

world hunger. The action made hunger eradication “a core dimension” of the ELCA and called for each of the 65 synods to make ending hunger central to its ministry and mission.

+ Bioethical research: The assembly called on the ELCA Church in Society program unit to develop a social statement that “addresses significant theological, ethical, public and pastoral challenges arising from developments in genetics” for possible consideration by the 2011 Churchwide Assembly.

+ Refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants: Voting members approved action to “welcome and encourage task forces to empower this church in its engagement with refugee and immigrant issues” and mandated strengthening the church’s work with Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service. It also called on the U.S. Congress “to end immediately the detention and imprisonment of non-criminal asylum seekers, undocumented laborers” and others who are incarcerated and to “implement just, consistent and humane practices regarding the treatment of asylum seekers.”

+ Voting members referred several memorials, including those regarding faithful conversations about Scripture, mission-support covenants, licensed lay ministers, and HIV and AIDS education to various churchwide units or the Church Council for further study. The response to the Scripture memorial directed that a report be brought to the council in April 2006.

Resolutions Address Churchwide Matters

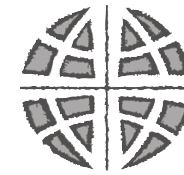
The assembly referred several proposals to churchwide units: development of a process to study a biblical approach to starting new mission congregations; creation of a panel to assist assembly voting members on assembly procedure; assessing the merits of electing bishops by ecclesiastical ballot; nominating young adult and youth representatives for Church Council positions; and inviting people with disabilities to greater participation in the church.

For more detail about the 2005 Churchwide Assembly, visit www.elca.org/assembly/05 on the Web.

**Tenth Biennial Assembly
Aug. 6-12, 2007, Chicago**



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MARKED WITH
THE CROSS OF
CHRIST FOREVER

2005 Churchwide Assembly

A Brief Summary of Actions

Ninth Churchwide Assembly
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Orlando, Fla. • August 8-14, 2005

The Ninth Biennial Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) was held Aug. 8-14, 2005, at the Orlando (Fla.) World Center Marriott Resort and Convention Center. About 2,300 people participated including 1,015 voting members. The theme for the assembly was "Marked With the Cross of Christ Forever."

Renewing Worship to Include New Worship Book

By 740-252, the assembly directed the ELCA Office of the Presiding Bishop through worship staff to complete the liturgical review of proposed content for a new book of worship in accordance with this church's established policy, and to work with synods, churchwide units, and institutions and agencies of this church on further development of worship resources. The new worship book, expected to be available as early as October 2006, will be at the center of a family of worship resources for the ELCA. The resources are part of the Renewing Worship project. The assembly declined amendments to delay the project and to retain *Lutheran Book of Worship* as the ELCA's primary worship resource.

Interim Eucharistic Sharing with the United Methodist Church Authorized

Voting members initiated "Interim Eucharistic Sharing" with The United Methodist Church 877-60. The agreement fosters mutual prayer, support and study. It encourages joint services of Holy Communion following guidelines established by both churches. Interim Eucharistic Sharing is a step that may lead to a relationship of full communion. The agreement was approved by the Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church in April 2005.

Ethnic Ministry Strategies Adopted

The assembly adopted new ministry strategies related directly to the five strategic directions of the ELCA. The assembly approved the African Descent Ministry Strategy, "Many Voices, Tell the Story, Create the Vision: Build our Future" by a vote of 940-5. Voting members approved an Arab and Middle Eastern Ministry Strategy, "Bridges Across History, Lands, and Cultures" by a vote of 858-6. The strategies were developed through the ELCA Commission for Multicultural Ministries in consultation with representatives of each community.

Churchwide Restructuring, Governance Proposals Adopted

By a vote of 810-169, voting members adopted proposals in "Faithful Yet Changing: Design for Mission Through the Churchwide Organization of the ELCA." Three types of units are described in the

approved design for mission: program units, offices and service units. Reorganization will begin immediately and be completed by the start of the next fiscal year, Feb. 1, 2006. Voting members declined amendments to create a unit with a specific focus on justice for women; instead, each unit will be responsible for maintaining full participation of women in its work. The assembly also declined an amendment that would continue its role to elect the editor of *The Lutheran*, the magazine of the ELCA. Under the approved redesign the editor will be elected by the Church Council in consultation with the presiding bishop, as will executive directors of program and particular service units.

The assembly adopted proposals for governance that would create program committees to work with program units. Voting members endorsed systems for discussion of major issues on the churchwide assembly agenda and Church Council nominations through synod assemblies on a rotating basis. The Church Council will remain at 33 members, plus the four churchwide officers, and include a number of new advisors from the program committees, seminaries, colleges and universities and social ministry institutions. A voting member proposal that would have established a Church Council made up of representatives from each of this church's 65 synods, plus the four churchwide officers, failed 464-505.

Assembly Acts on Sexuality Proposals

The assembly considered three recommendations forwarded to it from the ELCA Church Council. The recommendations resulted from a multi-year study process on sexuality led by a task force. The process was mandated by the 2001 ELCA Churchwide Assembly.

The assembly adopted Recommendation One by 851-127. The action urges this church to "concentrate on finding ways to live together faithfully in the midst of disagreements, recognizing the God-given mission and communion we share as members of the body of Christ."

Recommendation Two was adopted 670-323 as amended. The action asks that this church "continue to respect the guidance of the 1993 statement of the Conference of Bishops," which found no basis for establishing an official ceremony for the blessing of a homosexual relationship. The assembly reiterated this church's welcome to gay and lesbian people and its trust in pastors and congregations as they "discern ways to provide faithful pastoral care for all to whom they minister."

Recommendation Three, which required a

two-thirds vote for adoption because it would have affected ELCA bylaws, was defeated 490-503. This means there is no change in this church's expectations of rostered leaders.

Holy Land Campaign Implemented

Voting members urged Lutherans to participate in a campaign, "Peace Not Walls: Stand for Justice in the Holy Land," designed to build awareness. It also encourages engagement in accompaniment and advocacy activities for "peace with justice" between Israel and Palestine. By 668-269, the assembly adopted the campaign, a primary component of the "ELCA Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine," approved by the ELCA Church Council in April 2005.

Budgets Adopted for 2006 and 2007

The assembly adopted a budget for 2006 with a current fund fiscal year income proposal of \$81.2 million and a World Hunger income proposal of \$16.75 million. For 2007, the assembly approved a current fund fiscal year income proposal of \$81.5 million and a World Hunger income proposal of \$17 million.

Assembly Hears from President of Union for Reform Judaism

By 922-2, the assembly adopted a memorial expressing best wishes to the Jewish community in America on the 350th anniversary of Jewish presence in the United States. It expressed appreciation for the distinguished contributions made by Jews and commended the ELCA Department for Ecumenical Affairs for its work to promote Lutheran-Jewish dialogue.

In response Rabbi Eric H. Yoffie, president of the Union for Reform Judaism, said he was "particularly appreciative of the role played by the [ELCA] in forging meaningful relations between Christians and American Jews." With regard to Middle East concerns Yoffie emphasized that "the Reform Jewish movement is committed to a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. ... For peace to be achieved, territorial compromise will be required of Israel, and unconditional acceptance of Israel as a Jewish state will be required of the Palestinians."

Yoffie may have been the first Jewish leader to address an ELCA Churchwide Assembly. In addition to Yoffie, the assembly heard remarks from a variety of speakers representing Lutheran organizations and ecumenical partners.

Memorials Address Social Concerns

The assembly responded to several memorials from synods that addressed a variety of concerns:

+ World hunger programs: Voting members adopted a proposal for renewed commitment to end

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