

## **2009 Annual Assembly of the New England Synod, ELCA Action on Memorials and Resolutions**

**T**he 22<sup>nd</sup> annual assembly of the New England Synod, ELCA, approved 12 memorials and resolutions May 28-30 at the Sturbridge Host Hotel and Conference Center, Sturbridge, Mass. Most dealt with social concerns, including the genocide in Darfur, the conflict between Israel and Palestine, recognition of the diaconate, improved health care for rostered leaders, providing ELCA resources in Braille and large print, observing a day of peace, and calling for an ELCA social statement on disabilities.

### **09-01 Memorial Concerning Human Sexuality from the New England Synod to the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly – APPROVED.**

*Resolved*, that the New England Synod, meeting in Assembly, memorialize the 2009 Churchwide Assembly as follows: 1) to adopt the proposed Social Statement on Human Sexuality and its implementing resolutions, as recommended by the ELCA Church Council, and 2) to adopt the four parts of the proposed Recommendation on Ministry Policies, as recommended by the ELCA Church Council. A request to vote by paper ballot was defeated.

### **09-02 Memorial Concerning Human Sexuality from the New England Synod to the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly – APPROVED.**

*Resolved*, that the New England Synod, meeting in Assembly, memorialize the 2009 Churchwide Assembly as follows:

- 1) To amend the Social Statement on Human Sexuality to include the following implementing resolution: “To direct appropriate Churchwide units to develop, in consultation with those most affected, resources for holding persons in same-gender relationships publicly accountable in exchanges of promises of lifelong love and fidelity; these resources to be designed for use by congregations, faith-communities and rostered leaders;” and
- 2) To adopt the following: “Resolved, that the Vocation and Education Unit (of the ELCA) be directed to develop, and the Church Council be directed to approve, procedures for the expedited reinstatement to the roster or to candidacy of those whose rostering was precluded by previous policies on same-gender relationships.”

### **09-04 Resolution to the ELCA Church Council on Board of Pensions Health Plan – APPROVED.**

*Resolved*, that the ELCA Board of Pensions shall offer health and benefit packages for same-sex domestic partners that are equal in value and coverage to those plans offered to heterosexual spouses, and that the ELCA Board of Pensions consult with its insurance contractors to determine how best to accomplish this mandate in a timely and equitable fashion, and *Resolved*, that the New England Synod Assembly direct the New England Synod Council to forward this resolution to the Church Council for consideration and possible action.

**09-05 Resolution on Health Care – APPROVED (as amended)**

*Resolved*, that the New England Synod join with the ELCA in acknowledging the issue of affordable healthcare coverage for all as a justice issue that calls for action and that guidance for such action is found in the 2003 Social Statement on Health and Healthcare, and

*Resolved*, that the ELCA Board of Pensions re-evaluate its policies and procedures for the purpose of providing support to rostered leadership, seminarians and to those awaiting first call with benefit coverage that is equalized and affordable, and

*Resolved*, that the ELCA Board of Pensions develop a program that empowers rostered leadership, seminarians and those awaiting first call to better health without infringing on their individual rights or using information for data gathering; and

*Resolved*, that the New England Synod Assembly direct the New England Synod Council to forward this resolution to the Church Council for consideration and possible action.

**09-06 Memorial Affirming the Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine – APPROVED.**

*Resolved*, that the New England Synod in Assembly memorialize the 2009 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA to reaffirm this church's commitment to peace-making in the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian conflict through continued implementation of its Churchwide Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine ("Strategy") to the fullest extent possible, and

- to encourage the leaders and members of the ELCA engaged in this difficult work and to commend them in their faithful resolve;
- to embody our multilateral solidarity with our partners without sacrifice to the duties of witness against injustice and violence;
- to be scrupulously clear in our support of Israel's legitimate security concerns, and morally cognizant of the existential fears and the sense of isolation that affects not only so many in Israel but also so many Jews in the Diaspora;
- to continue to seek to make the concerns and perspectives of Palestinians heard in a public sphere where they have often been invisible or visibly caricatured;
- to oppose and seek to disarm the politics in our land that villainize and isolate Jews or Arabs or Muslims;
- to continue to reach out to agencies and leaders of the Jewish community and communicate forthrightly but with humility the passions and griefs we bear for the victims of Israel and Palestine;
- to recognize that in a conflict so fueled by legitimate passions and defined from such divergent perspectives we shall not be able to fulfill the Strategy's ideals perfectly or be immune to perceptions of bias, naïveté, or hostility, and yet we must persevere in the attempt;
- to continue to seek to 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.

**09-07 Memorial Calling for an ELCA Social Statement on Disability – APPROVED.**

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

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

**09-08 Memorial on Support for a Program to Make ELCA Materials Available in Braille and Large Print – APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

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

**09-09 Resolution on World Hunger – APPROVED.**

*Resolved*, that each congregation of the New England Synod be encouraged to offer its support and prayers for the New England leg of the Tour de Revs tour by:

- lifting up the fantastic story of what our church is doing on behalf of the hungry and poor both here and abroad,
- educating the congregation on the needs of the hungry and those who live in poverty, and
- encouraging its congregation to make generous contributions to the ELCA World Hunger Appeal.

**09-10 Resolution to Support Diaconal Ministries – APPROVED.**

*Resolved*, that this synod in assembly affirm the diaconate as a visible symbol to the world of hospitality to the stranger and loving care for people in need, and

*Resolved*, that the New England Synod affirm that, as with all rostered leaders, members of the diaconate lead through service, not as part of a spiritual or ecclesial hierarchy, and

*Resolved*, that congregations, agencies and institutions be encouraged to consider available and appropriately qualified deaconesses and diaconal ministers when filling calls to public ministry.

**09-11 Resolution on Observing an Annual Day of Peace – APPROVED.**

*Resolved*, that the congregations of the New England Synod be encouraged to observe the International Day of Peace annually on a Sunday near September 21 through worship, prayer, education and action dedicated to peace as a way of life.

**09-12 Resolution on Working to Stop Genocide in Darfur – APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

*Resolved*, that this Synod in Assembly encourage the congregations of the New England Synod to learn about the situation in Darfur and to pray for the people of Darfur, for the relief efforts, and for the peace process; and

*Resolved*, that this Synod in Assembly request that our congregations and individual members consider sending messages to their respective federal government leaders to take stronger measures towards achieving peace in Darfur; and

*Resolved*, that this Synod in Assembly request that the Bishop of the New England Synod communicate with the members of Congress representing congregations of the territory of this Synod and urge them to take stronger measures towards achieving peace in Darfur; and

*Resolved*, that this Synod in Assembly request the Presiding Bishop of the ELCA make advocating for peace in Darfur a priority and communicate the importance of advocating for peace in Darfur and supporting relief efforts in Darfur to the members of the ELCA, to the members of the Lutheran World Federation, and to the heads of state and leaders of government whom he often has the opportunity to meet.

**09-13 Memorial on Working to Stop Genocide in Darfur – APPROVED.** This memorial calls for our national church to do as our synod voted to do in 09-12.

*Resolved*, that this Synod in Assembly submit the following memorial for consideration by the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly, and

*Resolved*, that the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly encourage the congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to learn about the situation in Darfur and to pray for the people of Darfur, for the relief efforts and for the peace process; and

*Resolved*, that the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly request that the congregations and individual members of the ELCA consider sending messages to their leaders in the federal government, encouraging them to take stronger measures towards achieving peace in Darfur, including supporting funding for peacekeepers, multilateral sanctions against the perpetrators of genocide, and diplomatic efforts to encourage other countries with influence to support a comprehensive and just peace in Darfur, and

*Resolved*, that the 2009 Churchwide Assembly request that the Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America make advocating for peace in Darfur a priority and communicate the importance of advocating for peace in Darfur and supporting relief efforts in Darfur to the members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, to the members of the Lutheran World Federation, and to the Heads of State and leaders of government who he often has the opportunity to meet.

**09-03 Memorial Calling for a Super Majority to Change Ministry Policies – FAILED.**

*Resolved*, that the New England Synod Assembly memorialize the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to add the following provision to the rules of procedure for the assembly: “Any motion to come before this Churchwide Assembly regarding changes in this church’s current policy and practice for the rostering of ordained ministers, diaconal ministers, associates in ministry, and deaconesses shall require a two-thirds vote by the assembly for adoption.”