

ACTIONS REGARDING RESOLUTIONS

AT THE 2008 SYNOD ASSEMBLY

The following resolution, received from Pr. Jira Albers; Pr. Kathy Ash-Flashner; Doris Binner, AiM; Marlane Druckenmiller, AiM; Pr. Chris Eichorn; Elizabeth Elterich, AiM; Karen Matthias-Long, AiM; Ruth T. Miller, AiM; Pr. Wes Poole; Leesa Wimmer, AiM; and Pr. Bill Zimmermann, was adopted.

WHEREAS, all the baptized when they affirm their baptism promise "to hear the Word of God" and "to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed"; and

WHEREAS, all parents and sponsors covenant to place the Holy Scriptures in the hands of their children and nurture them in faith and prayer; and

WHEREAS rostered leaders (pastors, Associates in Ministry, deaconesses, and diaconal ministers) vow to be diligent in their study of the Holy Scriptures; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has begun a Book of Faith Initiative inviting everyone to join the conversation, to make a commitment, and to become part of the initiative (see <http://www.elca.org/bookoffaith>); therefore be it

RESOLVED, that we become a "Book of Faith" synod, committing ourselves to live in and from the Word of God in all our meetings, assemblies and events, so that as we regularly and increasingly hear, read, study, share and are engaged by God's Word, we lead by example in faithful service and holy living; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the bishop of our synod—who "as its pastor, shall be a teacher of the faith of this church and shall provide leadership for the life and witness of this church"—in coordination with the synod advocate lead this initiative personally and through collaborative programmatic work with congregations of the synod; and be it further

RESOLVED, that all voting members of this synod assembly covenant together to begin a regular practice of Bible study and prayer, gathering with others in their congregation and/or community to speak and hear the Word from one another; and be it further

RESOLVED, that we celebrate and continue to support and strengthen those places where Scripture is already taught and engaged, such as Women of the ELCA and Lutheran Men in Mission Bible studies, camping and campus ministries, lay schools, congregation councils, Sunday school and other educational groups, clusters, and mission districts; and be it further

RESOLVED, that we encourage all congregations to become a 'Book of Faith'

congregation, which will find expression by

- exploring new opportunities for engaging the Bible,
- sending sufficient numbers of members to synod events for training as Bible study leaders,

- including biblical study as an integral part of all meetings and groups, in order to become more fluent in the first language of faith—the language of Scripture—that we might live into our calling as a people renewed, enlivened, empowered, and sent by the Word.

The following resolution, received from Pr. Jay R. Wetzel; Judith J. Gifford, Union, Schnecksville; Bruce Hill, Heidelberg, Heidelberg; Diana J. Hill, AiM; Pr. Bruce MacLaughlin; Ruth T. Miller, AiM; Pr. Daniel Shook; Kathy Smith, Trinity, Hecktown; Pr. Jimmy Lee Werley; Melanie E. Werley, AiM, was adopted.

WHEREAS, approximately 800,000 adult Pennsylvanians below the age of 65 have no health insurance and are not eligible for government funded insurance; and

WHEREAS, 162,000 Pennsylvania households in 2007 had very low food security, a 14% increase over the previous year, and with demands on food pantries rising, yet the availability of food products to food banks and pantries decreasing; and

WHEREAS, 8.7% of Pennsylvania families are living below the poverty level and the number of the working poor is increasing; and

WHEREAS, the United States government implemented an Economic Stimulus plan

through which individuals and families are receiving checks ranging from \$300 to \$1,200; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA Conference of Bishops has encouraged members of ELCA congregations, as part of a public church that witnesses boldly to God's love, to tithe their Economic Stimulus check; therefore be it

RESOLVED that the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod urge its members to step forward by tithing their government funded Economic Stimulus check to agencies that provide goods and services to those Pennsylvanians who lack the necessities for health and wholeness.

The following resolution, received from Pr. Bruce D. MacLaughlin, Pr. Peter A. Pettit, Pr. Jimmy Lee Werley, Pr. Cheryl Meinschein, was adopted.

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has committed itself to peacemaking through the "Churchwide Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine" adopted at the 2005 Churchwide

Assembly, which assumes that ELCA action will among other things (§II.A.)

provide clear and reliable information to ELCA members,

be balanced in terms of its care for all parties in the conflict, be shaped by a commitment to listen and learn from companions and from both those with whom participants agree and those with whom they disagree, take responsibility for careful consideration of the political and humanitarian implications of our theology, and reflect ... zero tolerance for anti-Jewish and/or anti-Muslim sentiments or actions; and

WHEREAS, the Strategy seeks among its outcomes (§II.B)

a better understanding among ELCA leaders and members, along with their legislators, about the situation in Israel and Palestine, a deepening of mutual understanding between Jews and Lutherans and Muslims and Lutherans through dialogue and shared action, the enrichment of ELCA strategy for engagement in the Holy Land through these relationships, and increased cooperation and collaboration between the ELCA and Jewish groups in the U.S.—and with groups within Israel—that seek peace with justice in Israel and Palestine; and

WHEREAS, the church's calling to cultivate a culture of peace involves a process of informed moral deliberation that seeks "the powerful vision of difference in unity..., call[ing] us to engage differences, not to ignore or fear them ... [and] to strengthen [our] own particular communities in ways that promote respect and appreciation for people in other communities" (ELCA Social Statement on Peace, §5A); and

WHEREAS, the war of words in the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian conflict includes both intentional and negligent misrepresentations of the history of the region and of Arab, Israeli and Palestinian actions and policies; and

WHEREAS, our moral deliberation must take adequate account of a region with a long, complex history, for which different parties have widely disparate narratives and interpretations, and with multiple conflicts including those between the Israelis and Palestinians, between different Palestinian factions, and between nations in the region; and

WHEREAS, the quest for peace between Palestinians and Israelis has recently been complicated by the increasing regional influence of Iran, which has avowed a strategic goal of annihilating Israel and has supported militias with the same intent; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has been and remains committed to accompanying our Palestinian Lutheran brothers and sisters in their suffering and in their striving for Palestinian political autonomy and recognition in a viable, contiguous state; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA in its 1994 Declaration to the Jewish People expressed the "urgent desire to live out our faith in Jesus Christ with love and respect for the Jewish people," whose corporate identity and self-expression is intimately tied to the State of Israel; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod memorialize the 2009 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to reaffirm this church's commitment to peace-making in

the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian conflict through implementation of its Churchwide Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine to the fullest extent possible, and in so doing to:

1. embody a multilateral solidarity with the State of Israel and the Palestinian people as the primary communities involved and with all those with whom we find common cause for peace, justice and dignity; and
2. acknowledge the State of Israel as a legitimate political self-expression of the Jewish people, as well as the urgency of national sovereignty as a political self-expression of the Palestinian people; and
3. educate and equip members, congregations, synods, personnel and affiliated agencies of the ELCA for advocacy on behalf of all parties to the conflict who seek peace;
4. resist preferential identification with any party in the conflict that may inhibit our roles as witnesses for peace and facilitators of reconciliation; and
5. renounce the use of language and materials that caricature or oversimplify the conflict, dehumanize Arabs, Israelis, or Palestinians, or challenge the political legitimacy of their respective national movements, and counsel our strategy partners against such use; and
6. encourage and empower ELCA members, congregations, synods, personnel and affiliated agencies to become more familiar with and engaged with both Israeli and Palestinian schools, humanitarian organizations and co-existence projects.

The following resolution, received from Nadine Anderson, St. John, Easton; Pr. Manfred Bahmann; Pr. Peter Bredlau; Sharon Ann Burns, St. Peter, Bethlehem; Pr. Grace Olson; Christine Summy, AiM; and Pr. Richard Summy, was tabled by a vote of 286 yes and 204 no.

WHEREAS, the ELCA has repeatedly welcomed gay and lesbian people into its life (including resolutions of the 1991, 1995, 1999, 2005, and 2007 Churchwide Assemblies), and congregations throughout the ELCA are faithfully and effectively served by qualified ordained and lay rostered leaders who are in committed same-gender relationships; and

WHEREAS, in March 2009 (well before this Synod's 2009 Assembly), the ELCA Church

Council will decide which recommendations concerning the ELCA's ministry rosters it will make to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly, and this Synod desires to communicate its views concerning rostered ministry as the Church Council prepares its recommendations on the matter; and **WHEREAS**, a congregation that wishes to call as its pastor or lay rostered leader, an otherwise-qualified person in a committed same-gender partnership, should be

permitted to do so, while at the same time a congregation that does not wish to call such a pastor or lay rostered leader cannot and should not be forced to do so; and

WHEREAS, the document known as "Vision and Expectations," the document known as "Definitions and Guidelines," and the policy on reinstatement to the rosters of this church may be amended by the Church Council at the direction, by a simple majority vote, of the Churchwide Assembly (see Preliminary Minutes of the 10th Churchwide Assembly, pages 64 and 80, explanations by Presiding Bishop Hanson and Secretary Almen); now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA, meeting in Assembly, direct the Synod Council to submit a resolution to the ELCA Church Council to take the following actions regarding the ELCA's ministry rosters:

To direct the Committee on Appeals to develop an amendment to the documents known as "Definitions and Guidelines" that removes provisions precluding "practicing homosexual persons" from the rosters of this church; and

To direct the Vocation and Education unit, in consultation with the Conference of Bishops, to develop an amendment to the documents known as "Vision and Expectations" that removes provisions requiring persons who are "homosexual in their self-understanding" to "abstain from homosexual sexual relationships"; and

To direct the Vocation and Education unit, in consultation with the Conference of Bishops, to develop an amendment to the documents known as "Vision and Expectations" that inserts the following: "Ordained and lay rostered leaders in a same-gender partnership are expected to uphold the same standard as all ordained and lay rostered leaders, namely, to live in fidelity to their partner within a relationship that is mutual, chaste, and faithful"; and

To direct the Vocation and Education unit, in consultation with the Conference of Bishops, to develop an amendment to the policy on reinstatement to the rosters of this church that permits the reinstatement, without the usual requirement of five consecutive years without call, of persons who have resigned or been removed from the rosters solely because they are in a mutual, chaste, and faithful committed same-gender relationship; and

To direct the Church Council to take the steps necessary to amend "Definitions and Guidelines," "Vision and Expectations," and the policy on reinstatement to the rosters of this church in conformity with the amendments developed (pursuant to the preceding directions) by the Committee on Appeals and the Vocation and Education unit.

The following resolution, received from Nadine Anderson, St. John, Easton; Pr. Manfred Bahmann; Pr. Peter Bredlau; Sharon Ann Burns, St. Peter, Bethlehem; Pr. Grace Olson; Christine Summy, AiM; and Pr. Richard Summy, was adopted by a vote of 375, yes; 197, no; 1 abstaining.

WHEREAS, we discern the Holy Spirit's work in the 2005 Churchwide Assembly as (1) affirming that the current disagreements on homosexuality are between people of faith seeking to live in faithful obedience to the command of Jesus Christ and the call of the Holy Spirit, (2) leading the church to live together amidst our disagreements, (3) inviting continued communication, openness and understanding among all members of this church; and

WHEREAS, the 2005 Churchwide Assembly affirmed its trust for pastors and lay rostered leaders and congregations as they discern ways to provide faithful pastoral care for all to whom they minister, including persons in a committed same-gender partnership; and

WHEREAS, many congregations in the ELCA count as valued members and leaders baptized persons who are in a committed same-gender relationship and who desire to make public their promises of love and fidelity, seek to invite God into their relationship to help in the fulfillment of their promises, and long for the blessing of their church communities and the fullness of the prayers, encouragement and consolation that these communities of faith provide; and

WHEREAS, a growing number of states have legally defined and recognized relationships between two persons of the same gender and many in this church's congregations are entering into such relationships; and

WHEREAS, , many congregations in the ELCA yearn to provide pastoral care for the same-gender couples among their members by witnessing and supporting their promises of lifelong fidelity and by offering support in the name of God as they fulfill these promises- now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA, meeting in Assembly, encourage pastors and lay rostered leaders and congregations to provide pastoral care to same-gender couples by witnessing or affirming their promises of lifelong fidelity, and by invoking God's help and offering the congregation's support as they fulfill these promises; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA, meeting in Assembly, direct the Synod Council to submit a resolution to the ELCA Church Council to direct the ELCA Worship and Liturgical Resources section to develop resources to assist pastors and lay rostered leaders and congregations who wish to provide pastoral care to same-gender couples by witnessing or affirming their promises of lifelong fidelity, and by invoking God's guidance and offering the congregation's support as they fulfill these promises.

The following resolution, substituted by the Committee of Reference and Counsel for one received from Pr. Paul Buzzard, was adopted.

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod request the ELCA Vocation and Education Program Unit to make a recommendation to the ELCA Church Council regarding the possibility of granting voice and vote at synod assemblies to Synodically Authorized Lay Ministers; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly direct the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council to forward this resolution to the Church Council's Executive Committee for proper referral.

The original resolution from Pr. Paul Buzzard appears below.

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod memorialize the 2009 assembly of the ELCA, requesting that the process be started in making any needed constitutional, bylaw, and policy changes

that would grant voice and vote at synod assemblies to Synodically Authorized Lay Ministers, under appointment by their bishops.

The following resolution was received from the Committee of Reference and Counsel and was adopted with applause.

WHEREAS, the 21st annual Assembly of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod is now drawing to a close; and

WHEREAS, we have elected a new Bishop; and

WHEREAS, we have worshipped together, worked together, eaten together, laughed and cried together these three days; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that we heartily thank Bishop Strobel and his Staff for faithfully leading this Synod with wisdom and dedication these past twelve years, and Bishop-elect Samuel Zeiser for heeding the call of the Holy Spirit to be our leader in these challenging times, and

Kathie Bender Schwich for being our ELCA representative, keeping us informed about the mission of the wider Church and helping us through the election process, and

All who worked so diligently to make this a great Assembly – the planners, ushers, tellers, Synod support staff, volunteers, and

The musicians, worship leaders, choirs who inspired us and moved us with their soul-stirring efforts, and for Word and Sacrament, through which we have been fed and nourished in order that we might be faithful and bold in our personal and corporate ministries back home, and

Rostered leaders who have celebrated significant anniversaries and inspired us by their example of dedication and service, and

The magnificent seven – now known as the superb six – and final three – now known as the terrific two – who exemplified what it means to listen for the spirit and witness to their faith by offering their special gifts to the church, and

All the loving hands that knitted and the faithful hearts in prayer gave us 1,500 prayer shawls, and those who have worn them, and

All who have, with their presence, reminded us that together we are the church – Superintendent Günther Rudolph, Gary Harke, Neil Harrison, Philip Krey, Bishop Claire Burkat, and

The weather forecasters, who finally almost got it right in allowing no rain to fall upon a Synod Assembly, but they were thwarted in their efforts by Bishop Strobel, whose trademark is rain, and

All SALMs who, for the next six years, will now be called “SAMS,” and

Our loving and gracious God who calls us together in mission and sends us forth faithfully and boldly to witness and serve in all the world.