

REPORT OF THE NATIONAL CHURCH COUNCIL

Officers:	National Bishop Raymond Schultz Roger Kingsley, Vice-President	Donald Storch, Secretary Norm Thompson, Treasurer
Council:	Tom Brook Rev. Sonja Free Maaïke Froelich Rev. Nolan Gingrich Elizabeth Hachborn Ken Hartviksen Rev. Roger Haugen Heidi Hesselink Judy Kochendorfer	Rev. Mark Koenker Rev. Dr. Peter Mikelic Teddy Pope Rev. Doug Reble Robert Schmidt Carl Sorensen Rev. Trish Schmermund
ACC Rep	The Very Rev. Peter Wall	
LWF Rep	Kathy Magnus, LWF RONA	
Synod	Rev. Cindy Halmarson, SK Synod	Rev. Michael Pryse, Eastern Synod
Bishops:	Rev. Ron Mayan, ABT Synod Rev. Gerhard Preibisch, BC Synod	Rev. Elaine Sauer, MNO Synod

We met:

September 15–17, 2005
 March 9–11, 2006
 September 14–16, 2006
 January 18–20, 2007
 March 15–17, 2007
 and will meet June 20, 2007.

Copies of minutes of our meeting are posted on the ELCIC website when they have been approved by council.

At the September 2005 meeting we reaffirmed our vision for this church:

“to be a church In Mission for Others”

The strategic priorities that flow from that mission statement were identified as:

1. To nurture and uphold confessional integrity;
2. To enable mutual participation in mission; and
3. Relationships with partner churches.

As we survey Canada and our place in the world we are distressed at the increasingly uncaring society that we have become. We grieve over the wars, destruction of the environment and the growing number of poor and homeless in our own country. Though we are but a small church, less than 200,000 members across this great country we believe that our voice should be heard and that convention elected us to be leaders in this critical time.

Our actions have not been uniformly approved, either within or without the church. We are a democracy, our church in convention deals with many of the hard issues that come before us. Many of the issues council dealt with in the last two years were follow up to the decisions of the 2005 and prior conventions.

We have organized our report to you around the 3 strategic priorities that have guided our work in the last two years.

Strategic Priority #1: To nurture and uphold confessional integrity.

Three specifics were identified under this priority:

- 1.0 1.1 Establish and maintain standards for the teaching of doctrine and practice of rostered leaders, congregations and institution of the ELCIC;
- 2.0 1.2 Provide counsel and interpretation on matters of faith, order and doctrine; and
- 3.0 1.3 To be the public voice of the Lutheran Church in Canada speaking to the compelling questions and issues facing our global community.

We continue to be blessed and grow with the deepening relationship with the Anglican Church of Canada. (ACC). Council renewed the mandate of the Joint Commission for Anglican Lutheran Relationships for the period of 2007 to 2013.

One way of demonstrating this relationship is shown in the recommendation for approval of the second reading of the constitutional changes that will grant to rostered ministers of the ACC that are servicing the Lutheran Church, full privileges that are equivalent to those of rostered Lutheran ministers. (see **section G, motion #4**)

A second way of demonstrating this relationship is the second reading of the changes that would have the Council of the General Synod (COGS) appoint a voting member to the NCC. The ACC has made parallel changes in their documents to facilitate the same changes. (see **section G, motion #21**)

Guidelines are being developed for the development of Shared Ministries, protocols are being articulated for clergy serving in one another's churches and addressing of common discipline issues. Good work is being done.

The Lutheran representatives on the joint commission are Bishop Michael Pryse, Co-Chair, Rev. Ilze Kuplens-Ewart, Professor Cam Harder, Sharon Villetard, and Rev. Paul Johnson, national staff.

Work has continued on the developing common understanding of the diaconal ministry. First reading of constitutional changes to remove "lay" from our documents are being presented at this convention. Assuming they will be passed, and come up for second reading at the 2009 Convention, the necessary changes to the *Administrative Bylaws* will be presented at that time. (see **section G, motion #8**)

Tenth Anniversary of the *Evangelical Declaration*

In 1995 this church set up a Future Directions Task Force on Mission to discern where we were being called to as a church. Two years later we, in convention, adopted the report of that task force. This year we celebrate the tenth Anniversary of the *Evangelical Declaration*. It is a document that defines what it means for us to be the church, and what it means to live as the church in the world. We are again asking the convention:

Motion:

That National Church Council recommends to the Eleventh Biennial Convention the adoption of the document *In Mission for Others an Evangelical Theology of Mission, Evangelical Declaration for the next decade.*

Refer to addendum #1 page G-7 for the full document *In Mission for Others an Evangelical Theology of Mission.*

Stewardship of Creation Initiative

As we celebrate the tenth anniversary of the *Evangelical Declaration* and renew our commitment to *In Mission for Others an Evangelical Theology of Mission* we have come to recognize that our theology which calls us to be *In Mission for Others* also calls us to be better stewards of God's creation. For creation is a great expression of God's grace and love for all that is and its care is an expression of our service for others. That the integrity of God's creation is being broken is seen all around the world, through climate change, the destruction of natural habitat, the degrading of agricultural lands, the extinction of species, and our creation of so much waste which is filling our world, and polluting it with toxins. In the midst of such brokenness and need we are called to respond. In this response we are reminded of our call to be humble stewards of the creation on which all life depends, and we are reminded that creation belongs not to us, but rather to God.

As *In Mission for Others, an Evangelical Theology of Mission* states:

We affirm that God calls us, through Word and Sacrament, to be disciples and to make disciples. Our discipleship is defined by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. Our mission is to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with people in Canada and around the world through the proclamation of the Word, the celebration of the Sacraments, and through service in Christ's name. On the basis of the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions:

We believe, teach and confess that everything we have is a gift from God entrusted to our nurture and care, and that the Christian life is a life of stewardship.

We believe, teach and confess that the Holy Spirit calls and gathers the whole church into the mission of God, which takes seriously both the reality of the world, and the reality of Christ, with equal care.

Therefore, we, as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, will celebrate and rejoice in the gifts which God has given us to carry out our mission in the world today. Where we see need, we will take action. We will use our gifts deliberately to be the people of God for others.

Motion:

That the National Church Council recommends that we commit ourselves as a church to answer the call to respect the integrity of God's creation through an environmental stewardship initiative engaging our national, synodical, congregational and individual member expressions.

Refer to addendum #2 page G-9 for the stewardship of creation proposed strategy.

Second reading and approval is also being recommended for the constitution that will create a youth assembly with full voting privileges (**see section G, motion #5**) When those are approved, then there are recommended changes to the administrative bylaws to set the terms of the youth assembly (**see section G, motion #20**)

Council was guided by two actions from the 2005 Convention, namely the defeat of the motion to allow for local option of the same-sex blessings, and motion NC-05-27 which directed this church to “take steps to create a more welcoming environment in this church for gays, lesbians and their families.”

This issue and the larger issues surrounding it of biblical interpretation, societal changes and threatening behaviours by some pastors and congregations have consumed a large amount of councils thought, effort and time. This is neither an easy or conflict free discussion. Council presented and listened to a variety of input. We spent time in study and prayer.

What we present to Convention 2007 is what we see as the best way to minister to the diversity of opinion and feeling that is evident in the church.

In Convention 1995, motion NC-95-11, outlined the responsibilities of the national and synodical levels of this church. This has been the guiding resolution in the 12 years since it was enacted. The work of the National Church has been concentrated on those areas highlighted, namely:

NC 95-11 MS to adopt the following principles relating to organizational structure:

- A. That the NATIONAL CHURCH STRUCTURE serves and relates to SYNODS and to STRUCTURES BEYOND THE ELCIC;
 - 1) *That the NATIONAL CHURCH has the responsibility to nurture the IDENTITY, UNITY AND VISION of the ELCIC;*
 - 2) *That the PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY FOR DECISION-MAKING resides with the NATIONAL CHURCH in the following areas:*
 - i. Policies and standards for rostered leaders
 - ii. Mission in the world
 - iii. Public policies for the church in society
 - iv. Development of stewardship resources
 - v. Policies, standards and resources for worship
 - vi. Ecumenical and cooperative relationships with other churches
 - vii. Relationships with ELW, special interest conferences and other Lutheran organizations
 - viii. Pension and benefit programs
 - ix. GHDA
 - x. Colleges and church schools
 - 3) *That the NATIONAL CHURCH has additional responsibilities:*
 - i. To facilitate communication, consultation and cooperative programming among synods (e.g. conference of bishops, relationships with synod councils, communication to synod conventions, Rasmus, publications)
To provide national support, where agreed, in areas of synod responsibility (e.g. youth gatherings, stewardship, seminary curricula, CECF)

- B. That SYNODICAL STRUCTURES relate to the CONGREGATIONS and to the NATIONAL CHURCH STRUCTURE;
- 1) *That EACH SYNOD COOPERATES AND COLLABORATES with the National Church and other synods for the following purposes:*
 - i. To nurture the identity, unity and vision of ELCIC
 - ii. To support the mission of the church
 - iii. To coordinate common standards
 - iv. To address common concerns
 - v. To develop covenants for partnership in specific areas of mission
 - 2) *That PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY FOR DECISION-MAKING resides with the SYNODS in the following areas:*
 - i. Theological education and leadership (seminaries, candidates, continuing education)
 - ii. Addressing issues of church and society on the territory of the synod
 - iii. Resource development and fundraising
 - iv. Mission in Canada
 - v. Establishing and supporting specialized ministries (e.g. camps, chaplaincies, outdoor ministries)
 - vi. Supporting existing congregations and leaders in mission and ministry (e.g. worship, learning, witness, service, support, youth)

The issue of how to minister best to the gay and lesbian communities and their families has after much reflection been seen as an issue of mission and outreach, thus a synodical and congregational issue. We also wish to be clear that this is not a self-initiated concern of council or synods, but is before us in response to the request of many congregations and individuals within the church. Our time on council the last two years would have been easier if we had not had this issue before us.

In summary, here are the decisions that council made concerning the mission to homosexual and lesbian people and their families;

- The ELCA is undertaking a major study on human sexuality. We have been given the opportunity to join their discussions as visitors and to modify the ELCA documents to fit the Canadian situation.
- We will be taking this revised document and use it to begin our own process of prayerful reflection and dialogue as a church. This process will work first of all to develop a shared church wide dialogue so that we can listen together to what our faith teaches us about human sexuality and how we are to respond to human needs, suffering and joy related to human sexuality.
- Judy Wry chairs a committee that is undertaking this revision. We expect to receive a document which guides this discussion by the end of 2007. When complete it will be available to this church for study and reflection.
- The issues in the document being developed will deal with not just the concerns of homosexual and lesbian people, but with the many ways that our sexuality calls for a faithful and loving response.
- Out of this church wide study we expect that we can present to the 2009 Convention a Canadian social statement that will replace the 1970 document. We also recognize that this is a short timeline and that we may need to be given more time to adequately complete the study and document.

- In the mean time the issues are still with us, as is evident from the Eastern Synod motion from its 2006 Assembly restating the concerns in terms of synodical mission terms.
- After much discussion and reflection, the following motion is presented to you for approval.

CC-07-10 MS NCC recommend the following motion to the 2007 Convention:

- That this convention affirms that the diversity within Canada's culture requires responses to a variety of persons in order for this church to be *In Mission for Others*.
- We also affirm that the synods have the mandate to devise mission strategies appropriate to their regional settings.
- Accordingly, we encourage synods to develop ways to best minister to people who live in committed same sex relationships, including the possibility of blessing such unions.

Strategic Priority #2: Enable mutual participation in Mission.

2.1 Facilitate communication and cooperative programming among synods and between synods and national church.

2.2 Provide national support where agreed in areas of synod responsibility.

2.3 Energize and participate in the ecumenical movement in Canada.

2.4 Support advocacy, development and relief.

Examples of the discussions and actions from Council are:

- The relationship between the ELCIC and CLWR continues to improve and we continue to work to find ways in which we can greater collaborate in our shared work of addressing poverty and injustice around the world. In March of 2007 we signed a new Memorandum of Understanding which will serve as the basis for our ongoing work.
- Support to the Augusta Victoria Hospital (AVH) in east Jerusalem. The people of the ELCIC have responded generously to support the needs of this particular community. NCC was able to use part of a bequest to make a one time additional grant to the hospital until its regular funding was restored.
- The NCC agreed to sign onto a new agreement with KAIROS which will allow KAIROS to create its Peace and Justice Fund. This fund was created when several Roman Catholic communities decided to give \$1.5 million of their assets to KAIROS. These communities made this commitment because they saw in KAIROS the work they would want to be committed to, but are not able to because of the decreasing numbers. This new fund will support the justice work that we do with KAIROS
- We have also begun a process of reviewing and renewing how our church addresses injustice both in Canada and around the world.

Strategic Priority #3: Relationships with Partner Churches.

Our relationship continues to grow and deepen with the Anglican Church of Canada. Our day together before we begin our convention is both experience and evidence of this increasingly important relationship. Our council has benefited greatly from the full participation and gained from the wisdom of the COGS representative to our Council, Rev. Peter Wall.

Our ecumenical work in Canada is partly done through the Canadian Council of Churches. There is much interest in deepening of relationships between churches, we are limited only by the resources, both staff and financial to further these relationships.

Other areas of management of church affairs

A process was undertaken to develop a *Governance Manual*. This manual spells out roles and responsibilities of council members and officers. We find it helpful to clarify relationships and working arrangements. Further modification will occur as we have more experience in using this document.

Several other constitutional and administrative bylaws changes are being presented, the removal of reference to Divisions (which have not existed since 1997) (**section G, motion#11**) and some minor editorial changes (**section G, motion #12**).

Calls were issued to the following:

- Rev. Elaine Sauer as Assistant to the Bishop for Synodical Relations
- Rev. Paul Johnson as Assistant to the Bishop for Ecumenical Relations
- Rev. Kevin Ogilvie as President of Lutheran Theological Seminary, Saskatoon
- Rev. Paul Gehrs as Assistant to the Bishop for Synodical Relations
- Rev. Franklin Andrews as a chaplain for Corrections Canada
- Rev. Art Lechnitz with the Ethiopia Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus

Appointments were made through the Office of the Bishop:

- Rev. Susan Johnson as Lutheran World Federation North American Regional Committee member at large
 - Rev. Kayko Driedger Hesslein to the Governing Board of the Canadian Council of Churches
 - Ken Hartviksen as the lay MNO member of National Church Council
 - Rev. Greg Mohr to the Church Extension and Capital Fund (CECF) Advisory Board
 - Rev. Larry Ulrich to the CECF Advisory Board
 - Ken Hanssen was reappointed to the Group Services Inc. (GSI) Board for a four-year term 2007–2011
 - Bill Kuehnbaum was reappointed to the GSI Board for a four-year term 2007–2011
- Program Committee for Leadership for Ministry:

- BC Synod: Rev. Jim Hill
- ABT Synod: Deaconess Julie Hink
- MNO Synod: Sister Valerie Sander
- SK Synod: Rev. Vivian Roberts
- EAST Synod: Ms. Bobbye Goldenberg
- President LTS: Rev. Kevin Olgilvie
- Principal Dean WLS: Rev Dr. David Pfrimmer
- ELCIC Staff: Rev. Paul Gehrs

Program Committee for Youth Ministry:

- BC Synod: Ms. Sue Sorensen
- ABT Synod: Mr. Marshall Pilatzke
- MNO Synod: Rev. Larry Ulrich
- SK Synod: Ms. Kerilyn Voigt
- EAST Synod: Mr. Ian Koellner
- Canadian Lutheran Youth Giving (CLYG) Liaison: Ms. Roberta Weston
- ELCIC Staff: Rev. Paul Gehrs

- Andrea Mair as the ELCIC rep. on ELCA Lutheran Youth Organization (LYO)
- Amber Kendel as the ELCIC liaison for LWF Youth Desk

Brian Wilker-Frey as the ELCIC rep on the Kairos Ecological Justice Program Committee
Kimberly Dow as the ELCIC rep on the Ecumenical Health Care Network
Denis St. Onge was reappointed to the board of CLWR

ELCIC Human Sexuality Study Committee:

ABT Synod: Judy Wry-Chair
BC Synod: Samuel Voo
MNO Synod: Rebecca Ulrich
Eastern Synod: Rev. Steve Kristenson
Eastern Synod: Rev. Sonja Free
Eastern Synod: Rev. Richard Crossman
ELCIC Staff: Ryan Andersen

Program Committee for Mission in the World

BC Synod: Elina Singh
ABT Synod: Erhard Pinno
SK Synod: Arlene Schick
Eastern Synod: Rev. Nadine Nicholds
MNO Synod: Rev. Jack Frederick
ACC Rep: Rev. Godfrey Mawejje
ELCIC Staff: Rev. Paul Johnson
ELCIC Staff: Sr. Monica Denk
ELCIC Staff: Kelvin Krieger

Program Committee for Worship

MNO Synod: Rev. Don Engel, Chair
Eastern Synod: Rev. Eric Dyck
BC Synod: Rev. Brenda Nestegaard-Paul
BC Synod: June Schramm
ACC Rep: Eileen Scully

ELCIC Muslim Relations Steering Group

ABT Synod: Marcus Busch
SK Synod: Rev. Volker Greifenhagen
Eastern Synod: Rev. Tim Hegedus
MNO Synod: Rev. Michael Kurtz
BC Synod: Rev. Terrance Martin
Consultant: Rev. Roland Miller
ELCIC Staff: Bishop Raymond Schultz

We give thanks for the dedication and wisdom of Sonja Free and Tom Brook who complete their terms at this convention. We will miss the crisp reports of Treasurer Norm Thompson, and the guidance and gifted leadership of Bishop Raymond Schultz. We will celebrate with these folks on Saturday June 23 during the Convention.

We thank you for your support and prayers, and look forward to the debate concerning the motions we are presenting,

Roger Kingsley
Vice-Chair of Council
National Church Council