



Recommendations: African Descent Ministry Strategy

Background Information

“Many Voices, Tell the Story, Create the Vision: Build our Future” is the plan of action for ministry in the African descent communities of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. These gifted and culturally diverse communities include African American, African Caribbean, and African national communities. People of African descent represent 13 percent of the total population of the United States of America. Currently within this church there are 54,189 members of African descent. This represents one percent of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America’s total membership. This strategy, according to the preface, represents a partial dimension of what God does in and through the African descent community in this church. It provides a framework and sets directions for the vision of this community as it continues its faith journey, continuing a long history of contributions to Lutheranism from people of African descent.

Recommendation for Assembly Action

To receive with appreciation the African Descent Ministry Strategy of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America developed by the African descent community;

To express support and deep appreciation for existing ministries of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in American with people of African descent; and

To recommit the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to partnership with existing African descent congregations and to intensified outreach with the Gospel among the wider African descent communities.

Many Voices, Tell the Story, Create the Vision: Build Our Future

*The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America’s
Plan of Action for Ministry in African Descent Communities
(African American, African Caribbean, African National)*

1 Preface

2 The African American, African Caribbean, and African
3 national communities of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in
4 America (ELCA) are gifted and culturally diverse. In this
5 document this diverse group in North America and the
6 Caribbean is referred to as “people of African descent” or “the
7 Black people.” Throughout this strategy, various units of the
8 churchwide organization are identified as partners in this
9 journey. Wherever these partners are identified, the phrase “or
10 their successor(s)” should be understood.

11 People of African descent represent 13 percent of the total
12 population of the United States of America. Currently within
13 the ELCA there are 54,189 members of African descent. This
14 represents one percent of the ELCA’s total membership.¹

15 This strategy represents a partial dimension of what God
16 does in and through the African descent community in the
17 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. It provides a
18 framework and sets directions for the vision of this community
19 as it continues its faith journey.

20 This strategy continues a long history of contributions to
21 Lutheranism from people of African descent.

22 A Theology for a People of African 23 Descent in the Evangelical Lutheran 24 Church in America

25 “God is our refuge and strength, a very present
26 help in trouble” (Psalm 46:1).

27 The Christian theological foundations of people of
28 African descent in Lutheranism are rooted in a holistic
29 understanding of God. This faith perspective, etched in the
30 cross of Jesus Christ and the lives, sufferings, blood, and
31 hopes of ancestors and others, is shaped by a way of being in
32 the world. Moreover, this faith perspective expresses itself
33 through communal and personal interactions on the continent
34 of Africa and with the Western world.

35 Christian faith asserts that there is one God, known as
36 Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as expressed in the historic
37 ecumenical creeds. Therefore, people of African descent, led
38 by the Holy Spirit, prayerfully, joyously, and openly make
39 confession of and to the Triune God. Guided by the principles
40 of unity and diversity, people of African descent stand with the
41 global Lutheran communion in its confession that Jesus Christ
42 is Lord of all.

43 This confession and experience of the Triune God reveals
44 the primacy of the authority of God’s Word. “In the beginning
45 was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was

¹ELCA Department for Research and Evaluation statistics, August 2003.

46 God” (John 1:1). God’s Word is a universal Word for all
47 people in all places and for all time.

48 God’s Word is also particular as witnessed in the diversity
49 of God’s creation. “And the Word became flesh and lived
50 among us...” (John 1:14). God’s Word speaks to the particular
51 situation of people of African descent.

52 The basic message, God’s justifying grace embodied in
53 the person of Jesus Christ, proclaimed with power and carried
54 out in daily ministry among people of African descent, is
55 embedded in the particularities of African peoples. Thus,
56 culture is a repository of deeply held beliefs about the Triune
57 God. Through song, sermon, proverbs, the arts, morality,
58 liturgies, and pastoral care, people of African descent testify
59 to God’s justifying act of liberation in and through the person
60 of Jesus Christ. These become gifts that people of African
61 descent offer the global church.

62 Yet people of African descent know that sin hampers the
63 practice of God’s Word in both church and world. The
64 proclamation and practice of a fundamental belief in human
65 dignity and life is constantly tarnished through experiences of
66 racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of discrimination.
67 For example, the African American church emerged in
68 response to racism and as an affirmation of God-given dignity
69 and worth because people of African descent were
70 systemically denied full participation in every aspect of life,
71 including religion.

72 At the same time, the experience of racism has had a
73 deleterious effect on people of African descent. In many
74 ways, people of African descent continue to suffer from
75 internalized oppression. We have been so preoccupied with
76 loving our white neighbors and others that we have failed to
77 love ourselves as God loves us. We have internalized the
78 insidious nature of racism and now contribute to our own
79 oppression. We have believed the distortion of God’s image
80 in us; namely, that we are to become European in our
81 expression of Lutheran theology and ethics. God’s law reveals
82 how we have embraced that distortion in thought, word, and
83 deed, even though the Gospel tells us that we are God’s people
84 created in the image of God and that, through baptism, we are
85 made God’s daughters and sons forever. Consequently, God’s
86 prophetic Word and mission have suffered.

87 People of African descent lay claim to the Lutheran
88 tradition. African peoples who are Lutherans in the United
89 States, the Caribbean, South America, Africa, and elsewhere
90 gain strength and inspiration, through the Holy Spirit, to voice
91 the religious, theological, and ethical traditions of African
92 peoples. Through the gift of the Holy Spirit, the life of faith is
93 embodied by living as grace-filled people. People of African
94 descent are called by the Gospel of Jesus Christ to place hope
95 and trust in God who hears the cries of the people.

96 As witnesses to God’s justifying grace, people of African
97 descent are called to mission as proclaimed by Jesus in his first
98 sermon (Luke 4). The promise of salvation is proclaimed in
99 several directions. It is proclaimed toward African people
100 suffering from a loss of hope because of situations of pain and
101 struggle. The promise of salvation enables us to transcend the
102 imposed distortion of God’s image (Galatians 3:28). God’s
103 promise is also proclaimed beyond the African American
104 community in our partnership with the global communities and
105 their pain, struggles, and work for justice and transformation.

106 The God that Lutherans of African descent worship and
107 serve is a God whose attributes are love, justice, wisdom, and
108 power. The people of African descent stand on the witness of
109 ancestors who affirmed that the Triune God is both strength
110 and comfort. The faith of African peoples drives us to move
111 beyond all idols and believe that God in Jesus Christ is our
112 strength.

113 This strategy promotes health and healing for people of
114 African descent, for others, and for God’s world. The various
115 mission goals in this strategy challenge people of African
116 descent within Lutheranism to live out, in a variety of ways
117 and through various callings, the will of God, which promotes
118 justice, healing, and human dignity for all.

119 Introduction

120 *“Write the vision: make it plain on tablets, so that
121 a runner may read it” (Habakkuk 2:2).*

122 In November 1666, Lutheran witness to the Gospel among
123 people of African descent began on the island of St. Thomas,
124 in what is now the U.S. Virgin Islands. On April 13, 1669, a
125 Black man was baptized at a Lutheran congregation in New
126 York. This baptism began the recorded journey of the African
127 descent community in the Lutheran church in North America.

128 Near the end of the twentieth century and in the early
129 years of the twenty-first, a series of listening models and
130 participative events produced various documents that
131 described Black ministry in the Lutheran church. In 1994 a
132 major ecumenical consultation and dialogue on evangelism
133 and church growth in the African American context revealed
134 the “tablets” for a vision and direction for Black ministry in
135 the ELCA. To further write the vision, in 1996 the
136 “Proclaiming the Power” event gathered 500 lay members and
137 clergy, representing 130 Black congregations, at Howard
138 University in Washington, D.C. In 2000, 700 congregational
139 leaders from throughout this church met in regional events to
140 strategize and refine the vision. “Proclaiming the Power 2000:
141 Building Congregations and Leadership through Christ-
142 Centered Community Consensus” documents the results of
143 those regional events. “African descent” became the
144 consensus for wording to acknowledge people of African
145 descent within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
146 This terminology is meant to represent the connection of the
147 North American continent to its roots in the African diaspora.

148 In September 2003, the ELCA African Descent Strategic
149 Planning Process Steering Team came to consensus as to its
150 mission statement: “Many Voices, Tell the Story, Create the
151 Vision: Build Our Future.” Team members designed a focus-
152 group process in order to hear the many voices of the African
153 descent communities, as best time and treasury would allow.
154 Focus groups were held in Brooklyn, N.Y.; St. Croix,
155 St. Thomas, St. John, U.S. Virgin Islands; Milwaukee, Wis.;
156 East Cleveland, Ohio; Los Angeles, Calif.; Philadelphia, Pa.;
157 Baltimore, Md.; St. Louis, Mo.; Atlanta, Ga; Chicago, Ill.;
158 Detroit, Mich.; and Miami, Fla.

159 It is now time to make clear the vision, write it plainly,
160 and share it with the 240 congregations with at least 20 percent
161 persons of African descent in membership, as well as with the
162 whole ELCA.

163 *The Vision*

164 People of African descent congregations in the
165 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America are Christ-centered
166 communities in ministry, sharing gifts, empowered by the
167 Holy Spirit to proclaim the power, love, and presence of Jesus
168 Christ. This vision calls us to live out God's call in and
169 through visionary pastoral leadership, worship, witness,
170 discipleship, stewardship, family ministries, social justice, and
171 unity and diversity. These areas of ministry work together in
172 an integrated, holistic approach to our call of building the body
173 of Jesus Christ in mission.

174 In response to the vision's call, the following strategy
175 describes the mission opportunities in these key areas, which
176 have been identified for releasing the power to create and
177 sustain the vision. The recommended actions are for this
178 whole church's participation in the continuing journey of
179 African descent Lutheran ministry.

180 This strategy is a living document intended to stir
181 imagination and ministry initiatives beyond what is presented
182 on its pages. It is founded upon documents like *Confession for*
183 *the Third Millennium: Black Lutheran Experiences*.² It is
184 rooted in the experiences and writings that have preceded it in
185 the Black Lutheran community.

186 The development of this strategy represents a partial
187 attempt to address racism and other "isms." It is understood
188 that all of the communities of the ELCA should continue to
189 address these evils. The journey of people in the African
190 descent community has included oppression, racism,
191 colonialism, classism, and sexism. It also has included
192 delivering the power of the Gospel and transformation in Jesus
193 Christ. This strategy affirms the gifts and leadership of Black
194 people and calls for action in a variety of settings within the
195 structures of the ELCA.

196 The strategy strives to contribute to the efforts of the
197 ELCA as expressed in its Plan for Mission. It relates to the
198 mission plan's strategic directions by supporting congregations
199 in their call to be welcoming, assisting congregations to grow
200 in evangelical outreach, and assisting in the recruitment,
201 preparation, and care of leaders who serve a missional church
202 in a pluralistic world. In addition, this strategy relates to the
203 implementation of the strategic directions by pursuing the
204 ELCA's commitment to becoming more diverse in a pluralistic
205 societal context.

206 *Visionary Pastoral Leadership*

207 People of African descent traditionally understand
208 themselves to be a part of a larger community. The community
209 is a social organism. Apart from the community there is no
210 life. Our humanity, given by God, is discovered amid a
211 complex, interdependent network of relationships revealing us
212 to be people who belong to families of nations and to our
213 African ancestors. Life is known as we give and receive life
214 from God and one another. As the African proverb from the

215 Xhosa people says, "I am because we are."³ Faithful leaders
216 in the African context understand belonging to the community
217 as a core value for a quality life.

218 The Black community historically has looked to its
219 pastoral leaders to articulate prophetically the story of the
220 community. With a true sense of oneness with community,
221 pastoral leaders are called to serve God and the community
222 with visionary fervor and prophetic passion. Visionary
223 pastoral leaders speak the language of the people and convey
224 the message of the Gospel. Visionary pastoral leaders share
225 the wisdom of the elders and offer solutions grounded in the
226 Scriptures for everyday problems.

227 Visionary pastoral leaders understand the importance of
228 pastoral care for congregants and themselves. They
229 understand the sacred task of building ecumenical and global
230 relationships. Visionary pastoral leaders exemplify Christian
231 values as a way of life, leading the way in giving and tithing,
232 the struggle for justice, and the call for peace. Visionary
233 pastoral leaders understand preaching as an awesome
234 responsibility and a primary way the people hear the Word of
235 God. They connect God's story with the people's story. As
236 James Cone writes:

237 Telling the story is the essence of Black preaching. It
238 means proclaiming with appropriate rhythm and passion
239 the connection between the Bible and the history of Black
240 people. What has Scripture to do with our life in a white
241 society and the struggle to be *somebody* in it? To answer
242 that question, the preacher must be able to tell God's story
243 so that the people will experience its liberating presence in
244 their midst.⁴

245 Visionary pastoral leaders are developed and prepared
246 contextually for ministry. This requires congregations, synods,
247 institutions, and the churchwide expression of the ELCA to
248 increase sensitivity, understanding, and acceptance of the
249 many dynamics of the African descent experience and world-
250 view. Visionary pastoral leaders are generally grown from
251 within—affirmed, nurtured, and sustained by the Holy Spirit
252 in and through the community.

253 *Mission Context*

254 As of December 2004 there were 200 rostered leaders of
255 African descent: 117 congregational pastors; 36 seminary
256 faculty, synodical and churchwide staff members, and college
257 chaplains; four mission developers; four deaconesses and
258 diaconal ministers; 17 retired clergy; five retired associates in
259 ministry (AIMS); three clergy on disability; 12 pastors on
260 leave from call (seven female and five male); one pastor on
261 study leave; and one deaconess on leave from call. According
262 to the Division for Ministry and the Commission for
263 Multicultural Ministries, there are presently 37 students in the
264 Master of Divinity degree program and 21 Theological
265 Education for Emerging Ministries (TEEM) students.

³ Michael Battle, *Reconciliation: The Ubuntu Theology of Desmond Tutu* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1997), p. 39.

⁴ James H. Cone, *Speaking the Truth: Ecumenism, Liberation, and Black Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), p. 24.

² *Confession for the Third Millennium: Black Lutheran Experiences*, ed. Nelson T. Strobert and Theodore Schroeder (Chicago: ELCA, 2001).

266 **Goal**

267 That by no later than 2015 there be a minimum of 100
268 additional visionary pastoral leaders of African descent
269 preparing or prepared to serve African descent Lutheran
270 congregations.

271 **Mission Actions**

272 *Congregations are encouraged to:*

273 1. Discern, identify, and support at least two people
274 from their congregation as future visionary pastoral leaders.
275 To this end congregations are encouraged to:

- 276 • provide mentoring programs for youth;
- 277 • encourage young adults in full participation within the
278 community;
- 279 • enable lay leaders to explore leadership education
280 possibilities; and
- 281 • engage in honest appraisal of the community's needs and
282 potential for developing future visionary pastoral leaders.

283 2. Affirm and continue to support with love and care
284 their existing pastoral leadership. In pursuit of this goal,
285 congregations are encouraged to:

- 286 • provide for mutual ministry teams to facilitate open
287 communication within the congregational leadership and
288 community;
- 289 • seek to provide livable compensation packages with parity
290 to area professionals in order to eliminate "working poor"
291 clergy;
- 292 • work toward providing sabbatical leave with
293 compensation in order to enhance spiritual, educational,
294 and personal renewal; and
- 295 • provide for continuing education leave and compensation.

296 3. Develop lines of open communication about needs
297 and practices with synod, regional, and churchwide offices.

298 *Synods are encouraged to:*

299 1. Sponsor and promote an "Invitation to Service" (call
300 process) that is culturally grounded in the Lutheran
301 communities of African descent, but participates fully in the
302 established ELCA process. To this end, synods are
303 encouraged to:

- 304 • review how the synod's internalized racism creates
305 barriers for the growth of African descent leadership;
- 306 • look at how financial resources perpetuate the barriers for
307 growth and development of African descent leadership;
308 and
- 309 • consult and partner with members of African descent
310 congregations and the Black community to recruit at least
311 five new candidates of African descent per year for
312 preparation for ministry.

313 2. Provide meaningful and ongoing care for visionary
314 pastoral leaders and their families, including continuing
315 education, spiritual counseling, and personal support.

316 3. Encourage an environment of strong visionary
317 pastoral leadership in the ministries of congregations and their
318 members. Toward this goal, synods are encouraged to:

- 319 • identify and provide educational resources; and
- 320 • promote training programs for all lay and clergy leaders.

321 4. Promote and encourage open communication with
322 congregations and African descent leaders presently serving
323 congregations.

324 *Churchwide units are encouraged to:*

325 1. Coordinate all ministries related to the African
326 descent communities under the auspices of a major initiative
327 that recognizes and affirms the sense of "oneness" shared by
328 those communities.

329 2. Create and promote a more active communication
330 network within the people of African descent communities,
331 among other ethnic-specific communities, and within the
332 larger church community.

333 3. Support financially and encourage participation in
334 conferences, workshops, seminars, convocations, and
335 continuing education opportunities that will provide resources
336 to promote a culture of community expectation and
337 accountability, contextually relevant education, community
338 building, and related goals and values.

339 4. Welcome with respect and sensitivity African
340 national pastors and other leaders who have been prepared and
341 authorized for ministry in other churches of the Lutheran
342 World Federation (LWF) and who now are considering service
343 in the ELCA.

344 5. Assist candidacy committees and synods to
345 understand and acknowledge the gifts and skills of African
346 national pastors as they help them adapt to the specific needs
347 of this church.

348 6. Provide African national clergy with orientation to
349 Western culture and church polity by working with seminaries,
350 on-line educational opportunities, and mentorship programs.

351 7. Advocate for contextual theological reflection
352 opportunities for seminarians and pastors serving in the
353 Caribbean and other communities of African descent.

354 8. Affirm and validate the value, quality, and uniqueness
355 of the program at the Lutheran Theological Center in Atlanta.

356 9. Affirm and support Lutheran colleges and universities
357 (e.g., Wagner College and Wartburg College) in their efforts
358 to provide scholarships to students of African descent whose
359 goal is rostered leadership in the ELCA.

360 *Seminaries are encouraged to:*

361 1. Provide internship and clinical pastoral education
362 (CPE) opportunities that are contextually relevant for
363 communities of African descent.

364 2. Prepare seminarians for leadership in African descent
365 congregations.

366 3. Increase by intentional recruitment the number of
367 qualified African descent faculty at each seminary as
368 vacancies, promotions, and opportunities become available.

369 4. Review curricula to identify and provide courses that
370 will prepare all seminarians for leadership in African descent
371 congregations with a focus on increasing the quality and
372 number of Horizon internship sites to include African descent
373 congregations.

374 5. In consultation with the Division for Ministry, initiate
375 a sustained five-year effort to identify, recruit, and support
376 future visionary pastoral and lay professional leadership for
377 ministry in the African descent community.

378 6. Establish supportive and relevant mentoring programs
379 for all seminarians seeking a call to rostered ministry,
380 especially in African descent congregations.

381 7. Maintain working relationships with the African
382 descent Lutheran congregations in their area or region by

383 providing theological programs open to African descent
384 Lutheran leaders, both lay and clergy, and by establishing
385 community—seminary committees or specific community
386 liaisons.

387 8. Develop methods to communicate the existence and
388 availability of educational or informational programs and
389 training as well as program needs to local Lutheran
390 communities of people of African descent.

391 9. Listen to the voices of seminarians of African descent
392 as they navigate their way through the normal rostering
393 process.

394 10. Encourage four-year programs that lead to a Master
395 of Divinity degree or other advanced degrees as well as the
396 TEEM certificate process.

397 *The African American Lutheran Association (AALA) is*
398 *encouraged to:*

399 1. Support the Visionary Pastoral Leadership goal. To
400 that end, it should

- 401 • identify, encourage, and support members of African
402 descent whose vocational gifts are being stirred towards
403 rostered ministry;
- 404 • encourage candidates for rostered ministry to complete
405 their theological education at culturally relevant
406 institutions such as the Lutheran Theological School at
407 Atlanta;
- 408 • encourage members to volunteer to serve on synodical
409 candidacy committees;
- 410 • contribute to scholarship funds, such as the Daniel A.
411 Payne Memorial Scholarship Fund;
- 412 • provide scholarship information to all congregations of
413 the ELCA; and
- 414 • facilitate efforts to gather and guide young leaders in
415 service to ELCA colleges, seminaries, synods, and social
416 ministry organizations.

417 *The Conference of International Black Lutherans (CIBL)*
418 *is encouraged to:*

419 1. Develop processes, programs, and resources to teach
420 people how to deal biblically and theologically with the
421 indigenous and ecumenical nature of leadership.

422 **Worship**

423 The worship experience—God’s address to us and our
424 response to God’s power proclaimed through the Word and
425 Sacraments—is central to the religious life of the Black
426 community. Congregations building disciples from within the
427 African descent community take the worship experience
428 seriously. The language of the people is the language through
429 which the Gospel is to be heard, proclaimed, sung, danced, and
430 sacramentally embodied during worship and lived experiences.

431 Worship in the Black community is more verb than noun,
432 a holistic engagement of head, heart and body touched by
433 the sacred. Telling the story, testifying, preaching, and
434 praying are communal acts, set in the context of music,
435 movement, and dance. All are infused with a deep
436 awareness of activity of the Holy Spirit within worship and
437 a readiness for spontaneous response.⁵

⁵ *This Far by Faith* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, 1999),
p. 10.

438 There are common elements present in all Lutheran
439 worship: gathering, word, meal, and sending. However,
440 The interplay between worship and culture is often a messy
441 enterprise. Practices that seem right and salutary in one era
442 or within one culture may be judged odd or quaint in
443 another. The dialog between culture and the Christian faith
444 expressed in worship is as old as faith itself. Fortunately,
445 the Lutheran heritage welcomes this dialog, calling for
446 unity in the common, evangelical core of worship and at
447 the same time allowing for flexibility and freedom in the
448 ways this essential core is communicated and celebrated.⁶

449 A Lutheran World Federation study presents helpful
450 categories for framing and understanding this dialog:

451 The reality that Christian worship is always celebrated in
452 a given local cultural setting draws our attention to the
453 dynamics between worship and the world’s many local
454 cultures. Christian worship relates dynamically to culture
455 in four ways. First, it is *trans-cultural*, the same substance
456 for everyone everywhere, beyond culture. Second, it is
457 *contextual*, varying according to local situation (both nature
458 and culture). Third, it is *counter-cultural* challenging what
459 is contrary to the gospel in a given culture. Fourth, it is
460 *cross-cultural*, making possible sharing between different
461 local cultures.⁷

462 **Mission Context**

463 In 1999 *This Far by Faith* was published and made
464 available for ELCA congregations. This resource shares the
465 gifts of the Black community for worship. The African
466 descent community is known for its musical gifts and talents,
467 but African descent congregations are often challenged to find
468 musicians to support the worship experience in the Black
469 idiom.

470 **Goals**

471 1. To increase the number of African descent
472 congregations in which there is freedom for contextualized
473 worship and in which all people invited to worship are able to
474 see themselves in God’s story and in the worship experience.

475 2. To increase the number of musicians available to
476 support worship in the Black idiom.

477 3. To increase the number of worship resources that are
478 ethnically specific to the various cultures of African descent
479 peoples.

480 **Mission Actions**

481 *Congregations are encouraged to:*

482 1. Purposely study worship practices in relationship to
483 specific community contexts and needs and in relationship to
484 traditional Lutheran worship, and incorporate these learnings
485 into practical worship use.

486 2. Develop training opportunities for using *This Far by*
487 *Faith* as a resource to promote contextual worship.

488 3. Model shared leadership in worship by using trained
489 laity as worship leaders where appropriate.

⁶ *This Far by Faith*, p. 11.

⁷ Nairobi Statement on Worship and Culture (Lutheran World
Federation, 1996), as quoted in *This Far by Faith*, p. 8.

490 4. Explore Black preaching, providing opportunities and
491 continuing funds to develop the preaching skills of clergy and
492 worship leaders in the African descent context.

493 5. Identify musicians, with a particular focus on youth,
494 and assist them to develop the skill sets required for worship
495 leadership.

496 6. Explore alternative music options that target youth
497 and young adult interests.

498 *Synods are encouraged to:*

499 1. Sponsor workshops on contextualized resources,
500 encouraging congregations in African descent communities to
501 participate in events such as Black preaching seminars and
502 revivals.

503 2. Use synodical events and synod assemblies as
504 opportunities to share *This Far by Faith* and other resources
505 and gifts from the African descent community for worship.

506 3. Sponsor musical training events for musicians in
507 African descent congregations. Provide resources for
508 professional and lay leadership.

509 4. Encourage the mentoring of youth and young adults
510 who can expand the range of musical options for youth and
511 young adult worship participants.

512 *Churchwide units are encouraged to:*

513 1. Provide contextually relevant resources.

514 2. Encourage use of resources and gifts from the African
515 descent community at events such as the Churchwide
516 Assembly, Global Mission events, and Youth Gatherings.

517 3. Promote and use the gifts and diversity of music
518 offered by young adults and youth.

519 *Seminaries are encouraged to:*

520 1. Encourage professors of music and worship,
521 particularly through ecumenical partnerships, to seek ways to
522 increase opportunities to train seminarians to lead worship in
523 the Black context without compromising the community's
524 Lutheran doctrine and heritage.

525 2. Encourage seminarians to explore the diversity of
526 worship and music, including music that resonates with young
527 adults and youth.

528 3. Continue to provide and support preaching with
529 power and spirit events through convocations and classes.
530 Communicate the dates of such events churchwide in a timely
531 fashion so that sufficient time is provided for registration and
532 participation.

533 *The African American Lutheran Association (AALA) is*
534 *encouraged to:*

535 1. Promote and communicate the voice of the
536 community that calls for change in the worship experience.

537 2. Support congregations in their regions by being
538 present at events that assist in adapting worship and music to
539 meet community needs.

540 3. Continue to identify resources that empower the
541 community to be uplifted through Word and Sacrament and
542 that identify them as Lutherans of African descent.

543 4. Empower and promote young adult and youth
544 worship leadership in local events.

545 *The Conference of International Black Lutherans (CIBL)*
546 *is encouraged to:*

547 1. Develop processes, programs, and resources to teach
548 people how to deal biblically and theologically with the
549 indigenous and ecumenical nature of worship.

550 ***Witness***

551 As an institution whose mission is God's work for
552 transforming the world, this church is called to bear witness to
553 God's redeeming love. This witness includes inviting people
554 into relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

555 In the African descent community, as in many ethnic
556 communities across America, economic and familial survival
557 has become a primary concern. Historically, the Black church
558 has offered a witness to another reality given by God in Jesus
559 Christ. As pointed out in *African American Evangelism:*
560 *Proclaiming the Power,*

561 African American Christians have come to understand that
562 they are a community within a community. Just as the
563 apostle Paul in Romans 11:5 talks about "a remnant,
564 chosen by grace," so are African American Christians a
565 remnant that has a mission given under the Lordship of
566 Jesus Christ. That mission is to share Him with others.
567 For African American Christians, the "others" are those
568 within the community who need to hear from their brothers
569 and sisters what difference it makes to be a disciple of
570 Jesus Christ. This difference is not simply spoken, but is
571 shown in deeds of righteousness.⁸

572 African descent Lutheran congregations have the gift of
573 hope and life to offer within their community; they are called
574 to proclaim the power, love, and presence of Jesus Christ. The
575 strength of churches in the African descent community is best
576 demonstrated when the entire church witnesses to God's
577 presence in its midst and in the world, recognizing the
578 multiplicity of gifts within a culturally pluralistic church body.
579 Telling the story or evangelizing within the African descent
580 community must be culturally relevant, capturing the pain, the
581 joy, and the future hopes of the community.

582 African descent Lutheran communities are faced with the
583 competition of Evangelical Free and Pentecostal outreach
584 strategies that speak with a familiar and Black voice to the
585 community. Because of these persistent and well-developed
586 outreach ministries, the numbers of people in the Black
587 community who continue to be unchurched have become
588 sophisticated hearers of the words of a "cloud of witnesses."
589 The Lutheran message must be given with clarity and with
590 conviction to address the differences in its message of grace.
591 The voice must be strong and united in purpose and spirit.
592 Telling the story is not only about who we are as Lutherans; it
593 is also about who we are as children of the Living God. As we
594 tell the stories of a people who celebrate the God of the
595 oppressed, we also promote the God of abundance, who has
596 set us free through grace. This witness makes our message
597 unique and real for all people, especially people of African
598 descent of all ages and socio-economic backgrounds. This is
599 the message that goes from sea to sea, that reaches from coast
600 to coast.

⁸ James Capers, *African American Evangelism: Proclaiming the Power*
(Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 1996), p. 30.

601 **Mission Context**

602 Many African descent Lutheran congregations are known
603 for their welcoming spirit and hospitality, social witness,
604 social justice ministries, and positive presence in the
605 community. An evangelical witness and invitation to faith in
606 Jesus Christ are sometimes less evident.

607 **Goal**

608 Lutheran congregations of African descent are called to be
609 deep and wide in their evangelical witness and service. Using
610 strategies that focus on the spiritual needs of people of African
611 descent, congregations will be provided assistance and training
612 to promote measurable and consistent growth.

613 **Mission Actions**

614 *Congregations are encouraged to:*

615 1. Train, educate, encourage, and empower members to
616 “tell their stories” and proactively invite other people into
617 relationship with Jesus Christ.

618 2. Practice genuine hospitality and welcome all who
619 come, regardless of differences.

620 3. Reach out to the community, sharing the Gospel and
621 building community alliances for creating spiritually healthy
622 communities.

623 4. Provide intentional witnessing to young adults by
624 providing opportunities for inclusion in the life of the
625 congregation through worship and program experiences. An
626 important element will be the development of age-appropriate
627 programs targeted at those with specific needs.

628 5. Promote youth events and programs specifically
629 designed to develop youth involvement by providing
630 mentoring programs, connections with the Lutheran Youth
631 Organization (LYO), youth choirs, and Sunday school
632 programs that meet the needs of youth.

633 *Synods are encouraged to:*

634 1. In partnership with African descent congregations,
635 develop a specific strategy for witness and evangelism in the
636 African descent community.

637 2. Affirm and support congregations seeking to “re-
638 tool” for more effective outreach in the African descent
639 community.

640 3. At each Synod Assembly, place an emphasis on
641 witness and evangelism from a variety of cultural contexts.

642 4. In partnership with the churchwide organization,
643 develop a synod-wide outreach strategy for people of African
644 descent.

645 5. Equip leaders to evangelize with spirit and conviction
646 through development of community-relevant materials and
647 training.

648 6. Promote the recruitment of energized and spirit-filled
649 leadership by supporting those ministries that dare to be
650 different.

651 7. Develop specific programs for youth and young
652 adults, including those programs that connect with LYO.

653 *Churchwide units are encouraged to:*

654 1. Identify and evaluate possibilities and specific
655 recommendations for supporting existing congregations,
656 establishing new starts, and developing rostered leadership
657 within the ELCA, using as a work plan the Division for
658 Outreach African American and Black Outreach strategy.

659 2. Include mission opportunities for evangelism in the
660 African descent community.

661 3. Provide additional financial resources and staff for
662 resource development, training events, and congregational
663 program support to enhance the evangelical witness of the
664 African descent community within the ELCA.

665 4. In conjunction with ELCA seminaries, provide
666 direction for the development of evangelism tools that respond
667 to the ecumenical communities that exist outside of the
668 ELCA’s full-communion partnerships (e.g., Church of God in
669 Christ).

670 5. Create outreach resources that target young adults and
671 youth.

672 *Seminaries are encouraged to:*

673 1. Develop curriculum focused on the evangelical
674 witness of people of African descent to create avenues of
675 spiritual experience and expression within the Lutheran
676 context.

677 2. Through education of ecumenical partners, reaffirm
678 the need for cross-training strategies for evangelism and
679 outreach within the context of the communities of African
680 descent.

681 *The African American Lutheran Association (AALA) is*
682 *encouraged to:*

683 1. Affirm the message of public witness through social
684 activities, and support programs for Lutherans of African
685 descent of all ages.

686 2. Provide contacts for mission congregations and
687 developing leaders to participate in the goals and vision of
688 AALA.

689 *The Conference of International Black Lutherans (CIBL)*
690 *is encouraged to:*

691 1. Develop processes, programs, and resources to teach
692 people how to deal biblically and theologically with the
693 indigenous and ecumenical nature of witness.

694 **Discipleship**

695 Discipleship is lived out through several dimensions of the
696 faith journey, in the command to go and tell, in inviting others
697 to come and see, and in being sent out to witness, serve, and
698 make disciples.

699 The connection of life and faith is enfleshed in our
700 communities as we see ministry happening daily and the Word
701 being lived out Monday through Saturday, not just on Sunday.
702 It is not good enough for us to *say* that we are disciples; we are
703 called to *be* followers of Jesus, to *be* disciples. Discipleship is
704 not a “time-sensitive” program or project.

705 At its heart, discipleship is a series of relationships. The
706 first relationship is the disciple’s relationship with Jesus.
707 The second is the relationship between disciples. The final
708 relationship that must be included in any New Testament
709 study of discipleship is the relationship of disciples to
710 others. Each relationship begins in the same way: with an
711 invitation and a response.⁹

⁹“Called to Discipleship: Congregation Planning Guide” (Chicago: ELCA, 2000), p. B-5.

712 Worshipping communities must prepare for discipleship
713 through faith-filled, intentional study of the Word. This
714 involves regular interactive sessions in which the Word, its
715 meaning, and the way it is lived out in daily lives is engaged.
716 Learning and living the Word is not for individual benefit
717 alone; it is also for becoming living examples in order to make
718 disciples.

719 **Mission Context**

720 The ELCA offers an abundance of faith-formation
721 resources to its congregations. There are resources that have
722 been developed by and for use in the African descent Lutheran
723 community, such as *Rooted in the Gospel, Planning Revivals,*
724 and *Confession for the Third Millennium: Black Lutheran*
725 *Experiences*. Many Black congregations have engaged in
726 training opportunities around these resources.

727 Historically, the Black Christian community has a strong
728 witness of prayer, Bible study, worship, and sharing of faith
729 stories. African descent congregations can build on this legacy
730 and continue the journey of passing on the faith to the next
731 generation. Making disciples is an intentional response to the
732 Gospel.

733 **Goal**

734 To make discipleship a priority over membership.

735 **Mission Actions**

736 *Congregations are encouraged to:*

- 737 1. Pray constantly for God’s discerning Spirit to direct
738 the life of the congregation.
- 739 2. Provide Bible study opportunities, encourage
740 members to bring their Bibles to Bible study and worship, and
741 provide Bible study teachers with training and resources.
- 742 3. Offer intentional processes for making disciples of
743 every member (e.g., “each one teach one”).
- 744 4. Create opportunities for disciples to use the diversity
745 of their gifts within their congregation and community.
- 746 5. Create small groups to provide mutual
747 encouragement and accountability among disciples in the
748 congregation.
- 749 6. Have leaders who are proficient in the Word and
750 model discipleship.

751 *Synods are encouraged to:*

- 752 1. Encourage congregations to be communities that
753 study the Bible, building partnerships ecumenically, cross-
754 culturally, and across economic barriers.
- 755 2. Create a communication network for congregations
756 to share their best practices for making disciples.
- 757 3. Establish lay schools or academies for formal
758 learning, fellowship, and interaction with teachers,
759 theologians, and bishops of this church.

760 *Churchwide units are encouraged to:*

- 761 1. Continue to provide and develop the ethnic-specific
762 resources necessary to encourage greater discipleship.
- 763 2. Strengthen the ELCA’s “Call to Discipleship”
764 emphasis.
- 765 3. Provide forums for congregations to share best
766 practices for making disciples.

767 *The African American Lutheran Association (AALA) is*
768 *encouraged to:*

- 769 1. Assist congregations in providing an atmosphere of
770 outreach through open gatherings that promote public access
771 to the gifts and community of the Lutheran church.
- 772 2. Through small group activities and Bible study,
773 witness to the body of Christ being active in the Lutheran
774 understanding of inclusiveness and discipleship.
- 775 3. Work with congregations, clusters, and synods to
776 promote the witness of the community of Lutherans of African
777 descent as active in and vital to the growth of the ELCA.

778 *The Conference of International Black Lutherans (CIBL)*
779 *is encouraged to:*

- 780 1. Develop processes, programs, and resources to teach
781 people how to deal biblically and theologically with the
782 indigenous and ecumenical nature of discipleship.

783 **Stewardship**

784 *“Merciful God, we offer with joy and thanksgiving*
785 *what you have first given us—ourselves, our time,*
786 *and our possessions, signs of your gracious love”*
787 *(Lutheran Book of Worship, p. 108).*

788 Stewardship begins with God, and its primary purpose is
789 to serve the will of God. The Black community understands
790 itself as a “community of communities,” which embodies an
791 interdependent, holistic view of creation and relationships with
792 one another.

793 Through ministry out of their own resources, steward
794 disciples experience the joy and passion of giving. Through
795 this relationship of giving and blessing, steward disciples
796 experience the connection between God’s work in and through
797 their lives and God’s mission and ministry in the world.
798 Making this connection brings growth in both faith and
799 service, as well as a life-long journey of following the example
800 of Jesus.

801 Christians are called to be in the world, but not of the
802 world, because the world does not live according to Christ. As
803 partners in God’s mission, we are called to be in the world
804 serving and meeting people’s needs. This service is a large
805 part of how we steward or manage what God has given us.

806 Our service reflects and is influenced by our stewardship
807 in the ways in which we budget our financial resources, use
808 our church facilities, care for the environment, educate
809 ourselves about the needs of the world, and share the Good
810 News in and with the community.

811 The African descent community has been characterized as
812 those with the least. The expansion of the Black middle class,
813 however, means that Black Americans, as a group, have
814 greater philanthropic potential than originally perceived. It is
815 time for the African descent community to be recognized as a
816 full partner in giving of itself and its resources to the
817 community. It is time for the communities of African descent
818 to develop the resources that already exist and to pay their own
819 way when it comes to supporting congregations and rostered
820 leaders within their communities.

821 Church bodies do not take the assets of the Black
822 community into full consideration. Blacks, along with other
823 people of color, are part of today’s growing demographic

824 majority. Since congregations are the primary institution that
825 people of African descent have always supported, this church
826 should ask for and receive contributions from the African
827 descent community in ways that will acknowledge all of its
828 gifts.

829 **Mission Context**

830 People of African descent link stewardship to the
831 covenantal relationship with God and the kinship of all people.
832 Traditionally, congregations have been the primary institution
833 supported by this community. Congregations of people of
834 African descent must take a systematic approach in teaching
835 stewardship that includes tithing, holistic giving, and
836 discipleship.

837 **Goal**

838 African descent congregations will demonstrate sustained
839 growth, grow in their stewardship of time, talent, and treasure
840 through intentional planning, education, and understanding of
841 the need to be in full partnership with this church and with
842 their community.

843 **Mission Actions**

844 *Congregations are encouraged to:*

- 845 1. Connect the teaching of stewardship of time, talents,
846 and possessions with their social ministry actions.
- 847 2. Teach tithing as a faith practice.
- 848 3. Encourage church leaders to model tithing as an
849 example for congregation members.

850 *Synods are encouraged to:*

- 851 1. Sponsor stewardship workshops designed for African
852 descent congregations.
- 853 2. Produce culture-specific stewardship material,
854 ensuring an understanding of stewardship that goes beyond
855 fiscal responsibility to time and talent.
- 856 3. Call qualified African descent staff to serve as
857 stewardship specialists.

858 *Churchwide units are encouraged to:*

- 859 1. Identify strong stewardship congregations within the
860 African descent community to serve as models.
- 861 2. Call people of African descent to serve as
862 stewardship staff.

863 *Seminaries are encouraged to:*

- 864 1. Offer programs in financial planning and budgeting
865 to prepare future leaders for the task of directing the fiscal
866 affairs of congregations.
- 867 2. Develop programs open to the congregational leaders
868 of local churches to promote healthy congregational asset
869 management and planning.
- 870 3. Offer seminars on writing programs and proposals for
871 faith-based grants.

872 *The African American Lutheran Association (AALA) is*
873 *encouraged to:*

- 874 1. Urge its membership to utilize existing programs to
875 “grow” fiscal, volunteer, and creative assets in congregations.
876 The variety of stewardship programs presently offered by this
877 church can be used in many contexts.

878 *The Conference of International Black Lutherans (CIBL)*
879 *is encouraged to:*

- 880 1. Develop processes, programs, and resources to teach
881 people how to deal biblically and theologically with the
882 indigenous and ecumenical nature of stewardship.

883 **Family Ministries**

884 **Mission Context**

885 The task of the Black church is—like that of Ezra and
886 Nehemiah in the Old Testament— to promote spiritual,
887 ethnic, and psychological rejuvenation among a people
888 recovering from captivity; to model and proclaim God’s
889 truth to Black men, women and children through
890 evangelism and discipleship so that Christ’s sovereign rule
891 will be acknowledged in the family. Weak families
892 suggest weak churches and vice versa! Satan thrives
893 where spiritual authority is weak.¹⁰

894 The first institution was the human family. God created
895 Adam and Eve to provide for the care of creation. As the
896 family increased, so did the need for God’s guidance. “At that
897 time people began to invoke the name of the Lord” (Genesis
898 4:26b). “The Black church is often much like an extended
899 family of care, sharing and fellowship,” writes Darlene
900 Hannah.¹¹ It takes the whole church to provide for the
901 education, nurture, and inclusion of all that extended family.
902 As the Black Lutheran church seeks to be a community proud
903 of its history and culture, no member of that family can be left
904 behind.

905 **Goal**

906 That every congregation of African descent will support
907 and nurture leaders of all ages.

908 **Mission Actions**

909 *Congregations are encouraged to:*

- 910 1. Provide mentoring programs to educate and train
911 leaders of all ages.
- 912 2. Develop inclusive programs for all ages directed at
913 increasing leadership participation.
- 914 3. Weave Youth Sundays and young adult focus groups
915 into the fabric of best practices for cohesive, connected
916 worship.
- 917 4. Identify and support laypeople who exhibit the gifts
918 of the Holy Spirit to serve in rostered Word and service
919 ministry (e.g., diaconal ministry, associates in ministry).

920 *Synods are encouraged to:*

- 921 1. Provide education and training information for
922 congregations seeking to develop family ministries.
- 923 2. Recognize communities striving to be inclusive of
924 youth and young adults and provide mentoring assistance and
925 resources.

¹⁰ Hank Allen, “The Black Family: Its Unique Legacy, Current Challenges, and Future Prospects,” in *The Black Family: Past, Present & Future: Perspectives of Sixteen Black Christian Leaders*, ed. by Lee N. June (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), p. 27.

¹¹ Darlene B. Hannah, “The Black Extended Family: An Appraisal of Its Past, Present, and Future Statuses,” in *The Black Family*, p. 50.

926 3. Acknowledge that smaller congregations will benefit
927 from this model of family ministry and direct funding to them
928 as needed.

929 4. Develop training tools and resources to aid family
930 ministry communities.

931 5. Provide adequate financial resources for attendance
932 at training and growth seminars.

933 6. Provide support and training for congregants
934 preparing for rostered Word and service ministry.

935 *Churchwide units are encouraged to:*

936 1. Develop training and mentoring tools to empower
937 synods and congregations in their family ministry programs.

938 2. Recognize the need to develop family ministry tools
939 that incorporate members of every age into the life of the
940 congregation.

941 3. Reinforce with Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, the
942 need for age-inclusive Christian education materials.

943 4. Advocate for just state and federal policies in all areas
944 related to the quality of family life.

945 *Seminaries are encouraged to:*

946 1. Create an environment for future rostered leaders to
947 acquire skills for family ministries.

948 2. Develop relationship, marriage, and family courses
949 that will increase the availability of family ministry-ready
950 rostered leaders able to work with a variety of family units to
951 promote whole family participation in worship and Christian
952 education.

953 3. Recognize the need for seminary-trained youth
954 workers and family practitioners and work to provide
955 educational support for such vocations.

956 *The African American Lutheran Association (AALA) is
957 encouraged to:*

958 1. Support congregational youth programs by utilizing
959 youth and young adults in programs and chapter boards and
960 offices.

961 2. Provide elder leadership to congregations developing
962 mentoring programs for youth and young adults.

963 3. Encourage young adults to see confirmation as a
964 stepping stone into life in this church, not a graduation from it.

965 4. Support ministries that seek to work with family life
966 issues (e.g., shelters for women survivors of domestic violence
967 and child advocacy programs).

968 *The Conference of International Black Lutherans (CIBL)
969 is encouraged to:*

970 1. Develop processes, programs, and resources to teach
971 people how to deal biblically and theologically with the
972 indigenous and ecumenical nature of family ministries.

973 **Social Justice**

974 *“But let justice roll down like waters, and
975 righteousness like an ever-flowing stream” (Amos 5:24).*

976 **Mission Context**

977 African descent Lutheran congregations have inherited a
978 grand social ethical tradition from both the historic Black
979 church and the Lutheran church. From the Black church,

980 people of African descent inherited an understanding that the
981 Christian faith must be concerned about the body and soul of
982 all members of its context. From the Lutheran church, people
983 of African descent inherited a strong social ministry network.
984 Both traditions embrace their mission to be a public church
985 that serves and speaks on behalf of the “least of these”
986 (Matthew 25).

987 The prophetic and priestly dimensions of ministry in
988 African descent communities require Lutherans of African
989 descent around the globe to be attentive to their context.
990 Issues such as HIV-AIDS, homelessness, poverty, social
991 justice in the judicial process, economic equality, educational
992 opportunity, and health care accessibility converge on African
993 descent Lutheran congregations in many ways. People of
994 African descent need to be empowered in all arenas in the fight
995 for justice.

996 **Goal**

997 To speak God’s Word forthrightly to those systems that
998 continually drive life out of God’s people.

999 **Mission Actions**

1000 *Congregations, synods, and churchwide units are
1001 encouraged to:*

1002 1. Use the social statements of the ELCA (e.g., *Freed in
1003 Christ: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture*) as theological
1004 foundations for advocacy and service ministries.

1005 2. Use available printed resources (e.g., *Criminal
1006 Justice Ministry: A Congregational Handbook*) as aids to
1007 encourage this church to be about faith active in love.

1008 3. Partner with Lutheran social ministry organizations
1009 and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) so that
1010 faith active in love might be lived out within communities of
1011 African descent.

1012 4. Interact with the Lutheran Office for Governmental
1013 Affairs (LOGA) and grass-roots programs of governmental
1014 offices and agencies to empower and nurture the relationship
1015 between those officials and congregations of Lutherans of
1016 African descent.

1017 5. Develop plans to share effective congregational
1018 models of doing justice and showing mercy.

1019 6. Work with ecumenical and global networks pursuing
1020 social justice ministry.

1021 7. Develop resources for assisting all expressions of the
1022 ELCA in responding to HIV-AIDS, developing prison
1023 ministries, improving public school education, and working
1024 with other issues of importance to African descent
1025 communities.

1026 8. Convene a broad-based churchwide consultation for
1027 the purpose of identifying models of health-care ministries and
1028 developing plans for promoting healthcare among people of
1029 African descent.

1030 *Seminaries are encouraged to:*

1031 1. Promote the exchange of ideas through seminars and
1032 convocations in which social justice is discussed to address the
1033 issues that prevent the body of Christ from being all that it can
1034 be in a chaotic world.

1035 2. Equip future Lutheran rostered leaders of African
1036 descent with information and networking skills to access the

1037 myriad of political avenues through which justice can be
1038 pursued for all members of the body of Christ in the world.

1039 3. Provide opportunities for training in community
1040 development that helps build appropriate organizations
1041 responsive to the needs of the community.

1042 *The African American Lutheran Association (AALA) is*
1043 *encouraged to:*

1044 1. Promote social issues in the African descent
1045 community.

1046 2. Organize avenues for exercising the rights and
1047 responsibilities of people of African descent (e.g., voter
1048 registration drives and food drives).

1049 *The Conference of International Black Lutherans (CIBL)*
1050 *is encouraged to:*

1051 1. Develop processes, programs, and resources to teach
1052 people how to deal biblically and theologically with the
1053 indigenous and ecumenical nature of social justice.

1054 **Unity and Diversity**

1055 **Mission Context**

1056 Diversity is in the very nature of African descent. In the
1057 21st century, the African descent community unites the three
1058 largest communities of people of African descent: the African
1059 American, the African Caribbean, and the African national.
1060 The diverse social, cultural, geographical, and historical
1061 presence of the African descent community represents the
1062 most under-utilized and significant community in the ELCA.
1063 From the tribes of Africa, the Caribbean, and the United States
1064 come the richest cultural and spiritual assets that claim kinship
1065 in the Lutheran church. The people represented by these
1066 communities unite to maintain their spiritual “soul” in the
1067 ELCA. Their gifts of connectedness with the earth, family,
1068 neighbor, and stranger provide the ELCA a true vision of the
1069 future of this church.

1070 As a people continually discouraged from witnessing to
1071 their oneness with Christ in the literature, art, and music of the
1072 religious community, the diverse people of African descent
1073 willingly offer their gifts to the spiritual community that has
1074 cradled them and nurtured them with the means of grace. The
1075 African descent community seeks to respond to that invitation
1076 by sharing its heart and being with the church. For the past
1077 338 years of Lutheranism in a multicultural context, people of
1078 every race in God’s creation have shared the love of Christ
1079 through the gifts of the diverse cultures from which they
1080 evolved. This reality calls this church to transcend culture and
1081 to build relationships with and within communities of color.

1082 **Goal**

1083 To create a strategic team of leaders of the various
1084 communities (African American, African Caribbean, African
1085 national) to develop cohesive programs that will create
1086 openings for recognized churchwide leadership, not tokenism.

1087 **Mission Actions**

1088 *Congregations, synods, churchwide units, and seminaries*
1089 *are encouraged to:*

1090 1. Extend an open hand of fellowship to all people with
1091 respect and dignity regardless of race, color, or culture.

1092 2. Acknowledge the leadership styles, diversity, and
1093 differences of all people of African descent, and promote the
1094 recognition of such gifts.

1095 3. Support and enhance the historical perspectives of
1096 Lutherans from diverse communities of color as effective and
1097 embrace them as willing leaders for the church.

1098 4. Dismantle the glass ceiling that prohibits the growth
1099 of communities by removing political obstacles that impede
1100 the growth and nurture of leaders of African descent.

1101 5. Through education, mentorship, and media, empower
1102 thoughts, words, and deeds that reflect the need to be
1103 responsive to Christ’s call to the entire community of all
1104 people.

1105 6. Acknowledge prayerfully and deliberately the
1106 brokenness of the past and move towards the future as a
1107 unified body of Christ.

1108 7. Regularly convene consultations that gather
1109 congregational leaders, rostered leaders, teaching theologians
1110 of color, synodical leaders, and churchwide staff to assess and
1111 plan future directions in this church’s common ministry.

1112 8. Convene and participate in regular consultations with
1113 this church’s ecumenical partners engaged in multicultural
1114 ministry.

1115 *The African American Lutheran Association (AALA) is*
1116 *encouraged to:*

1117 1. Educate Lutherans of African descent regarding the
1118 institutional structure of the ELCA.

1119 2. Maintain a Web site that provides the historical
1120 background of Black Lutherans’ journeys; a listing of rostered
1121 leaders of African descent; congregational, synodical, and
1122 churchwide news and events of interest; and on-line resources
1123 for dialogue.

1124 *The Conference of International Black Lutherans (CIBL)*
1125 *is encouraged to:*

1126 1. Develop processes, programs, and resources to teach
1127 people how to deal biblically and theologically with the
1128 indigenous and ecumenical nature of unity and diversity.

1129 **Executive Summary of** 1130 **Mission Opportunities and Goals**

1131 **Visionary Pastoral Leadership**

1132 **Mission Context**

1133 As of December 2004 there were 200 rostered leaders of
1134 African descent: 117 congregational pastors; 36 seminary
1135 faculty, synodical and churchwide staff members, and college
1136 chaplains; four mission developers; four deaconesses and
1137 diaconal ministers; 17 retired clergy; five retired associates in
1138 ministry (AIMS); three clergy on disability; 12 pastors on
1139 leave from call (seven female and five male); one pastor on
1140 study leave; and one deaconess on leave from call. According
1141 to the Division for Ministry and the Commission for
1142 Multicultural Ministries, there are presently 37 students in the
1143 Master of Divinity degree program and 21 Theological
1144 Education for Emerging Ministries (TEEM) students.

1145 **Goal**

1146 A goal of this strategy is that by no later than 2015 there
1147 be a minimum of 100 additional visionary pastoral leaders of
1148 African descent preparing or prepared to serve African descent
1149 Lutheran congregations.

1150 **Worship**

1151 **Mission Context**

1152 In 1999 *This Far by Faith* was published and made
1153 available for ELCA congregations. This resource shares the
1154 gifts of the Black community for worship. The African
1155 descent community is known for its musical gifts and talents,
1156 but African descent congregations are often challenged to find
1157 musicians to support the worship experience in the Black
1158 idiom.

1159 **Goals**

1160 One goal of this strategy is to increase the number of
1161 African descent congregations in which there is freedom for
1162 contextualized worship and in which all people invited to
1163 worship are able to see themselves in God's story and in the
1164 worship experience.

1165 A second goal is to increase the number of musicians
1166 available to support worship in the Black idiom.

1167 A third goal is to increase the number of worship
1168 resources that are ethnically specific to the various cultures of
1169 African Descent peoples.

1170 **Witness**

1171 **Mission Context**

1172 Many African descent Lutheran congregations are known
1173 for their welcoming spirit and hospitality, social witness,
1174 social justice ministries, and positive presence in the
1175 community. An evangelical witness and invitation to faith in
1176 Jesus Christ are sometimes less evident.

1177 **Goal**

1178 Lutheran congregations of African descent are called to be
1179 deep and wide in their evangelical witness and service. Using
1180 strategies that focus on the spiritual needs of people of African
1181 descent, congregations will be provided assistance and training
1182 to promote measurable and consistent growth.

1183 **Discipleship**

1184 **Mission Context**

1185 The ELCA offers an abundance of faith-formation
1186 resources to its congregations. There are resources that have
1187 been developed by and for use in the African descent
1188 Lutheran community, such as *Rooted in the Gospel*, *Planning*
1189 *Revivals*, and *Confession for the Third Millennium: Black*
1190 *Lutheran Experiences*. Many Black congregations have
1191 engaged in training opportunities around these resources.

1192 Historically, the Black Christian community has a strong
1193 witness of prayer, Bible study, worship, and sharing of faith
1194 stories. African descent congregations can build on this legacy
1195 and continue the journey of passing on the faith to the next
1196 generation. Making disciples is an intentional response to the
1197 Gospel.

1198 **Goal**

1199 A goal of this strategy is to make discipleship a priority
1200 over membership.

1201 **Stewardship**

1202 **Mission Context**

1203 People of African descent link stewardship to the
1204 covenantal relationship with God and the kinship of all people.
1205 Traditionally, congregations have been the primary institution
1206 supported by this community. Congregations of people of
1207 African descent must take a systematic approach in teaching
1208 stewardship that includes tithing, holistic giving, and
1209 discipleship.

1210 **Goal**

1211 African descent congregations will demonstrate sustained
1212 growth, grow in their stewardship of time, talent, and treasure
1213 through intentional planning, education, and understanding of
1214 the need to be in full partnership with this church and with
1215 their community.

1216 **Family Ministries**

1217 **Mission Context**

1218 The task of the Black church is—like that of Ezra and
1219 Nehemiah in the Old Testament— to promote spiritual,
1220 ethnic, and psychological rejuvenation among a people
1221 recovering from captivity; to model and proclaim God's
1222 truth to Black men, women and children through
1223 evangelism and discipleship so that Christ's sovereign rule
1224 will be acknowledged in the family. Weak families
1225 suggest weak churches and vice versa! Satan thrives
1226 where spiritual authority is weak.¹²

1227 The first institution was the human family. God created
1228 Adam, then Eve to provide for the care of creation. As the
1229 family increased, so did the need for God's guidance. "At that
1230 time people began to invoke the name of the Lord" (Genesis
1231 4: 26b). "The Black church is often much like an extended
1232 family of care, sharing, and fellowship" writes Darlene
1233 Hannah.¹³ In order to provide for that extended family, it takes
1234 the whole church to provide for the education, nurture, and
1235 inclusion of all the members. As the Black Lutheran church
1236 seeks to be a community proud of its history and culture, no
1237 member of that family can be left behind.

1238 **Goal**

1239 The goal of this strategy is that every congregation of
1240 African descent will support and nurture leaders of all ages.

1241 **Social Justice**

1242 **Mission Context**

1243 African descent Lutheran congregations have inherited a
1244 grand social ethical tradition from both the historic Black
1245 church and the Lutheran church. From the Black church,

¹²Hank Allen, "The Black Family: Its Unique Legacy, Current Challenges, and Future Prospects," in *The Black Family: Past, Present & Future: Perspectives of Sixteen Black Christian Leaders*, ed. by Lee N. June (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), p. 27.

¹³Darlene B. Hannah, "The Black Extended Family: An Appraisal of Its Past, Present, and Future Statuses," in *The Black Family*, p. 50.

1246 people of African descent inherited an understanding that the
1247 Christian faith must be concerned about the body and soul of
1248 all members of its context. From the Lutheran church, people
1249 of African descent inherited a strong social ministry network.
1250 Both traditions embrace their mission to be a public church
1251 that serves and speaks on behalf of the “least of these”
1252 (Matthew 25).

1253 The prophetic and priestly dimensions of ministry in
1254 African descent communities require Lutherans of African
1255 descent around the globe to be attentive to their context.
1256 Issues such as HIV-AIDS, homelessness, poverty, social
1257 justice in the judicial process, economic equality, educational
1258 opportunity, and health care accessibility converge on African
1259 descent Lutheran congregations in many ways. People of
1260 African descent need to be empowered in all arenas in the fight
1261 for justice.

1262 ***Goal***

1263 One goal of this strategy is to speak God’s Word
1264 forthrightly to those systems that continually drive life out of
1265 God’s people.

1266 ***Unity and Diversity***

1267 ***Mission Context***

1268 The very nature of being of African descent is diversity.
1269 In the twenty-first century, the African descent community
1270 unites the three largest communities of people of African
1271 descent: the African American, the African Caribbean, and the
1272 African national. The diverse social, cultural, geographical,

1273 and historical presence of the African descent community
1274 represents the most under-utilized and significant community
1275 in the ELCA. From the tribes of Africa, the Caribbean, and
1276 the United States come the richest cultural and spiritual assets
1277 that claim kinship in the Lutheran church. The people
1278 represented by these communities unite to maintain their
1279 spiritual “soul” in the ELCA. Their gifts of connectedness
1280 with the earth, family, neighbor, and stranger provide the
1281 ELCA a true vision of the future of this church.

1282 As a people continually discouraged from witnessing to
1283 their oneness with Christ in the literature, art, and music of the
1284 religious community, the diverse community of people of
1285 African descent willingly offers their gifts to the spiritual
1286 community that has cradled them and nurtured them with the
1287 means of grace. The African descent community seeks to
1288 respond to that invitation by sharing its heart and being with
1289 the church. For the past 338 years of Lutheranism in a
1290 multicultural context, people of every race in God’s creation
1291 have shared the love of Christ through the gifts of the diverse
1292 cultures from which they evolved. This reality calls this
1293 church to transcend culture and to build relationships with and
1294 within communities of color.

1295 ***Goal***

1296 The goal of this strategy is to create a strategic team of
1297 leaders of the various communities (African American,
1298 African Caribbean, African national) to develop cohesive
1299 programs that will create openings for recognized churchwide
1300 leadership, not tokenism.

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