



MUHLENBERG,
MALLS, and MISSION

RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED AT THE 2011 SYNOD ASSEMBLY

A RESOLUTION CALLING THE CHURCH TO SPEAK AND ACT TO PREVENT BULLYING, HARASSMENT AND RELATED VIOLENCE

Whereas, “If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.” (1Cor. 12:26); and

Whereas, in the ELCA Social Statement on Education (2007) we declared, “The ELCA expects communities of learning and teaching to be safe places. We recognize that school safety is an issue for all students, staff, and teachers. Unfortunately, incidents of bullying, intimidation, and other forms of violence are not unusual. We affirm that personal safety and security are essential for optimal teaching and learning”; and

Whereas, research indicates children with disabilities or special needs are at a higher risk of being bullied than others (Rigby, K., 2002, *New Perspective on Bullying*. London. Jessica Kingsley Publications); and has concluded that “Bullying around issues of sexual orientation, non-conforming gender behaviors, and dress was the most common form of bullying, second only to issues of appearance (e.g., body size and disability).” (The National School Climate Survey, conducted in 2005); and

Whereas, in the ELCA Social Statement on Sexuality: *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* (2009) we declared, “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, increased media attention has made us acutely aware of tragic consequences (including youth suicide) if steps are not taken to prevent bullying, harassment, and other related forms of violence; and

Whereas, the voice of the church addressing the intersection of race, economic status, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, and physical ability is a powerful witness to the healing and life affirming Gospel promise; be it therefore

Resolved, That the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod encourages new partnerships among our congregations, the synod and its committees and task forces, the Churchwide Organization, outdoor ministries, campus ministries, Lutheran Schools, Lutherans Concerned/North America, Lutheran Social Services organizations, public schools, counseling centers, non-profits and associated ministries of the synod and other governmental organizations in order to support and offer preventative programs addressing bullying, harassment, and other related violence, especially with higher risk populations; and be it further

Resolved, That these partnerships be encouraged to create or join with existing preventative programs which:

- a. utilize positive, inclusive, empowering and developmentally appropriate materials,**
- b. raise participant's awareness about the issue,**
- c. focus on prevention,**
- d. seek to change bystander behavior into all behavior,**
- e. create partnerships between you and adults, and be it further**

Resolved, That these partnerships seek funding for these efforts from a combination of existing funds and new funding sources not otherwise accessible individually such as foundation grants, synod and other Lutheran organizational grants (for example, Thrivent, Wheat Ridge ministries, Women of the ELCA, etc.), private and governmental funding sources; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod Council appoint some group or person to work to organize synod wide support and coordinate efforts to expand programs to "address bullying, harassment, and other related violence," with a report to the 2012 Assembly of what is done.

A MEMORIAL CALLING THE CHURCH TO SPEAK AND ACT TO PREVENT BULLYING, HARASSMENT AND RELATED VIOLENCE

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Whereas, the voice of the church addressing the intersection of race, economic status, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, and physical ability is a powerful witness to the healing and life-affirming Gospel promise; be it therefore

Resolved, That the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod memorializes the 2011 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to encourage, support, and publicize new partnerships in ministry that emerge in our church addressing the prevention of bullying, harassment, and related forms of violence, especially with higher risk populations.

PEACEMAKING IN ISRAEL AND PALESTINE THROUGH POSITIVE ECONOMIC INVESTMENT

Whereas, the ELCA has declared its partnership in ministry with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, stating its commitment to demonstrate “balanced care for all parties in conflict” (2005 Churchwide Strategy) and to advocate for a “viable, contiguous, independent Palestinian state and a secure Israel” (2005 Churchwide Strategy), and

Whereas, Palestinian civil society needs to develop the infrastructure of a viable state for the successful implementation of a political solution between the Palestinians and the Israelis, and

Whereas, in August, 2009, Prime Minister Salam Fayyad of the Palestinian National Authority detailed his working plan for developing the infrastructure and institutions of the future Palestinian State, including building government offices, a stock market, an airport, a free market economy, and an effective security apparatus,¹ and

Whereas, these efforts appear to be bearing fruit in an economic boom in the West Bank, where the growth rate reached 8.5 percent in 2009² and expanded to an estimated 9 percent in the first half of 2010³, and

Whereas, during this time there has been an increase in foreign investment in the West Bank, and Palestinian real estate developers have begun the first modern, planned Palestinian city north of Ramallah;⁴ and

Whereas, these positive trends are also being supported by some measures taken by Israel that enhance Palestinian economic activity and improve the security situation in the West Bank,⁵ and

Whereas, positive economic investment in Palestine is a more productive approach to peacemaking than boycott, divestment and/or economic sanction campaigns against Israel, and

Whereas, boycott, divestment and economic sanctions are likely to increase the fear and isolation of the Israeli public and decrease their willingness to take the risk inherent in any peace agreement, therefore be it

¹ Salam Fayyad, "Ending the Occupation, Establishing the State," Program of the Thirteenth Government, Palestinian National Authority, August 27, 2009
(copy available at <http://www.palestine-pmc.com/details.asp?cat=2&id=2075>)

² International Monetary Fund, Macroeconomic and Fiscal Framework for the West Bank and Gaza: Fifth Review of Progress, "Staff Report for the Meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (Madrid April 13, 2010)

(can be obtained at <http://www.imf.org/external/country/WBG/RR/2010/041310.pdf>)

³ International Monetary Fund, "Macroeconomic and Fiscal Framework for the West Bank and Gaza: Sixth Review of Progress," Staff Report for the Meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (September 21, 2010)

(can be obtained at <http://www.imf.org/external/country/WBG/RR/2010/092110.pdf>)

⁴ See e.g., Portland Trust Palestinian Economic Bulletin (November 2010), U.S. Senator John Kerry Visits The West Bank's First Planned Community (March 1, 2010)
(can be obtained at <http://www.Palestinenote.com>)

⁵ State of Israel, "Measures Taken by Israel in Support of Developing the Palestinian Economy and Socio-Economic Structure," Report of the Government of Israel to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (New York, September 21, 2010)

(can be obtained at <http://www.mfa.gov.il/NR/rdonlyres/4F678C2F-133C-4CAC-BA18-076F8CCB9407/0/IsraelsReporttoAHL210910.pdf>)

An economic growth rate in Gaza is also estimated at 16 percent in 2010 driven by the gradual easing of the blockade. International Monetary Fund, "Macroeconomic and Fiscal Framework for The West Bank and Gaza: Sixth Review of Progress," Staff Report for the Meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (September 21, 2010)

(can be obtained at <http://www.imf.org/external/country/WBR/RR/2010/092110.pdf>)

Resolved, That the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod memorializes the 2011 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to encourage the church's members, congregations, synods, and agencies to consider making positive economic investments in those Palestinian projects and businesses that peacefully strengthen the economic and social fabric of Palestinian society while at the same time opposing any movement towards boycott, divestment and/or economic sanctions against Israel.

RESOLUTION REGARDING BOTTLED WATER

Whereas, throughout Scripture, water is clearly seen as a gift from God for all creation—"When the poor and needy seek water, I will open rivers on the bare heights, and fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water." (Isaiah 41: 17-18); and

Whereas, bottled water creates more trash and uses more energy than a re-usable bottle refilled from the tap. Disposable plastic bottles fill our landfills and take up to 1000 years to biodegrade. They also require substantial energy to manufacture, fill and transport. The majority of the energy used comes from fossil fuels like oil and coal, which emit carbon dioxide and are a primary cause of global warming [SOURCES: Earth Policy Institute, "pouring Resources Down the Drain" (2006); Natural Resources Defense Council, "Bottled Water: Pure Drink or Pure Hype?" (1999)]; and

Whereas, tap water in the United States is generally clean and safe. The United States has water systems to provide safe tap water, which is subject to dozens of state and federal regulations and testing requirements. Testing standards for bottled water are much less strict; and

Whereas, bottled water as a regular source of water can be seen as a luxury. Bottled water can cost as much as \$10 per gallon-much more than a gallon of gasoline. A 2006 report found that globally [*we spend*] \$100 billion is spent on bottled water; and

Whereas, the Lutheran Youth Fellowship of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod is calling on individuals, families, groups and congregations to individually pledge to reduce their use of bottled water, which means; opting for public tap water over bottled water; and advocating for healthy, strong water systems both locally and globally; and

Whereas, many religious and other communities are encouraging their members to take a pledge such as the following one to reduce the use of disposable bottled water:

Don't Bottle it Up! Pledge

I pledge to reduce my use of disposable bottled water, which means: Opting for public tap water over bottled water; and advocating for healthy, strong public water systems both locally and globally:

- +Because bottled water is expensive.
- +Bottled water can cost as much as \$10 per gallon.
- +Because tap water in the U.S. is clean and safe. In the U.S. almost all of our communities have systems to provide safe tap water, which is subject to dozens of state and federal regulations and testing requirements. Testing standards for bottled water are much less strict.
- + Because bottled water creates trash and uses energy. Bottled water creates mind-boggling amounts of trash and uses more energy than a reusable bottle refilled from the tap. Disposable plastic bottles fill our landfills and oceans and take up to 1,000 years to biodegrade. Bottled water travels many miles from the source, resulting in the burning of massive amounts of fossil fuels.
- + Because God's plan and our call is for all to have safe drinking water. More than one billion people around the globe lack access to safe drinking water and sanitation services. In developing countries 80 percent of illnesses relate to poor water quality; someone dies of a water-related illness every 14 seconds.
- +Because water is a gift from God, not a commodity to be bought and sold for profit.

Resolved, That the members of this assembly and the congregations of this synod are urged to prayerfully consider taking the "Don't Bottle It Up! Pledge."

OMNIBUS RESOLUTION

Whereas, the 24th Annual Assembly of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly has been meeting at Muhlenberg College June 17 and 18 along with the gathering of LIFT (Lutherans in Faith Together), and

Whereas, the annual LYF (Lutheran Youth Fellowship) Assembly has been meeting at Muhlenberg College June 16, 17, and 18, now therefore be it

Resolved, That the Assembly by a rising vote of thanks, express its gratitude and appreciation to:

- **The Triune God in whose name we gather;**

- **Bishop Samuel Zeiser, whose gracious, confident, and faithful leadership bears witness to God’s faithfulness and who warmly invited us to add our handprints to the crozier which symbolizes our unity in Christ.**
- **ELCA Secretary David Swartling who warmly reminded the assembly to resist being discouraged by times of turmoil because we are a church of reformation and resurrection filled with signs of hope;**
- **Professor Jon Paul, not only for warmly proclaiming that grace always finds a way, even in the midst of a culture of consumption in which malls are sacred places, but also for revealing to us the five worst religious album covers of all time;**
- **Muhlenberg College and President Randy Helm for the very warm welcome extended to the first annual synod assembly held at the college in 25 years;**
- **The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia and President Philip Krey for warmly awarding the Muhlenberg Medal to Pastor William “Chip” Fairchild;**
- **Presidents Helm and Krey for the heartwarming signing of the Articulation Agreement between the two institutions they lead;**
- **The members of Lutheran Youth Fellowship (LYF) for warmly inspiring us to Live Your Faith and for providing Bishop Zeiser that special Shah;**
- **Henry Melchior Muhlenberg for having a 300th Birthday which we could warmly celebrate even if he looks better dead than alive;**
- **Pastor Carl Shankweiler whose wig and warmth brought Henry Melchior Muhlenberg to life among us;**
- **Vice President Dawn Baxter, Secretary Barbara-Anne Taylor, and Executive Associate of the Bishop Catherine Ziel who radiated a warm presence on the dais;**
- **Marty Haugen and Mary Preus for their warm and winsome worship and music leadership;**
- **Chaplain Peter Bredlau, Pastor Glenn Simmons, synod secretarial support staff, assembly, LIFT, and LYF planners, ushers, tellers, and countless volunteers who helped the assembly, LIFT, and LYF to run smoothly and warmly;**
- **All who attend this assembly, who have been freed in Christ to serve so we can do what matters in order that the unconditional love of God in Jesus Christ may be known in all the world.**