U.S. and international human rights law, and work to end the genocide against the Palestinians of Gaza;
- reject schemes to remove Palestinians from Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, address the catastrophic living conditions that could force Palestinians to leave, and work to end the rampant settler violence against Palestinians in the West Bank;

and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southeast Synod memorialize the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to encourage individuals, congregations, and synods of the ELCA to pray for Palestinians and Israelis, Jews, Christians and Muslims, who work to create a future of justice, equality, reconciliation, and peace for all, including our siblings of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL), Augusta Victoria Hospital operated by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), and the World Council of Churches/Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (WCC/EAPPI) who offer comfort, support, accountability, and relief.

### *Background*

The ELCA has a longstanding commitment to addressing the ongoing Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands and the subsequent discrimination, restriction of movement, forced displacement, and violence that affects this church's partners on the ground daily. This work is rooted in accompaniment of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) and guided by the "[Churchwide Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine](#)" (2005). In October 2023, following an [in-depth review](#) by ELCA staff and leadership from the Palestinian Lutheran church, the ELCA announced a new initiative, [Sumud: For Justice in Palestine and Israel](#), that engages ELCA members in accompaniment, awareness-raising, and [advocacy](#).

Participants and experts consulted for this review process made an [official recommendation](#) regarding the "ELCA Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine" (2005) (see p. 32) to:

- "Determine language, goals, strategies and priorities that no longer fit the current realities in Palestine and Israel, the ELCA and/or the U.S., as well as those that are still applicable and should be pursued (e.g., ending the occupation).
- Develop a new or significantly revised strategy for engagement with the goal of bringing this strategy forward through the channels most appropriate and necessary for adoption, keeping in mind the timelines and dates of future ELCA Church Council meetings and churchwide assemblies if needed."

While ELCA Sumud and Witness in Society MENA (Middle East and North Africa) teams have made good progress engaging the ELCA by creating [tools of advocacy](#) to enhance this church's understanding of the context in

Palestine and Israel and empowerment in advocating for human rights, justice, and peace for all Palestinians and Israelis, the recommended work to review and update this church's "ELCA Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine" (2005) is needed to better reflect the current reality on the ground and empower the ELCA's advocacy to expand their work for more meaningful engagement.

ELCA staff including the ELCA MENA Desk, the Arab and Middle East Ministries within MDCC (Ministries of Diverse Cultures and Communities) and the Witness in Society advocacy office, work with local partners on the ground in the Holy Land, as well as Palestinians in the diaspora to create tools that foster deeper engagement, education, and understanding about Palestine and Israel. ELCA Sumud also shares prayers and [devotional materials](#) to encourage members and ecumenical groups to include the constant devastation and violence in the Holy Land and especially Gaza in this church's [spiritual response](#). Through these tools, the ELCA has highlighted and amplified the voices of this church's Palestinian partners so that ELCA communities may engage with the lived experiences of Palestinian Christians and their wider community on the ground in the Holy Land. The Witness in Society (WiS) advocacy office continues to prioritize advocating for human rights, justice, and peace for all Palestinians and Israelis and support policies that end the occupation and promote a peaceful resolution of the conflict. These commitments are reflected in [WiS's annual policy priorities for the 119th Congress](#), which addresses these urgent issues and provides guidance in terms of directed advocacy towards Congress and the federal government.

Further, the Office of the Presiding Bishop gives voice to these commitments and provides support for this church's ecumenical and inter-religious relations in the U.S. and globally. This includes sensitivity and care for the commitments expressed in [A Declaration of the ELCA to the Jewish Community](#) (1994) and [A Declaration of the ELCA to the Muslim Community](#) (2022), as well as the deepening of cooperative efforts with ecumenical and inter-religious partners who share this church's deep concern for the human rights, justice, and peace for all Palestinians and Israelis.

The ELCA has long spoken in support of the indigenous Christian concern for the future of Palestine and Israel and the Christian presence there, specifically [citing the Kairos Palestine document as an "authentic word" that "warrants our respect and attentiveness"](#).

ELCA social purpose investments through separately incorporated ministries are subject to social criteria investment screening and are evaluated by an independent source in multiple categories. The ELCA [Human Rights](#) Social Criteria Investment Screen and the ELCA [Military Weapons](#) Social Criteria Investment Screen are the two screens that would most commonly apply in this case. All screens are revised regularly. The ELCA has a [Boycott Policy](#) and an accompanying set of guidelines and procedures, but the ELCA does not have a policy around divestment. At the 2007 Churchwide Assembly, the ELCA voted in favor of exploring the investment activity of the ELCA with regard to Palestine and Israel, but opted to exclude the option of divestiture.

Through resources from ELCA partners on the ground, the churchwide staff acknowledge and affirm the urgency and unprecedented nature of the circumstances outlined in these memorials.

#### *Recommended for assembly action*

**To receive with gratitude the memorials on "Stand for Palestinian Rights and End to Occupation of Palestine" from the Northwest Washington Synod, Oregon Synod, Rocky Mountain Synod, Nebraska Synod, Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod, Metropolitan Chicago Synod, Southeast Michigan Synod, New England Synod, Delaware-Maryland Synod, Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod, and Southeastern Synod;**

**To reaffirm the public policy advocacy of the Witness in Society (WiS) team;**

**To urge the WiS federal policy team to identify and provide support for meaningful and impactful opportunities for the public witness of the presiding bishop with the U.S. administration and Congress on the issues identified in the memorials;**

**To reaffirm the ELCA's sense of urgency and action for ongoing advocacy, awareness, and accompaniment through the ELCA Sumud initiative;**

**To reaffirm the work of the ELCA through the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) Desk, Sumud, WiS Advocacy, and the Office of the Presiding Bishop to encourage ELCA members, congregations, synods, and appropriate churchwide units to advocate for human rights, justice, and peace for all Palestinians and Israelis and support policies that bring an end to the occupation and promote a just and peaceful resolution of the conflict;**

**To reaffirm the ELCA's commitment to amplifying ELCA partners' voices from Palestine and Israel and their language of justice for their own people, and**

**To reaffirm the work of the ELCA through the MENA Desk, ELCA Sumud, ELCA WiS Advocacy, and the Office of the Presiding Bishop to encourage prayerful response to ongoing devastation unfolding in the Holy Land.**



The Office of the Secretary has determined that six Synod Assembly memorials are resolutions that more properly should have been forwarded to synod councils. These resolutions were transmitted to the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America through its Executive Committee. Actions taken by the Church Council are in the Report of the Church Council, Section XI of the Bulletin of Reports.

- Providing for Ordination of Candidates Serving as Interim Pastors [Southwest California Synod (2B), 2023]
- Expanded Response: Climate Displaced Persons [Rocky Mountain Synod (2E), 2023]
- Full Funding for Churchwide Ministries [Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod (4C), 2023]
- Support of Jubilee USA Network [Upstate New York Synod (7D), 2023]
- Non-Binary Inclusion [Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod (8G), 2024]
- Seasonal Membership [Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod (8G), 2024]

The Church Council voted in November 1988 “that future communications from synods will be dealt with according to ELCA constitutional and bylaw provisions.” This affirms that:

- Synod assemblies address the Churchwide Assembly.
- Synod councils address the Church Council.
- Synod councils address churchwide units through the Church Council’s Executive Committee, including forwarding resolutions adopted by a Synod Assembly.

The content of a synod assembly’s action determines whether it is a memorial or a resolution. Generally, memorials are reserved for broad policy matters that are the primary work of the assembly. Resolutions concern implementation of policies that already have been established or specific requests that concern either work already assigned or work that is related to the responsibilities of churchwide units. For example, if a previous assembly has taken action to establish a policy, the work is underway. Advice about the work goes to those units carrying out this responsibility.

The Office of the Secretary has provided the following information for all synods prior to each synod assembly:

### Memorials

Memorials address broad policy issues. Only a Synod Assembly may address a memorial to the Churchwide Assembly. Synod Councils are not authorized to adopt memorials. One of the responsibilities of the Churchwide Assembly, in accordance with provision 12.21.c. of the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, is to “receive and consider proposals from Synod Assemblies.” Once received by the churchwide organization, memorials are referred to the Memorials Committee. Memorials must always include a final “resolved” clause asking the Churchwide Assembly to act (or refrain from acting) in a particular way.

RESOLVED, that the \_\_\_\_\_ Synod Assembly memorialize the [YEAR] Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to . . . [describe the proposed course or action for consideration.]

### Resolutions

Resolutions are requests from synods to the Church Council or units or offices of the churchwide organization. Synod councils may pass resolutions to the Church Council. Resolutions have a narrower focus than memorials because they are requests for consideration or action by the Church Council or by individual units or offices of the churchwide organization by way of the Church Council Executive Committee. Frequently, synod councils will pass resolutions between meetings of their Synod Assembly and forward them to the Church Council for consideration, or to the Church Council Executive Committee if the desired action involves referral to a unit or office of the churchwide organization.

The final “resolved” clause of resolutions will differ depending upon whether they are intended for the attention of the Church Council or a churchwide unit or office. For example:

RESOLVED, that the \_\_\_\_\_ Synod Assembly direct the \_\_\_\_\_ Synod Council to forward this resolution to the Church Council’s Executive Committee for proper referral and disposition under the bylaws and continuing resolutions of this church.

*Or*

RESOLVED, that the \_\_\_\_\_ Synod Council request the Church Council to ... [describe the proposed course of action].

Or

RESOLVED, that the \_\_\_\_\_ Synod Council request the Church Council's Executive Committee to ...  
[describe the proposed course of action].

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#### Notice related to recommendations of Memorials Committee

Appendix B

If a voting member desires the assembly to discuss a synod memorial or the Memorials Committee's response that is proposed for *en bloc* consideration, she or he may request that it be removed from the proposed *en bloc* resolution, provided the member's request is supported by ten other voting members. Such request shall be made in accordance with the following paragraph. The assembly then will consider and vote separately on the proposed response of the Memorials Committee. After removals, the *en bloc* resolution shall be voted upon without amendments or debate.

► **Separate consideration:** To call for such separate consideration, a voting member must submit notification electronically to the secretary of this church or the secretary's assistant prior to the established deadline on the memorials form. Paper forms will be used only if the electronic form is not functional; if needed, paper forms will be available from the secretary's assistant.

The **deadline** to submit a request for separate consideration of a recommended response to synod memorials or to offer a substitute response to synod memorials is **Monday, July 28, 2025, at 9:15 p.m.**

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#### Motion form

Appendix C

With respect to any recommendation made by the Memorials Committee in this report, a voting member of the assembly may offer a substitute motion to the committee's recommendation only if such member has given notice by the established deadline. For such notice, a voting member who desires to offer a substitute to the recommendation of the Memorials Committee must complete the memorials form and submit it to the secretary of this church or the secretary's assistant prior to the established deadline. In addition, the text of the proposed substitute should be submitted on a **motion form** electronically to the secretary or the secretary's assistant. Paper forms will be used only if the electronic form is not functional; if needed, paper forms will be available from the secretary's assistant.

Consultation with at least one of the co-chairs of the Memorials Committee is required when a substitute will be moved and is recommended when any other amendment will be proposed to the response recommended by the Memorials Committee.

The **deadline** to submit a request for separate consideration of a recommended response to synod memorials or to offer a substitute response to synod memorials is **Monday, July 28, 2025, at 9:15 p.m.**