



Report of the Secretary

Part One: Principle of Unity

Principle of Unity

“The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America shall be one church.” This statement is the most important principle of organization for this church. The declaration occurs in the first sentence in Chapter 5 of the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* (churchwide constitutional provision 5.01.). It points both our unity in Christ and the commitment of members, congregations, synods, and churchwide ministries to the Confession of Faith, Statement of Purpose, and organizational principles of this church.

In accord with the principle of unity, a succinct definition of the polity of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is provided in churchwide constitutional provision 8.11.:

This church shall seek to function as people of God through congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization, all of which shall be interdependent. Each part, while fully the church, recognizes that it is not the whole church and therefore lives in a partnership relationship with the others.

Our unity in this church is further underscored in constitutional provision 8.16.:

In faithful participation in the mission of God in and through this church, congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization—as interdependent expressions of this church—shall be guided by the biblical and confessional commitments of this church. Each shall recognize that mission efforts must be shaped by both local needs and global awareness, by both individual witness and corporate endeavor, and by both distinctly Lutheran emphases and growing ecumenical cooperation.

Note a key word in understanding the polity of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). That key word for congregations, synods, and churchwide ministries is “interdependence.” The primary “expressions” of this church are interdependent. Therefore, as expressed in churchwide constitutional provision 8.11.: “. . . Each part, while *fully* the church, recognizes that it is *not the whole* church and therefore lives in a *partnership* relationship with the others . . .” (*emphasis added*).

This partnership is crucial—an absolutely essential ingredient for a healthy and wholesome life together. After all, each congregation as an assembly of God’s people is a reflection of the whole Church. All members and congregations on the way together through synods and churchwide ministries also provide a manifestation of the body of Christ in the world.

The primary purpose of each congregation is expressed in the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* in this way:

The congregation shall include in its mission a life of worship and nurture for its members, and outreach in witness and service to its community (8.12.).

The central responsibilities of each of the 65 synods are underscored in this brief statement:

The synod shall provide for pastoral care of the congregations, ordained ministers, associates in ministry, deaconesses, and diaconal ministers within its boundaries. It shall develop resources for the life and mission of its people and shall enlarge the ministries and extend the outreach into society on behalf of and in connection with the congregations and the churchwide organization (8.13.).

Our churchwide ministries are to serve on behalf of and in support of the congregations, synods, and the extended work of this church:

The churchwide organization shall implement the extended mission of the Church, developing churchwide policies in consultation with the synods and congregations, entering into relationship with governmental, ecumenical, and societal agencies . . . (8.14.).

All three of these primary expressions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America are to carry out their work interdependently:

Since congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization are partners that share in God’s mission, all share in the responsibility to develop, implement, and strengthen the financial support program of this church (8.15.).

Primary Purposes of This Church

Working in partnership, congregations, synods, and churchwide ministries are to fulfill the primary purposes of this church, as expressed in the *Model Constitution for Congregations* (*C4.02.), the *Constitution for Synods* (†S6.02.), and the churchwide constitution (4.02.). To participate in God’s mission, each expression of this church is to:

1. WORSHIP GOD:

Worship God in proclamation of the Word and administration of the sacraments and through lives of prayer, praise, thanksgiving, witness, and service.

2. PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL:

Proclaim God’s saving Gospel of justification by grace for Christ’s sake through faith alone, according to the apostolic witness in the Holy Scripture, preserving and transmitting the Gospel faithfully to future generations.

3. CARRY OUT THE GREAT COMMISSION:

Carry out Christ’s Great Commission by reaching out to all people to bring them to faith in

Christ and by doing all ministry with a global awareness consistent with the understanding of God as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier of all.

4. **SERVE HUMAN NEED:**

Serve in response to God's love to meet human needs, caring for the sick and the aged, advocating dignity and justice for all people, working for peace and reconciliation among the nations, and standing with the poor and powerless and committing itself to their needs.

5. **NURTURE MEMBERS:**

Nurture its members in the Word of God so as to grow in faith and hope and love, to see daily life as the primary setting for the exercise of their Christian calling, and to use the gifts of the Spirit for their life together and for their calling in the world.

6. **MANIFEST UNITY:**

Manifest the unity given to the people of God by living together in the love of Christ and by joining with other Christians in prayer and action to express and preserve the unity which the Spirit gives.¹

In the continuing journey of God's people, we as the baptized members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America are called to witness and service in the name of Jesus, our crucified and risen Lord and Savior. The health and vitality of that witness and service, however, may be related directly to our understanding of the "Church" in its profound dimensions—dimensions that span geography, time, and eternity.

A Genuine Challenge

One challenge that faces the ELCA is the need for churchly awareness, particularly our sense of and commitment to the Church of Jesus Christ, the one holy catholic and apostolic Church. In fact, I believe embracing a greater sense of ecclesiology² has been an ongoing challenge for Lutherans throughout much of our history in North America. Lutherans too easily have fallen victim to the American syndrome of individualism. The tendency to look at issues of the world from only one's individual perspective shapes the lives of many people. Even salvation is viewed in a solitary way. Thereby, we ignore or forget our unity in Christ. We fail to grasp the collective and corporate reality of the Church, a reality that exists in both institutional and spiritual ways.

From the perspective of American church history, the commitment to interdependent church life is counter-cultural. Perhaps it is even more counter-cultural today than in some periods of the past. The principle of interdependence declares that no member, pastor, or congregation is the center of the ecclesial universe. No one synod is self-contained. And the churchwide organization is part of the whole, not a far distant

appendage. Indeed, we understand that "...each part, while *fully* the church, recognizes that it is *not the whole* church and therefore lives in a *partnership* relationship" with the other expressions of this church.

A Healthy Sense of the Church

Clear indications exist in many parts of the ELCA of a lack of understanding of basic Lutheran ecclesiology. At the same time, I see a failure to appreciate the lively, mutually engaging polity of the ELCA, a polity that arises from a wholesome, Reformation-shaped ecclesiology. Let it be clearly understood that such a healthy understanding of the "Church" is not one that sees itself in constant rebellion against or separated from the Church catholic, that is, the whole tradition of the Church.³ Rather:

➤ A healthy ecclesiology helps us see the part of this church in which we live and work within a larger framework.

➤ A healthy ecclesiology makes us realize that the description of the Church in Articles VII and VIII of the Augsburg Confession is not a portrayal of episodic appearances of the Church but rather of our continuity in the faith—a continuity both assured and shaped by the Word, the Word announced, the Word with water, and the Word in meal. That is, the Church does not appear only periodically when the Word is preached and the Sacraments are celebrated. Rather the Church has a continuing reality in the context of the life-generating experience of Word and Sacrament.

➤ A healthy ecclesiology helps us understand that we walk in the footsteps of the apostles and martyrs, the pioneers and teachers, the servants and leaders who have gone before us.

➤ A healthy ecclesiology helps us realize that others will follow us and we are to prepare the way for them. We are called to be faithful in our time.

➤ A healthy ecclesiology enables us always to see the broader dimensions of the life of this church.

➤ A healthy ecclesiology compels us to understand that the Church is the body of Christ—Christ's institutional incarnation in the world—and is not our personal possession for our own gratification.

➤ A healthy ecclesiology drives us to render what we can offer rather than focus on what we may prefer to gain.

➤ A healthy ecclesiology summons us to constant prayer not only for the Church in our own community but also for the Church throughout this land, throughout the world, and throughout the ages.

➤ A healthy Lutheran ecclesiology reflects the Apostle Paul's teaching of the Church as the body of Christ (see 1 Corinthians 12). With this perspective, we can embrace even more fully the interdependent polity of the ELCA for

¹ Provision 4.02. in the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* (2005 edition), p. 21. This Statement of Purpose for congregations, synods, and churchwide ministries of the ELCA was first adopted by the uniting churches in August 1986 and affirmed upon the constituting of this church on April 30, 1987.

² Ecclesiology refers to the doctrine of the Church. The English word is drawn from the Latin word *ecclesia* and the Greek word *ekklesia* for the assembly of the faithful.

³ The 1970 Evian Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation adopted a statement calling on member churches to be prepared to "acknowledge that the judgment of the Reformers upon the Roman Catholic Church and its theology was not entirely free of polemical distortions, which in part have been perpetuated to the present day." The Rev. Dr. Kent S. Knutson of The American Lutheran Church was chair of the drafting committee for that statement. See *From Federation to Communion*, edited by Jens Holger Schjørring, Prasanna Kumari, and Norman A. Hjelm (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), p. 394.

congregations, synods, churchwide ministries, and related institutions and agencies.

The life of the ELCA is manifested in all its expressions as all parts of this church function together, with each part fulfilling its primary, assigned responsibility conscientiously and with untiring dedication.

What's in a Name, Especially For a Church Body?

The name, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, did not emerge for this church without study and effort. Picking a name was a topic of high interest in the mid-1980s. Many suggestions were received.

I served on the five-member Ad Hoc Committee on the Name for the New Lutheran Church. As a member of that committee, I wrote the rationale for using the name Evangelical Lutheran Church and for including within the identification this church's primary territory, just like the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, and other Lutheran churches throughout the world.

Assignment: three to five

The committee met June 10-11, 1985, in an old hotel on Mannheim Road near O'Hare Airport in Chicago. The assignment was to prepare a list of three to five names with rationale and a list of pros and cons for each.

Ninety-nine individuals and five groups had offered suggestions. Of those, most urged that the word "Lutheran" be included in the name, but ten names were submitted that did not use the word "Lutheran." Twenty-nine proposed including "Evangelical," 25 "United," and 23 "Christ" or "Christian" in the name. Eight recommended "Catholic," and six proposed simply "Lutheran Church-U.S.A."

The rationale for each of the five names submitted by the committee was drafted overnight and later refined for the final report. The five were: Evangelical Lutheran Church; United Evangelical Lutheran Church; Lutheran Church of Evangelical Unity; Lutheran Community of Christ; and Lutheran Church in the U.S.A.

The full report was presented to the September 23-27, 1985, meeting of the Commission for a New Lutheran Church in Kansas City. The committee agreed to test throughout the uniting churches the names Evangelical Lutheran Church in the U.S.A. and Lutheran Church in the U.S.A. The decision on the name "Evangelical Lutheran Church in America" was made at the commission's February 1986 meeting.

Reasons for name

I recounted the rationale for the name in *One Great Cloud of Witnesses* in this way:

When a name was being proposed for the "new" Lutheran church, the word "evangelical" was suggested for several reasons. Its roots are in the Greek word for "Gospel." The name is widely used by Lutheran churches throughout the world; it has been employed since the Reformation to identify those who emphasize the doctrine of justification by grace through faith and the authority of Scripture in the life of both the whole Church and individual believers; and it was the name chosen for what was then the newly merged

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. Further, it was noted that the name, "evangelical," has been widely used by Lutherans in Europe, Africa, South America, Japan, and elsewhere. The name in some places is employed even without the word Lutheran because it is seen as the primary designation and identity of Lutherans. "Evangelical" was the name preferred by Luther for the movement he led. He thought such a name pointed to the proclamation of the Gospel "as the source of the church's life and the living, powerful, creative force through which people are called to faith and sustained in the communion of saints." The word, "evangelical," also carries with it an emphasis on mission. "We are called to go into all the world to proclaim the Gospel so that all people may know Christ's love."⁴

The word, "Lutheran," was seen as essential in the American context because it underscores our heritage as part of Luther's reform movement. Lutheran is the "shorthand" name by which most Lutherans in North America identify themselves.

Interesting elements related to the choice of a name were these facts: Of the 254 Lutheran church bodies in the world in 1987, 239 included the name of their location or country, 198 were identified as "Lutheran" in their name, and 149 also used "evangelical" in their name.

Reflecting our focus on the Gospel as the power of God for salvation [*in the use of the word "Evangelical"*], respecting our particular heritage within the whole church [*with "Lutheran"*], and acknowledging the primary arena of our work [*"in America"*], we identify ourselves as members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.⁵

It was exciting to be a part of that process of proposing a name. The historical significance of the committee's task, I suspect, was apparent to us in our deliberations. We wondered, of course, how our report would be received by the commission and the uniting churches. The work was affirmed to our relief and delight.

In the first 20 years of the life of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, I have been mindful of the importance of this church's name. I also have reflected on the obligation and challenge to live more fully into the commitments reflected by that name—to be *Evangelical*, to be *Lutheran*, to be *Church*, to be *servicing in America*.

Assembly Part of Practice of Interdependence

Each Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America represents a significant milestone. An assembly offers a picture, albeit a partial one, of our life together as sisters and brothers in Christ.

This marks my tenth Churchwide Assembly as secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. In the predecessor American Lutheran Church, I was present for all but three of the ALC's 13 biennial general conventions. In addition, I witnessed

⁴ Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Name for the New Lutheran Church, Commission for a New Lutheran Church (September 23-27, 1985), Exhibit P, Parts A, B, and C, page 2.

⁵ Lowell G. Almen, *One Great Cloud of Witnesses*, third edition (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 2006), pages 16-17.

three of the biennial conventions of the Lutheran Church in America.

Throughout the past 30 years, I have attended about 165 ELCA synodical assemblies and district or synod conventions in the predecessor bodies. I have seen the unfolding story of the collective life we share as Lutherans reflected in a variety of ways through these gatherings.

Moreover, I have been a guest in scores upon scores of congregations from one corner of this church body to the other. I have marveled at the magnificent blessings of God so evident throughout the congregations and other expressions of this church.

As declared in churchwide constitutional provision 8.11., congregations, synods, and churchwide ministries are to carry out their work interdependently (“Each part...*fully* the church...[but] *not the whole* church...”). I hope that, for the sake of those who follow us in the journey of faith, the coming years will show an ever deepening commitment to a sense of unity for the sake of mission and comprehensive partnership in the life of faith. Then congregations, synods, and churchwide ministries—and related institutions and agencies—will be engaged actively in God’s mission in the world. As we live in God’s amazing grace together, we can declare in heartfelt gratitude: “Thanks be to God!”

The Rev. Lowell G. Almen, *secretary*



Report of the Secretary

Part Two: Responsibilities

Responsibilities

The duties and responsibilities of the secretary, as specified in the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, are diverse and numerous (see 13.41., 13.41.01-13.42.02., and 11.33.). A brief summary, however, may be expressed in this way.

The Office of the Secretary shall:

1. Prepare records for this church in as accurate, thorough, up-to-date, useable, and prompt a way as possible;
2. Preserve the records of this church; and
3. Provide service and assistance to this church and others in a punctual, friendly, and courteous manner.

That summary was prepared by staff members of the Office of the Secretary as a helpful reminder of the duties and responsibilities that the constitution and bylaws of this church assign to the secretary as an officer of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

More specifically, the Office of the Secretary maintains the official rosters and records; collects and reports the annual parochial statistics; compiles and publishes minutes of the Churchwide Assembly, Church Council, Executive Committee, Conference of Bishops, and Cabinet of Executives, and receives minutes of other meetings; coordinates the use of legal counsel and risk-management services; arranges for and manages meetings of the churchwide organization; oversees the archives, library services, and records management for the churchwide organization; provides for the publication of official documents and policies of this church; and prepares, when necessary, amendments to and interpretations of its constitutions, policies, and procedures.

Rosters

Maintaining the official rosters of this church is a key responsibility of the secretary. Staff members work closely with synodical offices in recording additions, changes, and resignations or removals from the roster of ordained ministers, roster of laypersons, and congregations. The annual Yearbook, compiled by the Office of the Secretary, contains these rosters, together with a summary of annual congregational reports and statistics; a directory of the churchwide organization and this church's colleges, universities, seminaries, schools, early childhood education centers, life-long learning partners, social ministry organizations, campus ministries, outdoor ministries, ecumenical organizations, interchurch organizations, independent Lutheran organizations, ministries in chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, and clinical education; and other information.

Further, the secretary oversees the implementation of the policies adopted by the Church Council on the rosters and assists synods in interpretation and execution of the relevant policies and procedures for the management of the rosters. Indeed, a

good portion of each day is spent answering inquiries about constitution, policies, and procedures from other churchwide units and synods, congregations, and members of this church.

The Office of the Secretary also issues and collects information from annual congregational reports and develops, with the assistance of the Research and Evaluation section, a summary statistical snapshot of the congregations of this church.

Minutes

The developing historical record of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America represents one of the strategic responsibilities of the secretary and staff of the Office of the Secretary. Meticulous attention is devoted to preparing the authoritative and comprehensive record. Great effort, therefore, is committed to striving for clarity and confirming accuracy in the preparation of the minutes of the Churchwide Assembly, the Church Council, and the Conference of Bishops. The minutes provide not only an official record of the decisions made and the actions taken, but they also offer to future historians documentation of this church's history. At the same time, through the Office of the Secretary, advice and guidance are provided to churchwide units to help ensure that the records of boards and committees are complete and filed in a timely way.

A certified copy of the official minutes of the Churchwide Assembly and copies of the minutes of the Church Council, Conference of Bishops, boards, and committees are deposited for historical preservation in the Archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Preserving History

Another one of the duties of the secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is to "be responsible for the archives of this church" (13.41.02.f.).

During the course of the past 20 years, this church's archives—which brought together archival materials from The American Lutheran Church, the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches, and the Lutheran Church in America as well as the Archives of Cooperative Lutheranism of the Lutheran Council in the U.S.A.—has flourished. The collection has grown in size, from 7,500 linear feet in 1988 to 12,500 linear feet in 2006. The archives relocated in 1999 to a secure and well-equipped building with enough environmentally controlled space for many years of future growth. The number and type of services the archives provides to members, congregations, synods, the churchwide organization, and the general public also have increased.

The purposes of an archives include collecting and preserving significant records, organizing them so that they are readily available, assisting researchers into the materials, and making the archives' resources widely known. To assist in these

responsibilities, the archives is fully automated, with highspeed Internet access, a local server, and digital scanning equipment. From its inception it has participated in the Online Computer Library Center's WorldCat, the world's largest bibliographic database. In 2001 software to manage collections information was installed, followed by an online catalog. The archives Web site, begun in 1997, provides global access to the catalog, online exhibits, a digital library of selected titles, and multimedia files. Page visits average between 20,000 and 30,000 per month, and many routine reference questions now can be answered through the information found on the site.

The archives also increases knowledge about its holdings through microfilming and disseminating its records. Microfilms have been shared with the Concordia Historical Institute in St. Louis, Mo., and the Lutheran World Federation Archives in Geneva, Switzerland. Through a project with Yale Divinity School Library, all global mission records from prior to the creation of The American Lutheran Church of 1960 and the Lutheran Church in America of 1962 have been microfilmed and are being shared with partner churches.

The archives supports congregational archives through educational information, coordinates activities for regional and synodical archives, and assists in the records management program of the churchwide organization.

Legal Counsel and Risk-Management Services

Legal consultation and services also are provided through the Office of the Secretary to the officers, synodical bishops, the Church Council, the Churchwide Assembly, and the programmatic units in the churchwide office. The general counsel and the associate general counsel, through the Office of the Secretary Web site, also make general legal information concerning this church more widely available to members, pastors, congregations, synods, and affiliated ministries. Through the ELCA Attorneys Association, the general counsel helps synods, congregations, and other affiliates to find qualified attorneys who can represent their legal interests.

Under supervision of the secretary and the general counsel, the risk manager provides advice and direction in protecting the assets of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and its related organizations. The risk manager is responsible for insurance coverage for the churchwide organization and for oversight and design of the insurance program available to synods and congregations. The risk manager identifies corporate exposure to loss and implements appropriate risk management techniques to eliminate or reduce the impact of such loss.

Records Management

The secretary also carries the responsibility to "implement and operate a records management system for the churchwide organization" (13.41.02.g.) and "provide library and reference services for the churchwide office (13.41.02.j.).

The goals of records management are rapid retrieval of accurate information, appropriate and economical storage of information in all formats, compliance with legal or administrative requirements for retention of data, consistency in policy governing similar kinds of records, protection of this church's vital and historical records, and prompt and cost effective disposal of obsolete or extraneous records.

The records management program requires staff to plan for the entire life cycle of their records in all formats. Records retention schedules for programmatic and for business records have been developed to direct the churchwide staff in the proper care of their records. Through this program, the useful and vital records of this church are identified, maintained, and safeguarded. Good stewardship is practiced by reducing the expenditure for both physical and electronic storage of data.

During these two decades records management has faced two new challenges—changes in legal requirements for records retention and the ongoing evolution of technology for generating and storing data. Policy manuals for congregations, synods, and the churchwide office have been developed to address the ways to ensure future generations that records will still be available for their use long after hardware, software, and file formats have changed.

A course in congregation administration has been developed for Fisher's Net, a distance-learning program for clergy and lay leaders. The course includes modules for records management, legal issues, maintaining the parish register, and congregation archives. In addition, PowerPoint programs are made available to leaders who wish to use them for workshops on congregation administration.

Providing staff in congregations, synods, and the churchwide office with the proper records retention guidelines and training helps to assure good administrative practices today and the legacy of this church for future generations.

Library Resources

The Lutheran Center Library was established to provide research services and efficient access to information at the least cost for Lutheran Center staff as well as for researchers who reach the library in person, by telephone, or via the Internet. Library circulation statistics attest to an increasing demand for the materials and services of the Lutheran Center Library. In the year 2006, 2,474 items circulated; interlibrary loan transactions numbered 436; and ELCA staff downloaded 269 full-text articles from online periodical databases.

In 1988, the Lutheran Council in the U.S.A. shipped 3,000 books from New York to Chicago. This became the foundation of the library's collection. The number of books and media in the Lutheran Center Library has reached 16,540 through judicious purchases; subscriptions to all of the publications of the Lutheran World Federation, World Council of Churches, and the Alban Institute, among others; and gifts from individuals and units. In order to encourage sharing of resources and economizing on periodical subscriptions in the churchwide office, the library subscribes to about one hundred of the most commonly used journals.

The library has proven its value to the Lutheran Center staff members—saving them both time and money—as they seek the information necessary to make decisions, develop their programs, and expand their level of expertise in their appointed areas. It is providing the same time- and cost-effective service to those outside the Lutheran Center, who have equal access to its services through the ELCA Web site.

Assembly Logistics, Meeting Management, and Travel

In connection with each Churchwide Assembly, staff members of the Office of the Secretary and other units must devote untiring attention to planning. The bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America assign to the secretary responsibility for all arrangements for the assembly, including assembly hall logistics, hotel and hall negotiations and contracts, registration, travel, and coordination of staff and volunteers. In fulfilling that task, the efforts of many people are required. For the gracious ways in which staff and volunteers carry out their duties to help ensure a productive assembly, we all can be grateful.

The Office of the Secretary also is responsible for negotiating and monitoring travel expenses for all Chicago-based churchwide units; negotiating favorable contracts with travel, hotel, and other service providers; providing staff support and services to church personnel for logistical planning; administering other meetings of the churchwide organization, specifically but not limited to two or three meetings of the Church Council per year, meetings of the Church Council Executive Committee as required, two to three meetings of the Conference of Bishops per year, one annual meeting of the Academy for Bishops, and board, program committee, advisory committee, and other meetings as required for churchwide units; coordinating meetings for program units; and overseeing travel arrangements for churchwide staff members and others traveling on behalf of this church.

Diligent efforts throughout the past two decades have been undertaken by the Office of the Secretary to control travel costs for the churchwide organization. Close monitoring is practiced. The changing practices, policies, and fares of airlines affect directly the overall cost of travel for Church Council members, board and committee members, members of the Conference of Bishops, and staff serving through the churchwide organization and synods, as well as voting members for the Churchwide Assembly.

The chart provides an overview of the results of efforts in the application of the travel policy for staff of the churchwide organization and in the pattern of ticketing for travel.

Wide Variety of Responsibilities

On any given day in my office at the Lutheran Center in Chicago, I walk from legal matters to risk management on insurance issues to assembly concerns to official roster-and-policy issues to records management to archival preservation to administration and personnel management to preparing official constitutional interpretations to drafting a variety of documents to handling substantial correspondence to preparing a sermon for a congregation's 250th anniversary to presiding in chapel for communion to hosting a visiting church leader to the exercise of ecumenical diplomacy and then on to whatever surprise is around the next corner—and all that within the space of a few hours. In other words, as secretary, I have had to adapt quickly to whatever matter was at hand. I also discovered that serving as secretary has represented yet another dimension of pastoral ministry for me. I was called as a pastor to serve this church in particular ways for the sake of witness to the Gospel and care for the unity to which Christ calls us.

The Rev. Lowell G. Almen, *secretary*

2006 Travel Costs with Comparison to Previous Years

Year	Number of tickets	Savings off coach	Total spent	Average domestic ticket
2006	10,390	78.00%	\$3,208,111	\$309
2005	11,891	76.00%	\$3,560,437	\$299
2004	9,663	79.00%	\$2,783,658	\$281
2003	11,531	78.00%	\$3,566,928	\$301
2002	11,774	80.00%	\$3,188,783	\$264
2001	13,176	80.66%	\$3,309,590	\$244
2000	11,839	77.00%	\$3,242,561	\$267
1999	10,095	71.00%	\$2,951,527	\$292
1998	8,563	68.00%	\$2,552,481	\$291
1997	7,882	68.00%	\$2,314,912	\$294
1996	8,412	65.00%	\$2,414,320	\$283
1995	8,067	73.61%	\$2,384,816	\$296
1994	7,639	75.78%	\$2,099,053	\$268
1993	7,540	73.25%	\$2,269,850	\$297
1992	7,514	66.00%	\$2,256,850	\$296
1991	7,381	53.00%	\$2,272,000	\$308
1990	8,028	54.00%	\$2,602,891	\$325
1989	9,548	51.50%	\$2,870,164	\$301
1988	8,272	51.91%	\$2,380,103	\$288



Report of the Secretary

Part Three: Roster Statistics

The secretary is responsible for maintaining the official rosters of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. These include the rosters of congregations, ordained ministers, associates in ministry, deaconesses, and diaconal ministers.

Roster of Congregations

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America counted 10,549 congregations on December 31, 2006, including congregations under development.

The record of those added to the roster of congregations is indicated in Table 1.

The record of removals from the roster of congregations by categories is shown in Table 2.

The process for *withdrawal* of a congregation is specified by constitutional provisions 9.62. and 9.71. in the *Constitution*,

Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

“Merged” is defined as involving a congregation giving up its separate identity and uniting with an already existing congregation (i.e., being *merged* into an existing congregation).

“Consolidated” is defined as involving two or more congregations that join together to become a new entity with a new name and a new congregation identification number (i.e., the congregations are *consolidated* to become a new congregation).

The roster of congregations is published annually in the yearbook of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, prepared by staff of the secretary. Congregations that have been received into this church or that have been consolidated, merged, withdrawn, disbanded, or removed are listed at the end of the roster of congregations in the yearbook.

Table 1: Additions to the Roster of Congregations

Congregations	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Received by synodical action	22	25	22	30	20	17	25	19	29	18	31	16	9	12	12	16
Resulting from consolidations	6	5	3	6	4	8	5	4	5	2	1	0	2	1	5	5
Totals	28	30	25	36	24	25	30	23	34	20	32	16	11	13	18	21

Table 2: Removals from the Roster of Congregations

Congregations	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Withdrawn	4	4	8	8	2	4	5	2	5	12	6	17	8	26	22	18
Disbanded	31	30	36	32	34	34	40	32	29	33	42	26	39	40	31	38
Merged	4	6	7	7	5	5	9	4	5	2	2	0	9	7	3	10
Consolidated	10	11	6	13	10	18	12	15	10	4	0	0	6	2	5	12
Removed	0	0	0	0	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	1	0
Totals	49	51	57	60	54	61	67	53	49	51	50	43	63	79	62	78

Change of Synodical Relationships

Any change in a congregation’s synodical relationship is to be reported to the Churchwide Assembly. As provided by ELCA bylaw 10.02.02., “Any congregation in a border area desiring to change its synod relationship may do so upon approval of the synod assemblies of the synods concerned, which shall report any such change to the Churchwide Assembly.”

The following changes of synodical relationships for congregations have been reported by synods:

Year of Transfer	Congregation	ID Number	Location	Former Synod	Receiving Synod
2005	Redeemer	14034	Chino, Calif.	2B	2C
2005	Holy Trinity	02573	Sharpsburg, Md.	8F	8H
2005	Salem Evang.	02571	Bakersville, Md.	8F	8H
2005	New Promise	30299	St. George, Utah	2E	2D

Roster of Ordained Ministers

As of December 31, 2006, the roster of ordained ministers of this church listed a total of 17,655 ordained ministers (active and retired). Included in that number were 3,228 women, and 593 people of color or people whose primary language is other than English.

Additions to the roster of ordained ministers take place only in the ways defined by the constitution and bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Those specific ways are:

1. Individuals who are ordained in accord with the constitution and bylaws of this church in effect at the time of their ordinations, after having been approved by a duly constituted synodical candidacy committee and having received and accepted a regular, attested Letter of Call to be a pastor.
2. Individuals received from other church bodies:
 - a. Individuals approved by a synodical candidacy committee who previously were ordained in another Lutheran church body or another Christian church body, under bylaw 7.31.14., whose ordination is recognized by this church under the policy that addresses such recognition. Others would be ordained by this church under the policy of such reception.
 - b. Individuals received, under churchwide bylaw 8.72.15.c., through the candidacy process for the roster of ordained ministers who were ordained in a full-communion partner church body.
3. Individuals reinstated to the roster of ordained ministers, under churchwide bylaw 7.31.15., who previously were ordained in this church or one of its predecessor church bodies.

Additions	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Ordained	296	315	310	298	339	336	338	361	308	315	309	279	308	270	279	283
Reinstated	26	20	20	14	13	15	17	9	20	23	19	9	19	22	11	8
Received from other churches	23	8	35	18	21	20	23	19	18	15	25	12	11	9	9	8
Totals	345	343	365	330	373	371	378	389	346	353	353	300	338	301	299	299
Removals by																
Death	196	154	196	182	188	210	207	211	249	211	224	213	246	223	226	208
Resignation	58	50	51	42	50	47	56	57	48	52	57	48	45	63	62	78
Removal	96	115	71	89	55	97	107	58	41	42	36	56	46	50	48	62
Transfer to ELCIC*	1	1	5	2	4	4	1	1	0	2	3	2	4	1	2	3
Totals	351	320	323	315	297	358	371	327	338	307	320	319	341	337	338	351

* Indicates Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

As was the case in our predecessor church bodies, including those that existed prior to 1960, unauthorized or irregular ordinations are not recognized.

● **Only ELCA clergy called:** In keeping with the criteria for membership in the ELCA, congregations agree to call as pastors only ordained ministers on the ELCA roster or duly approved candidates for the roster (churchwide constitutional provision 9.21.d. and bylaw 9.21.01.).

● **Partner church clergy under contract:** Service by ordained ministers from full-communion partner church bodies is addressed in churchwide bylaws 8.72.15. and 9.21.02. and takes place under contract with the approval of the synodical bishop. Such ministers are not eligible for call by an ELCA congregation.

● **Added to roster:** Only the names of individuals ordained or received in conformity with the governing documents and policy statements in place at the time of the ordination or reception are added to the roster of ordained ministers of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

The names of people added to and removed from the roster of ordained ministers are listed annually in the yearbook of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The number of additions to the roster of ordained ministers and removals from that roster are shown in Table 3.

Percentages of pastors who are women as part of the *whole* clergy roster (active and retired) and as part of the *active* roster for 1990 through 2006 appear in Table 4.

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Whole Roster	7.5%	8.1%	8.7%	9.3%	9.7%	10.5	11.3	12.0	12.7	13.4	14.2	14.9	15.6	16.5	17.0	17.7	18.3
Active Roster	9.4%	10.3	11.3	12.2	12.8	14.1	15.4	16.4	17.5	18.7	19.9	21.2	22.2	24.6	25.4	26.7	28.0

Official Rosters of Laypeople

This church has established three rosters of laypeople. They are associates in ministry, deaconesses, and diaconal ministers.

The names of people approved by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for admission to the roster of associates in ministry, the roster of deaconesses, and the roster of diaconal ministers—as well as the names of people removed from those rosters—are listed annually in the yearbook of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

As of December 31, 2006, the roster of associates in ministry numbered 1,077 people (see Table 5).

The roster of deaconesses numbered 62 women as of December 31, 2006 (see Table 6). This figure does not include those in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada.

Diaconal ministers, as of December 31, 2006, numbered 111 people (see Table 7). The roster of diaconal ministers, established by the 1993 Churchwide Assembly, was started in 1996 with the consecration of seven people.

Table 5: Associates in Ministry

Additions	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Commissioning	42	40	39	33	30	34	39	25	34	34	27	33	24	31	36	28
Reinstatement	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	2	1	3	0	1	1
Totals	43	40	40	33	30	34	39	25	34	40	29	34	27	31	37	29
Removals by																
Death	9	6	5	8	6	5	8	9	12	11	2	9	12	12	11	11
Ordination	8	10	12	2	9	9	9	4	6	2	1	9	9	8	2	2
Consecration	—	—	—	—	—	3	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Resignation	12	9	7	18	7	12	10	9	8	10	2	3	2	2	7	5
Removal	71	79	49	36	24	30	33	11	15	29	16	17	16	9	8	17
Totals	100	104	73	64	46	59	62	33	42	52	21	38	39	31	28	35

Table 6: Deaconesses

Additions	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Consecration	—	—	3	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	2	0	2	0
Reinstatement	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	0	1	3	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	2	0	2	0
Removals by																
Death	2	4	2	2	6	3	3	2	8	7	4	3	4	2	2	1
Ordination	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Resignation	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Removal	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Totals	2	6	2	2	7	3	3	2	9	7	6	3	4	2	2	2

Table 7: Diaconal Ministers

Additions		1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Consecration		7	7	4	12	20	12	11	13	14	10	15
Reinstatement		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals		7	7	4	12	20	12	11	13	14	10	15
Removals by												
Death		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ordination		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Resignation		0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	1
Removal		0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0
Totals		0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	1	2	1

Congregational Statistics

Comparison Between 2004 and 2005

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America reported a baptized membership of 4,850,776 in 10,549 congregations in 2005. That figure represented a decrease of about one and one-half percent or a reduction of 79,653 baptized members since 2004.

In the past 15 years from 1991-2005, the ELCA baptized membership has decreased about 390,000 from 5,240,739 members reported in 1990. More than half the decline occurred between 2002 and 2005. The combined decrease for these four years resulted in a decline of 249,101 baptized members.

Parochial reports showed the loss was due to a decrease in the number of new members, the disbanding of 31 congregations, and “roll cleaning” in many remaining congregations. In 2005, “roll cleaning” resulted in a loss of 208,436 members on top of 192,825 members in 2004. Those reductions occur when long inactive members who indicate no interest in continued participation are removed from the rolls of congregations.

Twenty-two congregations with a combined baptized membership of 14,083 withdrew from the ELCA in 2005. One congregation with membership of 111 was removed.

The average number of people in worship on Sundays decreased slightly in 2005. About 1.4 million (1,439,747) or 30 percent (29.68%) of all baptized members participate in worship each week. Average worship attendance, an indicator of active participation by members in congregations, has fluctuated in the ELCA between 30 and 31 percent.

Confirmed membership in 2005 decreased by 49,039 to 3,636,948. Communing and contributing membership, which demonstrates active participation, decreased by 48,276 to 2,256,700 in 2005, following a decline of 44,879 in 2004, for a two-year total slide of 93,155.

The last time a gain of ELCA membership occurred was in 1991 with a net gain of 4,438 baptized members that year. Losses in baptized membership for previous years were: 54,496 in 2004; 53,081 in 2003; 61,871 in 2002; 26,043 in 2001; 23,749 in 2000; 28,557 in 1999; 6,830 in 1998; 2,308 in 1997; 9,517 in 1996; 8,559 in 1995; 12,752 in 1994; 21,783 in 1993; and 10,609 in 1992.

For 2005 in the ELCA, accessions by baptism, affirmation of faith, and transfer from other ELCA congregations declined— 3,498 fewer baptisms of children (67,652 in 2005, down from 71,150 in 2004; 71,705 in 2003; 73,494 in 2002; and 77,541 in 2001), 3,360 fewer affirmations of faith (53,961 in 2005; 57,321 in 2004; 57,914 in 2003; 60,780 in 2002), and 3,201 fewer transfers from Lutheran congregations (76,518 in 2005; 79,719 in 2004; 82,791 in 2003; 86,053 in 2002; and 95,988 in 2001).

Adult baptisms decreased by 404 (6,764 in 2005; 7,168 in 2004; 7,428 in 2003; 7,397 in 2002; and 8,455 in 2001), and accessions from non-Lutheran congregations declined 888 (17,794 in 2005; 18,682 in 2004; 19,064 in 2003; 19,430 in 2002; and 21,131 in 2001).

There were 19 more deaths in 2005 (47,210 versus 47,191 in 2004) and 3,671 fewer transfers to other Lutheran congregations (53,429 in 2005; 57,100 in 2004 and 59,563 in 2003).

The average number of baptized members per congregation decreased in 2005 by six people to 463, and the average confirmed membership decreased by three people to 348. In 2005, the average number of communing and contributing members slipped by four to 216 per congregation.

For 2005, three percent (3.1%) of ELCA baptized members were identified as persons of color or persons whose primary language is other than English, essentially unchanged from 2004.

Income for ELCA congregations nears \$2.7 billion in 2005

Income for the 10,549 congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in 2005 approached \$2.7 billion. Total receipts amounted to \$2,676,901,588, up 2.94 percent or almost \$76 million from the previous year.

The 2005 increase was more than the 1.79 percent growth experienced in 2004, and the 2.45 percent growth in 2003. In the four-year period of 2002–2005, congregation receipts grew nearly \$226 million.

Of the total congregational income, over \$1.8 billion (\$1,846,578,404) was received in regular, unrestricted offerings, up \$47 million (\$47,296,985) or over two and one-half percent (2.62%) in 2005, versus a more than three percent increase in 2004, and a nearly four percent increase in 2003. For 2001, the percent of increase in regular giving by members over 2000 grew three and one-half percent. A six percent jump occurred in 2000 from the 1999 level of regular offerings.

Funds held by congregations in endowments and investments almost matched regular giving in 2005. Congregations held over \$1.8 billion (\$1,871,512,026) in savings and investments, endowments, and memorial funds—up \$78,788,575 (4.39%) from 2004.

The average regular giving per confirmed member in 2005 grew to more than \$598, an increase of nearly five percent (4.81%). The increase in 2004 over 2003 was nearly four percent (3.85%), 2003 over 2002 was nearly three percent (2.95%), and 2002 over 2001 was one and one-half percent (1.54%).

Total disbursements by ELCA congregations for local operating expenses amounted to almost \$1.8 billion (\$1,795,642,179). That represented an increase of \$67 million (\$67,328,140) or nearly four percent (3.89%) over 2004.

Regular “mission support”—that is, monies passed from congregations to the 65 synods and to the churchwide organization to support the national and international ministries of this church—decreased slightly (0.12%) following a three-year decline of nearly three percent (3.07%). “Mission-support” funding for 2005 was \$130,323,202. Regular “mission support” in 2004 was \$130,490,038, down \$1 million (\$1,048,261) from 2003. Regular “mission support” in 2003 amounted to \$131,538,299, down \$1.7 million (\$1,665,920) from \$133,204,219 in 2002.

Synodically related “Special Benevolences” decreased by almost six percent (5.95%) or \$1,092,214 to \$17,244,535. Income for community benevolent causes increased by over three percent (\$1,176,031) to \$38,117,762 in 2005.

Of total income, ELCA congregations devoted 90 percent (90.14%) to operating expenses, capital improvements, debt reduction, and other expenses. Nearly seven percent (6.94%) was contributed for synodical and churchwide mission support, hunger and disaster appeals, missionary sponsorship, Mission Partners, and designated causes. The remainder supported special synodical and local benevolences.

Of all ELCA congregations, sixty-three percent (62.62%) reported that they had no debt in 2005. Estimated value of assets owned by congregations exceeded \$18 billion.

**Summary of Congregational Statistics
as of December 31, 2005**

					<i>Statistical Analysis</i>
	2004	2005	Change	Percent	Averages per Congregation
Summary of Membership Statistics					
Total Number of Congregations	10,585	10,549	36-	0.34-	
Baptized Members	4,930,429	4,850,776	79,653-	1.61-	463.21
Confirmed Members	3,685,987	3,636,948	49,039-	1.33-	348.06
Communing Members, Confirmed	2,621,862	2,579,669	42,193-	1.60-	247.14
Communing Members, Unconfirmed	273,049	274,872	1,823+	0.66+	26.33
Communed and Contributed	2,304,976	2,256,700	48,276-	2.09-	216.34
Analysis of Membership Gains and Losses					
Baptized Members—Accessions					
By Baptism—Children under Age 16	71,150	67,652	3,498-	4.91-	
By Baptism—Adults Age 16 and above	7,168	6,764	404-	5.63-	
By Affirmation of Faith	57,321	53,961	3,360-	5.86-	
By Transfer from ELCA Congregations	64,429	62,575	1,854-	2.87-	
By Transfer from Other Lutheran Congregations	15,290	13,943	1,347-	8.80-	
From Non-Lutheran Congregations	18,682	17,794	888-	4.75-	
From Other Sources and Statistical Adjustment	21,775	21,251	524-	2.40-	
Total Accessions—Baptized Members	255,815	243,940	11,875-	4.64-	
Baptized Members—Losses					
By Death	47,191	47,210	19+	0.04+	
By Transfer to ELCA Congregations	46,394	43,527	2,867-	6.17-	
By Transfer to Lutheran Congregations	10,706	9,902	804-	7.50-	
To Non-Lutheran Congregations	14,416	13,788	628-	4.35-	
For Other Reasons and Statistical Adjustment	192,825	208,436	15,611+	8.09+	
Total Losses—Baptized Members	311,532	322,863	11,331+	3.63+	
Confirmed Members—Accessions					
By Baptism—Adults Age 16 and above	5,196	4,804	392-	7.54-	
By Affirmation of Faith	43,180	40,831	2,349-	5.44-	
By Transfer from ELCA Congregations	47,704	46,822	882-	1.84-	
By Transfer from Other Lutheran Congregations	11,210	9,992	1,218-	10.86-	
From Non-Lutheran Congregations	13,083	12,644	439-	3.35-	
From Other Sources and Statistical Adjustment	20,329	20,680	351+	1.72+	
Baptized Members Confirmed	52,560	50,564	1,996-	3.79-	
Total Accessions—Confirmed Members	193,262	186,337	6,925-	3.58-	
Confirmed Members—Losses					
By Death	44,529	44,371	158-	0.35-	
By Transfer to ELCA Congregations	35,092	32,647	2,445-	6.96-	
By Transfer to Other Lutheran Congregations	7,778	7,285	493-	6.33-	
To Non-Lutheran Congregations	10,263	10,097	166-	1.61-	
For Other Reasons	131,299	136,613	5,314+	4.04+	
Total Losses—Confirmed Members	228,961	231,013	2,052+	0.89+	

**Summary of Congregational Statistics
as of December 31, 2005**

Summary of Financial Statistics

Statistical Analysis

Totals—End of Year	2004	2005	Change	Percent	Averages per Congregation
Total Receipts	2,600,358,990	2,676,901,588	76,542,598+	2.94+	255,673.50
Total Disbursements	2,568,013,806	2,608,801,005	40,787,199+	1.58+	249,121.56
Assets, Value on December 31	17,091,182,686	18,012,976,197	921,793,511+	5.39+	1,720,437.07
Total Indebtedness on December 31	1,634,835,740	1,691,374,706	56,538,966+	3.45+	161,544.86
Average Giving per Baptized Member	427.07	448.92	21.85+	5.11+	Indebtedness/Assets 9.38%
Average Giving per Confirmed Member	571.25	598.75	27.50+	4.81+	Congrs. with no debt 62.62%

Detail of Financial Statistics

Receipts for Regular Operation

Regular Giving by Members	1,799,281,419	1,846,578,404	47,296,985+	2.62+
Designated Giving by Members	306,368,416	331,062,240	24,693,824+	8.06+
Earned Income, Unrestricted	72,091,620	83,677,260	11,585,640+	16.07+
Earned Income, Restricted	45,800,330	48,600,559	2,800,229+	6.11+
Grants and Subsidies	19,332,163	20,833,334	1,501,171+	7.76+
Cash Borrowed	181,513,428	157,243,253	24,270,175-	13.37-
Other Receipts	175,971,614	188,906,538	12,934,924+	7.35+

**Statistical Analysis
Percent of
Total Disbursements**

Disbursements for Regular Operation

Current Operating Expenses	1,728,314,039	1,795,642,179	67,328,140+	3.89+	68.83
Capital Improvements	286,019,766	257,340,213	28,679,553-	10.02-	9.86
Payment on Debts	209,100,304	208,057,901	1,042,403-	0.49-	7.97
Mission Support	130,490,038	130,323,202	166,836-	0.12-	4.99
Designated Giving for Mission Support	8,410,597	10,371,776	1,961,179+	23.31+	0.39
World Hunger Appeal (See note below)	11,498,052	11,103,628	394,424-	3.43-	0.42
Disaster Response (See note below)	2,651,013	18,343,920	15,692,907+	591.95+	0.70
Mission Partners	4,836,183	4,449,460	386,723-	7.99-	0.17
Mission Founders	247,560	281,257	33,697+	13.61+	0.01
Vision for Mission	330,398	432,940	102,542+	31.03+	0.01
Missionary Sponsorship	7,435,570	6,577,404	858,166-	11.54-	0.25
Synodical Benevolences	18,336,749	17,244,535	1,092,214-	5.95-	0.66
Local Community Benevolences	36,941,731	38,117,762	1,176,031+	3.18+	1.46
Other Benevolences	17,042,171	19,541,552	2,499,381+	14.66+	0.74
Other Expenses	106,359,635	90,973,276	15,386,359-	14.46-	3.48

Assets, Value on December 31

Church Edifice and Lot	13,474,922,783	14,178,432,891	703,510,108+	5.22+
Parish House and Lot	629,251,748	666,134,022	36,882,274+	5.86+
Parsonage(s) and Lot(s)	517,190,840	532,763,161	15,572,321+	3.01+
Other Real Estate	429,755,934	501,406,579	71,650,645+	16.67+
Endowment and Memorial Funds	1,042,078,903	1,101,641,303	59,562,400+	5.71+
Cash, Savings, Bonds, etc.	750,644,548	769,870,723	19,226,175+	2.56+
Other Assets	247,337,930	262,727,518	15,389,588+	6.22+

Bequests Received During Year

Number of Bequests Received	8,409	4,444	3,965-	47.15-	Per 100 Deaths: 9.41
Total Value of Bequests Received	83,847,181	74,657,068	9,190,113-	10.96-	Ave. Beq. \$16,799.52
Intended Mission Support	135,767,478	131,644,946	4,122,532-	3.03-	

*World Hunger and Disaster Response contributions were, in prior years, reported in a combined figure.

**Summary of Congregational Statistics
as of December 31, 2005**

	<i>Statistical Analysis</i>				
	Percentage of Congregations Reporting Ethnic Group Members				
	2004	2005	Change	Percent	Members
Worship Services					
Total Attendance at Worship Each Week	1,474,767	1,439,747	35,020-	2.37-	
Average Sunday Attendance per Congregation	140	137	3-	2.14-	
Percent of Baptized Members Attending Worship	29.91	29.68	0.23-	0.76-	
Congregations Reporting Ethnic Group Members					
African American/Black	3,646	3,700	54+	1.48+	35.07
American Indian and Alaska Native	1,213	1,232	19+	1.56+	11.67
Arab/Middle Eastern	496	530	34+	6.85+	5.02
Asian/Pacific Islander	3,533	3,525	8-	0.22-	33.41
Latino/Spanish	3,014	3,135	121+	4.01+	29.71
Multiethnic	1,586	1,844	258+	16.26+	17.48
White	10,371	10,321	50-	0.48-	97.83
Other	797	720	77-	9.66-	6.82
Percent Ethnic Baptized Membership					
Total Ethnic Baptized Membership					
African American/Black	54,241	54,354	113+	0.20+	1.12
American Indian and Alaska Native	6,780	7,095	315+	4.64+	0.14
Arab/Middle Eastern	1,638	1,779	141+	8.60+	0.03
Asian/Pacific Islander	22,395	21,950	445-	1.98-	0.45
Latino/Spanish	38,255	39,157	902+	2.35+	0.80
Multiethnic	11,036	12,261	1,225+	11.10+	0.25
White	4,781,579	4,700,513	81,066-	1.69-	96.90
Other	12,440	11,096	1,344-	10.80-	0.22

Distribution of Congregations by Size: Baptized Members

	Size of Congregation	Total Congregations	Percent	Total Baptized Members	Percent
	-0-	77	0.72	0	0.00
Very Small	1-175	3,111	29.49	321,082	6.61
Small	176-350	2,792	26.46	716,278	14.76
Moderately Small	351-500	1,491	14.13	625,534	12.89
Medium Sized	501-700	1,164	11.03	687,509	14.17
Moderately Large	701-950	810	7.67	657,834	13.56
Large	951-1,500	651	6.17	759,433	15.65
Very Large	1,501 & over	453	4.29	1,083,106	22.32

Distribution of Congregations by Size: Confirmed Members

	Size of Congregation	Total Congregations	Percent	Total Confirmed Members	Percent
	-0-	100	0.94	0	0.00
Very Small	1-175	4,095	38.81	404,133	11.11
Small	176-350	2,968	28.13	753,251	20.71
Moderately Small	351-500	1,292	12.24	540,454	14.86
Medium Sized	501-700	947	8.97	555,753	15.28
Moderately Large	701-950	532	5.04	429,401	11.80
Large	951-1,500	410	3.88	479,383	13.18
Very Large	1,501 & over	205	1.94	474,573	13.04



Report of the Secretary

Part Four: Duties of the Office

Duties as Secretary

As I complete my service as secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, I realize that I have had the privilege of exercising my responsibilities in an exciting era for this church. Reflect with me on the discoveries that have been a part of my work throughout the past two decades and on the nature of the responsibilities of the secretary.

Provision for election of the secretary of this church by the Churchwide Assembly—a thoroughly reasoned decision of the Commission for a New Lutheran Church—reflects the accountability of the secretary to the life of this whole church and not only for one unit in the churchwide office.

In that connection, it merits noting that the duties of the Office of the Presiding Bishop and the Office of the Secretary may be altered only by the Churchwide Assembly. That is not the case for the functions of any other unit in the churchwide organization. Except for the presiding bishop and the secretary, unit assignments may be changed by the Church Council.

Given the fact that the presiding bishop and the secretary are elected as full-time officers of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America by the Churchwide Assembly, the governing documents make clear that only the Churchwide Assembly has the authority to alter the assigned responsibilities of presiding bishop and secretary and their respective offices.

Important Qualities and Abilities

From experience, I have identified some key qualities that I believe have been important in my service as this church's first secretary. Let me list them.

I first came into office upon my election in 1987 profoundly aware that I was being called to serve the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Therefore, I understood that the secretary must possess or develop quickly an understanding of the polity of this church and be committed to its practice. I recognized then and still believe that the secretary does not have the right to re-implement the polity of a predecessor church body or create a new one for this church. The polity as reflected in the governing documents is the one that we have, subject only to revision by the Churchwide Assembly.

Related to an understanding of this church's polity is the need for an understanding and appreciation of ecclesiology. By this I mean not only ecclesiological perspectives emerging from the Lutheran Reformation of the 16th century but also, more broadly, the ecclesiological perspectives of various Lutheran and other churches throughout this country and the world.

In retrospect, I realize now that I had the advantage in having been present in all of the meetings of the Commission for a New Lutheran Church (CNLC) and most of the meetings of the churchwide Transition Team. In the CNLC process, I heard the debates. I read the drafts. I saw the polity—and the ecclesiological assumptions—of this church emerge.

As a resource for this church, I prepared an overview of the history and polity of the ELCA in all its expressions in the book, *One Great Cloud of Witnesses*, first published in 1996 and now in its third edition.

Documents and Policies

I realized that essential for the secretary is the ability to understand and interpret clearly the governing documents of this church as well as roster policies. Great responsibility is assigned to the secretary for official interpretation of the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*. I have sought to carry out that responsibility with utmost care. To fulfill that task with integrity, both knowledge of the inter-related content of the governing documents and a commitment to trustworthy and consistent practice in their interpretation and application have been essential at each step of the way.

I have endeavored to focus on the well-being of this whole church, in accord with the governing documents. In so doing, I have sought as the secretary to be fair and reliable.

At the end of each Churchwide Assembly, there are "courtesy resolutions" of gratitude. They always are appreciated, but the one related to my work as secretary that stands out most in my mind was adopted at the Milwaukee assembly in 2003. That resolution noted my commitment to fairness. I cherish that acknowledgment.

Skill in Drafting Documents

As a practical matter in my position as secretary, I have seen how essential has been both the knowledge and skill to draft with clarity a wide variety of documents. At times in drafting certain documents, the ability to be very precise is necessary. Other times, eloquence represents the quality of writing that must be sought. Given the wide variety of material in which the secretary has a hand, I now realize how much writing I have done on behalf of this church throughout the past 20 years.

In my service as secretary, I have seen how often it was important that I was a pastor of this church. In some settings and circumstances, that has been no small factor in being effective and in being able to do what I was asked or what needed to be done.

The secretary is not an assistant to the presiding bishop but an officer of this church. Yet I understood from the start that the secretary cannot have some agenda or program separate from or in conflict with that of the presiding bishop. That would not be healthy or appropriate in the life of this church.

The fostering of mutual trust between the presiding bishop and secretary, in my judgment, is not an option; it is an obligation. Sometimes that commitment occurs naturally. For instance, Dr. Herbert W. Chilstrom and I recalled the events that led to the formation of this church. He was a member of the

Commission for a New Lutheran Church and, as indicated, I was present at all those meetings. Interest in church history shared by Dr. George Anderson and me was part of the “glue” in a bond for our work together. Further, the appreciation that Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson has reflected for my knowledge of historical developments in the life of this church and our predecessor bodies has contributed to mutual trust and common effort. I am grateful.

Representative of this Church

In spite of egalitarian patterns and practices, I have discovered that, to put the matter bluntly, rank matters in some circumstances. Thus, an important role as the secretary has been the responsibility, upon request, to represent the presiding bishop in various inter-church, national, and international arenas. There are situations in which the presiding bishop is not available but, as a matter of respect and honor, ecclesiastical etiquette requires the sending of one who is understood as a “high-ranking” representative of this church. At various times, therefore, I have carried out as the secretary that role on behalf of the presiding bishop.

Examples could be cited. Among them was my participation in a delegation of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. on a visit to mark the 1700th anniversary of Christianity in Armenia. Further, on March 21, 1990, I was the ELCA’s representative at the celebration of independence for the Republic of Namibia. Other instances include being a leader in the prayer service at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C., on the first anniversary of “9-11” and being the representative of the ELCA at the consecration of Archbishop Herman as primate of the Orthodox Church in America at St. Nicholas Cathedral in Washington, D.C., on September 8, 2002.

I came to realize very quickly as secretary that ecumenical awareness and experience was important for my work. I have represented this church, on behalf of the presiding bishop, in various national and international ecumenical meetings, including in Rome, Istanbul, Geneva, and London.

In 1990, I was one of the ELCA participants in the Lutheran World Federation Assembly in Curitiba, Brazil. I also was a part of the ELCA delegation at the 1998 assembly of the World Council of Churches in Harare, Zimbabwe.

For the initial implementation of the first full-communion agreement, I chaired the Lutheran-Reformed Coordinating Committee that developed the policy regulating exchangeability of ordained ministers of Word and Sacrament. That policy made clear the accountability of the respective churches and also provided certain protections, including the principle that service of ordained ministers under a full-communion agreement is by invitation only of the inviting body and only with the authorization of the bishop or, in the case of some other churches, the appropriate judicatory executive.

On behalf of the presiding bishop, I was called upon to serve as this church’s representative at the 2000, 2003, and 2006 general conventions of The Episcopal Church, addressing the full-communion relationship between the ELCA and The Episcopal Church. I also served as the ELCA representative to the general assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the general synod of the Reformed Church in America, and the southern province assembly of the Moravian Church.

Because of my knowledge of church structure, the polity of the ELCA, and American Lutheran history, as well as ecumenical issues, I was appointed as a member of the tenth round of the U.S. Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue. I continue as a member of the eleventh round, serving as co-chair with the Most Rev. Richard Sklba.

With Congregations and Synods

As secretary, I have been able to represent this church in congregations and synods for a variety of occasions, many joyous and some sad.

Among the treasured opportunities that I have enjoyed are invitations to significant congregation anniversaries. With each one, I ask for a copy of the congregation’s history and, in the course of the sermon or banquet address, I have recounted part of the congregation’s own history. The response that I have heard is, sometimes even from the pastor, “I didn’t know that about our congregation.” Actually, we have throughout the more than 10,000 congregations of this church marvelous stories of courage, faithfulness, and vision exercised by forebears and current pilgrims in witness and service in the name of Christ. Those histories are journals of the faith and vision of our forebears.

I also have appreciated the “snapshot” I get of a synod from participation in Synod Assemblies. But the secretary must be alert in such settings. With sometimes only a moment’s notice, the secretary must be able to respond to a question from the synod bishop for advice in the course of the assembly.

Willing to be a Servant

In keeping with the principles of organization of the ELCA, the secretary must be willing to be a servant. Such service includes knowledge of this church’s history and those of the predecessor church bodies. Appreciation of the importance of thorough documentation and the retention of records must be demonstrated by the secretary. Administrative responsibilities require attention too. The broad range of duties of the office results in the pace of many days being full and consuming. Yet there also are opportunities for renewal, including in times of Bible study during meetings of the Conference of Bishops and the Church Council. (The secretary is a voting member of both the conference and council.)

When I was elected on May 2, 1987, and immediately undertook my responsibilities as the first secretary of the ELCA, I looked back and realized that—by historical circumstances and my duties throughout the 1970s and 1980s—I had been well prepared for service in the “new” church. Truly, little had I realized in sitting through all those meetings on plans for the “new” church that I was gaining crucial knowledge for future responsibilities. Such knowledge was enormously helpful to me in offering principled leadership throughout the years. It also was crucial in enabling me to provide objective and informed constitutional interpretation and policy development.

Throughout the past two decades, I have sought to be a good steward of my responsibilities. I now give heartfelt thanks for the profound privilege of having served as the first secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

The Rev. Lowell G. Almen, *secretary*



Report of the Secretary Part Five:

“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven.” Yes, “for everything...a season.” That is what we read in the book of Ecclesiastes. That is what we know from the unfolding experiences of life.

God is full of gracious surprises. As I reflect on the passing of the years, I recognize now the surprises that have been a part of my life—surprises throughout the seasons of the past 40 years in my service as an ordained minister of Word and Sacrament.

When I was ordained on June 11, 1967, little could I have imagined what the call of the church would have in store for me. That day was the start of a journey—a journey of many seasons, a journey of a grand unfolding of unexpected responsibilities.

From earliest childhood, I had a sense of the passing of the generations. I also developed an early awareness of the continuity of the church throughout the centuries. My parents and the pastor of our congregation helped nurture that awareness in me, an awareness of God’s faithfulness from age to age.

The invitation does come to each generation—the invitation and even the obligation to be faithful in our time. Indeed, “for everything...a season...and a time for every matter under heaven.”

My gratitude for the continuity of faithful witness has grown deeper with each passing year. And my joy in recognizing the unity of the church throughout the ages has been felt by me in profound ways.

So—for this, my tenth and concluding report as secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America—I stand here in front of the oldest unaltered Lutheran church building in North America: Augustus Lutheran Church in Trappe, Pa. This community is located a few miles northwest of Philadelphia.

Some look upon this place as a type of shrine, a shrine to faithful witness spanning many generations. The structure originally was built in 1743. It was constructed during the first year that the Reverend Henry Melchior Muhlenberg served as pastor.

He arrived in Philadelphia in November 1742. He had been sent from Germany to serve this congregation and others. He was one of those early giants in the unfolding history of Lutherans in North America. Often, he even is called the patriarch of North American Lutheranism.

To me, Pastor Muhlenberg is a model in many ways for all who lead and serve in the church: He is a reminder of faithful witness to Scripture. Of untiring commitment to the well-being of the church. Of deep understanding of the original context and contemporary application of the Lutheran Confessions. Of genuine pastoral care for members. Of facing tough challenges and disappointing obstacles, always with a eye on the wider picture of God’s mercy.

The nature of my service as a Lutheran pastor has been very, very different from that of Pastor Muhlenberg. Yet the model he provided of a profound understanding of the Church

and a deep awareness of the duties of a Lutheran pastor have helped shape my work in unexpected settings and situations. The Church has asked of me many things. And I recognize what a profound privilege I have had to serve the Church in the name of Christ and for the sake of the Gospel.

Following ordination, I undertook my responsibilities as pastor of what then was known as St. Peter’s Lutheran Church. The congregation was located in Dresser, Wisconsin.

There was a coincidence in that call. The congregation through which I was baptized into Christ’s church was named St. Peter Lutheran Church. It was located two miles from the farm where I grew up, about 10 miles northwest of Park River, North Dakota.

A quarter century after my baptism in northeastern North Dakota through the congregation named St. Peter, I was installed as pastor of St. Peter’s Lutheran Church in northwestern Wisconsin. Presiding for the installation was Dr. Theodore Ohlrogge as district president. The service took place on a summer Sunday in 1967.

One of the characteristics of that congregation was a strong commitment to benevolence support of the wider church. Long before I began to serve there, the congregation had committed itself to 20 percent of the offerings being devoted to benevolence or what we now call mission support.

Leaders of the congregation asked, “Why do we exist?” They replied, “We exist not just for ourselves. We exist to support the work of the Gospel through the wider church.” And the members—albeit fewer in number than 300—were serious in that commitment.

At the same time, they graciously helped form a young seminary graduate as a new pastor. They did so in salutary, life-shaping ways.

When I was called to a new setting of ministry, I remember what the president of St. Peter’s Congregation said at a farewell luncheon. He said, “When you came as pastor, we did not have a very high awareness of baptism. You have taught us the meaning of baptism for each day of our lives.”

I became associate campus pastor and director for communications at Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota. In that experience, I had the privilege of working with students, especially in the worship life of the community. I also learned a great deal about administration from Dr. Joseph L. Knutson. He was the college president at the time. Dr. Knutson taught me the importance of principle-centered leadership. He did so by wholesome example and clear decision-making.

While serving on the campus, I also provided pastoral assistance at Trinity Lutheran Church in Moorhead.

Yet another surprise awaited me. The church asked me in 1974 to become managing editor and then editor in 1979 of *The Lutheran Standard*. That was the official publication of The American Lutheran Church, one of the three predecessor church

bodies of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

In my role as editor, I attended most of the meetings of the Committee on Lutheran Unity. That committee proposed the formation of the Commission for a New Lutheran Church in 1982. I was present at all ten sessions of that 70-member commission. Through the efforts of the commission, otherwise known as the CNLC, the plans were shaped for the formation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

As part of the CNLC process, I served on the five-member work group that proposed names for the “new church.” As a member of that work group, I wrote the rationale for use of “Evangelical Lutheran Church” in the name.

Little did I realize—while sitting in those CNLC meetings, and later the meetings of the Transition Team—that I was undergoing crucial education for the next surprise. That next surprise was my election on May 2, 1987, as the first secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Throughout all those meetings in the 1980s, I did gain crucial knowledge of the anticipated work of the ELCA. I also came to know well the design for this church’s organization and operation. That knowledge was enormously helpful to me in so many ways in my duties as secretary, including constitutional interpretation and principled leadership for conscientious guidance in our life together.

I quickly discovered that serving as secretary represented yet another dimension of pastoral ministry. I was called as a pastor to serve this church in particular ways for the sake of witness to the Gospel and care for the unity to which Christ calls us. Yes, I recognized anew that “for everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven.”

On any given day in my office at the Lutheran Center in Chicago, I have walked from roster-and-policy concerns to preparing official constitutional interpretations to drafting a variety of documents to various legal matters to risk management on insurance issues to assembly planning to archival preservation to records-management practices for the churchwide units to administration and personnel management to handling substantial correspondence to preparing a sermon for a congregation’s 250th anniversary to presiding in chapel for communion to hosting a visiting church leader to the exercise of ecumenical diplomacy and then on to whatever surprise is around the next corner—and all that within the space of a few hours. In other words, as secretary, I have had to adapt quickly to whatever matter was at hand.

A significant part of my service as secretary also has occurred beyond the walls of an office in Chicago.

To have been a part of this chapter of U.S. Lutheran history has been an unbounded blessing. I have had a first row seat for many of the major events for the ELCA and its predecessor churches in the final quarter of the twentieth century and the early years of this century. In several instances, I have experienced more than a front-row seat. I have been on the platform, both figuratively and at times actually, in contributing to the shaping of those significant developments.

I complete my service as secretary with only a few regrets. These I now confess:

▣ I regret that I have not been able to testify more eloquently to the grand vision of our life together in this church as imagined and expressed within the governing documents of the ELCA.

▣ I regret that some leaders and members throughout this church have not celebrated fully or undertaken enthusiastically the interdependence and shared ministry to which God calls us. We are called to the practice of genuine interdependence through our work together in each congregation, in all the synods, and throughout the wider church. The failure to engage fully together in the life of this church has hobbled pursuit of the mission God sets us before in our time.

We have a vivid and vital polity in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America—a polity that reminds us, in its practice, of our unity in Christ and in this church. This is the vision for how we are to live and serve together. We see it in our church’s constitution in provision 8.11.:

“This church shall seek to function as people of God through congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization, all of which shall be interdependent. Each part, while fully the church, recognizes that it is not the whole church and therefore lives in a partnership relationship with the others.”

Each part, *fully* church, but not the *whole* church. Each part interdependent, not independent. Each part, living in relationship with others. Each part a vital, mission-focused, active expression working together in this portion of the body of Christ that we know as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

As I now look back on the two decades of my service as the first secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, I do find my heart filled with gratitude—gratitude for having been able to serve this church as secretary. I am profoundly grateful in so many ways:

I suspect that if I were to devote every day from this moment forward in expressions of thanks to my wife, Sally, and our children, Paul and Cassandra, my words of gratitude still would not measure up to the unbounded love that they have given me so generously. They have done so throughout my service as a pastor and servant of the Church. They have done so without complaint. They have done so with compassion and kindness. They have been supportive, especially in those lonely times of tough decisions as I sought to fulfill faithfully my responsibilities. I have known of their love, but I suspect that I have not acknowledged as fully as I should have throughout the years how much that love has meant to me. I am so grateful to them.

I treasure the recollection of having visited several hundred vital congregations—congregations engaged fully in local ministry as well as the wider endeavors of this church. I have found that the healthiest congregations are those committed both to local ministry and the efforts of the wider church.

I am grateful for the occasions when I have participated in various synodical events, including assemblies and convocations. There I have witnessed the strength and vitality of leadership and service shown by synodical bishops, other officers, various staff members, and Synod Councils, as well as folk throughout the synods.

Many synodical assemblies reflect special highlights for me. For instance, in several of them throughout the years, I have had the privilege of participating in the ordination of new pastors to serve the Church now and in the future. Those ordinations are memorable moments of thanksgiving and anticipation. In some sense, each year we experience a gradual “changing of the guard,” so to speak, among our pastors. With the passing of the seasons,

I have come to realize that my signature is now on the ordination certificates of 45 percent of the active roster of ordained ministers of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

I am mindful that I have served with scores of conscientious and wise leaders on the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Their commitment to the care of this church I have seen demonstrated in manifold ways. In addition, I have witnessed the high quality and deep commitment of members of churchwide boards, committees, task forces, and work groups who contribute generously to the life of this church.

I recall the outstanding servants of the Church who have served as members of the Conference of Bishops. Their care for this church and the whole Church is a story of faithfulness and dedication. I remember them, past and present, with thanksgiving to God.

I give thanks for the opportunity to have been a part of a dedicated and creative cadre of leaders and staff serving in our churchwide ministries. I recall with gratitude the three presiding bishops with whom I have served as an officer.⁶ The three treasurers.⁷ The four vice presidents.⁸ The scores of executive directors and staff of the various churchwide units. Marvelous and dedicated folk who have served you and others so well for the sake of our shared endeavors in the name of Christ.

I hold precious the fact that I have been surrounded in the Office of the Secretary by individuals of untiring commitment, high integrity, and abiding care for the well-being of this whole church.

There are numerous recollections that I could cite—recollections that hold special meaning for me. I highlight only a few:

I rejoice in having been able to see ecumenical developments in this time that were first outlined for me by the late Dr. Kent S. Knutson. He did so when I was a senior seminarian in 1966-1967. What he taught in terms of ecumenical directions seemed visionary at the time. Yet I have experienced the embracing of those directions. I have seen the unfolding of ecumenical possibilities in a variety of ways in the life of this church and others. Dr. Knutson did not live long enough to see many of his grand hopes bear fruit. But I have, and I am grateful.

I take satisfaction in having served as the first chair of the Lutheran-Reformed Coordinating Committee. That committee was appointed for the implementation of the Lutheran-Reformed relationship of full communion. Out of that work emerged the procedures for the orderly exchange of ordained ministers of Word and Sacrament—a process of good order that provides

⁶The Rev. Herbert W. Chilstrom served from May 2, 1987, through October 31, 1995. The Rev. H. George Anderson served from November 1, 1995, through October 31, 2001. The Rev. Mark S. Hanson began his service as presiding bishop on November 1, 2001.

⁷Mr. George E. Aker was elected by the Church Council in June 1987, and served until January 31, 1992. Mr. Richard L. McAuliffe served from February 1, 1992, through January 31, 2002. Ms. Christina Jackson-Skelton became the treasurer on February 1, 2002, upon her election in November 2001 by the Church Council.

⁸Ms. Christine H. Grumm served as vice president from May 1987 through October 31, 1991, when she was succeeded by Ms. Kathy J. Magnus, who was vice president until October 31, 1997. Dr. Addie J. Butler served from November 1, 1997, through October 31, 2003. Mr. Carlos E. Peña became vice president on November 1, 2003, following his election at the eighth Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in Milwaukee, Wis.

both for accountability on the part of clergy in such situations and protection of the participating churches. Those procedures served also as the pattern for the later relationships of full communion embraced by this church.

Following adoption in 1997 of the Lutheran-Reformed agreement, history was made again in 1999. That transpired with the adoption of the full-communication relationship between the ELCA and the Moravian Church and also between the ELCA and The Episcopal Church. Subsequently, I was present in 2000 at The Episcopal Church's gathering when the relationship with the ELCA was embraced and celebrated.

I have seen the significance of those agreements unfold. Even as we must continue to learn how to bear one another's burdens in our congregations and throughout the ELCA, now we are reminded of the call to bear one another's burdens in ongoing, profound relationships between church bodies in full communion.

I recall my joy when I was appointed to serve as a member for Round X of the U.S. Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue. That round produced the 2004 statement, *The Church as Koinonia of Salvation: Its Structures and Ministries*. I believe that will prove an historic document ecumenically for years to come. Now I am serving as co-chair of Round XI on the topic, "The Hope of Eternal Life."

Ecumenical experience has had international dimensions for me as well. I marvel at having met popes and patriarchs. I represented this church five times in meetings with Pope John Paul II. From those meetings, I recall especially a conversation in February 1994. He talked with me about the importance of evangelism—evangelism not only for those who have never heard the Gospel but also for those who have grown indifferent to their engagement in the life of the Church.

I have met Pope Benedict XVI twice, once in his previous role as prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and then in March 2006 in his current role. I especially recall his crucial efforts to receive officially the very historic Lutheran-Roman Catholic *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*.

Then, in Istanbul, it was no small moment in March 2006 when His All Holiness, Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomew, entered the audience room where the ELCA ecumenical delegation was waiting. I was delighted to be there again, but I was moved even more deeply when Bartholomew exclaimed upon seeing me, "Oh, my old friend."

I have had opportunity to visit with and come to know a host of presiding bishops, church presidents, stated clerks, general secretaries, and other church leaders throughout the world. I have been deeply moved by their dedication to faithful service. I also have been mindful of the turbulent waters through which they have had to navigate from time to time. I know of the cost to them of such struggles. They, with many others, bear on their hearts the scars of leadership guided by genuine principles. Yet they do so without complaint.

I treasure the privilege of having known several general secretaries of the Lutheran World Federation and the World Council of Churches as well as the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Any visit to the ecumenical center in Geneva, Switzerland, offers a thrilling reminder of the grand scope of the Church in our time. I especially recall the privilege, as a representative of this church, of participating in the Eighth Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation in 1990

and also the Eighth Assembly of the World Council of Churches in 1998.

I remember the tremendously moving moment on March 21, 1990, when the Republic of Namibia was born. As the ELCA's representative for that nation's independence celebration, I witnessed the South African flag being lowered on one pole at 12:18 A.M. and the Namibian flag being raised on another pole at 12:24 A.M. That signaled a new birth of freedom for our Lutheran sisters and brothers, as well as all others, in that land.

I was sitting that night with Bishop Kleopas Dumeni of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia. He said, "Never did I expect to live to see this day." He and many members of his family had paid a high price of suffering and sorrow on the journey to freedom.

That evening in Windhoek, Namibia, I remembered an earlier conversation with Bishop Dumeni. That previous conversation took place in my office in Chicago shortly before my installation on October 10, 1987, as the ELCA's first secretary. Bishop Dumeni said he hoped the ELCA, as such a big church, would not forget his church and others throughout the world. Remember us in our struggle, he said. And the ELCA did remember.

I recall being a part of an ecumenical delegation to mark the 1700th anniversary of Christianity in Armenia. In the settings we visited and the events we observed, I found myself pondering again and again all those centuries of faithful witness. I also realized the price, even unto death, that some paid for the sake of the faith during the era of Soviet domination.

I find myself with tear-filled eyes as I think of the places in many lands where I have seen first-hand the work of Lutherans and others in relief and development. I think especially of the children I have seen in camps in Somalia and Ethiopia. Those children were given a chance for life because of the dedication of relief workers—workers sponsored by this church through the Lutheran World Federation and Lutheran World Relief.

I have witnessed the joy of families being reunited and given a new chance for life through the endeavors of Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service.

And I am mindful of and grateful for the marvelous ministries carried out through Lutheran Social Service agencies and the other social ministry organizations that are part of Lutheran Services in America.

I treasure the special privilege of having become acquainted with the work of the pastors who serve as Lutheran military chaplains. They represent an outstanding group of courageous and faithful ministers of Word and Sacrament. They serve in challenging and, at times, very dangerous settings. Viewed from a military perspective as a high-ranking officer of this church, I have been able to express this church's gratitude to chaplains collectively in conferences and personally on various posts and bases in this country and abroad. I give thanks to God for their dedication and integrity in profound pastoral ministry—a ministry that is rendered by them with firm commitment to faithful witness and with compassionate care of those whom they are called to serve.

I have worked hard in trying to keep as many doors and windows open as possible between the ELCA and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS). The task has not been easy, and at times the prospects have seemed discouraging. Yet I remain convinced that, for the sake of clear Lutheran witness in

this land, these two church bodies need to work together in as many ways as possible now and in the years to come.

As we look to the future, we can be mindful of this—that woven together into the ELCA are threads from the various histories of Lutherans in North America. We also have within the ELCA the diverse cultures of this country, including cultures formed by immigration patterns, shaped by historical experiences, and influenced by regional differences. This variety is a dynamic strength within our life together—and also a potential source of tension. We dare not make absolute this variety. We must guard against regional parochialism looming destructively large in local thinking and divisive practice. The wider vision of God's mission that was demonstrated throughout the generations by our forebears is needed by us now and in the future.

Yes, "for everything . . . a season, and a time for every matter under heaven." Many seasons have passed since Henry Melchior Muhlenberg stood in this pulpit and preached here two and a half centuries ago. Yet his abiding concern for the faithful witness of the Church remains with us.

We are at a grand moment. We mark this year the 20th anniversary of the constituting of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. In so doing, we can be mindful that, with the formation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, God answered the prayers of generations of Lutherans in North America from Pastor Muhlenberg forward—untiring prayers, persistent prayers for a time of greater Lutheran unity, unity not for its own sake but unity for the sake of effective witness to the Gospel in the world, now and in the years to come.

"For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven."

To God alone the glory. *Soli Deo Gloria!*

The Rev. Lowell G. Almen, *secretary* (May 2, 1987–October 31, 2007)



Appendix A: Report of the Committee on Appeals

Heads

Proposals for action

The Rev. Lowell G. Almen, *Secretary* tis

