



Recommendations: Our Calling in Education

Background

“Our Calling in Education” is the text of the proposed social statement on education for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Work on this statement was authorized by the 2001 Churchwide Assembly [CA01.06.40].

The goals for this social statement are:

- 1) to present a Lutheran vision of education for our time;
- 2) to address issues of education and schooling for children and young people in our society, giving attention to purpose and quality, equity and access for all, responsibilities, and religion’s role in public schooling;
- 3) to describe an understanding of this church’s educational institutions (e.g., preschool, primary and secondary schools, and colleges and universities); and
- 4) to consider this church’s ministries in relation to public schools and universities and the vocation of those involved in education in different roles.

If approved by the 2007 Churchwide Assembly, it will be the ninth social statement of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

The development and adoption of social statements by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America are guided by the document *Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns* (see Section V, page 7, in this volume), adopted by the 1997 Churchwide Assembly and revised by the Church Council in 2006.

At the time of the inception of this social statement, the board of the Division for Church in Society had the responsibility to name an appropriate group to study the topic; encourage broad participation by congregations and members of this church; and provide for a study document and/or preliminary draft, designed for study and response. Both the Church Council and the Conference of Bishops are forums for deliberation on preliminary documents.

Work on this social statement began in 2003 with the appointment by the board of the Division for Church in Society of a task force to oversee development of study materials, a first draft, and a final draft on the topic of education. Members of the task force included Dr. Robert Benne; Ms. Shirley A. Brown; Dr. Marcia Bunge; Pr. Michael Domenech; Dr. Paul J. Dovre (co-chair); Ms. Christi Lines (co-chair); Ms. Marlene Lund; Dr. Susan W. McArver; Dr. David Pellauer; Ms. Ann Fretwell Schmidt; Dr. Barry Smith; Mr. Donald Strickland; Bp. Harold L. Usgaard; Dr. Emily Van Dunk; Dr. Grace Wolf-Chase; and Pr. Jean A. Zietlow. Program Committee advisors included Dr. Kathryn Johnson, Vocation and Education, and Pr. Rosa M. Key, Church in Society. Staff members included Pr. Ronald W. Duty and Pr. John R. Stumme (lead studies’ staff). Other staff included Mr. Mark Carlson, Ms. Diane Monroe, Ms. Mary Nasby

Lohre, Ms. Sue Rothmeyer, Pr. Mark N. Wilhelm, and Ms. Marilyn Campbell.

As part of the development process, the task force scheduled listening posts in a variety of locations in this church. It prepared and distributed a study document; responses to the study document helped to inform development of the first draft of the social statement.

The first draft of the social statement was distributed in the winter of 2005. More than 225 written responses to the first draft were received. In addition, synods hosted 48 hearings in 40 synods, including for the first time one bilingual hearing and one conducted in Spanish.

The proposed social statement, “Our Calling in Education,” was reviewed by the program committee for the Church in Society unit in March 2007 and referred to the Church Council for consideration by the Rev. Rebecca S. Larson, executive director of the Church in Society unit.

Recommendation

for Assembly Action *Two-Thirds Vote Required*

To adopt “Our Calling in Education” as a social statement of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, in accordance with “Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns” (2006).

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37 Prologue: Education and Vocation

38 The calling of Lutherans and of the Evangelical Lutheran
39 Church in America in education is closely tied to a Lutheran
40 understanding of vocation. While many understand vocation
41 as a job or career or as the call to be a pastor or priest,
42 Lutherans understand vocation as a calling from God that
43 encompasses all of life for all the faithful.

44 Vocation involves God's saving call to us in baptism and
45 life lived in joyful response to this call. In Jesus Christ we are
46 loved by a gracious God who frees us to love our neighbor and
47 promote the common good; in gratitude for God's love, we live
48 out our vocation in our places of responsibility in daily
49 life—home, congregation, work place, neighborhood, nation,
50 and global society.

51 Education belongs to our baptismal vocation. Our
52 particular calling in education is two-fold: to educate people in
53 the Christian faith for their vocation and to strive with others
54 to ensure that all have access to high quality education that
55 develops personal gifts and abilities and serves the common
56 good. This calling embraces all people in both Church and
57 society.

58 We of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
59 express gratitude for homes and congregations that carry out
60 this calling in education. We give thanks to God for other
61 institutions and individuals in all of education's varied settings:
62 for public, Lutheran, and other private early childhood
63 education centers, schools, colleges, and universities; for
64 outdoor ministries and for campus ministries; and for all who
65 live out their vocation as students, parents, pastors, lay
66 professionals, teachers, administrators, staff members, directors,
67 board members, and trustees in these educational settings.

68 The ELCA's calling in education recognizes special
69 responsibilities and accountability in certain specific areas:

- 70 • It affirms the essential role of parents and congregations
71 in the faith formation of young people and urge
72 revitalization of the baptismal commitment to educate in
73 the faith for vocation, a commitment that continues
74 throughout life.
- 75 • In light of the essential role of public education in serving
76 the common good of the society and in the face of
77 continuing concern for the effectiveness of some public
78 schools, the lack of equitable access for many students to
79 high quality schools, and the often inadequate provision of
80 financial resources, the ELCA affirms and advocates for
81 the equitable, sufficient, and effective funding of public
82 schools.
- 83 • In view of the expanding role of ELCA early childhood
84 education centers and schools in providing outreach and
85 distinctive religious educational opportunities to growing
86 numbers of children, this church affirms these schools and
87 encourage synods, pastors, congregations, and members to
88 claim and support this unique mission opportunity.
- 89 • In gratitude for the extraordinary work of ELCA colleges
90 and universities in preparing students for vocation in the
91 Church and world and for ELCA seminaries in their
92 preparation of leaders for our church, this church affirms
93 the role of these institutions and encourages them to
94 sustain and strengthen those elements that distinguish the

1 Lutheran tradition in higher education and
2 theological education.

- 3 • In gratitude for public higher education and the vital role
4 of ELCA campus ministries in public and private
5 universities and in recognition of the special cultural,
6 missional, and financial challenges they face, the ELCA
7 affirms these ministries and urges new and creative
8 collaborative efforts in their support.
- 9 • In recognition of the growing costs of Lutheran, public,
10 and private higher education, which limit access for many
11 students, the ELCA affirms foundations, corporations,
12 congregations, institutions, and individuals who provide
13 financial assistance to students and urge both state and
14 federal governments to expand grant funding for low- and
15 middle-income students who need it.

16 1. What Does God Have to Do 17 with Education?

18 Education, as understood in this social statement, refers in a
19 broad sense to learning, teaching, and knowing as a dimension
20 of human life. It is a lifelong activity that permeates all that we
21 do. In a narrower sense, education refers to intentional activity
22 in which we engage one another in learning. People create
23 institutions and situations whose purposes are to encourage,
24 transmit, and advance human learning and to shape and equip
25 new generations. Through education human beings are formed
26 as people, acquiring knowledge, wisdom, attitudes, beliefs,
27 skills, and abilities to think, feel, and act in particular ways.

28 When the Christian church talks about education, it does
29 so in the light of its faith in God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
30 Christians believe that God creates human beings with ability
31 to learn, teach, and know and that God is active in and
32 through education. God's creative activity encompasses all
33 people and their education, and the redeeming gospel of Jesus
34 Christ gives the Church a distinctive mandate in education.

35 *The Lutheran Legacy*

36 From the time of the Reformation, the Lutheran church has
37 been a teaching and learning church. Martin Luther, a
38 university professor, pursued the reform of education on all
39 levels as an integral part of his reform of Church and society.
40 With his teaching on vocation, Luther understood the
41 Christian life to be one of service to God and neighbor in one's
42 everyday places of responsibility; education equipped Christians
43 for this vocation. He taught that education served the
44 common good of Church and society: In a move unusual for his
45 day, he taught that schools for all—both those who were
46 wealthy and those who were poor, both boys and girls—were
47 necessary so that the Church would have learned and faithful
48 pastors and the civil community would have wise and good
49 rulers.¹ He insisted that Christians learn to read, understand,
50 and interpret the Bible and know the content of their faith. He
51 stressed the importance of teaching faith and love in the home
52 by word and example, writing "The Small Catechism" to assist
53 parents in this task.²

54 Lutherans in North America and the Caribbean followed
55 Luther's call to educate in home, Church, and society. They

56 prayed and held devotions in the home, taught the faith in
57 Sunday school and through catechetical instruction, founded
58 schools, colleges, and seminaries of all sorts, and established
59 campus ministries and outdoor ministries. They strongly
60 supported public education, and many Lutherans have carried
61 out their calling as educators in a wide array of educational
62 institutions. This legacy lives on in the Evangelical Lutheran
63 Church in America as one of its defining characteristics.

64 *The God Who Calls Us*

65 In baptism Christians are called to live in faith and hope in God
66 and in love to neighbor in the ordinary relationships of daily
67 life. God's wondrous and awesome call to us gives joy,
68 confidence, seriousness, and purpose to all of life. It holds
69 together faith and love, God and neighbor, the individual and
70 community, and a person's gifts and the needs of others and of
71 the earth. In our places of responsibility in family, work,
72 society, and Church, God's living call comes to us to serve
73 others, seek justice, promote the common good, and care for
74 creation competently and creatively with our gifts and abilities.
75 This Lutheran understanding of vocation is especially
76 important for our approach to education today.

77 Faith in the God who calls provides a critical and
78 constructive perspective to guide Christians in their calling in
79 education today.³

80 *The God Who Calls Us Is "the Father almighty, 81 creator of heaven and earth"*

82 God's good creation, with its amazing variety and diversity,
83 presents the context for vocation. A patterned and structured
84 reality that is reliable and knowable, creation is also changing,
85 open, and inexhaustible in what it discloses to human
86 knowledge. Dependent on the one who calls it into existence
87 out of nothing (cf. Romans 4:17), creation's purpose is to glorify
88 and be in communion with the triune God. Education belongs
89 to the goodness of creation through which Christians praise the
90 Creator.

91 Education depends on and should reflect who people are
92 as creatures of God. Humanity is one, and all are of equal
93 worth before God. Education is always to respect the dignity
94 we receive in being created in "the image of God." The
95 Creator gives us responsibility for the life and education of new
96 generations and for making the earth a fitting home for human
97 beings and other creatures (Genesis 1:26-28). To carry out
98 these divine mandates we are enabled to learn, teach, and
99 know in a world that can be known, at least in part.

100 Because God creates all people as embodied minds and
101 spirits, education involves us as whole persons. Our affections,
102 will, and intellect interact in our learning and teaching. We
103 come to know in a variety of ways. We are limited creatures,
104 subject to death, who learn, teach, and know with particular
105 perspectives, assumptions, and commitments. Our knowledge
106 is always partial and we cannot know everything, so we are
107 always compelled to select what we should learn and teach. As
108 social beings who rely on other people, we are created for living
109 in love with God and others and for caring for the earth on
110 which we depend. We accept personal responsibility to learn
111 and know throughout our lives with and for others.

1 The necessity, capacity, love, and delight to learn, teach,
2 and know come from God. Human beings are blessed with the
3 gifts of memory, self-consciousness, and anticipation. We
4 marvel at the divinely given abilities to communicate, reason,
5 explore new realities, discover meaning and truth, create art,
6 technology, and complex societies, enjoy beauty, and discern
7 what is right and good. We approach education with awe,
8 wonder, and gratitude to the triune God.

9 The God who calls all people continues to preserve and
10 bless a good but fallen creation. The Bible identifies the root
11 of what corrupts creation as human sin, the rupture in our
12 relationship with God. Instead of loving God with all our
13 being, we turn away from our Creator and center our lives on
14 ourselves, consistently loving ourselves more than we do God
15 and our neighbor. Sin profoundly disrupts and distorts human
16 community, penetrating the heart of individuals and entangling
17 human institutions.

18 Sin's power persistently warps and corrupts human
19 learning and educational institutions. Our lives are marked by
20 ignorance—the opposite of knowledge—and by folly—the
21 opposite of wisdom. In a society of inequalities, our school
22 systems often reinforce privilege, denying equitable access to a
23 high quality education for all. In pride humans claim too much
24 for our limited grasp of intellectual or moral truth, and in
25 despair we think that there is no truth and no right and wrong.
26 We use knowledge to dominate or harm others, to deny them
27 their humanity, and to ravish the earth rather than to serve the
28 neighbor. We put our trust in our knowledge or wisdom to
29 justify our existence before God.

30 Although creation is bound in sin and death, God
31 continues to preserve, create, bless, and govern the world,
32 bringing forth ever-new wonders. People and institutions are
33 “masks of God,” in Luther’s phrase. That is, God provides for
34 the health and well-being of the earth and its creatures through
35 the actions of people and the working of human institutions, as
36 well as by the processes of nature. At the same time, God holds
37 all people accountable to act responsibly in human affairs and
38 enables them to strive for and achieve degrees of “civil
39 righteousness,” that is, a peace and justice necessary and
40 possible in a sinful world.⁴

41 All people share the need and responsibility to be educated
42 in civil righteousness and the matters of earthly life. We see
43 God at work when people dedicate themselves to this
44 responsibility and in the good they accomplish through their
45 efforts. God’s continuing creative activity calls us to support
46 governments and other institutions that enact just education
47 policies and create schools that foster human flourishing, serve
48 the common good, and care for creation.

49 ***The God Who Calls Us Is “Jesus Christ,
50 God’s only Son, our Lord”***

51 Through the gospel, the saving news of God’s love in Jesus
52 Christ for sinners, Christians are freed to care for education as
53 an arena for service to the neighbor. The gospel forgives us,
54 liberates us from the power of sin, death, and evil, and
55 empowers us to amend our lives to love the neighbor, seek
56 justice, and care for the earth. Education is not a means to
57 secure our personal salvation but a way to benefit the neighbor.

58 Justified before God by grace alone, through faith alone, on
59 account of Jesus Christ alone, Christians do not look to human
60 learning, teaching, and knowing as means to reconcile us with
61 God. Our lives do not receive ultimate meaning by how much
62 learning or academic recognition we have. The gospel frees us
63 from judging our human worth and that of others by their
64 education or any other accomplishment.

65 Christians live the paradox of being sinners and saints at
66 the same time, struggling with the realities of imperfection,
67 ambiguity, and evil in and around us; yet we are people on the
68 way, constantly transformed by God’s grace and awaiting the
69 resurrection of the dead and the fulfillment of the whole
70 creation in God’s eternal reign. Confident of the gospel’s
71 promise of God’s final victory, we live out our calling in
72 education now under the cross as forgiven sinners, turning daily
73 to God to confess our sin and receive forgiveness and new life.

74 The one who saves us is also our teacher. By his life and
75 teachings, Jesus of Nazareth teaches us what it means to be
76 truly human, living and dying for others. He teaches us to love
77 God with our whole being—including with all our mind—and
78 our neighbor as ourselves (Luke 10:27). He bids us to care for
79 “the least of these who are members of my family” (Matthew
80 25:31-46; 40).

81 ***The God Who Calls Is “the Holy Spirit”***

82 By means of the gospel the Holy Spirit calls us into the Church,
83 the community of believers that gathers around Word and
84 Sacrament. The risen Lord Jesus instructs his followers to “go
85 . . . make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name
86 of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and
87 *teaching* them to obey everything that I have commanded you”
88 (Matthew 28:19-20; italics added). Christians teach and learn
89 in the Church so that we will not be conformed to the world
90 but instead be disciples who are transformed by the renewing
91 of our minds (Romans 12:2).

92 The Church has been given the distinctive mandate to
93 educate in the faith for vocation—to instruct, form, and bring
94 forth faithful, courageous, and wise disciples to live out their
95 baptismal vocation in Church and world. In baptism, believers
96 are buried with Christ into death and freed to “walk in newness
97 of life” (Romans 6:4), to a new way of being in the world
98 marked by faith, hope, and love.

99 In educating for our vocation given in baptism, Christians
100 rely on the Holy Spirit to work through us to shape our
101 character and to produce “the fruit of the Spirit[:]. . . love, joy,
102 peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness,
103 and self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23). The same Spirit gives us
104 varieties of gifts “for the common good” (1 Corinthians 12:4-7).
105 Sharing one hope, “one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God
106 and Father of all,” we members of the body contribute in
107 different ways “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for
108 building up the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:5, 12). We build
109 up life in community by discerning and nurturing members’
110 gifts, receiving them in gratitude, and sharing our gifts joyfully.

111 Dependent on the Holy Spirit, education in the Church
112 centers in worship—in Word and Sacrament—and permeates
113 all of congregational life and mission. It addresses us as whole
114 people in our relationships, shaping the way we think, feel, and

1 act. It strengthens our trust in the gospel, cultivates the gifts
2 of the Spirit, and teaches us what is true about God's
3 relationship with creation on the basis of the Bible and the
4 Church's doctrines. It encourages us to understand and affirm
5 the content of our faith in ways that invite us into the
6 wondrous mystery of God's love for the world that passes all
7 understanding.

8 The Church in education confesses and gives voice to
9 God's ultimate truth for humankind and creation revealed in
10 the gospel. In seeking to discern and understand God's truth
11 and its meaning for life, the Church teaches the knowledge of
12 faith boldly and in a spirit of humility, knowing "now we see in
13 a mirror, dimly" (1 Corinthians 13:12). At the same time the
14 Church in education learns from and is challenged by
15 knowledge and insight coming from all people. Instead of
16 dismissing this learning in the name of faith or faith in the
17 name of such learning, Christians say "yes" both to faith and its
18 knowledge and to God's gift of reason. Confident that the God
19 revealed in Jesus Christ is the source of all truth, we affirm and
20 value the discovery and transmission of true knowledge
21 wherever and however it occurs. Paul's admonition voices our
22 open, discerning attitude toward human learning: "Whatever
23 is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is
24 pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there
25 is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think
26 about these things" (Philippians 4:8).

27 The ELCA's calling in education energetically pursues
28 excellent education in this church and society. If we neglect
29 teaching the faith for vocation, we betray our distinctive
30 mandate and are unprepared to serve our neighbor in the
31 world. If we neglect our responsibilities for the education of all
32 people in earthly matters and civil righteousness, we close our
33 eyes to God's continuous creating activity and fall short in
34 loving our neighbor and serving the common good. Education
35 in both society and Church is God-pleasing, for the God who
36 calls us in vocation is both Creator and Preserver and Redeemer
37 and Sanctifier.

38 *Our Calling in Education Today*

39 The ELCA lives its calling in education today in a world that
40 is increasingly interconnected and in a society that is becoming
41 more pluralistic. Contemporary culture brings new marvels yet
42 also conveys messages that hinder learning and clash with the
43 Church's beliefs. Science and technology continuously reshape
44 our world, bringing new benefits as well as new dangers and
45 creating new moral dilemmas and theological challenges.
46 Many voices point to the crucial significance of early childhood
47 education as well as to the need for and the possibilities of
48 lifelong learning. Millions of men, women, and children in our
49 affluent society live in poverty, and most young people who live
50 in poverty do not have fair access to good schools. Recognizing
51 how essential formal education is for living in today's world, our
52 society has developed an elaborate array of public and private
53 schools from preschool through post-graduate. Yet perfor-
54 mance of educational institutions in this society is often
55 criticized, and many reform proposals are advanced.

56 Within this complex, changing, and challenging context
57 the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America claims and

58 aspires to renew its calling in education. We are grateful for
59 and challenged by the legacy we have received, and we are
60 aware that we too often fall short in our calling. We pledge to
61 sustain, renew, and where need be, reform our calling in
62 education for this time and place so that we will be a stronger,
63 livelier, and more faithful teaching and learning church.

64 This calling in education belongs to this whole church.
65 Individuals, families, congregations, early childhood education
66 centers and schools, colleges and universities, seminaries,
67 outdoor ministries, campus ministries, lifelong learning centers,
68 publishing ministry, social ministry organizations, synods, and
69 the churchwide organization all participate in this calling. It
70 involves lifelong learning in formal and informal settings. It
71 includes pastors and bishops as teachers of the faith who speak
72 to heart and mind and who address public issues of education.
73 In this calling in education we learn from ecumenical partners,
74 other churches, and the Church throughout the world and ages
75 as well as from other religions and secular knowledge. We
76 honor and support parents, pastors, students, educators,
77 citizens, and all who carry out their callings in education.

78 This social statement calls the ELCA in light of our faith
79 to engage, deliberate, and act with respect to four contexts:
80 home and congregation, public education, this church's
81 educational institutions, and public colleges and universities.
82 Our calling in education is to:

- 83 • communicate the faith to children and youth with power
84 and conviction in home and congregation where lifelong
85 learning in the faith is expected and encouraged;
- 86 • advocate equitable access to excellent education for all
87 young people;
- 88 • sustain and strengthen early childhood education centers,
89 schools, colleges and universities, and seminaries as an
90 integral and integrated part of this church's mission in
91 education; and
- 92 • support public higher education to serve the common good
93 and rejoice in the faithful presence of campus ministry in
94 public colleges and universities.

95 2. What Faith Will Our Children Have?

96 *Faith Formation from Generation to Generation*

97 Luther taught, "Anything on which your heart relies and
98 depends, I say, that is really your God."⁵ All have faith in
99 something; the question is, is it trust in the living God or in
100 something else? Will our children be nurtured and transformed
101 by the faith and community that trust and confess the God who
102 calls us?

103 Few questions are more urgent and significant for this
104 church's life and mission. The answers will depend in large part
105 on whether or not we nurture our children and encourage
106 adults to grow in faith throughout their entire lives. Children
107 brought to the baptismal font often become distant from the
108 community of faith as they move toward becoming adults.
109 Many adults do not consider their own ongoing and intentional
110 faith formation to be vital to their lives as Christians.

111 Each generation faces its own challenges in maintaining,
112 nurturing, and passing on the faith. In our time these
113 challenges are profound and pervasive. Attempts to com-

1 municate the faith face the demands and the fragmentation of
2 modern life, numerous religions and ideologies competing for
3 our loyalty, and the ever-present messages that tell us that
4 success and happiness come from consuming goods and
5 pursuing individual desires and pleasures. The disconnect
6 between home and congregation, the hesitance of Christians to
7 witness to the gospel, and their lack of commitment to be
8 lifelong learners impair continued faith formation.

9 *Lifelong Learning*

10 Faith formation begins at baptism and continues throughout
11 life. This truth shapes the ELCA's understanding and practice
12 of educating in the faith for vocation. A teaching and learning
13 church invites the baptized of all ages—from infants to older
14 adults—into a continuous discipline of learning and faith
15 formation.

16 As Christians mature in their knowledge and experience
17 in the world, their faith also should deepen and mature. If their
18 knowledge of the faith fails to keep up with their knowledge of
19 the world, then their understanding of God will be affected. As
20 people grow older, a changing world presents new questions
21 and dilemmas to them, and based on their continuing life
22 experience, they raise new questions about their world and
23 faith. Continued growth and learning in the faith enable
24 Christians to see how their faith gives direction and sheds light
25 on their changing lives.

26 Because learning and being formed in the faith are lifelong
27 opportunities and tasks, the ELCA urges Christians throughout
28 their lives to assume personal responsibility to grow in their
29 faith by:

- 30 • deepening their relationship with God through worship
31 and prayer;
- 32 • maturing in their knowledge of the Bible and the Church's
33 doctrines;
- 34 • learning by doing, practicing their faith in daily living,
35 service, and justice;
- 36 • learning and using the art and skills of speaking the truth
37 in love and discerning together the gospel's meaning for
38 life;⁶ and
- 39 • connecting their baptismal vocation and their specific
40 callings in daily life.

41 Where adults are vigorous learners in the faith, children
42 and young people will have models and companions for their
43 own learning, adults will learn from children and young people,
44 and all generations will grow together in their faith.

45 *"Let the little children come to me."*

46 While adults are responsible for their own lifelong learning,
47 they also bear a particular responsibility to nurture the faith of
48 the next generation. The Bible communicates a keen sense of
49 how generations are bound together in networks of mutual
50 obligation. The elder generation is to transmit its knowledge,
51 wisdom, and faith, and the younger generation is to honor the
52 blessings it receives. "Train children in the right way, and
53 when old, they will not stray" (Proverbs 22:6). The Bible as
54 well as church history testifies to the significance of educating
55 children in the faith. Experience and contemporary studies
56 confirm the importance of early childhood education. Passing

57 on the faith to a new generation begins in infancy and
58 continues through adulthood.

59 Jesus invited the children (Mark 10:13-16; cf., Matthew
60 19:13-15; Luke 18:15-17), and so we are to welcome children,
61 teaching and learning from them in ways that recognize their
62 dignity and complexity. The Church's traditions on children
63 help us to understand children from different perspectives and
64 to hold these diverse ways together in tension.⁷

65 For example, children are both:

- 66 • *gifts of God*. God entrusts parents, the Church, and society
67 to welcome and care for children as full participants of
68 their communities. As gifts of God, children are sources of
69 hope, joy, delight, and also obligation.
- 70 • *and sinful creatures and moral agents*. Children, "re-born" in
71 baptism, share in the solidarity and equality of sin common
72 to all (Romans 3:10). Furthermore, children are moral
73 agents who have growing degrees of responsibility for what
74 they do and who may act in ways that are self-centered
75 and harmful to themselves and others. Recognizing that
76 children are sinful is never a warrant to abuse and treat
77 them inhumanely; rather it is a caution against an
78 idealistic view of children as primarily innocent beings who
79 automatically love God and others. Children, therefore,
80 need to be formed for their vocation and that with
81 gentleness and love.

82 Children are both:

- 83 • *fully human and made in the image of God*. Children,
84 therefore, are worthy of the dignity and respect due to all
85 human beings. Jesus reinforced the dignity of all children
86 by welcoming and blessing them and saying that to them
87 belongs the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 19:14, 15).
 - 88 • *and developing beings who need instruction and guidance*.
89 Children require nurture and guidance to develop into
90 intellectually, morally, and spiritually mature adults.
- 91 Children are both:
- 92 • *models and teachers of faith*. In striking ways, Jesus held up
93 children as teachers of adults. "Truly I tell you, unless you
94 change and become like children, you will never enter the
95 kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this
96 child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew
97 18:3, 4).

- 98 • *and orphans, neighbors, and strangers in need of justice and
99 compassion*. The Bible also reminds us that children may
100 be among the most vulnerable members of society. Many
101 are impoverished, neglected, abandoned, and abused.
102 They need protection, justice, and compassion. Children
103 are our neighbors whom we are called to love.

104 Christians enrich our welcoming of children to a life of
105 faith by holding together these diverse perspectives on whom
106 they are. Because they are gifts of God, for example, we will
107 respect their dignity and bring joy, laughter, and a sense of
108 obligation into teaching and forming them in home and
109 congregation. Because they—like all the baptized—are sinners
110 as well as saints and in need of instruction, we will emphasize
111 the vital role of families in instilling the habits and practices of
112 faithful living, and we will develop substantial congregational
113 programs of faith formation. We will introduce them to good
114 examples, mentors, and stories of faith and service and help
115 them discern their callings. Remembering that Jesus saw

1 children as teachers of the faith, we will listen attentively to
2 them, honor their insights and questions, and learn from them.
3 We will give special attention to children who are most
4 vulnerable and those who have been wounded, and we will
5 become stronger advocates for them.

6 ***A Mutual Environment of Living Faith***

7 Both home and congregation are responsible for passing on the
8 faith to children and youth. Where each carries out its
9 responsibility faithfully and is engaged in a fruitful partnership
10 with the other—trusting in the Holy Spirit to bless their
11 faithfulness—children and youth are baptized, grow, and dwell
12 in an environment of living faith.

13 In such an environment, both home and congregation
14 anchor their teaching in the Bible and in Luther’s “The Small
15 Catechism.” They nurture in children and youth faith, hope,
16 and love. They teach and discuss the Church’s doctrines,
17 creeds, the liturgy, and moral beliefs. They live out together
18 Christian practices, such as praying, worshiping, singing,
19 visiting people who are sick, seeking justice with people who
20 experience poverty or discrimination, and caring for the earth.

21 Many children and youth, however, do not experience a
22 mutually supportive environment in home and congregation.
23 Most baptized children grow up in homes where faith formation
24 is not part of everyday living, even among families who are
25 active in congregational life.⁸ Adolescent youth who identify
26 themselves as Christians often have great difficulty explaining
27 what they believe. Many have a vague concept of God and
28 view religion as merely an instrument to make them happy and
29 morally good.⁹ After catechetical instruction many young
30 people begin to lose interest in participating in congregational
31 life. Parents and other caregivers often do not educate their
32 children in the faith for vocation, and congregations often do
33 little to encourage and assist them. We dare not ignore the
34 seriousness of this state of affairs.

35 Reform begins at baptism, where congregations and
36 sponsors and home meet. At baptism, through which God
37 grants us new life, parents and sponsors commit themselves
38 before God and the congregation to educate children in the
39 faith.¹⁰ Pastors, associates in ministry, diaconal ministers,
40 deaconesses, and the community of faith need to remind
41 parents, caregivers, and sponsors of their pledge and help them
42 fulfill it, and parents need to remind pastors and the
43 community of faith to help them.

44 Parents nurture and instruct in the faith by offering a good
45 example to their children. They do so by modeling prayer,
46 hymn singing, Bible study, and private devotional reading;
47 attending worship and Sunday school with their children and
48 participating in the life of the congregation; serving the poor
49 and caring for creation, and witnessing to the gospel and
50 faithfully living out their callings. Providing a good example,
51 however, is not enough. Parents’ awesome responsibility also
52 includes encouraging their children to pray publicly and
53 privately, read devotions, witness to their faith, deepen their
54 knowledge of their faith, and take part in activities of
55 generosity, service, and justice. Families have unique
56 opportunities to talk together about matters of faith and
57 vocation. As parents teach the faith, they learn from their

58 children and are themselves more deeply formed in the faith.
59 The home itself is to be a domestic church for the whole family.
60 Parents cannot undertake this important task unsupported.
61 In baptizing children, congregations also accept responsibility
62 for forming children and youth in the faith. Equipping parents
63 for their vocation as parents belongs among a congregation’s
64 chief priorities. This begins by teaching persistently and boldly
65 that it is the calling and obligation as well as the delight of
66 parents to educate their young people in the faith. Where
67 parents are not involved in educating in the faith,
68 congregations have heightened responsibility to take on this
69 challenge.

70 Congregations’ responsibility includes providing strong
71 programs of faith formation for children and youth that involve
72 parents and other adults. Through classes, parenting groups
73 and mentoring programs, congregations provide opportunities
74 to study the Scriptures, to discuss fears and hopes, to learn new
75 ideas, and to become acquainted with resources to support
76 those responsible for the task of forming children in the faith.

77 Congregations should welcome children and youth of all
78 ages in worship, Sunday school, catechetical instruction, and
79 youth ministry and be attentive to the changes going on in
80 young peoples’ lives. They will give special attention to
81 engaging post-confirmation youth in the congregation’s life.

82 Congregations also can strengthen the faith formation of
83 children, youth, and adults by encouraging them to take part in
84 this church’s outdoor ministries. Numerous conference
85 centers, camps, and retreat centers positively shape the faith
86 and lives of people of all ages. Many young people, families,
87 and leaders of this church testify to the important role of these
88 outdoor ministries in their faith formation and spiritual
89 development.¹¹

90 ELCA seminaries provide important support for those
91 involved in the faith formation of all ages. The Lutheran
92 tradition has long valued the teaching role in the congregation
93 of those trained in theological education, and we look to
94 pastors, deaconesses, diaconal ministers, associates in ministry,
95 and lay leaders to work with congregations and parents in the
96 crucial task of forming the faith of all generations. This church,
97 therefore, expects seminaries to take seriously the importance
98 of Christian education and youth and family ministry and to
99 educate all students for excellence in leadership in these areas.

100 We also call upon the ELCA to continue and expand the
101 provision of creative and comprehensive resources necessary to
102 enable parents and congregations to help form the faith of all
103 generations.

104 ***Equipping Faithful and Discerning Students***

105 During their formative years, young people face the challenge
106 of learning to discern and pursue what is good and right amid
107 conflicting ideas and enticing alternative ways of living. An
108 environment of living faith equips them to grow and mature in
109 their baptismal calling in a pluralistic culture that exhibits both
110 God’s goodness and sin’s corruption. In such an environment
111 parents willingly accept their obligation for their children,
112 create the structure and climate for children to grow in
113 freedom, and set parameters on how the culture will be allowed
114 to influence their children.

1 Especially important during these formative years is their
2 schooling experience. Parents as well as congregations will
3 teach their children and young people that being a student is
4 a calling—a way to serve God and others. They will convey to
5 them a love for learning that opens youthful minds to the
6 exciting quest for knowledge. Faith inspires us to understand
7 God’s world and to delight in the discovery of truth. Students
8 are called to take the wonderful opportunity and demanding
9 responsibility of learning with utmost seriousness, showing
10 diligence, discipline, lively interest, honesty, creativity, and
11 respect for their teachers.

12 In fulfilling their baptismal pledge, parents will carefully
13 consider where their children attend school and the education
14 they receive. Whether they send their children to a public
15 school, a Lutheran school, other Christian school, private
16 school, or home school them, parents will be concerned that
17 their children receive a high quality education and develop a
18 vibrant faith active in love. Parents weigh many factors in
19 selecting a school. Some of these factors are the gifts and needs
20 of the child, the schooling options available, the desire or not
21 for a faith-based education, and the cost. Pastors, other
22 rostered leaders, and other congregational members can help
23 parents think through their possibilities, and congregations can
24 support them in their options.

25 Schools rightly expose their students to a wide variety of
26 ideas, beliefs, and values but often find it difficult to provide a
27 basis on which to evaluate moral and belief systems. When
28 schools do not teach about religion, students may conclude
29 that religion is not important for “real life” or that what is right
30 and wrong is only a “matter of opinion.” Some schools,
31 including religious ones, may promote beliefs and attitudes that
32 denigrate certain racial, ethnic, religious, or other groups of
33 people.

34 Attentive to what their children are learning in school,
35 home and congregation will seek to deepen their young
36 people’s understanding of their faith and vocation. Pastors,
37 other educational leaders, and parents will seize opportunities
38 to listen carefully to their questions, to explore openly their
39 struggles and concerns, to help them make sense of their faith
40 and learning, and to discern what is good and true in a
41 contested world.

42 ***Guidelines for the Ministry of Faith Formation***

43 How congregations carry out their educational responsibilities
44 for children, youth, and adults of all ages takes many forms.
45 The following guidelines are designed to help congregations
46 focus intentionally on faith formation:

47 Educational ministries will:

- 48 • rely on the Holy Spirit to work through education to form,
49 guide, and enlighten learners in the faith;
- 50 • inspire, inform, and challenge children, youth, and adults
51 with faithful, interesting, and effective teaching and
52 learning;
- 53 • implement educational materials and programs that are
54 rooted in the triune God, the Bible, and the Lutheran
55 Confessions;
- 56 • plan and assure that the education ministry of the
57 congregation is centered in and flows out of worship;

- 58 • encourage Christians to be lifelong learners in the faith,
59 providing opportunities for all to grow in their faith and to
60 be equipped for their vocation in the Church and the
61 world;
- 62 • provide opportunities for discussing and studying social
63 issues, ethics, science, and other religions in light of faith;
- 64 • incorporate the best teaching and learning methods
65 available with a willingness to try new approaches; and
- 66 • incorporate educational programs and practices
67 appropriate to the age, interest, learning abilities, and
68 other characteristics of the people for whom they are
69 intended.

70 Children, youth, and family ministries will:

- 71 • welcome and educate children and youth in ways that
72 recognize their wonderful complexity and dignity;
 - 73 • give priority to the ministries of children, youth, and
74 families through trained leadership, finances, and
75 resources; and
 - 76 • work to strengthen the family and to create an intentional
77 partnership between the congregation and the home.
- 78 Educational ministry leadership will:
- 79 • support the pastors and other leaders who are called to be
80 teachers of the faith;
 - 81 • provide for the ongoing education of teachers;¹² and
 - 82 • draw on the resources and people available in this church
83 including ELCA program units and take advantage of
84 opportunities offered by our seminaries, colleges, and
85 lifelong learning centers.¹³

86 A vibrant congregational ministry in education for
87 children, youth, and adults carries out the biblical mandate “to
88 equip the saints” (Ephesians 4:12) and prepares them for their
89 vocation in daily life. It gives us hope that all of the
90 generations will have a living faith in the God who calls us.

91 **3. Will All Children and Youth Have 92 Access to High Quality Education?**

93 ***Schools for All***

94 “A city’s best and greatest welfare, safety, and strength consist
95 in its having many able, learned, wise, honorable, and well-
96 educated citizens.”¹⁴ So wrote Luther in his appeal to city
97 governments to establish schools. Then as now, effective
98 schools are a blessing to society, preparing students for their
99 future callings and responsibilities. In order that students will
100 be prepared for their callings and responsibilities, the ELCA
101 expects all schools—public, private, Lutheran, other religious
102 or home schools—to fulfill at least four purposes for students in
103 age-appropriate ways. Schools should:

- 104 1) prepare students academically;
- 105 2) encourage their personal flourishing, developing their
106 knowledge and wisdom and instilling a delight in
107 learning;
- 108 3) prepare students for productive work and financial
109 responsibility; and
- 110 4) equip them to live and serve in a complex, diverse,
111 and interdependent global society and to be
112 responsible and civil citizens.

113 High quality schools excel in accomplishing these purposes.

1 While public, religious, and private schools, as well as
2 home schooling, contribute to the common good of our society,
3 public schools remain the principal educational institutions for
4 children and youth from kindergarten through high school.
5 Most students in our society—nearly 90 percent—are enrolled
6 in public schools. These government-run and tax-supported
7 schools represent the most significant public commitment to
8 provide formal education for all young people.

9 The American and Puerto Rican societies rightly place
10 high expectations on public schools. In providing access to
11 education for all, public schools are to generate a more
12 equitable society. By bringing together students from all sectors
13 of society, they are to help nurture shared values, cultural
14 understanding, and social harmony. By developing the
15 potential of each student, they are to prepare students for work,
16 family life, and citizenship and thereby promote economic well-
17 being and the common good. Some also expect public schools
18 to help solve pressing social issues such as poor health,
19 violence, and poverty. Yet resources to support these
20 expectations compete with the demands of other public
21 responsibilities such as health, human services, and public
22 safety.

23 While public schools historically have enjoyed widespread
24 public support, in recent decades public discourse about them
25 often has been shaped by criticism and discontent. The ELCA
26 reaffirms its commitment to the concept and work of public
27 schools, and joins with others in seeking change where they do
28 not live up to expectations. Especially do we call for public
29 attention and action on behalf of those children and youth who
30 are not receiving a good education. The ELCA urgently
31 presses the question: Will all children and youth have access to
32 high quality education?

33 ***The Commitment to Public Schools***

34 Public schools vary in size, culture, and quality. The challenges
35 and opportunities they face differ according to their context,
36 and people's experiences with them vary. Recognizing both
37 this diversity and what is common about public schools, and
38 drawing upon our theology, the ELCA sets out certain
39 attitudes, guidelines, and expectations to inform its commit-
40 ment to public schools.

41 We of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America view
42 public schools with *gratitude*. We are grateful for the
43 educational achievements of public schools in the past and
44 present. We rejoice in the opportunity for education that
45 public schools offer to all children, including children who
46 suffer the effects of poverty and discrimination and to children
47 with special learning needs. We recognize how public schools
48 in various situations bring together children and youth from
49 many different social, economic, and ethnic backgrounds—
50 including those from new immigrant populations—for a
51 common education in a spirit of civic equality. We are
52 thankful for all who teach and work in and for public schools
53 with dedication, ability, and care.

54 The ELCA views public schools with *realism, hope, and*
55 *wisdom*. Because we recognize human limitations and the
56 power of sin, we are prepared to be critical where public schools
57 fall short, and we seek to be conscious of our own limitations

58 and how our self-interest may influence and distort our views.
59 Our faith in God keeps alive our hope to seek workable
60 solutions to seemingly insolvable problems, including those in
61 public education. This is a tough hope that calls for sustained
62 effort, not easy answers. It treasures wisdom and knowledge in
63 discerning what actions best serve the education of children
64 and youth.

65 This church understands the education of young people to
66 be a *shared responsibility*. Parents and schools as well as religious
67 bodies and community all share this responsibility. A
68 responsibility requires a corresponding right or authority to
69 fulfill it. Parents have primary, but not exclusive, responsibility
70 for the education of their children. This responsibility obligates
71 them to be involved in their children's education in home,
72 school, and congregation. It also gives parents the right to
73 select whether to send their children to public, religious, or
74 private schools or to home school them.

75 Because children are God's gifts to society and the Church
76 as well as to parents, society through government also has
77 responsibility and authority to provide for young people's
78 education. This responsibility and right are derived both from
79 parents' consent and from government's mandate to provide for
80 the common good and the well-being of those in its
81 jurisdiction. This responsibility gives government the right to
82 levy taxes for education, enact compulsory attendance laws, set
83 educational standards, and operate public schools. The shared
84 responsibility between parents and public schools and their
85 teachers should be one of partnership.

86 ***Expectations for Public Schools***

87 We of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America expect
88 schools to be *communities of learning and teaching*. Schools—all
89 schools—should strive above all to be communities in which
90 people with distinct roles join together in mutual respect
91 around the common concern for learning, teaching, and
92 knowing. Communities of learning and teaching ought to be
93 places of thoughtful and civil instruction and dialogue. In
94 addressing social needs (to reduce poverty or improve health,
95 for example), schools should do so principally as an educational
96 community, as occasions for learning and teaching. When
97 public schools perform other social functions for the best
98 interest of children (for example, providing breakfast or caring
99 for children after school), government should ensure they have
100 adequate resources in addition to resources supporting their
101 primary educational purpose. Their extracurricular oppor-
102 tunities in sports, the arts, and forensics should develop healthy
103 leadership and encourage strong academic performance.
104 School organization should facilitate schools' identity as
105 communities of learning and teaching.

106 In a community of learning students should learn to think
107 and read critically, write and speak clearly, and understand
108 math and science competently. They will know how to
109 analyze, reformulate, synthesize, and solve problems. They will
110 become acquainted with a wide variety of humanistic,
111 scientific, artistic, and practical subject matters. They will be
112 introduced both to the broadly accepted content of different
113 disciplines and to the processes and methods by which these
114 disciplines arrive at their conclusions. They will come to think

1 on their own, to ask questions, and to be creative in their
2 learning. They will learn to care for their health and how to
3 stay physically fit.

4 To prepare their students, schools require competent
5 leadership from principals and boards, good teachers and
6 counselors, research-based teaching methods and curricula,
7 adequate facilities and resources; parental and community
8 support and involvement; and eager students. When public
9 schools are not accomplishing these purposes adequately,
10 citizens have a responsibility to work to improve them. Public
11 attention to social and economic influences on student
12 readiness is also essential so that students are not hungry, in ill
13 health, or victims of violence or abuse.

14 The ELCA expects communities of learning and teaching
15 to be safe places. We recognize that school safety is an issue for
16 all students, staff, and teachers. Unfortunately, incidents of
17 bullying, intimidation, and other forms of violence are not
18 unusual. We affirm that personal safety and security are
19 essential for optimal teaching and learning.

20 This church affirms that public schools have a role in
21 *teaching and forming students to live morally in society*, what
22 Lutherans call “civil righteousness.” This task raises many
23 dilemmas in our pluralistic society. Yet no education is morally
24 neutral, and public schools do communicate moral beliefs and
25 values. Public schools, therefore, ought to teach the principles
26 and virtues of living together in responsible freedom in a
27 democratic society, which includes respect for the diverse
28 cultures and beliefs of their students. Moral education suited
29 for public schools will draw upon what the community holds in
30 common and teach in a fair and impartial way on those issues
31 on which the community is divided.¹⁵

32 This church expects public schools *to teach about religion* as
33 a vital part of human life and culture. When they do not teach
34 about religion, public schools leave students with a distorted
35 picture of the world. Public schools as government institutions
36 should not sponsor religious exercises such as prayer or
37 devotional reading of religious texts nor advocate for or against
38 any particular religion.¹⁶ They should, however, help their
39 students understand the importance of religion for individuals,
40 history, and contemporary life by teaching about the beliefs,
41 practices, and history of different religions in fair and
42 informative ways. This will require competent teachers and
43 good curricula.

44 The ELCA affirms the search for truth and meaning in its
45 many different forms. Public schools, therefore, should address
46 the full scope of human knowing, including the arts,
47 humanities, social and natural sciences, mathematics, and
48 technology. The curricula should present the best current
49 knowledge and method in each discipline. *In teaching the*
50 *natural and physical sciences*, we expect public schools *to*
51 *acknowledge the distinctions between them and religion*. Both ways
52 of knowing have their own integrity and limits in method and
53 purpose. While religion and faith provide subject matter and
54 methods to speak of God’s role in the origin and purpose of
55 creation, we do not claim that they provide a scientific account
56 of how the natural world functions. While the natural and
57 physical sciences have tested methods to describe and explain
58 the natural world and we learn from them, we do not look to

59 science to answer religious questions. Schools and teachers
60 should respect the distinct approaches to truth and knowledge
61 in the natural and physical sciences and religion, explore the
62 philosophical issues in their relationship, and recognize moral
63 questions that may arise from them and various proposed
64 answers to these questions.

65 **Expectations of this Church**

66 The ELCA encourages its congregations and pastors *to develop*
67 *strong connections with their public schools* for the sake of the
68 children in their communities. While respecting the other’s
69 purpose and character, congregations and public schools should
70 understand themselves to be allies in serving children and
71 youth.

- 72 • Congregations can join with public schools in affirming the
73 importance of education and countering views that
74 devalue or denigrate education.
- 75 • Congregations can ask their public schools how they can
76 assist students and provide space and volunteers for after-
77 school activities such as tutoring.
- 78 • Pastors and other rostered leaders can make themselves
79 available as resource people in teaching about religion, and
80 they and Lutheran social ministry organizations can be of
81 assistance when schools experience a crisis where
82 counseling and support are needed.
- 83 • In communities with release-time programs, congregations
84 and public schools have special opportunities to work
85 together in providing religious instruction for those
86 families who want it.
- 87 • Congregations should encourage members to be involved
88 in their schools, willing to serve in volunteer and elected
89 positions, and support teachers and students in their
90 calling.
- 91 • Congregations and public school officials can meet to
92 discuss scheduling of activities and events and other issues
93 of mutual interest.
- 94 • Lutheran and public schools can enter into mutually
95 beneficial relationships.
- 96 • Congregations and public schools can cooperate in
97 instructing teachers and students about how students may
98 appropriately exercise their religious freedom in public
99 schools, including the right of equal access for student-led
100 religious groups. Public schools are not “religion-free
101 zones”; voluntary and non-disruptive religious expressions
102 by students are permissible.¹⁷

103 **Equitable Access to High Quality** 104 **Education for All**

105 Because all are created in God’s image, all have equal worth
106 and dignity and should be treated accordingly. This belief
107 stands behind our strong support for our society’s expectation
108 that all young people have equitable access to high quality
109 schools. All students are entitled to good schools, and when
110 they receive a high quality education, society benefits. In
111 educating millions, public schools continue to achieve notable
112 successes in fulfilling this expectation.

113 Public schools have provided a widespread, high level of
114 education as the country’s scientific, technological, cultural,

1 and economic leadership demonstrates. Researchers differ,
2 however, on the quality of public school education. Some
3 argue that given the nature of public support and the resources
4 provided, public schools do well when compared to public
5 education systems in other countries. Others argue that public
6 schools are not meeting the challenges of an increasingly
7 complex and competitive global economy.¹⁸ All agree that
8 public schools face the enormous task of offering high-quality
9 education to prepare citizens and workers for today's
10 knowledge-based global world.

11 The ELCA's commitment to equitable access for all calls
12 us to attend to the glaring inequities in this country's schooling.
13 The disturbing reality persists that too many young people do
14 not have access to good public schools. This reality is most
15 pervasive in poor communities, especially where poverty is
16 intertwined with a history of racism and discrimination. More
17 than a half-century after the Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board*
18 *of Education* decision, many schools remain racially separate
19 and unequal,¹⁹ often in connection with residential segregation.
20 Schools where a substantial majority of students live in poverty
21 consistently represent schools with the fewest resources and
22 some of the lowest performances.²⁰ Federal, state, and district
23 funding often shortchange schools that serve students who
24 need the most support from their schools.²¹

25 The connection between persistent poverty along with
26 discrimination and lack of equitable access to high quality
27 schools means that many factors contribute to this society's
28 failure to educate all young people. People who are poor face
29 daily a vast assortment of interlocking hardships related to low-
30 paying jobs, inadequate housing in dangerous and unhealthy
31 environments, poor health and physical disabilities, disrupted
32 families, language barriers, unwise personal choices, as well as
33 inadequate schools. One of this society's greatest challenges is
34 to attend to all the factors that contribute to poverty. Good
35 schools alone cannot break the cycle of generational poverty,
36 yet they have an indispensable role in doing so. American and
37 Puerto Rican societies have an obligation to do all they can to
38 realize the dreams of children and youth who live in poverty
39 that education will improve their lives.

40 We of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,
41 therefore, commit ourselves to work with others for public
42 policies that boldly and consistently push toward ensuring that
43 all students have equitable access to high quality schools. We
44 oppose all forms of invidious or harmful discrimination. We
45 affirm that public schools and their teachers should set high
46 expectations for all students, challenge them all to achieve
47 these expectations, and have the means to meet these
48 expectations. Commitment to equitable access to high quality
49 schools for all, along with commitment to combat poverty in all
50 its dimensions, has great potential to improve the academic
51 performance of students who do not now have opportunity to
52 benefit from good education.²²

53 As a church body, the ELCA has the calling to focus public
54 attention on the vast inequities in our educational system, to
55 voice the hope and obligation of achieving equitable access to
56 high quality schools for all students, and to help create
57 conditions to deliberate about and act on that calling. As
58 individual Christians in our calling as citizens, we have

59 responsibility and competence to determine what specific
60 measures will most improve equitable access for all students to
61 high quality schools in our communities, states, and nation.

62 ***Evaluating Educational Reforms***

63 Citizens, political officeholders, educators, and researchers
64 representing a wide range of attitudes toward public schools
65 recognize that public schools should and can do better in
66 improving the performance of their students. When they are
67 considering any proposed school reform, we encourage all
68 citizens to evaluate it in terms of its appropriateness,
69 effectiveness, and cost. They should ask of a proposal:

- 70 • Does it improve educational quality for all students?
- 71 • Is it effective in enhancing student learning?
- 72 • Does it assist educators in their work?
- 73 • Is it affordable and sustainable?
- 74 • Does it protect students from invidious discrimination?
- 75 • Is it supported by reliable research?
- 76 • Is there a means to evaluate the results of the program and
77 decide if the program should be continued, modified, or
78 ended?

79 ***Moving Toward Equitable Access***

80 The ELCA calls upon its members to consider the following
81 measures:

82 ***Countering the Negative Effects of Poverty and Discrimination***

83 Because poverty and discrimination have such a large and
84 negative impact on student learning, this church calls for public
85 policies that give top priority to children and youth who do not
86 have equitable access to good education, both in large cities
87 and rural areas. This requires compensatory measures for
88 children and young people who are encumbered by social
89 disadvantages to increase their chances of equal opportunity for
90 a good education. This includes:

- 91 • providing resources and opportunities to overcome the
92 negative effects of poverty and injustice;
- 93 • broadening the tax base and funding strategies to achieve
94 adequate funding for every school;
- 95 • expanding and funding good early childhood education for
96 children in poverty, which increases the possibilities of
97 later educational success. Such education is a model for
98 developing other programs for students who live in poverty
99 and suffer discrimination;
- 100 • creating incentives to attract high quality teachers,
101 administrators, and staff to schools where most students
102 live in poverty. Such incentives will go beyond higher
103 salaries to include providing a supportive climate for
104 teachers to innovate and be more effective in their
105 instruction;
- 106 • involving parents and care givers in their children's
107 education through parental classes and other means; and
108 • creating opportunities for education that cross ethnic,
109 social, economic, and jurisdictional lines.

110 ***Equity in Funding***

111 Large discrepancies in per pupil funding in school districts
112 within the same state are a major barrier to equitable access to

1 high quality schools for all students. While increased funds by
2 themselves do not ensure better educational results, their
3 strategic investment can make a difference.²³ Moreover, equity
4 in funding among school districts is a matter of justice and is
5 mandated in most state constitutions. In states where per pupil
6 funding is vastly unequal (usually where school districts rely on
7 local property taxes for their revenue), citizens should work
8 actively to reform the funding system and tie such reforms to
9 measurable outcomes.²⁴

10 **School Choice**

11 A growing number of school districts and states seek to increase
12 the range of schools students can attend through policies that
13 establish magnet schools, open enrollment, charter schools, tax
14 credits, and vouchers. Research on this whole range of options
15 continues.²⁵ Many families and communities are encouraged by
16 the experiences of their children with these options,
17 particularly in urban neighborhoods. Increasing school options
18 appeals to the idea that parents and students can choose
19 among schools and to the belief that competition among
20 schools improves educational quality. It also recognizes that
21 there are diverse ways to educate young people. Others argue
22 that some of these options will increase racial segregation,
23 weaken public schools, benefit principally the privileged sectors
24 of society, and leave too many students in poor-performing
25 schools. The effects of each of these policies—or proposed
26 policies—need to be evaluated in the local context with a
27 special focus on whether or not the option improves
28 educational quality and offers greater opportunities for children
29 and youth living in poverty. ELCA members considering these
30 choice options are encouraged to study the ELCA’s 2001 social
31 policy resolution on school voucher proposals²⁶ as well as to use the
32 questions listed above under “Evaluating Education Reforms.”²⁷

33 **Accountability**

34 Public schools should be held accountable for educating all
35 their students, but how to do so is a source of ongoing
36 contention. What should the standards be? Who should set
37 them? What is their impact on student learning? What should
38 be the consequences for schools that fail to meet them? What
39 policies and funding exist to improve schools that do not reach
40 standards? Intended to spur academic achievement, federal
41 and state legislation holds public schools accountable by means
42 of standards and regular testing and by requiring change in low-
43 performing schools. The effects of such laws require continuing
44 assessment. Policies to implement accountability, therefore,
45 should address the whole education agenda, including to:

- 46 • provide for appropriate periodic adjustment in outcome
47 goals;
- 48 • evaluate academic progress with both qualitative and
49 quantitative measures;
- 50 • take into account the individual situation of students,
51 especially those who are negatively affected by language,
52 disabilities, or social disadvantages;
- 53 • provide, where indicated, adequate resources to implement
54 remediation and improve the quality of education in the
55 schools where students attend;
- 56 • offer, as a last resort, adequate alternatives for students
57 attending schools that consistently do not meet
58 performance standards; and

- 59 • give careful and comprehensive assessment to measure the
60 impact on student learning.

61 **Improving Educational Quality**

62 In addition to the above-mentioned reforms, efforts to improve
63 educational quality focus on every other aspect of public
64 schools. Proposals include:

- 65 • changing who controls public schools;
- 66 • restructuring school administration and organization;
- 67 • creating smaller schools in urban areas or consolidating
68 smaller schools in rural areas;
- 69 • reducing class size;
- 70 • extending school calendars or school hours;
- 71 • improving teacher and administrator education and
72 development;
- 73 • introducing merit pay;
- 74 • improving teaching methods and classroom environments;
75 and
- 76 • changing curricula.

77 What these and other reform proposals may mean varies
78 from context to context. In each context citizens will ask of
79 them basic questions such as those suggested above in
80 “Evaluating Education Reforms.”

81 **Counsel to Parents**

82 In some circumstances parents may be able to choose from
83 among a number of options to meet the educational needs of
84 their children, including public, magnet, private, charter,
85 religious schools, and home schooling. In these cases we urge
86 parents to be aware of the options and to consider:

- 87 • the special needs and gifts of their child;
- 88 • whether or not they desire a faith-based education for their
89 child;
- 90 • how well each option will achieve the purposes of
91 education (see page 20);
- 92 • how well the options prepare the student for life with and
93 for service to others in a complex, diverse, global society;
94 and
- 95 • the affordability of each option.

96 Because education is a shared responsibility, the ELCA
97 encourages parents to consult with others who may be of
98 assistance in making their decision.

99 **4. Will Our Church Have Schools and 100 Colleges? Will Our Schools and 101 Colleges Have a Church?**

102 **The Commitment to 103 Lutheran Educational Institutions**

104 In a living tradition devoted to educating in the faith for
105 vocation in the Church and world, it is not surprising to find
106 that institutions of learning and teaching have been integral
107 and vital to its life and mission. “When schools flourish,”
108 Luther was recorded as saying, “then things go well and the
109 church is secure. Let us have learned citizens and teachers.
110 The youth furnish recruits for the church; they are the source
111 of its well-being. If there were no schools, who would there be

1 to take our place when we die? In the church we are forced to
2 have schools. God has preserved the church through schools;
3 they are its conservatories.²⁸ Since the Reformation Lutherans
4 have taken on the demanding task of establishing and
5 maintaining educational institutions in hope and commitment
6 to equip a new generation to witness to the gospel and carry
7 out their vocation in society.

8 A steward of this tradition, the Evangelical Lutheran
9 Church in America has an extensive network of educational
10 institutions to benefit Church and society. In 2006, ELCA
11 congregations owned and operated 267 elementary schools, 18
12 high schools, and 1722 early childhood centers, involving more
13 than 225,000 students.²⁹ Twenty-eight colleges and univer-
14 sities are affiliated with this church, which enrolled nearly
15 58,000 students in 2007.³⁰ There are eight ELCA seminaries,
16 and dozens of centers and programs for continuing education.³¹
17 Under the auspices of the three seminary clusters, other
18 educational programs and institutions of the ELCA are joining
19 as interdependent lifelong learning partners with the seminaries
20 to expand access to lifelong learning in the faith for all the
21 baptized by building a theological education network. The
22 ELCA's Study of Theological Education, adopted by the
23 Churchwide Assembly in 1995, guides the building of this new
24 network.³²

25 What are the ELCA's hopes for and commitment to the
26 future of its schools (early childhood education centers through
27 high school), colleges, and universities? All are highly prized by
28 the constituencies that directly support and benefit from them,
29 yet they are too often not well known or appreciated by many
30 ELCA members. For the most part all must find their own
31 financial support. Yet we face an opportune moment. The
32 number of schools is growing, and many colleges and
33 universities are reclaiming their Lutheran connections. This
34 situation provokes the question: Will our schools and colleges
35 and universities have a church—laity, pastors, bishops,
36 congregations, synods, seminaries, and churchwide organization—
37 that affirms and supports them?

38 This church's fervent hope is that it be so. We affirm anew
39 our historic commitment to Lutheran schools and colleges and
40 universities and encourage its deepening and extension. If we
41 follow through on this commitment, then, yes, this church will
42 have vibrant schools and colleges and universities, benefitting
43 both Church and society and valued as indispensable
44 educational arms of this church's mission.

45 ***Lutheran Schools and Centers***

46 ELCA congregations are becoming increasingly involved in
47 offering preschool, elementary, and secondary education to
48 their surrounding neighborhoods. From 1995 to 2006 the
49 number of schools and centers grew by 15 percent, and many
50 congregations continue to express interest in beginning a
51 school or center.³³ This remarkable development means that
52 today nearly one of every five ELCA congregations operates
53 some type of school.

54 Through their schools and centers, congregations aim to
55 offer a strong academic education in a caring Christian
56 environment. By word and example, teachers, administrators,
57 and pastors seek to motivate students to learn and nurture

58 their gifts in service to others in response to God's love for
59 them. Students learn in a setting where they pray, sing, and
60 worship, and where they study the Bible, the Church's beliefs,
61 and Christian moral teachings. Families who send their
62 children to Lutheran schools and centers take on an extra
63 financial burden. Often families desire that their children be
64 firmly educated in the faith to prepare them for engaging
65 aspects of a culture that they perceive to be indifferent to or in
66 conflict with the Christian faith.

67 Lutheran schools and centers enroll students of different
68 religious, ethnic, cultural, and economic backgrounds. At least
69 17 percent of children who attended Lutheran schools in 2005
70 were people of color other than white, a percentage more than
71 five times higher than ELCA congregations as a whole.³⁴
72 Students and teachers are especially diverse in urban settings.
73 Through the care and witness of faculty, staff, pastor, and
74 congregational members, Lutheran schools and centers offer
75 students and their families opportunity to hear the gospel and,
76 if desired, to become part of the congregation. In so doing they
77 have proven to be a significant means of evangelizing
78 unchurched families. They also have been important in
79 educating many children who later became leaders in this
80 church and in society.

81 Lutheran schools and centers face many challenges in
82 offering excellent education in a caring Christian environment.
83 They work, for example, to maintain low tuition while
84 providing fair and adequate salaries for their staffs, to find
85 rightly qualified teachers and administrators, and to develop a
86 wholesome relationship between congregation and school and
87 center. Schools and centers serving the poorest neighborhoods
88 are often the most fragile, under resourced, and in need of the
89 most improvement.

90 We of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America view
91 Lutheran centers and schools as a significant part of this
92 church's mission; commend congregations that sponsor them;
93 and honor the teachers, administrators, staff, and pastors who
94 work in them. Wherever they exist, Lutheran schools and
95 centers should be an integral part of a congregation's witness to
96 the gospel and public service to the community. Congregations
97 should fulfill their responsibility to provide oversight, support,
98 and direction for their educational institutions.

99 ***Expectations of Lutheran Centers and Schools***

100 The ELCA expects our early childhood education centers and
101 schools to continue serving this church's mission by:

- 102 • promoting academic excellence in age-appropriate ways
103 according to accepted standards;
- 104 • reaching out to others with the good news of Jesus Christ;
- 105 • educating in the faith for vocation; and
- 106 • serving their community.

107 Lutheran schools and centers will offer a secure,
108 welcoming, and caring learning environment for children of all
109 cultural, ethnic, religious, and economic backgrounds. They
110 will provide scholarships for low-income students and involve
111 families in their children's education. Lutheran schools and
112 centers will offer service education and prepare students to be
113 responsible citizens and productive members of society. They
114 will work in partnership with other schools in their community.

1 **Expectations of this Church**

2 In order to provide a more supportive climate for enacting this
3 vision, the ELCA calls for renewed efforts to assist schools and
4 centers in areas that include:

- 5 • expecting churchwide and synodical leadership and ELCA
6 publications to promote Lutheran centers and schools;
- 7 • encouraging members to consider sending their children to
8 Lutheran centers and schools;
- 9 • preparing pastors, associates in ministry, deaconesses, and
10 diaconal ministers for service in congregations with centers
11 and schools;
- 12 • encouraging our seminaries, colleges, and universities to
13 prepare teachers, principals, pastors, and other staff for
14 Lutheran centers and schools both in their degree
15 programs and through in-service training;
- 16 • encouraging alliances for financial support for struggling
17 centers and schools, such as pairing congregations in
18 affluent areas with congregations in low-income areas;
- 19 • providing seed money to ensure that Lutheran centers and
20 schools have a good foundation in areas of defining
21 purpose, education, faith formation, governance,
22 administration, and finance;
- 23 • strengthening the network among Lutheran schools to
24 meet common opportunities and needs; and
- 25 • disseminating information on and ensuring equity in public
26 funding for all children as laws require and the United
27 States Constitution permits.

28 **Lutheran Colleges and Universities**

29 **A Tradition of Academic Excellence and Service**

30 “A Christian cobbler makes good shoes, not poor shoes with
31 little crosses on them,” Luther was reported to have said.³⁵
32 Likewise, Lutherans, out of commitment to the common good,
33 have insisted that their colleges and universities have a first
34 duty to be excellent schools. This has been and continues to
35 be the case. Following the example of Luther’s and Philip
36 Melancthon’s leadership at the time of the Reformation,
37 Lutheran colleges and universities have conceived of education
38 in holistic terms and shaped their academic programs in the
39 liberal arts tradition. Today they appear regularly in lists of the
40 best regional and national colleges.

41 ELCA colleges and universities perform valuable service to
42 Church and society. At their best, they offer an excellent
43 curriculum that aims at educating the whole person. Their
44 emphasis on broad and integrated learning and critical thinking
45 equips students for a whole life. Within this liberal arts context
46 they prepare students for professions in education, health care,
47 science, technology, social work, the arts, business, law, and
48 other specific callings, and they provide many future pastors
49 and other future leaders in this church with a well-rounded
50 education.

51 Furthermore, ELCA colleges and universities find
52 excellent ways to introduce their students to the essential
53 questions of meaning and purpose. Many prominently feature
54 the Lutheran teaching on vocation—that the purpose of life is
55 to serve God and the neighbor in one’s callings in everyday life.
56 More specifically, many ELCA colleges and universities also
57 educate students in the faith by offering—and often

58 requiring—courses in Bible, theology, church history, and
59 ethics. They help students engage the intellectual claims of the
60 faith with the claims of other disciplines.³⁶ They sustain strong
61 programs of service to the neighbor in both local and global
62 settings. They offer opportunities for worship, Bible study,
63 mentoring, and participation in strong music programs that
64 praise God. When they take their heritage seriously, they
65 impart a vision of the world in which Christian faith plays the
66 central integrating role. Graduates testify and a comprehensive
67 national survey confirms that Lutheran colleges and
68 universities have a positive and lasting impact on students in
69 matters related to academic quality, faith, ethics, civic
70 engagement, and church affiliation and leadership.³⁷

71 **The Changing Context**

72 In the history of higher education in the United States, many
73 church-founded institutions of higher learning have disengaged
74 from their sponsoring churches—some totally, some partially.
75 Nearly all church-related colleges have experienced some
76 measure of disengagement from both the institutional church
77 and from the religious heritage that once influenced nearly
78 every facet of the college’s life. ELCA colleges and universities
79 represent a broad range on the spectrum of engagement. Most
80 have maintained a significant connection with their Lutheran
81 heritage, and many are giving renewed attention to their
82 Christian identity in a world of many faiths and cultures.

83 ELCA colleges and universities persist in their mission as
84 church-related colleges in the midst of a sharply changing
85 environment that brings both opportunity and challenge. The
86 major opportunity is that they will continue to be excellent
87 schools that bring the Lutheran voice to bear in an increasingly
88 global, ecumenical, diverse, and competitive educational scene.
89 This church’s colleges and universities can continue to embody
90 in a vastly new environment a persuasive vision of Christian
91 higher education that is embedded in the Lutheran tradition.
92 Especially encouraging are the vigorous global outreach
93 programs on many campuses, the affirmation of Lutheran
94 distinctiveness in a changing and sometimes hostile culture,
95 and the growing cultural and ethnic diversity in many settings.
96 Among the challenges are that our colleges and universities
97 might lose their connection with the Christian heritage
98 completely, that they may lose their academic vitality due to
99 inadequate resources, that their costs might exceed the
100 financial resources of most Lutherans, or that they may not
101 achieve the diversity they seek.

102 **Life in Relationship**

103 A strong and vibrant relationship between this church and its
104 institutions of higher learning assumes mutual commitments.
105 In shaping the future of that relationship, this church may ask
106 whether or not its colleges and universities are authentically
107 and recognizably Christian in the Lutheran tradition, urging
108 them to manifest that identity. Conversely, colleges and
109 universities that are faithful to their Christian character may
110 ask whether or not this church vigorously supports them: Will
111 congregations encourage students to consider an ELCA college
112 or university? Will pastors and bishops promote them? Will
113 ELCA high school graduates attend our colleges and

1 universities? In these matters the ELCA will need to manifest
2 its commitment to its colleges and universities.

3 Due to shrinking resources and competing priorities, there
4 has been a forty-year decline in churchwide and synodical
5 financial support for colleges and universities. The ELCA is
6 grateful that Lutheran colleges and universities have developed
7 alternative sources of financial support, and many individual
8 Lutherans are generous and faithful benefactors. It has
9 provided advocacy and support, maintained a strong network
10 among college leaders, provided leadership development
11 opportunities for faculty and staff, nurtured the conversation
12 between faith and learning, and provided valuable research to
13 assist the colleges and universities in their mission. Fortress
14 Press, the academic arm of this church's publishing ministry,
15 continues to publish texts in biblical studies, theology, ethics,
16 and pastoral care that are used widely in ELCA colleges and
17 universities as well as in this church's seminaries.

18 In the future as in the past, the survival and flourishing of
19 ELCA colleges and universities will depend on a delicate
20 ecology of school, church, and family. Where the colleges and
21 universities live out their calling as significant ventures in
22 Lutheran education, churches and families demonstrate
23 interest and confidence in those institutions. Without the
24 churches and families that give important support to Lutheran
25 ventures in education, the colleges and universities may re-
26 define themselves and their missions for people who will
27 support them. The ecology that once made Lutheran colleges,
28 churches, and families a viable interdependent organism must
29 be shaped in ways that respond to these new realities and
30 opportunities.

31 The ELCA, therefore, urges its colleges and universities
32 and this church in all its expressions to maintain their
33 connections where they are strong, strengthen them where they
34 are weak, and rebuild them where they are lacking. It calls for
35 mutually beneficial relationships built on trust, commitment,
36 and collaboration.

37 **Expectations of ELCA Colleges and Universities**

38 In such a relationship the ELCA expects that its colleges and
39 universities will:

- 40 • reaffirm their commitment to maintain a living connection
41 with the Christian faith;
- 42 • offer excellent, broad education in service to Church and
43 society in a setting of academic freedom;
- 44 • educate in the faith with courses in Bible, Lutheran
45 theology, church history, and ethics;
- 46 • serve as incubators for the discovery of knowledge,
47 preserve it in scholarly collections, and communicate it
48 through scholarly publications;
- 49 • nurture an ongoing dialogue between the claims of the
50 Christian faith and the claims of the many academic
51 disciplines as well as explore issues at the crossroads of life;
- 52 • feature prominently the Lutheran teaching on vocation;
- 53 • embody important elements—worship, music and the arts,
54 service, personal moral standards, international education—
55 as part of the ongoing Lutheran ethos;
- 56 • maintain programs that serve as a liaison between the
57 college or university and the various expressions of this
58 church; and

- 59 • continue to attempt to make it financially possible for
60 qualified students—especially Lutheran students—who
61 desire to attend a Lutheran college or university to do so.

62 **Expectations of this Church**

63 To make the relationship a mutual one, this church also
64 expects that:

- 65 • the presiding bishop and synodical bishops will voice
66 persistently and persuasively their commitment to our
67 colleges and universities;
- 68 • the churchwide organization will demonstrate persistently
69 and persuasively its commitment to this church's colleges
70 and universities;
- 71 • the churchwide organization will continue its consultative
72 and informative roles with ELCA colleges and universities
73 and foster contact and collaboration among them;
- 74 • synods will support colleges and universities on their
75 territory in intentional and visible ways;
- 76 • colleges and universities, seminaries, synods, schools, and
77 other ELCA institutions and ministries will initiate and
78 welcome partnerships with one another;
- 79 • congregations will support colleges in helping them recruit
80 students and in aiding students financially who attend
81 ELCA colleges and universities;
- 82 • ELCA youth and their parents will give careful
83 consideration to Lutheran colleges and universities; and
- 84 • advocacy ministries will call on lawmakers to find means
85 of public support for students to attend private and
86 religious colleges and universities and urge lawmakers in
87 those states that make grants to students going to private
88 colleges to maintain them at the highest level possible.

89 This church individually and corporately should give its
90 schools, colleges, and universities its full loyalty and support so
91 that they faithfully and competently exercise their calling in
92 education.

93 **Supporting Lifelong Learning**

94 Education is a lifelong process and takes a variety of forms,
95 involving non-formal learning experiences as well as each
96 person's own more formal discipline and study. This ongoing
97 learning may occur in museums, art galleries, planetariums,
98 aquariums, theaters, concert halls, zoos, botanical gardens,
99 nature preserves, book clubs, travel programs, and lecture
100 series. We of the ELCA value and support these non-formal
101 institutions and activities. We also affirm the more formal role
102 of public universities, colleges, and other educational
103 institutions in providing a broad range of extension and
104 continuing education programs that serve an increasingly
105 diverse adult population. We welcome the opportunities for
106 learning provided by new forms of electronic communication.

107 Just as many congregations offer quality educational
108 experiences for people of all ages to continue to grow in their
109 faith, our Lutheran colleges and universities, seminaries,
110 lifelong learning partners, and outdoor ministries also offer
111 opportunities for lifelong learning in knowledge of the faith as
112 well as in knowledge of the world. The ELCA commends
113 Lutheran colleges and universities for expanding their
114 academic programs to serve the needs of non-traditional

1 students for both graduate and undergraduate studies. We also
2 commend our seminaries and other study centers of this church
3 for responding to the learning needs of both lay and rostered
4 leaders in congregations as well as to the desire of adults of all
5 ages for personal growth in faith and knowledge through
6 lifelong learning.

7 We urge the churchwide organization to continue to
8 provide leadership and support to the institutions and agencies
9 of the church that provide these essential educational services
10 and to encourage them to deepen their interdependent
11 partnership in a network that educates for vocation. In order
12 that lifelong learning be encouraged and well-resourced, the
13 full range of teaching institutions and programs in this church
14 should continue their progress toward fulfillment of the vision
15 of the ELCA's Study of Theological Education, deepening their
16 emerging partnerships with the three seminary clusters to form
17 an interdependent network of education providers throughout
18 this church. Only such a network for lifelong learning is
19 adequate both to our calling in education and the callings of all
20 learners.

21 5. Will Public Higher Education 22 Serve the Common Good?

23 *Expectations for Public Universities and Colleges*

24 Higher education in the United States embraces a broad range
25 of religious, private, and public colleges and universities. These
26 academic institutions vary in their philosophy of education,
27 history, culture, quality, specialties, cost, size, and status. This
28 variety gives vitality to higher education, making it one of our
29 country's strongest assets.

30 Public institutions are the most numerous institutions of
31 higher education and serve the most students. Public four-year
32 colleges and universities, public community colleges, and
33 technical colleges provide the primary access point to higher
34 education for millions of people of all economic classes and
35 every racial and ethnic group, including thousands of
36 international students. As public institutions, we as citizens
37 share responsibility for them. Their future is vital to the
38 common good, which we are to serve and promote as part of
39 our vocation.

40 Institutions providing technical education make important
41 contributions to the common good by preparing skilled
42 professionals for careers in a wide range of trades and
43 professions. Individuals prepared for these occupations are
44 enabled to make their way in society and to serve their
45 neighbors in practical ways.

46 We of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America look
47 to all colleges and universities to transmit knowledge through
48 teaching, advance knowledge through research, preserve
49 knowledge in scholarly collections, and communicate
50 knowledge through publications.³⁸ They thereby contribute to
51 the common good by connecting their knowledge to the world
52 in which we live. Public universities and colleges do these
53 things across a wide spectrum of disciplines. They teach
54 undergraduate students the humanities, arts, languages, and
55 sciences; and their post-graduate programs educate professors
56 and other professions such as doctors, lawyers, and scientists.

57 Public universities along with many private universities are
58 centers of basic scientific research and technological
59 development. Their libraries and Internet resources make vast
60 learning available, and publications by their professors
61 profoundly influence our culture. They also sponsor continuing
62 education for adults who have concluded formal degree
63 programs but wish to continue learning throughout their lives.

64 *The Commitment to Public Higher Education*

65 Lutherans have long had a commitment to public higher
66 education. The ELCA is grateful for the role public universities
67 and colleges play in preparing people—including most
68 Lutherans who attend college—to act competently in their
69 callings and responsibilities. Because knowledge of how the
70 world functions and learning how to learn continue to benefit
71 both individuals and society, we encourage vigorous public
72 support for the many institutions of higher learning. As
73 society's expectation increases about how many years of
74 schooling people should have, the importance of public
75 universities and colleges also increases.

76 The ELCA honors and supports the broad network of
77 community and technical colleges and their students, faculties,
78 and staffs. These institutions of higher education provide
79 strategic opportunities for many students who wish to continue
80 their education and obtain training in sought-for practical
81 skills. In addition to preparing students for their careers, these
82 educational institutions often invigorate the economies of their
83 communities.

84 The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America expects all
85 universities and colleges to be places of free inquiry that exhibit
86 intellectual honesty, the disciplined search for knowledge and
87 truth, and civility. We support the academic freedom of public
88 higher education and oppose its restriction for ideological or
89 political reasons. We expect that the diversity of perspectives
90 among professors will enable public universities and colleges to
91 be settings for genuine dialog on the major ideas and values
92 that shape and often create controversy in our society.

93 Universities and colleges are charged to engage in ongoing
94 discussion about what counts as knowledge in contrast to
95 ignorance and misunderstanding. The boundaries and shape
96 of this discussion change as new discoveries are made. This has
97 led to new areas of inquiry such as the history of religion. It
98 also has led to the study of peoples and cultures that may have
99 been ignored or excluded, in the past. This church challenges
100 and encourages public universities and colleges to take up the
101 full range of religious traditions and their intellectual content
102 as legitimate participants in their search for knowledge and
103 truth.

104 The extraordinary growth of higher education since World
105 War II is closely tied to the increased emphasis it gives to
106 occupational education.³⁹ College and university education has
107 become the principal—almost exclusive—way for people to
108 gain access to higher earnings and occupational or professional
109 status. Most students today look to their college education
110 chiefly as a means for them to become well-off financially.⁴⁰
111 The danger is that occupational purposes will overwhelm
112 moral, civic, and intellectual goals.

113 Concern for the purpose of life, justice and neighbor, and
114 the common good are central to nearly all religions and

1 intrinsic to our civic values. We, therefore, commend and
2 encourage renewal of disciplines in which these matters are
3 examined, such as the humanities, the arts, and the social
4 sciences. We commend efforts in higher education to engage
5 students in service learning, and we applaud student-led groups
6 that struggle with questions of life's purpose and society's good.
7 On campuses where many students ask such questions,⁴¹
8 Lutheran campus ministry takes on special significance.

9 ***This Church's Presence and Campus Ministry***

10 The ELCA is present in public universities and colleges, as well
11 as private ones, through students, professors, administrators,
12 and staff living out their calling in these institutions. More
13 Lutherans teach at public and non-Lutheran private
14 universities and colleges than do at Lutheran institutions.
15 Many of them not only perform their callings with excellence
16 but also provide models of Christian teaching and the
17 engagement of faith and learning. All have opportunities to
18 witness to their faith. We celebrate those who carry on these
19 tasks and encourage this church to support them.

20 ***Lutheran Campus Ministry***

21 This church also is present in these institutions of learning
22 through campus ministries. Lutherans launched their first foray
23 into intentional ministry on public campuses in 1907 at the
24 University of Wisconsin–Madison Campus. A century later
25 there are nearly 200 recognized ELCA campus ministries that
26 receive churchwide and/or synodical annual operating grants.
27 In addition, more than 400 Cooperating Congregations in
28 Campus Ministry carry on some form of outreach to a nearby
29 campus.⁴² In some places, this ministry is ecumenical and
30 carried on in partnership with other denominations.

31 Campus ministry in this church “invites people in
32 academic settings more deeply into Jesus Christ and the
33 community that bears his name, so that they discover and fulfill
34 their vocation as disciples.”⁴³ This ministry gives young adults
35 on campus opportunity to participate in the life of the Church
36 and deepen their faith during an important time of their lives
37 when they are experiencing change, growth, and challenge.

38 ***Expectations of Campus Ministry***

39 Lutheran campus ministry is an integral part of our calling in
40 education. Many former students testify to ways in which
41 campus ministry helped them grow in their understanding of
42 their faith and vocation as they gained new knowledge. As it
43 has done for decades, this ministry continues to provide leaders
44 for Church and society. The ELCA expects its campus
45 ministries to:

- 46 • be worshiping communities that proclaim the gospel and
47 celebrate the sacraments;
- 48 • educate in the faith, teaching the Bible and Christian
49 doctrine, exploring Christian perspectives on ultimate
50 questions, and creating settings for students, staff, and
51 professors to ask questions and to discuss their concerns;
- 52 • call students to live out their baptismal vocation,
53 challenging them to regard their learning itself as a worthy
54 calling and providing them with theological wisdom to
55 accompany their growing learning and technical
56 competence;

- 57 • engage faith and learning, showing how faith and its
58 knowledge deepen and enliven learning in the classroom,
59 library, and laboratory and how that learning deepens and
60 enlivens faith and its knowledge;
- 61 • model thoughtful and respectful dialogue on controversial
62 issues;
- 63 • provide opportunities for service in Church and society;
64 and
- 65 • offer opportunities for friendships, fun, and community life.

66 Campus ministries face the challenge of both nurturing
67 Lutheran students and reaching out to seekers. On campuses
68 where other ministries attract more students, Lutheran campus
69 ministers will ask why and explore their own relevance and
70 vitality. Campus ministries sometimes face the tension of
71 addressing controversial issues on campus while being
72 communities that welcome individuals with different view-
73 points. While some students may consider a certain attitude as
74 prophetic, others who disagree may feel unwelcome, perceiving
75 that promoting the issue has come to define the ministry more
76 than the gospel that unites them. Limited resources may often
77 mean campus ministries are unable to meet the diverse
78 expectations and opportunities presented to them.

79 ***Expectations of This Church***

80 Lack of financial support threatens campus ministries in many
81 places. Most depend almost entirely on funds from outside
82 sources, primarily from synods and the churchwide
83 organization, which have been in a forty-year decline. Let us
84 be fully aware of the growing crisis in this church's ministry to
85 a large, influential segment of young adults living and studying
86 at public (and private) universities and colleges. In reaffirming
87 its ministry on these campuses, the ELCA calls for creative
88 action to support campus ministry that takes into account
89 opportunities, challenges, and resource constraints. This action
90 includes:

- 91 • calling upon the presiding bishop, synodical bishops,
92 pastors, and other leaders to support this church's campus
93 ministry;
- 94 • urging congregations to alert their students on non-
95 Lutheran campuses about Lutheran campus ministry;
- 96 • encouraging congregations near colleges and universities
97 to reach out to professors, students, and staff of these
98 institutions; and
- 99 • thinking in new ways about how we establish and maintain
100 campus ministries which may involve new models of
101 ministry, of partnership, and of staffing and support.

102 ***Will Students Have Access to Higher Education?***

103 Higher education in the United States has long been seen as
104 the portal of opportunity to upward mobility and the realization
105 of the American dream. Following World War II, the GI Bill
106 provided educational opportunity for millions of veterans and
107 fueled a vigorous postwar economy and a growing middle class.
108 Higher education, then and now, enables individuals to
109 transcend the boundaries of class and race and contributes to
110 the economic and civic well being of the nation.

111 The high cost borne by students and their families,
112 however, is limiting access to higher education, depriving many
113 individuals of opportunity and depriving society of highly

1 educated citizens. The cost of higher education has grown
2 substantially in recent years, significantly outpacing inflation in
3 the rest of the economy. This cost is funded from four sources:
4 • tuition paid by students and their families;
5 • charitable contributions of individuals, corporations, and
6 foundations;
7 • financial assistance in the form of grants, loans, and work;
8 and
9 • in the case of public education, direct appropriations from
10 state or local government.

11 In recent years financial assistance and direct
12 appropriations have declined in relationship to the growth in
13 the cost of education, and charitable contributions have not
14 made up the difference. As a result, the burden upon students
15 and their families has grown. This high and growing cost to
16 students prevents many, including people who live in poverty,
17 from pursuing a college degree.⁴⁴

18 In spite of the general acknowledgment that educated
19 citizens are key to this country's economic vitality and that
20 more needs to be done to provide equitable access for all, public
21 investment in higher education has been declining for some
22 time relative to its rising cost. Funding for federal and state
23 grants to students lags behind increases in educational costs,
24 and state subsidies to public colleges and universities fail to
25 keep pace with increased costs.⁴⁵ In addition, college- and
26 university-funded aid has increased for middle and upper-
27 income students at the expense of students from low-income
28 families.⁴⁶

29 The consequences of this trend limit equitable access and
30 jeopardize academic quality. Specifically:

- 31 • Students are carrying increasingly larger debt loads and
32 requiring more time to complete their education.⁴⁷
- 33 • While college completion rates have improved among all
34 income groups over the past thirty years, the gaps in
35 completion rates between students who are affluent and
36 those who are poor have increased.⁴⁸

37 Although the growth of community colleges is a promising
38 development, lack of funding weakens our country's leadership
39 in higher education and compromises our capacity to meet the
40 educational requirements of an increasingly knowledge-based
41 world. Colleges and universities are being stretched thin in
42 their capacity to provide high quality education, and, most
43 importantly, equity in educational opportunity.

44 ELCA colleges and universities have responded to this
45 situation with a variety of scholarship and grant programs of
46 their own, several with considerable success as seen in the
47 relatively strong enrollment of people of color and from low-
48 and middle-income families. For most colleges and universities,
49 however, it is impossible to close the opportunity gap created
50 by inadequate state and federal funding for students' financial
51 aid. As a consequence, many low- and middle-income families
52 find it difficult if possible to access this church's colleges, and
53 the colleges struggle to extend financial aid while maintaining
54 academic quality and financial viability.

55 In light of this situation, the ELCA calls upon its advocacy
56 ministry to support adequate funding for higher education to
57 increase equitable access, and urges members as citizens to
58 consider how public policy can improve equitable access to
59 higher education. The ELCA urges the following public policy
60 remedies:

- 61 • increase state and federal funds for need-based financial
62 assistance;
- 63 • support targeted incentive programs for low-income and
64 under-represented groups;
- 65 • increase state subsidies to public institutions as a way of
66 ameliorating tuition increases; and
- 67 • increase efficiency wherever feasible.

68 We also:

- 69 • urge ELCA colleges and universities to continue to seek
70 ways to help redress the growing opportunity gap;
- 71 • encourage members to help fund scholarships for low-
72 income students and congregations to provide scholarship
73 assistance to their students who attend ELCA colleges;
- 74 • affirm this church's practice of providing financial
75 assistance to ELCA colleges and universities as a sign of
76 continuing commitment to them; and
- 77 • call upon the churchwide organization to work with synods
78 to expand scholarships for United States and international
79 students who need assistance.

80 Living Our Calling

81 We of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America give
82 thanks to God whose gracious gift of new life in baptism frees
83 us for the vocation to love our neighbor and contribute to the
84 common good in our places of responsibility in daily life. We
85 are grateful that God, who has created humans with ability to
86 learn, teach, and know, blesses human life through education.
87 We pray that the Holy Spirit will sustain, renew, and transform
88 us as we live our calling in education in this church and society
89 with its many amazing opportunities and daunting challenges.
90 May we in this calling exhibit the character of our new life in
91 Christ, to which St. Paul summons us: "Do not be conformed
92 to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your
93 minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what
94 is good and acceptable and perfect" (Romans 12:2). May we
95 faithfully and boldly be a teaching and learning church,
96 educating in the faith for vocation and striving with others so
97 that all people have equitable access to a high quality education.

98 Endnotes

99 ¹ "To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany That They Establish and
100 Maintain Christian Schools," 1524, ed. Walther I. Brandt, *Luther's Works*, 45
101 (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1962), 339-378. See also, "A Sermon on
102 Keeping Children in School," 1530, ed. Robert C. Schultz, *Luther's Works*, 46
103 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), 207-258.

104 ² *The Book of Concord. The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, eds.
105 Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000),
106 345-375.

107 ³ The quotations in the text are from the Apostles' Creed, *Book of Concord*, 21-
108 22. The social statement follows the Apostles' Creed and Luther's
109 explanations of this creed in his catechisms in connecting one of the persons
110 of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—with a particular work of God:
111 creation, redemption, and sanctification. The Christian tradition also teaches
112 that the whole Trinity and all three persons of the Trinity in communion with
113 one another are agents of creation, redemption, and sanctification.

114 ⁴ See "The Augsburg Confession," Article XVI, for how the Lutheran
115 confessions affirm civil affairs and distinguish the justice and goodness of civil
116 affairs from "the eternal righteousness of the heart" transmitted by the gospel.
117 *The Book of Concord*, 49. In the *Apology to the Augsburg Confession*, Philip

1 Melancthon speaks often of civil righteousness in distinction from the
2 righteousness before God given in the gospel. "Civil righteousness that reason
3 understands" deals with "the commandments of the second table" of the Ten
4 Commandments. Ibid., 125.

5 ⁵ "The Large Catechism," *The Book of Concord*, 386.

6 ⁶ *Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective*, the first ELCA social statement,
7 called on this church to be "a community of moral deliberation," 5-6, 7-8.
8 That social statement was adopted by the 1991 Churchwide Assembly. The
9 seven subsequent social statements adopted by the ELCA as well as the 11
10 messages adopted by the ELCA Church Council provide resources and
11 guidance on various societal topics that are often the subject of education in
12 this church. This social statement assumes what these social statements and
13 messages say on topics related to education, such as economic justice, care for
14 creation, racism, and health care. ELCA social statements and messages are
15 online (www.elca.org/socialstatements).

16 ⁷ For a more complete development of the following six themes on which the
17 text depends, see Marcia J. Bunge, "Rediscovering the Dignity and Complexity
18 of Children: Resources from the Christian Tradition," *Journal of Lutheran Ethics*
19 4, 1 (January 2004). Online at www.elca.org/jle/article.asp?k=165. These major
20 themes were published in Bunge's articles, "The Child, Religion, and the
21 Academy: Developing Robust Theological and Religious Understandings of
22 Children and Childhood," *Journal of Religion* 84, 4 (October 2006), and "A
23 More Vibrant Theology of Childhood," *Christian Reflection* 8 (2003), 11-19.

24 ⁸ See Merton P. Strommen and Richard Hardel, *Passing on the Faith: A Radical*
25 *New Model for Youth and Family Ministry* (Winona, Minn.: St Mary's Press,
26 2000), 14. According to one survey of youth and adults cited in the book, for
27 example, "only 9 percent reported holding family devotions with any degree of
28 regularity."

29 ⁹ In studying the religious lives of teenagers, Christian Smith concludes that at
30 the level of consciousness, "adolescent religious and spiritual understanding
31 and concern seem to be generally very weak. Most U.S. teens have a difficult
32 to impossible time explaining what they believe, what it means, and what the
33 implications of their beliefs are for their lives" (262). Most Protestant teens in
34 effect discard the belief of salvation by grace and faith alone to voice the idea
35 that they are saved by living a morally good life (136). Smith suggests that the
36 dominant religion among contemporary teens is what he calls "Moralistic
37 Therapeutic Deism" (162ff). Christian Smith with Melinda Lundquist Denton,
38 *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (New
39 York: Oxford Press, 2005).

40 ¹⁰ In the liturgy for Holy Baptism, parents and sponsors pledge that they will
41 "faithfully bring [their children] to the services of God's house, and teach them
42 the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments. As they grow in
43 years, you should place in their hands the Holy Scriptures and provide for their
44 instruction in the Christian faith, that, living in the covenant of their Baptism
45 and in communion with the Church, they may lead godly lives until the day of
46 Jesus Christ." *Lutheran Book of Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing
47 House, 1978), 121.

48 ¹¹ For information about ELCA Outdoor Ministry see www.elca.org/camps.

49 ¹² Visit the Christian Education page on the Web site of the Evangelical
50 Outreach and Congregational Mission unit for resources and support for
51 congregational teachers (www.elca.org/christianeducation). See also the book
52 written by Christian education professors in our seminaries: *The Ministry of*
53 *Children's Education: Foundations, Contexts, and Practices*, with an Introduction
54 by Margaret A. Krych (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004).

55 ¹³ For more information on these resources and opportunities, visit the ELCA
56 Web page (www.elca.org) and the Web page of the ELCA Publishing House
57 (www.augsburgfortress.org). For information on lifelong learning and links to
58 ELCA colleges and seminaries, go to www.elca.org/vocationeducation.

59 ¹⁴ "To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany That They Establish and
60 Maintain Christian Schools," *Luther's Works*, 45, 356.

61 ¹⁵ Among other possibilities, the character education movement offers various
62 models for consideration (see www.character.org).

63 ¹⁶ We reaffirm the position of the social statements of the Lutheran Church in
64 America and The American Lutheran Church that supported the U.S.
65 Supreme Court's decisions in 1962 and 1963 declaring it unconstitutional for
66 states to require religious exercises in public schools and permitting public
67 schools to teach about religion. See *Prayer and Bible Reading in the Public*
68 *Schools*, social statement of the Lutheran Church in America (1964), and
69 *Church-State Relations in the USA*, social statement of The American Lutheran
70 Church (1966). They are online at the Web site of *Journal of Lutheran Ethics*
71 (www.elca.org/jle).

72 ¹⁷ The Web site of The First Amendment Center ([www.fac.org/rel_liberty/](http://www.fac.org/rel_liberty/publicschools/Index.aspx)
73 publicschools/Index.aspx) provides helpful resources on religious liberty in public
74 schools. It includes the important consensus document developed by
75 individuals representing very different views, "Public Schools and Religious
76 Communities."

77 ¹⁸ For those who argue that public schools are doing well compared to other
78 countries, see Gerald W. Bracey, *The War Against America's Public Schools:*
79 *Privatizing Schools, Commercializing Education* (Needham Heights, Mass.: Allyn
80 and Bacon, 2002) and Bruce J. Biddle and Lawrence J. Saha, *The Untested*
81 *Accusation: Principals, Research Knowledge, and Policy Making in Schools*
82 (Westport, Conn.: Ablex Publishing, 2002). Those who do not think that
83 public schools are meeting today's challenges argue: "Having reviewed trends
84 in the United States and abroad, the committee is deeply concerned that the
85 scientific and technical building blocks of our economic leadership are eroding
86 at a time when many other nations are gathering strength." *Rising Above the*
87 *Gathering Storm: Energizing and Employing America for a Brighter Economic*
88 *Future*, Committee on Prospering in the Global Economy, created by the
89 National Academy of Sciences, National Academy of Engineering, and
90 Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, "Executive Summary"
91 (2005), 4 (www.nap.edu/execsumm_pdf/11463.pdf). Among the "worrisome
92 indicators" the committee noted are: "US 12th graders recently performed
93 below the international average for 21 countries on a test of general knowledge
94 in mathematics and science." And "In 1999, only 41% of US 8th grade
95 students received instruction from a mathematics teacher who specialized in
96 mathematics, considerably lower than the international average of 71%."

97 ¹⁹ "One-sixth of the country's black students now attend virtually all non-white
98 schools, many of which are impoverished, and only one-seventh of the whites
99 attend multiracial schools, defined as those with 10 percent or more minority
100 enrollment." David K. Shipler, *The Working Poor: Invisible in America* (New
101 York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004), 294.

102 ²⁰ For example, according to the National Center for Educational Statistics'
103 publication "Dropout Rates in the United States: 2001": "In 2001, students
104 living in low-income families were six times more likely than their peers in
105 high-income families to drop out of high school over the one-year period of
106 October 2000 to 2001 (table 1). (Low income is defined as the lowest 20
107 percent of all family incomes, while high income refers to the top 20 percent
108 of income distribution.)" While the national dropout rate from high school is
109 10.7 percent, more than 25 percent of young people in virtually every large city
110 leave high school without graduating (www.nces.ed.gov/pubs2005/dropout2001).

111 ²¹ A new study, *Funding Gaps 2006*, documents how school financial policy at
112 the federal, state, and district levels systematically stacks the decks against
113 schools that serve low-income students and students of color. The study was
114 prepared by The Education Trust (www2.edtrust.org).

115 ²² See the 1999 ELCA social statement *Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All*
116 for a comprehensive perspective for combating poverty. For the ELCA's stance
117 against racism, see the 1993 social statement, *Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity,*
118 *and Culture*.

119 ²³ See Eric A. Hanushek, "The Alchemy of 'Costing Out' an Adequate
120 Education." Unpublished paper, 2005, Program on Education Policy and
121 Governance, Harvard University. This paper can be found at
122 <http://edpro.stanford.edu/hanushek/admin/pages/files/uploads/alchemy.revision.pdf>

123 ²⁴ "In 2005 funding systems had been challenged in 36 states on the basis that
124 inter-district funding was inequitable. Increasingly, cases are focusing on the
125 inadequacy of funding in achieving learning goals." *Education Next*, 21 (Winter,
126 2007). (Online at www.educationnext.org).

127 ²⁵ Examples of different perspectives and research on these options may be
128 found online (www.educationnext.org, www.ksg.harvard.edu/pepg,
129 www.aft.org/pubs-reports, www.nea.org).

130 ²⁶ Churchwide Assembly action CA01.06.26 (adopted in 2001), online at
131 www.elca.org/socialpolicyresolutions/resolution.asp?id=83&ref=hts.

1 ²⁷ In its Churchwide Assembly in 2001, the ELCA adopted a social policy
2 resolution on school vouchers. This resolution neither favors nor opposes all
3 voucher proposals, but sets out a number of goals by which to evaluate specific
4 legislative proposals. These goals, set forth as questions, ask to what degree
5 proposals:

- 6 • provide public schools the support and resources necessary to fulfill their
7 tasks?
- 8 • increase equal access to high quality education for all, especially for
9 children and youth who live in poverty or are otherwise disadvantaged?
- 10 • enhance the ability of families—especially families living in poverty and
11 other situations of hardship—to select the right high quality education
12 for their children?
- 13 • allow participating schools, including religious ones, to maintain their
14 distinctive character and mission?
- 15 • protect against all forms of invidious discrimination against students?
- 16 • ensure just, equitable, and long-term viable sources of funding?
- 17 • provide eligible families sufficient and accurate information of students
18 in participating schools?
- 19 • ensure ways for measuring the educational achievements of students in
20 participating schools?
- 21 • establish means to evaluate the positive and negative results of the
22 program and in light of these results to consider if the program should be
23 continued, modified, or ended?

24 The complete text of the resolution is online ([www.elca.org/
25 socialpolicyresolutions/resolution.asp?id=83&ref=hts](http://www.elca.org/socialpolicyresolutions/resolution.asp?id=83&ref=hts)).

26 ²⁸ *Conversations with Luther*, translated and edited by Preserved Smith and H.P.
27 Gallinger (Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1915), 96. Quoted from *A Compend of
28 Luther's Theology*, edited by Hugh T. Kerr (Philadelphia: The Westminster
29 Press, 1966), 192-193.

30 ²⁹ These statistics were provided by Donna Braband, director for schools and
31 early childhood centers, Vocation and Education unit. They are for the 2005-
32 2006 school year. For more information on ELCA centers and schools see the
33 Web page of the ELCA Schools and Early Childhood Ministries of the
34 Vocation and Education unit (www.elca.org/schools).

35 ³⁰ Information on ELCA colleges and universities is found on the Web page of
36 ELCA Colleges and Universities of the Vocation and Education unit
37 (www.elca.org/colleges). At the beginning of the 2006-2007 school year, there
38 were 50,088 full-time undergraduate students, 2,271 full-time graduate
39 students, 3,892 part-time undergraduate students, 1,670 part-time graduate
40 students, for a total head count of 57,921 and a full-time equivalent of 55,224
41 in ELCA colleges and universities. These figures were provided by Arne Selby,
42 director for colleges and universities in the Vocation and Education unit.

43 ³¹ ELCA seminaries are an integral part of this church's network of educational
44 institutions, and references are made to them in relation to our schools and
45 colleges and universities. The 1995 Churchwide Assembly adopted a report on
46 them and theological education. See "Faithful Leaders for a Changing World:
47 Theological Education for Mission in the ELCA. Evangelical Lutheran Church
48 in America Study of Theological Education. Report to the 1995 Churchwide
49 Assembly." Available from the ELCA's Vocation and Education unit.

50 ³² "Lifelong learning partners" refers to education programs for lifelong learning
51 in theology that have joined in a collaborative association with the Vocation
52 and Education unit to form the ELCA Lifelong Theological Education
53 Partnership. This partnership is an association for planning, programming, and
54 advocacy for lifelong theological education for ministry, including ministry in
55 daily life. As of January 2007 34 programs are members of the partnership.
56 Lifelong learning partners include programs sponsored by a variety of
57 accredited and non-accredited institutions, including colleges, conference
58 centers, seminaries, synods, congregations, and other institutes and
59 organizations.

60 ³³ Web page of the ELCA Schools and Early Childhood Ministries
61 (www.elca.org/schools). The Web page reports that during the last year 100
62 congregations had expressed interest in beginning a school or center.

63 ³⁴ For data on the diverse ethnic and racial composition of ELCA schools and
64 centers, see "Summary: ELCA Schools and ECE Centers Survey 2004-2005"
65 (www.elca.org/education/survey).

66 ³⁵ This statement is widely attributed to Luther although scholars seem unable
67 to locate where he said it. For one effort to track down its source in Luther, see

68 William A. Decker, "In Search of Quotes," *Lutheran Partners* 20, 2
69 (March/April 2004), online at www.elca.org/lp.

70 ³⁶ Robert Benne, Marcia Bunge, Tom Christenson, Paul Dove, Mark Edwards,
71 Darrell Jodock, DeAne Lagerquist, Mark Schwehn, and Ernest Simmons are
72 among ELCA scholars who have been particularly active in thinking through
73 Lutheran approaches to the engagement of faith and learning.

74 ³⁷ A recent survey compared a large sample of Lutheran graduates from
75 Lutheran colleges and universities and from public flagship universities on a
76 number of key issues. Compared to Lutheran alumni of flagship public
77 universities, for example, Lutheran alumni of Lutheran colleges and
78 universities:

- 79 • said their colleges placed more emphasis on personal values and ethics
80 (90% to 41%);
- 81 • discovered more opportunities to develop spiritually (87% to 20%);
- 82 • experienced more help in integrating faith into other aspects of life (72%
83 to 11%);
- 84 • were more likely to have been engaged in church or religious activities
85 (74% to 31%);
- 86 • felt there was a greater sense of community among students (88% to
87 57%);
- 88 • found more faculty who were interested in students personally and
89 academically (85% to 41%);
- 90 • reported that their colleges were more effective in developing moral
91 principles for careers and leadership (90% to 36%); and
- 92 • were more likely to be "completely satisfied" with the quality of education
93 they received (59% to 35%).

94 The survey was done under the auspices of the Lutheran Education
95 Conference of North America in 2005 (www.lutherancolleges.org). The alumni
96 who were surveyed had graduated between 1991-1999.

97 ³⁸ Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Idea of the University: A Reexamination* (New Haven:
98 Yale University Press, 1992), 16-17.

99 ³⁹ "In 1900 only 2.3 percent of those aged eighteen to twenty-four went to
100 college; in 2000, 36 percent of this group attended college. In 1940, only 4.5
101 percent of the entire population had completed four years of college; by the end
102 of the century it was 25.2 percent" (56). About two-thirds of graduating
103 students in 2000 received their college degrees in occupational or professional
104 fields (57). The authors argue for the following point: "As higher education
105 became a mass institution by exalting its public purposes—its benefits to the
106 nation's economy, the protection of national defense, the creation of new
107 knowledge, and the promise of equal educational opportunity—its private
108 benefits in helping individuals gain access to professional status and earnings
109 became its dominant rationale" (56). They claim that "the ethos of a moral
110 and civic purpose to higher education has never disappeared, but it has become
111 a minority view in the world of scholarly research and in the vocational
112 preparation of students" (61). W. Norton Grubb and Marvin Lazerson, *The
113 Education Gospel: The Economic Power of Schooling* (Cambridge, Massachusetts:
114 Harvard University Press, 2004).

115 ⁴⁰ "While the post-World War II expansion drew on a rhetoric of public
116 purposes, students attended college because of the possibilities for individual
117 gain. One measure of advancing vocationalism was the attitude of students,
118 reflected in an annual survey of freshmen. In the late 1960s, developing a
119 meaningful philosophy of life was the most important goal of freshmen, rated
120 "essential" or "very important" by 80 percent of respondents, while fewer than
121 45 percent thought it important to be well-off financially. At the end of the
122 century these two values had traded places: developing a meaningful
123 philosophy was most important for only 42 percent of freshmen, while 74
124 percent cited being well-off financially." *Ibid.*, 65.

125 ⁴¹ See "The Spiritual Life of College Students: A National Study of College
126 Students' Search for Meaning and Purpose," Higher Education Research
127 Institute (Graduate School of Education & Information Studies, University of
128 California, Los Angeles, 2005). This extensive survey of first-year students at
129 colleges and universities across the country found high levels of interest in
130 spiritual and religious questions. For example, more than three-fourths of
131 students say that they are "searching for meaning/purpose in life." Pages 4-5.
132 While this report seems to differ from the one referred to in the previous
133 endnote, it may indicate the complexity of contemporary students, or perhaps
134 differences in methodologies between the two studies.

1 ⁴² For more information visit the Web site of ELCA Lutheran Campus Ministry
2 in the Vocation and Education unit (www.elca.org/campusministry).

3 ⁴³ "Policies and Procedures for Campus Ministries," approved by the ELCA
4 Church Council (November 15, 2003), 4 (www.elca.org/campusministry/policies).

5 ⁴⁴ "Pervasively dismal grades in affordability show that for most American
6 families college is less affordable now than it was a decade ago. The rising cost
7 of attending college has outpaced the growth of family income. Although
8 financial aid has increased, it has not kept pace with the cost of attendance.
9 Every state should reexamine college tuition and financial aid policies, and
10 each should formally link future tuition increases to gains in family income. In
11 the meantime, the conclusion from *Measuring Up 2004* is clear: The vast
12 majority of states have failed to keep college affordable for most families" (8).
13 "The nation's gap in college participation between affluent and poor students
14 has widened. The college-going gap between white, African-American, and
15 Latinos persists" (10). *Measuring Up 2004*, The National Center for Public
16 Policy and Higher Education (2004), 8 (http://measuringup.highereducation.org/_docs/2004/NationalReport_2004.pdf). The report evaluates and grades the 50
18 states in their higher education performance in four categories: preparation,
19 participation, affordability, and completion.

20 ⁴⁵ The federal Higher Education Act of 1965 carried the hope and promise of
21 ensuring access to higher education for low- and middle-income students. It
22 created the Pell grants, which enabled millions of students to receive a higher
23 education who would not otherwise have received one. In addition, several
24 states initiated grant and scholarship programs with similar objectives. Funding
25 for these federal and state grants, however, has fallen behind educational costs.
26 "For example, in 1975 the average Pell grant covered 84% of the cost of college
27 and in 2006 it covers only 36% of the cost." Kati Haycock, "Promise
28 Abandoned" (www2.edtrust.org).

29 ⁴⁶ Kati Haycock, "Promise Abandoned" (www2.edtrust.org).

30 ⁴⁷ National Conference on State Legislatures, *Transforming Higher Education:*
31 *National Imperative—State Responsibility*, 2006 (www.ncsl.org) documents both
32 the heavier debt load and the more time required to complete students'
33 education.

34 ⁴⁸ "For example, in 1975 40% of students in the top income quartile completed
35 college by age 24 compared to 6% of the lower quartile students. By 2003 the
36 completion rates were 75% and 9% for the two groups" (Haycock).

Recommendation

for Assembly Action

Majority Vote Required

To adopt the following implementing resolutions:

Faith Formation and Lifelong Learning

1. To embrace our legacy as a teaching and learning church with gratitude and new vigor and to pray for God's guidance and power to renew and live boldly our calling in education for a new century;
2. To call upon congregations and families to educate all generations in the faith and to be partners in creating and funding compelling and creative curricula and programs for all ages (children, youth, and adults), thus forming an environment of living faith;
3. To call upon members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to renew their calling in education as students, parents, educators, and citizens and to live out their baptismal vocation as lifelong learners in the faith and in their knowledge of the world;
4. To call upon the Evangelical Outreach and Congregational Mission and the Vocation and Education program units to collaborate with Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, to continue to expand the provision of creative and comprehensive resources necessary to enable parents and congregations to help form the faith of all generations;
5. To call upon the presiding bishop, synodical bishops, and the Evangelical Outreach and Congregational Mission and the Vocation and Education program units to work with Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, and other churchwide units persistently and persuasively to ensure that Christian education for all ages (adult, children, youth, and family ministry) is a priority in congregational life, seminary education, and synodical planning;
6. To call upon the Evangelical Outreach and Congregational Mission, Vocation and Education, and Augsburg Fortress program units to work with synods, regions, congregations, rostered leaders, the Lutheran Association of Christian Educators, Lutheran outdoor ministries, seminaries, and other groups and organizations to share best practices for Christian education and faith formation and to encourage their use in congregations and other ministries;
7. To call upon ELCA seminaries and other teaching institutions of this church to continue their emphasis on preparing pastors, diaconal ministers, deaconesses, associates in ministry, and lay people for excellence in the practice of teaching Christian education and faith formation in service of lifelong learning;
8. To give thanks to God for and to recognize members who are educators in public, Lutheran, and other private schools at all levels of education, to encourage congregations to support them in their callings as educators, and to urge members and all expressions of this church to encourage youth and others to enter these callings;

Public Educational Institutions

9. To call upon all schools to prepare students for living in a complex and global society as persons who are capable of critical thinking, continuing personal growth and concern for others, family responsibility, civic participation, artistic appreciation, productive work, and financial responsibility;

10. To call upon members of this church to advocate for equitable access to an excellent education for all children and youth and to support early childhood education, their public schools, colleges, and universities, advocating for policies that provide adequate resources and their fair distribution for these educational institutions;

11. To call upon members and congregations to develop strong connections with their public schools and to work with others to ensure high quality education for all students;

12. To call upon this church's advocacy ministries to support legislative initiatives that improve public schools and ensure excellent education for all students in ways that are consistent with this social statement and to support financial aid and tuition policies that provide more equitable access to higher education for low- and middle-income students;

Lutheran Institutions

13. To recognize and affirm early childhood education centers, elementary and secondary schools, colleges and universities, seminaries, campus ministries, and outdoor ministries of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America as part of this church's mission, and to call upon this church's leaders to support them publicly and actively;

14. To call upon this church's colleges, universities, seminaries, and lifelong learning partners to prepare and sustain leaders for schools and early childhood education centers of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and to provide ongoing professional development opportunities for them; to expect sponsoring congregations to ensure that their schools and early childhood education centers provide high quality Lutheran education; to encourage non-sponsoring congregations as well as synods to be in partnership with them; and to call upon the Vocation and Education unit to convene consultations throughout this church for the purpose of addressing the challenges and opportunities facing ELCA schools and early childhood education centers;

15. To call upon synods and congregations to support ELCA colleges and universities in their ministry of preparing people to fulfill their vocations in church and world; to call upon the Vocation and Education unit to continue its support of ELCA colleges and universities through the convening of administrators and faculty; and to call upon the Vocation and Education unit to convene consultations throughout this church for the purpose of furthering the respective

and mutual ministries of ELCA colleges and universities and this church;

16. To call upon synods and congregations to support campus ministries and to call upon the Vocation and Education unit to convene consultations throughout this church for the purpose of addressing the challenges and opportunities facing Lutheran campus ministry and developing a strategy to increase financial support, build new and stronger partnerships, and take such additional actions as may enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of this vital ministry;

17. To affirm the Study of Theological Education, as approved by the 1995 Churchwide Assembly, and its continuing value as a guide for the strengthening of the ELCA's theological education network;

Social Statement Reception

18. To call upon the Church in Society, Evangelical Outreach and Congregational Mission, and Vocation and Education units, in cooperation with other churchwide units, to provide leadership and consultation for synods, seminary clusters and networks, and congregations on the basis of this social statement;

19. To call upon the Vocation and Education and the Evangelical Outreach and Congregational Mission units, in consultation with the Church in Society unit, to collaborate with Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, to develop educational resources to study and act upon this social statement;

20. To call upon teaching theologians, bishops, pastors, diaconal ministers, associates in ministry, deaconesses, educators, and others to continue to deepen the theoretical and practical understanding of our calling in education through intellectual discourse and continued reflection;

21. To call upon all congregations, synods, early childhood education centers, elementary and secondary schools, colleges and universities, seminaries, campus ministries, outdoor ministries, social ministry organizations, public policy advocacy ministries, and churchwide units to carry out the substance and spirit of this statement; and

22. To call upon the Vocation and Education, Church in Society, Evangelical Outreach and Congregational Mission units, and Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, to oversee a process of implementation and accountability for this social statement and to report on implementation of this social statement to the Church Council in 2009.