



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Eleventh Churchwide Assembly
Aug. 17-23, 2009 • Minneapolis, Minn.**

The Eleventh Biennial Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) was held Aug. 17-23, 2009, at the Minneapolis Convention Center. About 2,300 people participated, including 1,045 voting members. The theme was “God's work. Our hands.”

Full Communion with the United Methodist Church Adopted

By a vote of 958-51, the assembly adopted a full communion agreement with the United Methodist Church (UMC). This is the ELCA's sixth full-communion relationship and the first for the UMC. The assembly also established a joint commission to oversee the relationship by a vote of 922-15. In 2008 the UMC General Conference adopted the same proposal. Full communion means that the two churches identify in one another a common Christian faith; agree to mutual recognition of Baptism and the sharing of Holy Communion; worship together and recognize each other's ordained ministers for service in either church; express a common commitment to evangelism, witness and service; engage in common decision-making on critical matters; and agree to a mutual lifting of criticisms that may exist between the churches.

Carlos Peña Re-elected Vice President

Vice President Carlos Peña of Galveston, Texas, was elected on the fourth ballot to a second six-year term as vice president with 580 votes, 60.8 percent of the votes cast. Peña was elected over Ryan M. Schwarz, McLean, Va., who received 264 votes, and Norma J. Hirsch, Des Moines, Iowa, who received 110 votes. There were 97 nominees on the first ballot.

HIV and AIDS Funding Proposal Adopted

The assembly voted 884-41 to approve a proposal to raise \$10 million over three years to support this church's HIV and AIDS strategy. A \$1 million goal encouraged by the 2007 Churchwide Assembly will be included in the \$10 million. The ELCA Church Council approved the strategy in March.

Development of Lutheran Malaria Initiative Approved

By a vote of 989-11, the assembly approved continued development of an initiative to fight malaria, particularly in Africa. The Lutheran Malaria Initiative (LMI) is a shared effort with Lutheran World Relief (LWR), The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) and the United Nations Foundation. The assembly authorized continued receipt of gifts designated for the LMI, and asked that a report and recommendations for a possible churchwide LMI campaign be brought to the 2011 assembly.

Social Statement, "Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust," Adopted

The assembly adopted by a vote of 676-338 -- precisely two-thirds of those voting -- “Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust,” the ELCA's 10th social statement, with editorial



amendments. It also adopted 15 implementing resolutions by a vote of 695-285. The social statement is a theological and teaching document that builds on the key Lutheran principles of justification by grace and Christian freedom to serve the neighbor. It emphasizes that central to our vocation, in relation to human sexuality, is the building and protection of trust in relationships. It therefore affirms that we are called to be trustworthy in our human sexuality and to build social institutions and practices in which trust and trustworthy relationships can thrive. The social statement addresses, among other topics, marriage, same-gender relationships, families, protecting children, friendships, commitment, social responsibility and moral discernment. Regarding same-gender committed relationships, the social statement recognizes that members of this church are not in agreement and identifies the different perspectives that are present among us.

Ministry Policies Resolutions Adopted

Voting members adopted resolutions proposed by the Church Council based on those contained in a "Report and Recommendation on Ministry Policies." The assembly determined on August 17 that majority votes were required on each resolution for adoption. The actions direct that changes be made to churchwide policy documents to make it possible for people in publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships to serve as rostered leaders in the ELCA. The assembly adopted the resolutions in the following order:

Resolution 3: Adopted by a vote of 771-230 as amended: "Resolved, that in the implementation of any resolutions on ministry policies, the ELCA commit itself to bear one another's burdens, love the neighbor, and respect the bound consciences of all."

Resolution 1: Adopted by a vote of 619-402: "Resolved, that the ELCA commit itself to finding ways to allow congregations that choose to do so to recognize, support and hold publicly accountable lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships."

Resolution 2: Adopted by a vote of 559-451: "Resolved, that the ELCA commit itself to finding a way for people in such publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships to serve as rostered leaders of this church."

Resolution 4: Adopted by a vote of 667-307 as amended: This resolution called upon members to respect the bound consciences of those with whom they disagree; declared the intent to allow structured flexibility in decision-making about candidacy and the call process; eliminated the prohibition of rostered service by members in publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous same-gender relationships; recognized and committed to respect the conviction of members who believe that the ELCA should not call or roster people in committed same-gender relationships; called for development of accountability guidelines; directed that appropriate amendments to ministry policy documents be drafted and approved by the Church Council; and urged that this church continue to trust congregations, bishops, synods and others responsible for determining who should be called into public ministry.



More information about the social statement and the ministry policies resolutions is at <http://www.elca.org/faithfuljourney/faq> on the Web.

Budget Proposals for 2010, 2011 Adopted

By a vote of 863-71 voting members adopted churchwide budget proposals for 2010 and 2011. For 2010, voting members approved a current fund income proposal of \$76.69 million for the churchwide organization and an ELCA World Hunger Appeal income proposal of \$18.7 million. For 2011, they approved a current income proposal of \$76.78 million and a World Hunger income goal of \$19 million.

Social Statement on Justice for Women to be Developed

By a vote of 754-176 the assembly approved development of a social statement on the topic, to be considered by the 2015 Churchwide Assembly.

Assembly Adopts Memorials

+ **Immigration:** Adopted 873-82. The assembly called for comprehensive reform of U.S. immigration policies and processes, called for suspension of immigration raids until reform is enacted, and asked for a message on immigration this year.

+ **Lutheran Disaster Response:** Adopted 929-20. The assembly acknowledged this collaborative ministry of the ELCA and The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and acknowledged that a strategic planning process for LDR is underway. It encouraged the ELCA "to continue to deepen and develop its process for working together with churchwide units, synods and social ministry organizations in times of specific disasters." The assembly asked for a progress report to be presented to the Church Council in 2010, and amended the proposal to recommend creation of a permanent LDR advisory committee.

+ **Israel/Palestine:** Adopted 690-125. Voting members resolved to advocate on behalf of a peaceful resolution of the conflict between Israel and Palestine. They called the ELCA to lift up the voices within both communities, especially those who are victims of violence. The resolution also calls for care for the people of Gaza, and support for U.S. financial assistance that funds "peace and cooperation for all parties to the conflict." An amendment to the memorial called for the ELCA to "evaluate and refine its peace-making efforts to demonstrate as fully as possible the balanced care for all parties" expressed in the "Churchwide Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine."

+ **Worship, liturgical materials in Braille:** Adopted 926-10. This memorial called for affirmed and celebrated materials being provided to people with impaired vision, acknowledged funding challenges and limits for this work, and asked for a report to the Church Council in 2010.

+ **Project Connect:** Adopted 919-19. The memorial recognized "the immense contribution of communities of color within and beyond this church," encouraged those involved with Project Connect to share learnings with the wider church, renewed the



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ELCA's commitment to confront racism, and encouraged review of factors that inhibit people of color from "the fullness of leadership in this church."

+ **Human disability message:** Adopted 785-88. The assembly declined to authorize development of a social statement on human disability, but requested that the Church in Society program unit instead consider development of a message on human disability.

In addition, the assembly *en bloc* referred other memorials to the Church Council or churchwide units for response.

Assembly Adopts, Refers Resolutions

+ **Health care reform:** Adopted 799-126. The resolution provides that "each person should have ready access to basic health care services that include preventive, acute and chronic physical and mental health care at an affordable cost." The assembly requested that the urgency and sense of the resolution be communicated to Congress and the White House.

+ **Batak Special Interest Conference:** Adopted 845-15. The action strikes from the ELCA's bylaws reference to the "Batak Special Interest Conference of North America," a move supported by Batak members of the Indonesian ministries of the ELCA.

+ **Thanks:** The assembly also adopted resolutions expressing appreciation ELCA churchwide leaders and staff, plus local hosts and the people of the Twin Cities. Other resolutions regarding mission funding, wills and living trusts, and a study on "bound conscience" were referred to the Church Council or churchwide units for response.

Twelfth Biennial Assembly

AUGUST 14-20, 2011

Orlando, Fla.

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