

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
2019 Churchwide Assembly

Reports and Records: Assembly Minutes

August 5–10, 2019
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Moved;
Seconded;
Defeated:

Yes-398; No-477

To amend by deletion and insertion.

To receive with gratitude the memorials from the Sierra Pacific Synod concerning the creation of a U.S. Department of Peacebuilding ~~but to decline and~~ to take action ~~as stated in the resolveds~~ at this time.

The presiding bishop declared the amendment defeated. She then opened discussion on the main motion. There being no discussion she called for the vote.

ASSEMBLY

ACTION

YES-656; NO-224

CA19.03.08 To receive with gratitude the memorials from the Sierra Pacific Synod concerning the creation of a U.S. Department of Peacebuilding but to decline to take action at this time.

Presiding Bishop Eaton declared the action passed.

Mr. Christopherson introduced Category C1: Church and State and moved the recommended action on behalf of the Memorials Committee.

Category C1: Church and State

Reference: 2019 Pre-Assembly Report, Section VII, Report of the Memorials Committee

1. Minneapolis Area Synod (3G) [2019]

WHEREAS, the Lutheran tradition historically has been strongly supportive of the need for, and functions of, government; and

WHEREAS, the increasingly bitter politics of the past decade have generated much skepticism about, and hostility towards, the role of government in a free society—even calling into question the basic legitimacy of government; and

WHEREAS, the members of the ELCA could benefit from thoughtful exploration of the many issues concerned with the functions of government and civic engagement; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA social statements address the great social institutions of contemporary life, but have not yet addressed the nature and role of government, the call to civic engagement, or the relation of church to state in any churchwide document; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has significant resources to draw upon, including the statements of predecessor Lutheran bodies, recent publications, and members involved with government at all levels and from many perspectives; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Minneapolis Area Synod in Assembly memorialize the 2019 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to initiate the development of a social statement on the role of government, the nature of civic engagement, and the relationship of church and state.

Moved;
Seconded:

To receive with gratitude the memorial from the Minneapolis Area Synod requesting a social statement on the role of government, the nature of civic engagement, and the relationship of church and state; and

To authorize the development of an ELCA social statement on government, civic engagement and the relationship of church and state in accordance with the “Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns” (2018).

The Rev. Stephen R. Herr [Lower Susquehanna Synod] asked how this social statement would impact the next triennium budget proposal.

The Rev. M. Wyvetta Bullock, executive for administration for the churchwide organization, explained that a social statement typically has a five-year development with an estimated cost of \$300,000. The triennial budget proposal included funding for one social statement.

The Rev. Patricia J. Lull, bishop of the Saint Paul Area Synod, asserted that there were already many writings to draw from regarding church and state, including writings by Saint Paul, Martin Luther, and ecumenical partners. She expressed that those available resources negated a need for a new social statement.

The Rev. Mark E. Parker [Delaware-Maryland Synod] noted that there were four different memorials that called for the development of social statements on different topics. He pointed out that the Memorials Committee had decided to recommend a statement on church and state and had declined the other three, stating a lack of resources and the desire to focus on one statement at a time. Pastor Parker suggested that one of the other three topics, such as migrants and refugees, might be more a pressing issue to consider.

The Rev. Ann M. Svennungsen, bishop of the Minneapolis Area Synod, acknowledged the importance of being careful stewards of church resources. She expressed her belief that one of the great crises currently facing the United States was the role of government. Bishop Svennungsen noted that Luther had many useful things to say about the positive role of government and how God works through government; she said the ELCA could contribute to the political landscape of the country with a social statement on this topic.

The Rev. Nathan L. Metzger [Nebraska Synod] spoke against the motion, noting that individuals could draw upon the scriptures and other resources without spending resources on a five-year process.

Mr. Joseph T. Nolte [Church Council], member of the Memorials Committee, asked the Rev. Roger A. Willer, director for theological ethics, to provide background information on the topic.

Pastor Willer explained the differences between social statements and social messages. Social statements addressed large social institutions; social messages were more topical and could be completed in a year or less. He indicated that a social statement on church and state seemed appropriate to the Church Council because the social institution of government was in crisis. It would allow this church to participate and dig deeper into questions. Pastor Willer expressed his opinion that some of the other requests for social statements would be more appropriately categorized as social messages.

In addition to resources, Pastor Willer acknowledged the importance of examining which topic would be the proper focus and what kind of social statement this church should develop. That was why the Church Council had recommended church and state as the topic for a social statement.

The Rev. James W. Gonia, bishop of the Rocky Mountain Synod, spoke in favor of the motion. His synod has two advocacy offices that often speak on the distinctiveness of the Lutheran witness to the Gospel in the public sphere and in government. Bishop Gonia said that, while there are other resources on the topic of government, it would be helpful to have a document that brought all of those resources together to teach and equip people.

Pastor Parker moved to postpone the motion.

Moved;

Second:

To postpone consideration of the motion to create a social statement on church and state until after consideration of the memorial calling for a social statement on migrants and refugees.

Pastor Parker acknowledged that the topic of church and state was important but felt that there should also be consideration and debate on a statement on migrants and refugees before voting on this item. Pastor Parker explained that the original request in the memorial from the Delaware-Maryland Synod was for a social statement on migrants and refugees. He stated it was the intent of the authors of the original memorial to push for a full social statement, which was not the recommendation of the Memorials Committee.

Pastor Willer noted that there were social messages on immigration.

Ms. Cheryl Stuart [Florida-Bahamas Synod] spoke in opposition to the motion to postpone. She asserted that the topic of migration required a faster response such as the one-year social message process allows, rather than a five-year social statement process. She expressed that it would be very helpful to have a document explaining how people of faith interact in the public square.

The Rev. Sonja Ware [Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod] spoke in favor of the motion to postpone and urged voting members to be cautious in creating a competition among social statements. She asked if the assembly had the power to authorize two social statements.

The presiding bishop relayed that the assembly had the power to authorize as many social statements to be worked on at once as it deemed appropriate; however, the question guiding the reasoning for a single social statement was staff capacity and finances.

The presiding bishop called for the orders of the day and asked members to remember their positions in the microphone queues.

Report of the Reference and Counsel Committee

Reference: 2019 Pre-Assembly Report, Section IX, Report of the Reference and Counsel Committee

Presiding Bishop Eaton introduced Ms. Emma K. Wagner and Mr. James J.F. Jennings, Church Council members and co-chairs of the Reference and Counsel Committee, who would introduce non-germane resolutions for consideration.

Motion A: Resolution to Establish June 17th as Emanuel 9 Feast Day of Repentance

Reference: 2019 Pre-Assembly Report, Section IX, Report of the Reference and Counsel Committee

Ms. Wagner presented Motion A.

Motion A: Resolution to Establish June 17th as Emanuel 9 Feast Day of Repentance. Submitted by the Rev. Kwame L. Pitts [Metropolitan Chicago Synod]

WHEREAS, the Lord teaches us “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance” (Luke 5:31-32); and

WHEREAS, the Emanuel 9 (Rev. Clementa C. Pinckney, Cynthia Marie Graham Hurd, Susie Jackson, Ethel Lee Lance, Depayne Middleton-Doctor, Tywanza Sanders, Rev. Daniel L. Simmons, Sharonda Coleman-Singleton, and Myra Thompson) on June 17, 2015, while in prayer and Bible study at the historic African-American church, Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church in Charleston, South Carolina were murdered by a self-professed white supremacist adult who was raised and formed in the ELCA; and

WHEREAS, that self-professed white supremacist espoused racist rhetoric and epithets before and after committing these murders; and

ASSEMBLY

ACTION

CA19.04.13 **To declare elected to the Committee on Discipline: Mr. Peter S.J. McKinney, Grand Rapids, Mich. (6B).**

Mr. Cunniff announced the completion of the Second Common Ballot.

Report of the Memorials Committee (continued)

Reference: 2019 Pre-Assembly Report, Section VII, Report of the Memorials Committee

Presiding Bishop Eaton called on Ms. Cheryl T. Chatman and Mr. Reid A. Christopherson, co-chairs of the Memorials Committee, to continue the report and discussion on memorials for separate consideration. The chair reminded the assembly that the motion being considered was the motion to postpone.

Mr. David Severson [Minneapolis Area Synod] spoke in opposition to the motion. He asserted that there were other available resources for immigration and migrant policies. He expressed concern that this would delay work toward a statement on church and state.

There being no further discussion, the chair called for the vote.

Moved;

Second;

Yes-285; No-594

Defeated:

To postpone consideration on the motion to create a social statement on church and state until after consideration of the memorial calling for a social statement on migrants and refugees.

The main motion was now on the floor.

The Rev. Matthew L. Riegel, bishop of the West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod, spoke in opposition to the main motion, citing Bishop Lull's references to works by Augustine and Luther. He conveyed that predecessor church body statements could also be useful. He pointed to the 1966 statements on church and state from the Lutheran Church in America and the American Lutheran Church. He encouraged voting members to read those predecessor statements.

Mr. William J. Middeke [Minneapolis Area Synod] said he was in favor of the main motion, as a document on church and state could provide helpful guidelines. He noted the complexities some churches in other denominations have created by endorsing candidates. Those actions have made some wonder whether churches should lose their tax-exempt status if they endorse a candidate.

Mr. Paul G. Archer [Southeast Michigan Synod] moved to amend the motion.

Moved;

Seconded;

To amend by deletion and insertion:

To receive with gratitude the memorial from the Minneapolis Area Synod requesting a social statement on the role of government, the nature of civic engagement, and the relationship of church and state; and

To ~~authorize the development of an ELCA social statement on government, civic engagement and the relationship of church and state~~ **refer the request for a social statement on church and state to the Church Council for further consideration and action** in accordance

with the “Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns” (2018).

Mr. Archer explained that the “Policies and Procedures” document stipulates that a request for a social statement is to be referred to the Church Council for consideration of the capacity of the churchwide organization and of any overlap there may be with existing documents.

The Rev. Roger A. Willer, director for theological ethics, clarified that a Churchwide Assembly must authorize a social statement before cost and capacity discussions would be sent to the Church Council. The Church Council would then exercise oversight of a social statement development process in consultation with the Office of the Presiding Bishop.

After Pastor Willer’s clarification, the presiding bishop declared the amendment out of order. The assembly returned to discussion of the main motion on sanctuary.

The Rev. Laura M. Hall-Schordje [Metropolitan Chicago Synod] expressed her belief that a more up-to-date teaching tool, rather than the predecessor church body statements from 1966, would be very helpful for her congregation. It could provide constructive information on how to address social justice issues without being partisan.

Ms. Bethany Fayard [Southeastern Synod] asked what specific issues could be covered in a social statement on church and state.

Pastor Willer pointed to the Minneapolis Area Synod’s background information in the “Report of the Memorials Committee.” Possible items to be covered in a social statement could include:

- How do Lutherans understand the nature of government?
- How do Lutherans understand civic engagement?
- What does it mean to be a citizen?
- What is the relationship between one’s faith and democracy?

The Rev. Gladys G. Moore offered an amendment.

Moved;

Seconded:

To amend by deletion and insertion:

To receive with gratitude the memorial from the Minneapolis Area Synod requesting a social statement on the role of government, the nature of civic engagement, and the relationship of church and state; and

To ~~authorize request~~ the development of an ELCA ~~social statement social message~~ on government, civic engagement ~~and what it means to be a public church~~, and the relationship of church and state in accordance with the “Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns” (2018).

Pastor Moore explained her opinion that a social message developed in one year would be helpful, especially for those who were preaching in a tumultuous time. She thought more people might read a one- to two-page social message, rather than a long social statement.

Mr. Joshua L. Copeland [North Carolina Synod] spoke in opposition to the amendment. He believed that a social message would not provide enough material for necessary, substantial conversation.

The Rev. Jenifer L. Collins [Saint Paul Area Synod] stated her approval for the amendment. She noted that social messages are for pressing matters of social concern. She felt a one-year timeline to complete a social message met the urgency of current events.

Mr. Ivan A. Perez [Metropolitan Chicago Synod] wondered whether it would be possible to request both a social message and a social statement on church and state.

Pastor Willer noted that it would not be possible to request a social message and a social statement at the same time; however, many times, a social message has been generated out of a social statement process. The Women and Justice Task Force called for an immediate social message on gender-based violence which was created through the request of the Church Council. A task force on church and state could initiate a faster response during the larger process.

Mr. Thomas J. Askegaard [Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod], member of the Memorials Committee, asked for the Memorials Committee chairs to provide background information as to why church and state was chosen as the topic for the social statement process.

Mr. Christopherson explained that the topic of church and state appeared to be the most significant “missing piece” of guidance within this church and a topic that required the most attention for a social statement at this point in time.

The Rev. Mae J. Zelle [South-Central Synod of Wisconsin] asked for a description of the process for a social message and how congregations would be engaged in a social message’s development versus engagement in a process for a social statement.

Pastor Willer noted that a social message is usually completed in a year. The draft message would be posted online for congregations to review and provide feedback. While not as extensive as a social statement process, it would provide similar participatory engagement.

Ms. Victoria R. Bosin [Saint Paul Area Synod] was in favor of a social message due to its timeliness. She expressed that it could provide helpful information on the role of the church, the role of the state, and the difference between the two in an election year. She requested that more information about what the church says on major issues also be included. She remembered receiving a brochure in two previous elections that helped congregation members speak with each other on difficult issues.

Pastor Moore offered an amendment to her amendment.

Moved;

Seconded:

To amend the proposed amendment by deletion and insertion:

To receive with gratitude the memorial from the Minneapolis Area Synod requesting a social statement on the role of government, the nature of civic engagement, and the relationship of church and state; and

To ~~authorize—request~~ the development of an ELCA **social statement-social message** on government, civic engagement, **and what it means to be a public church**, and the relationship of church and state in accordance with the “Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns” (2018).

Pastor Moore stated her amendment to the amendment was to provide grammatical corrections to her previous submission.

There being no discussion on the amendment to the amendment the chair led the vote.

Moved;
Seconded;
Carried:

Passed by majority

To amend the proposed amendment by deletion and insertion:

To receive with gratitude the memorial from the Minneapolis Area Synod requesting a social statement on the role of government, the nature of civic engagement, and the relationship of church and state; and

To ~~authorize—request~~ the development of an ELCA ~~social statement—social message~~ on government, civic engagement, ~~and what it means to be a public church~~, and the relationship of church and state in accordance with the “Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns” (2018).

The amendment to the proposed amendment carried. The presiding bishop resumed discussion on the motion to amend.

The Rev. Ann M. Tiemeyer questioned whether, if the assembly asked for a social message, it would then lose the opportunity to ask for a social statement on church and state. She asked what precluded the assembly asking for both at this time.

Pastor Willer stated nothing would preclude using both sets of language. It could go either way. He noted that staff of the churchwide organization who work with social documents heard the urgency and desire for a timely response.

Mr. Brian L. Campbell [Western Iowa Synod] moved the previous question.

Moved;
Seconded:

Two-Thirds Vote

To end debate.

The chair called for the vote.

Moved;
Seconded;
Carried:

Approved by Two-Thirds Vote

To end debate.

The presiding bishop then called for the assembly to vote on the amendment.

Moved;
Seconded;
Carried:

Passed by majority

To amend by deletion and insertion:

To receive with gratitude the memorial from the Minneapolis Area Synod requesting a social statement on the role of government, the nature of civic engagement, and the relationship of church and state; and

To ~~authorize—request~~ the development of an ELCA ~~social statement—social message~~ on government, civic engagement, ~~what it means to be a public church~~, and the relationship of church and state in accordance with the “Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns” (2018).

The chair declared the amendment passed and called the orders of the day.

- Category C3: Migrants
- Category A6: Poor People’s Campaign
- Category C5: Call to Edit Sexuality Social Statement
- Category D7: Health Care Benefits

Category C1: Church and State (continued)

Reference: 2019 Pre-Assembly Report, Section VII, Report of the Memorials Committee

The chair asked voting members to return to the microphones in the order previously occupied when discussing Category C1.

Mr. Joseph T. Nolte, member of the Church Council and of the Memorials Committee, offered a substitute motion.

Moved;

Seconded:

To receive with gratitude the Memorial from the Minneapolis Area Synod requesting a social statement on the role of government, the nature of civic engagement, and the relationship of church and state; and

To authorize the development of an ELCA social statement on government, civic engagement, and the relationship of church and state that will allow thorough attention to scriptural, historical, theological, and social issues as a means to probe, share convictions, and establish this church’s comprehensive teaching in accordance with the “Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns” (2018); and

To urgently request the ELCA Church Council to authorize a social message as a priority in the development of a social statement. This message would elaborate in one place what this church already holds regarding issues such as public church, the vocation of citizenship, and the relation of church and state in accordance with “Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns” (2018).

Mr. Nolte offered this motion in response to previous discussion. He expressed his belief that this motion spoke both to the urgent need for a response and the need for deep conversation.

The Rev. Laura Ziehl Erisman [Pacifica Synod], member of the Memorials Committee, spoke in favor of the substitute motion. She agreed on the urgency of a social message and the need for a social statement to guide and inform all expressions of this church.

Mr. Clyde A. Walter [Metropolitan Chicago Synod], member of the Memorials Committee, spoke in favor of the motion. He explained that the Memorials Committee heard the need for both a social message and a social statement.

Mr. Peter W. Metcalf [Montana Synod] spoke in favor of the motion. He stressed urgency for this church to speak on the topic of church and state, especially with rising sentiments of Christian nationalism and disagreement regarding religion in the public sphere.

Having four speakers in a row and seeing none wishing to speak against, the chair called for a vote on the substitute motion.

Moved;
Seconded;
Carried:

Yes-689; No-118

To receive with gratitude the Memorial from the Minneapolis Area Synod requesting a social statement on the role of government, the nature of civic engagement, and the relationship of church and state; and

To authorize the development of an ELCA social statement on government, civic engagement, and the relationship of church and state that will allow thorough attention to scriptural, historical, theological, and social issues as a means to probe, share convictions, and establish this church’s comprehensive teaching in accordance with the “Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns” (2018); and

To urgently request the ELCA Church Council to authorize a social message as a priority in the development of a social statement. This message would elaborate in one place what this church already holds regarding issues such as public church, the vocation of citizenship, and the relation of church and state in accordance with “Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns” (2018).

The chair declared the motion to amend by substitution adopted. She then opened the floor to speaking to the motion.

Mr. Spencer W. Legred [Saint Paul Area Synod] called the previous question.

The Rev. Matthew L. Riegel, bishop of the West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod, raised a point of order and noted that a voting member must speak in opposition before the question could be called.

Ms. Courtney J. Peeler [Nebraska Synod] spoke in opposition to creating a social statement. She stated there was urgency to create a social message with the upcoming 2020 U.S. election.

The presiding bishop pointed out that the substitute motion before the assembly included the development of a social message as part of the social statement process. The social message development process would begin immediately.

Mr. Legred called the previous question to end debate.

Moved;
Seconded;
Carried:

Two-Thirds Vote
Yes-827; No-21

To end debate.

The assembly voted on Category C1.

ASSEMBLY

ACTION

YES-782; NO-82

CA19.05.29 To receive with gratitude the memorial from the Minneapolis Area Synod requesting a social statement on the role of government, the nature of civic engagement, and the relationship of church and state; and

To authorize the development of an ELCA social statement on government, civic engagement, and the relationship of church and state that will allow thorough attention to scriptural, historical, theological, and social issues as a means to probe, share convictions, and establish this church’s comprehensive teaching in accordance with the “Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns” (2018); and

To urgently request the ELCA Church Council to authorize a social message as a priority in the development of a social statement. This message would elaborate in one place what this church already holds regarding issues such as public church, the vocation of citizenship, and the relation of church and state in accordance with “Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns” (2018).

The chair declared the motion adopted.

Category D1: 50th Anniversary of the Ordination of Women to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament

Reference: 2019 Pre-Assembly Report, Section VII, Report of the Memorials Committee

Mr. Christopherson requested that the assembly resume consideration of Category D1, which had previously been deferred while awaiting the assembly’s decision regarding the social statement, *Faith, Sexism, and Justice*.

Moved;

Seconded:

To receive with gratitude the memorials from the Oregon, Southwest California, Western North Dakota, Northeastern Minnesota, Minneapolis Area, Saint Paul Area, Nebraska, Central States, Arkansas-Oklahoma, Northern Illinois, Southeastern Iowa, Western Iowa, North/West Lower Michigan, Northeastern Ohio, New Jersey, New England, Metropolitan New York, Upstate New York, Southeastern Pennsylvania, Allegheny, and Virginia synods concerning the 50th anniversary of the ELCA’s ordination of women to the ministry of Word and Sacrament;

To encourage all synods and congregations to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the ELCA’s ordination of women in 2020 and the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the ordination of women of color in the Lutheran tradition in the United States and the 10th anniversary of the ELCA’s decision to remove the barriers to ordination for people in same-gendered relationships and recognize the diversity of gifts that women’s ordination brings to this church;

To call upon synods, congregations and the churchwide organization to recognize the need for repentance and continued examination regarding equity for ministerial leadership and to collaborate in systemic work to address disparities based on gender and race for people in rostered ministry;