

Resolutions to the 2009 New England Synod Assembly

09-01 Resolution Calling for a Social Statement on Disability

WHEREAS, an estimated 54 million children and adults within the United States live with a disability;

WHEREAS, people who live with a disability have historically faced challenges in gaining equal access to education, employment, health care and accessibility and are more likely to live in poverty than people without disabilities;

WHEREAS, because of ignorance, fear, and the perpetuation of myths, people with disabilities and their families have been stigmatized and discriminated against in church and society;

WHEREAS, persons who live with a disability are active members and leaders in congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, yet many congregations struggle with issues of accessibility, accommodation and welcome;

WHEREAS, in carrying out its mission to the world, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America commits itself to, “study social issues and trends, work to discover the causes of oppression and injustice and develop programs of ministry and advocacy to further human dignity, freedom, justice, and peace in the world” (ELCA 4.03.1);

WHEREAS, neither the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America nor its predecessor bodies has a social statement addressing the theological and social implications of human disability;

WHEREAS, the Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns states that topics for social statements shall be approved by the Churchwide Assembly and development of a social statement shall be overseen by the Church in Society unit;

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;

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

*Submitted by
East Central Mission Area of New England Synod*

09-02 Resolution on Support for Program to Make ELCA Materials Available in Braille and Large Print

WHEREAS the Good News is a life-giving gift of God, meant to be shared freely with everyone, like sunlight or oxygen; and

WHEREAS Jesus commissions his followers to gather disciples everywhere, and the ELCA seeks to follow this call by welcoming diversity in our communities of faith and also by continuing a healthy tradition of self-examination and change when we discover bias in our words or actions; and

WHEREAS in John 9:3, Jesus specifically affirms God's calling for people who are blind, saying, "[this man] was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him," and the man in the story goes on to demonstrate this by courageously witnessing to Christ, just as many people with low vision or blindness continue to do today; and

WHEREAS people who have low vision or blindness are involved in an ongoing struggle for basic civil rights like access to voting and education, and the ELCA should support this struggle as part of our commitment to promoting justice for all God's children; and

WHEREAS people with low vision and blindness are already active as worshipers and leaders in ELCA congregations and seminaries; and

WHEREAS promoting the availability of Braille and large-print resources would encourage growth in our church membership; and

WHEREAS modern technology makes production and distribution of large-print and Braille materials easier than ever before; and centralizing these functions would allow congregations across the ELCA to have more convenient and less expensive access to such materials; and

WHEREAS the formation of the ELCA in 1988 included an organization called the ELCA Braille & Tape Service, later renamed ELCA Braille & Tape Ministry, which became inactive in 2004; and

WHEREAS since 2004 the ELCA has promoted worship and educational resources (ELW, Book of Faith resources, social statements, Christian education materials, etc.) that are available only in small-size print, thus marginalizing children and adults who read Braille or large print; and

WHEREAS the resurrection of a comprehensive program to provide Braille and large- print resources to ELCA congregations would benefit and uplift the entire body of Christ; be it therefore

RESOLVED that the New England Synod memorialize 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.

*Submitted by
East Central Mission Area of New England Synod*

09-03 Memorial Regarding Braille and Large-Print Resources

WHEREAS the Good News is a life-giving gift of God, meant to be shared freely with everyone, like sunlight or oxygen;

WHEREAS Jesus commissions his followers to gather disciples in all nations, and the ELCA seeks to follow this call by welcoming diversity in our communities of faith and also by continuing a healthy tradition of self-examination and change when we discover bias in our words or actions;

WHEREAS in John 9:3, Jesus specifically affirms God's calling for people who are blind, saying, "[this man] was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him," and the man in the story goes on to demonstrate this by his courageous witness to Christ;

WHEREAS people who have low vision or blindness are currently involved in a struggle for basic civil rights like access to voting and education, and the ELCA ignores this struggle by continuing to promote worship and educational resources (ELW, NRSV Bible, social statements, Christian education literature, etc.) that are available only in small-size print, thus marginalizing children and adults who read Braille or large print;

WHEREAS people with low vision and blindness are already active as worshipers and leaders in ELCA congregations and seminaries;

WHEREAS promoting the availability of Braille and large-print resources would encourage growth in our church membership;

WHEREAS modern technology makes production and distribution of large-print and Braille materials easier than ever before, and centralizing these functions would allow congregations across the ELCA to have more convenient and less expensive access to such materials;

WHEREAS the formation of the ELCA in 1988 included an organization called the ELCA Braille & Tape Service, later renamed ELCA Braille & Tape Ministry, which became inactive in 2004;

AND WHEREAS the resurrection of a comprehensive program to provide Braille and large-print resources to ELCA congregations would benefit and uplift the entire body of Christ;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT this congregation calls on the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to provide financial and other support for the creation of a new full-time program to make all our resources readily available in Braille and large-print.

Submitted by

Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church, 46 Woodland Street, Hartford, CT:

Wendy Colbert

Chester Brodnicki

Barbara Calogero

David Eberly

Janet Dudek

Glenna Brodnicki

Mildred Unfried

Nancy L. Urban

Lloyd O. Smith

Ted Steege

Eva Reque Steege +

Dale Eberhardt

Margaret G. Payne +

Rebecca Lewis

Brian Phelan

Barbara J. Ruhe

Emma Coleman-Carr

Bruce Klotz

Barbara Van Fleet

Mavis Smith

Gail Lindstrom

Darrell B. Urban +

09-04 Memorial Regarding Braille and Large-Print Resources

WHEREAS the Good News is a life-giving gift of God, meant to be shared freely with everyone, like sunlight or oxygen;

WHEREAS Jesus commissions his followers to gather disciples everywhere, and the ELCA seeks to follow this call by welcoming diversity in our communities of faith and also by continuing a healthy tradition of self-examination and change when we discover bias in our words or actions;

WHEREAS in John 9:3, Jesus specifically affirms God's calling for people who are blind, saying, "[this man] was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him," and the man in the story goes on to demonstrate this by courageously witnessing to Christ, just as many people with low vision or blindness continue to do today;

WHEREAS people who have low vision or blindness are currently involved in a struggle for basic civil rights like access to voting and education, and the ELCA continues to promote worship and educational resources (ELW, NRSV Bible, social statements, Christian education materials, etc.) that are available only in small-size print, thus marginalizing children and adults who read Braille or large print;

WHEREAS people with low vision and blindness are already active as worshipers and leaders in ELCA congregations and seminaries;

WHEREAS promoting the availability of Braille and large-print resources would encourage growth in our church membership;

WHEREAS modern technology makes production and distribution of large-print and Braille materials easier than ever before, and centralizing these functions would allow congregations across the ELCA to have more convenient and less expensive access to such materials;

WHEREAS the formation of the ELCA in 1988 included an organization called the ELCA Braille & Tape Service, later renamed ELCA Braille & Tape Ministry, which became inactive in 2004;

WHEREAS the resurrection of a comprehensive program to provide Braille and large-print resources to ELCA congregations would benefit and uplift the entire body of Christ;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the New England Synod memorializes 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.

Submitted by

South Central Mission Area of New England Synod:

Barbara Van Fleet

Ken Parkany

Pr. William S. Preuss

Janine Johnkoski

Jeffrey Cote

Darrell B. Urban

Jeannine Therriault

Richard Grandstrand

Joel Neubauer

Beth Long

Thea Griffin

Steven Long

Margery Vanderbilt

Dorothea Glatte

Pr. Chris J. Dion

Arlene Creswell

Stephen Brisson

Sarah A. Brisson

Lloyd O. Smith

Eva Reque Steege

09-05 Super Majority Resolution for Synod Assemblies

WHEREAS, the 2007 ELCA Churchwide Assembly voted “to direct the Task Force for ELCA Studies on Sexuality specifically to address and to make recommendations to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly on changes to any church policies that preclude practicing homosexual persons from the rosters of this church;” and

WHEREAS, the Constitutional and Legal Committee of the ELCA Church Council recommended that “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;” and

WHEREAS, the ELCA Church Council voted 19-10 to delete this provision and is recommending rules of procedure for the 2009 Churchwide Assembly which would require only a simple majority vote to change ELCA standards to allow pastors and other rostered leaders to be in same-sex sexual relationships; and

WHEREAS, a two-thirds majority vote is usually required for major decisions including the adoption of an ELCA social statement and for amendments to the ELCA constitution and bylaws; and

WHEREAS, a decision to change church teaching and policy to allow pastors and other rostered leaders to be in same-sex sexual relationships holds the potential to be very divisive in ELCA synods and congregations and to cause both membership and financial losses for synods and congregations; and

WHEREAS the ELCA is seeking ways to make decisions on a consensus basis rather than by close votes; and

WHEREAS, a super majority vote — such as a two-thirds majority — would require an overwhelming majority of Churchwide Assembly voting members to make such a significant change to church teaching and practice;

WHEREAS, the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly will adopt its rules for the assembly and could set a two-thirds majority for adoption of any changes to standards for pastors and other rostered leaders; therefore be it

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.”

Submitted by

The Congregation Council of Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, New Haven, Conn.

Adopted unanimously on March 10, 2009

09-06 Memorial Regarding Braille and Large-Print Resources

WHEREAS the Good News is a life-giving gift of God, meant to be shared freely with everyone, like sunlight or oxygen;

WHEREAS Jesus commissions his followers to gather disciples everywhere, and the ELCA seeks to follow this call by welcoming diversity in our communities of faith and also by continuing a healthy tradition of self-examination and change when we discover bias in our words or actions;

WHEREAS in John 9:3, Jesus specifically affirms God's calling for people who are blind, saying, "[this man] was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him," and the man in the story goes on to demonstrate this by courageously witnessing to Christ, just as many people with low vision or blindness continue to do today;

WHEREAS people who have low vision or blindness are currently involved in a struggle for basic civil rights like access to voting and education, and the ELCA continues to promote worship and educational resources (ELW, NRSV Bible, social statements, Christian education materials, etc.) that are available only in small-size print, thus marginalizing children and adults who read Braille or large print;

WHEREAS people with low vision and blindness are already active as worshipers and leaders in ELCA congregations and seminaries;

WHEREAS promoting the availability of Braille and large-print resources would encourage growth in our church membership;

WHEREAS modern technology makes production and distribution of large-print and Braille materials easier than ever before, and centralizing these functions would allow congregations across the ELCA to have more convenient and less expensive access to such materials;

WHEREAS the formation of the ELCA in 1988 included an organization called the ELCA Braille & Tape Service, later renamed ELCA Braille & Tape Ministry, which became inactive in 2004;

AND WHEREAS the resurrection of a comprehensive program to provide Braille and large-print resources to ELCA congregations would benefit and uplift the entire body of Christ;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT The New England Synod memorializes 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.

Submitted by

Greater Hartford Conference, New England Synod. March 10, 2009:

Rev. Joseph B. Ekeberg

Rev. William S. Preuss

Rev. Robert P. McGurn

Rev. Eugene F. Mitchell

Rev. Jeffery T. Stalley

Rev. Scott Bartlett

Rev. William M. White

Rev. Timothy Oslovich

Rev. David E. Halmers

09-07 A Memorial Concerning Human Sexuality from the New England Synod to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly

WHEREAS, the Task Force for ELCA Studies in Sexuality has earnestly studied and struggled with these matters for eight years, and their work models and invites mutually respectful dialogue about sexuality throughout this church; and

WHEREAS, the proposed Social Statement powerfully proclaims this church's teachings on trust, love, and service to the neighbor as the proper foundation of sexuality, while honestly recognizing that there is no consensus regarding same-gender relationships or the rostered ministry of people in them; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA Church Council, at its March 2009 meeting, voted by an overwhelming margin to recommend to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly the proposed Social Statement on Human Sexuality, its implementing resolutions, and a Recommendation on Ministry Policies; and

WHEREAS, the Recommendation on Ministry Policies allows a way to maintain a uniform standard and process for candidacy and call throughout this church while respecting the bound consciences of all; and

WHEREAS, the time has come for both those in this church who support publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous same-gender relationships and those who oppose them to join together in creating a means to continue living together faithfully in the midst of disagreement; now, therefore, be it resolved

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.
2. To adopt the four parts of the proposed Recommendation on Ministry Policies, as recommended by the ELCA Church Council.

Submitted by

New England Synod Task Force for Gay and Lesbian Understanding:

Pr. Nathan D. Piphos, chair

Mary Robinson

Ronald Gustafson

William Mark Lantz

Pr. Jonathan R. Niketh

Pr. Karen DeWerth-Wamester

Jim Mapstone-Knamm

Faye C. Reed

Clifford E. Gerber

Pr. William R. Kroeze

09-08 Resolution on Observing an Annual Day of Peace

WHEREAS we live in a culture in which violence and the use of force have become the norm both in neighborhoods and in government policy throughout the world, and

WHEREAS the New England Synod is in partnership with the ELCJ and the Holy Land whose territory and people are traumatized by acts of war and violence, and

WHEREAS Koinonia of Vermont, a partner in ministry with the New England Synod, has increasingly dedicated its ministry to teaching and encouraging Peace as a way of life, and

WHEREAS the United Nations has declared September 21 annually to be observed as the International Day of Peace and has called upon member nations to observe the day by ceasing all acts of war and violence,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the congregations of the New England Synod be encouraged to observe this International Day of Peace annually on a Sunday near September 21st through worship, prayer, education and action dedicated to Peace as a way of life.

*Submitted by
Koinonia of Vermont*

09-09 A Memorial Concerning Human Sexuality from the New England Synod to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly

WHEREAS, the Task Force for ELCA Studies in Sexuality has earnestly studied and struggled with these matters for eight years, and their work models and invites mutually respectful dialogue about sexuality throughout this church; and

WHEREAS, the proposed Social Statement powerfully proclaims this church's teachings on trust, love, and service to the neighbor as the proper foundation of sexuality, while honestly recognizing that there is no consensus regarding same-gender relationships or the rostered ministry of people in them; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA Church Council, at its March 2009 meeting, voted by an overwhelming margin to recommend to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly the proposed Social Statement on Human Sexuality, its implementing resolutions, and a Recommendation on Ministry Policies; and

WHEREAS, the Recommendation on Ministry Policies allows a way to maintain a uniform standard and process for candidacy and call throughout this church while respecting the bound consciences of all; and

WHEREAS, the time has come for both those in this church who support publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous same-gender relationships and those who oppose them to join together in creating a means to continue living together faithfully in the midst of disagreement; now, therefore, be it

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.
2. To adopt the four parts of the proposed Recommendation on Ministry Policies, as recommended by the ELCA Church Council.
3. To adopt the following additional implementing resolution of the Social Statement on Human Sexuality: "To direct appropriate churchwide units to develop, in consultation with those most affected, resources for congregations or faith-communities and ministers that choose to do so to support same-gender relationships by holding them publicly accountable in the exchange of promises of lifelong love and fidelity."
4. To adopt the following: "Resolved, that the Vocation and Education unit be directed to develop, and the Church Council be directed to approve, procedures for the reception from another Lutheran church-body and for the expedited reinstatement to the roster or to candidacy of those whose rostering was precluded by previous policies on same-gender relationships."

*Submitted by
Congregation Council, University Lutheran Church, Cambridge, MA*

09-10 Resolution on World Hunger

WHEREAS our Lord made it crystal clear that feeding the hungry and advocating for those in poverty is of the highest priority for those who are his disciples (Matt. 25:34-35); and

WHEREAS the Tour De Revs are setting out on a 3 seater bamboo bicycle to raise awareness for the needs of the hungry and those in poverty;

WHEREAS the Tour De Revs' goal is to raise \$5 million in their ride to assist the ELCA in reaching its goal of raising \$25 million annually for the ELCA World Hunger Appeal;

WHEREAS the ELCA World Hunger Program and Appeal is very effective and efficient in battling hunger and its causes and deserves our support; and

WHEREAS God's people respond generously when they see and understand a real human need. Therefore, be it

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,
- encouraging its congregation to make generous contributions to the ELCA World Hunger Appeal.

Submitted by:

Pastor David Rinas & Doreen Rinas

On Behalf of the New England Synod World Hunger Committee

09-11 Resolution on Working to Stop Genocide in Darfur

WHEREAS, the United States government has called the ongoing mass killing in Darfur by its rightful name, genocide, and the United Nations has called the situation in Darfur “the world’s greatest humanitarian crisis,” and

WHEREAS, in Darfur since 2003, hundreds of thousands of people have been killed, tens of thousands of women have been raped, 2.7 million people have been displaced from their homes, and 4.7 million people have been deprived of their livelihood and forced to rely on international humanitarian aid to survive, and

WHEREAS, the Sudanese government recently (March 2009) expelled thirteen international aid organizations in Darfur, putting at least a million people at imminent risk of starvation, and

WHEREAS, the Sudanese government continues to support the janjaweed militias who kill, rape, and brutalize the people of Darfur, and

WHEREAS, the United States and other countries could do a great deal more to pressure the Sudanese government to stop the genocide and allow peacekeepers into Darfur without resorting to military force, and

WHEREAS, the Reverend Mark Hanson, the Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the President of the Lutheran World Federation, is in a unique position to encourage Lutherans in the United States and around the world to pray for and advocate for the people of Darfur, therefore be it

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 be it further

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 be it further

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 be it further

RESOLVED, that this Synod in 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 whom he often has the opportunity to meet.

*Submitted by
Trinity Lutheran Church, Vernon, CT, April 12, 2009, Easter*

09-12 Memorial on Working to Stop Genocide in Darfur

WHEREAS, the United States government has called the ongoing mass killing in Darfur by its rightful name, genocide, and the United Nations has called the situation in Darfur “the world’s greatest humanitarian crisis,” and

WHEREAS, in Darfur since 2003, hundreds of thousands of people have been killed, tens of thousands of women have been raped, 2.7 million people have been displaced from their homes, and 4.7 million people have been deprived of their livelihood and forced to rely on international humanitarian aid to survive, and

WHEREAS, the Sudanese government recently (March 2009) expelled thirteen international aid organizations in Darfur, putting at least a million people at imminent risk of starvation, and

WHEREAS, the Sudanese government continues to support the janjaweed militias who kill, rape, and brutalize the people of Darfur, and

WHEREAS, the United States and other countries could do a great deal more to pressure the Sudanese government to stop the genocide and allow peacekeepers into Darfur without resorting to military force, and

WHEREAS, the Reverend Mark Hanson, the Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the President of the Lutheran World Federation, is in a unique position to encourage Lutherans in the United States and around the world to pray for and advocate for the people of Darfur, therefore be it

RESOLVED, that this Synod in Assembly submit the following memorial for consideration by the 2007 ELCA Churchwide Assembly:

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 be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly request that the congregations and individual members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America 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 be it further

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 whom he often has the opportunity to meet.

Submitted by

Trinity Lutheran Church, Vernon, CT, April 12, 2009, Easter

09-13 Resolution on Proposed Changes to ELCA Board of Pensions Health Plan

WHEREAS, many congregations in the ELCA count as valued employees and leaders persons who are in committed same-gender relationships, and who desire to care for the physical, financial, and emotional well-being of their partners in a spirit of Christian love, trust, and justice; and

WHEREAS, in 1991, the ELCA Churchwide Assembly reaffirmed its welcome to gays and lesbians by stating that, "...gay and lesbian people, as individuals created by God, are welcome to participate fully in the life of the congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America;" and

WHEREAS, in 1993, the Conference of Bishops, responding to questions about same-sex unions, stated, "... we express trust in and will continue dialogue with those pastors and congregations who are in ministry with gay and lesbian persons, and affirm their desire to explore the best ways to provide pastoral care for all to whom they minister;" and

WHEREAS, in response to questions about domestic partner benefits for gay and lesbian employees of the ELCA, a representative of the Board of Pensions wrote an e-mail dated January 21, 2009, "the Board of Pensions administers benefit plans consistent with the ELCA Pension and Other Benefits Programs and congruent with the policies of the ELCA. In 1996, the Church Council articulated this church's policy with respect to same-sex marriage in a 'Message on Sexuality: Some Common Convictions.' It states: 'Marriage is a lifelong covenant of faithfulness between a man and a woman.' That policy informs the Board of Pensions administration of spousal benefits under the program;" and

WHEREAS, the ELCA Board of Pensions interprets this definition of marriage as instructions from the Church Council to deny health and other benefits to same-sex partners, and

WHEREAS, the ELCA Board of Pensions does not, in practice, require a "lifelong covenant of faithfulness" and offers benefits to heterosexual employees who divorce and then remarry, in many cases insuring the non-biological stepchildren of such unions, and

WHEREAS, the strict enforcement of the "between a man and a woman" provision of the 1996 Church Council statement, coupled with the choice to ignore the "lifelong covenant of faithfulness" provision for heterosexual employees, would lead a reasonable person to conclude that the policy is used arbitrarily to discriminate against same-sex couples

THEREFORE, BE IT 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 should consult with its insurance contractors to determine how best to accomplish this mandate in a timely and equitable fashion; and

BE IT FURTHER 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.

Submitted by members of St. Ansgar Evangelical Lutheran Church, Portland, Maine:

Samuel J. Cushing

Steve Howell

Sam H. Christensen

Debra M. McDonough

Theresa A. Lee

Nancy Frie

Rebecca Burns

Nancy Deane-Loranger

Julie Davidson

Donald Davidson

Penny Sthouishettell

Fran Loranger

WilliamCc. Birthisel

David Littell

Everett Lee

Kristina Birthisel

William Barter

James McDonough

09-14 Resolution on Affordable Health Care

WHEREAS: The cost of health insurance has been a growing concern within our country, causing more and more individuals and families to forego insurance due to lack of affordability and thereby put their assets and savings at risk, raising a concern that this has become a public health issue.

WHEREAS: The ELCA has seen dramatic increases in costs for health insurance and the formulas used to set rates and define boundaries. This issue of health insurance has become a heavy burden for congregations and self sponsored pastors to bear. It also negatively impacts our ability to be successful in proclaiming the Good News of Christ within our communities. (The family rate this year comes in at just under \$1500 per month or is 30% of a pastor's salary with a sponsored organization, such as a congregation, and adds an \$800 deductible per person - up from \$300/person three years ago onto the policy for any health costs beyond preventative care.

WHEREAS: In 2003 the ELCA adopted a social statement on health and healthcare, taking a bold stand to stand as a voice for constructive change in the healthcare system that included equal access for all to basic healthcare

WHEREAS: A few years ago, the Conference of Bishops approved an initiative to motivate rostered leadership to build healthier lifestyles in order to diminish the rising cost of insurance coverage and to live a life more reflective of the healing power of the Gospel in their lives. That was good.

WHEREAS: A program with the Mayo Clinic was instituted, whereby individuals could be evaluated for their health needs and set goals and programs to address ways to improve their health. This was not good because of the HIPPA law. Even though the program has confidentiality built into the system, it is used to collect data to be used for various purposes. Most of the information needed by the Mayo Clinic is information confidential between doctor and patient. For the rostered leaders to be encouraged to volunteer this information supersedes HIPPA's requirement, for it allows personal health information to become known to an insuring organization. This crosses the boundary between the doctor and patient relationship and raises serious ethical questions.

WHEREAS: The structure of participation in the ELCA Health Plan is not equal for all allowed participants. Sponsorship by a Calling organization for the purposes of coverage and for the purposes of investing in the pension program limits the full participation of all rostered persons. For those called into short term ministries or to service in ministries outside this definition, such persons are limited to participation through self sponsoring. Self sponsoring has further limitations that include an inability to participate in a health savings account,

Therefore, be it 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.

RESOLVED: the NES direct the ELCA Board of Pensions to re-evaluate its policies and procedures for the purpose of providing an equalized and supported rostered leadership with benefit coverage that's affordable.

RESOLVED that the NES further direct the ELCA Board of Pensions to develop a program that empowers rostered leadership to better health without infringing on their individual rights or using information for data gathering.

*Submitted by
The Rev. Theresa A. Bianchi*

09-15 A Resolution Affirming the Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine

WHEREAS the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in its 2005 Churchwide Assembly committed itself to a “Churchwide Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine” which specified a resolve to educate our own members, to be balanced in caring for all parties in the conflict, to listen and learn from both those with whom we agree and those with whom disagree, to be responsible in considering the political and humanitarian implications of our theology, and to repudiate both anti-Jewish and anti-Muslim sentiments or actions (Strategy, §II.A); and

WHEREAS the Strategy seeks among its outcomes (in §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 entails informed moral deliberation in service to “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 we of this New England Synod and of the ELCA know the privilege as well as the responsibility of partnership with The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, a partnership which bids us not only to hear the cries of those sisters and brothers but compels us to represent them where they themselves cannot be present; and

WHEREAS we of this synod and this church have also committed ourselves to the living out of the 1994 ELCA Declaration to the Jewish People, a recognition and repudiation of our own ugly history of anti-Semitism and an avowal of our present “urgent desire to live out our faith in Jesus Christ with love and respect for the Jewish people,” and are engaged in deep friendship and partnership with Jews in the service of our one God; and

WHEREAS the present bitter controversies involving Israelis and Arabs, Jews and Palestinians, are more than an immensely difficult dispute over territory and boundaries but a clash of true but conflicting narratives, experiences of victimization and memories of horror on both sides that seem compelling to each but invisible to the other, such that one truth can seem incompatible with another and even finding the vocabulary to describe and discuss this holy land can seem impossible; and

WHEREAS the attempt to carry out the Strategy in faithfulness both to its vision of peace and to our deep solidarities with Jews and Palestinians—as well as with Christian ecumenical partners also engaged in this concern—is thus fraught with difficulty and necessary vulnerability to passionate debate, critique, and pressure; and

WHEREAS our Lord forbids us to despair, and our eyes recognize in so many on both sides of this conflict’s divide generous hearts and yearning for coexistence and peace after all; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the New England Synod in Assembly 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 continued implementation of its Churchwide Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine 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.
- embody our multilateral solidarity with our partners without sacrifice to the duties of witness against injustice and violence.

- be scrupulously clear in our recognition of the State of Israel, supportive of its 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.
- 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.
- oppose and seek to disarm the politics in our land that villainize and isolate Jews or Arabs or Muslims.
- 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.
- 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 from perceptions of bias, naïveté, or hostility, and yet must persevere in the attempt.
- continue in that spirit 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.

Submitted by:

The Rev. John Stendahl

09-16 Resolution to Support Diaconal Ministries

WHEREAS, the diaconate in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is expressed in two categories of ministry, as follows:

Deaconesses are an outgrowth of the European Deaconess movement of the 19th century. They are members of the Deaconess Community of the ELCA, which is observing its 125th anniversary in 2009, and participate in the life of that community. Diaconal Ministers are a category of rostered lay ministry established in 1993. Both deaconesses and diaconal ministers are called and consecrated. They serve in congregations, agencies and institutions at the intersection of church and world. The diaconate alerts the church to the needs of the world, extending the church's ministry of witness and care into the world, and

WHEREAS, the diaconate is called to work in the name of Christ at the boundary between the church and today's world and help lead the baptized into deeper service to God's people, and

WHEREAS, the diaconate brings the needs of God's world to the awareness of God's church, and

WHEREAS, the diaconate brings to the church its creativity of service both in worship and in service, and

WHEREAS, the diaconate serves a prophetic role to call the church to exercise its servant nature, and

WHEREAS, the diaconate provides a prophetic voice in addressing our global interconnectedness and the needs of the environment, and

WHEREAS, the diaconate is a model for servanthood, for deepening spirituality, and for community life;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT 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

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

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that congregations, agencies and institutions be encouraged to consider available and appropriately qualified deaconesses and diaconal ministers when filling calls to public ministry.

Submitted by

Heather L. Feltman, Diaconal Minister

Susan Lindberg Haley, Diaconal Minister

Sister Virginia E. Strahan, Deaconess Community of the ELCA

Sister Carol M. Weaver, Deaconess Community of the ELCA

09-17 Memorial Concerning the Implementing Resolution of the Social Statement on Human Sexuality from the New England Synod to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly

WHEREAS, the New England Synod has adopted “A Memorial Concerning Human Sexuality from the New England Synod to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly;” and

WHEREAS, the New England Synod defeated a resolution to rescind the guidance from the Synod Council relative to blessing same-gender relationships in 2007; now, therefore, be it resolved

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

1. To adopt the following additional implementing resolution of the Social Statement on Human Sexuality: “To direct appropriate churchwide units to develop, in consultation with those most affected, resources for congregations or faith-communities and ministers that choose to do so to support same-gender relationships by holding them publicly accountable in the exchange of promises of lifelong love and fidelity.”
2. To adopt the following: “Resolved, that the Vocation and Education unit be directed to develop, and the Church Council be directed to approve, procedures for the reception from another Lutheran church-body and for the expedited reinstatement to the roster or to candidacy of those whose rostering was precluded by previous policies on same-gender relationship.”

Submitted by

New England Synod Task Force for Gay and Lesbian Understanding