

**Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada  
Minutes of the National Church Council Meeting  
March 1-3, 2024 | ELCIC National Office, Winnipeg, MB (In Person Meeting)**

**Present:**

**Officers:** National Bishop Susan Johnson  
Gene Blishen, Treasurer  
Bruce Cook, Vice-Chair

**Council:** Rev. Chris Bishopp  
Bill Gastmeier  
Sarah Harrington  
Stephen Holmes  
Rev. Dr. Kimber McNabb  
John Nilson  
Rev. Dr. Kevin Powell  
Heidi Van Schaik  
Rev. Katrina Vigen  
Dorothy Patterson, CoGS Rep to NCC

**Synod Bishops:** Bishop Kathy Martin, BC Synod  
Bishop Larry Kochendorfer, ABT Synod (*Friday & Saturday morning*)  
Bishop Sid Haugen, SK Synod  
Bishop Jason Zinko, MNO Synod  
Bishop Michael Pryse, Eastern Synod

**Staff:** Peace Anthony-Idoko, Director of Finance and Administration  
Trina Gallop Blank, Assistant to the Bishop, Communications and Resource Generation  
Rev. Paul Gehrs, Assistant to the Bishop, Justice and Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations  
Deacon Gretchen Peterson, Assistant to the Bishop, Youth & Leadership  
Carmen Ramirez, Assistant to the Bishop, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion  
Desiree Mendoza, Office Manager, Meetings and Communications Coordinator

**Online:** Linda Grainger, Secretary  
Rev. Dr. Marc Jerry  
Kathleen Jensen

**Co-Facilitator:** Alcris Limongi (*Saturday, March 2*)

**Regrets:** The Very Rev. Peter Wall, Assistant to the Bishop for Worship

**FRIDAY, MARCH 1, 2024, 6:30 P.M.- 9:00 P.M.**

**Recognition of Territory**

Rev. Katrina Vigen (Co-Chaplain) shared the Recognition of Territory.

**Opening Worship**

Meeting co-chaplains Rev. Katrina Vigen and Heidi Van Schaik led the Opening Worship.

**Business Session One:**

Vice-Chair Bruce Cook called the meeting to order.

**Recognition of Territory / Welcome**

Vice-Chair Bruce Cook cited the Land Acknowledgement at the beginning of the meeting.

*Today, we gather on Treaty 1 territory here in Winnipeg. Kathleen joins us virtually from Treaty 7 territory in Brooks, Alberta; Marc joins us virtually from Treaty 4 lands with a presence in Treaty 6 territory; and Linda joins us virtually from Cession 118 and 173 territory in Davenport, Florida. A Cession in the United States is the transfer of sovereignty over a territory by means of a treaty.*

*Canada recognizes 70 historic treaties that were signed between 1701 and 1923. While Treaty 1 wasn't the first treaty signed in Canada, it was the first that was signed after the 1867 formation of the modern Canadian government.*

*We gather on Treaty 1 territory today in historic times. On October 3rd 2023, Manitobans elected the first provincial premier of First Nations descent and Manitoba's first Indigenous premier since Métis premier John Norquay in 1887. On October 18th, 2023, Wabanakwut "Wab" Kinew was sworn in as the 25th premier of Manitoba.*

*Kinew took his oath of office while wearing a ceremonial First Nations headdress in a ceremony at The Leaf in Winnipeg's Assiniboine Park. After taking his oath, Kinew greeted the crowd in the languages of seven different Manitoba Indigenous nations, and said it was the start of a new era.*

*The ceremony began with the lighting of the quilliq, a traditional Inuit oil lamp, and later featured traditional drumming and singing by Sioux Valley's Dakota Hotain Singers and the Red River jig performed by Norman Chief Memorial Dancers, a Métis music and dance group. It also included remarks from First Nations leaders such as Murray Sinclair, a former judge and senator who chaired the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. "Kinew's election as premier is Manitoba's "true act of reconciliation." said Sinclair. "I want you to think of it that way. I want you to think of the fact that we are now entering a new phase," he said.*

*So today we acknowledge this sacred land – we acknowledge the Indigenous peoples who have lovingly cared for this land since time immemorial. We acknowledge the ongoing work of truth and reconciliation we have before us as we commit to doing better for Mother Earth and its peoples.*

*May our words become action, thoughts become deeds, and may love be our guide.*

Bruce welcomed Dorothy Patterson, Council of General Synod's (CoGS) representative to the National Church Council (NCC) as well as Peace Anthony-Idoko, ELCIC's Director of Finance and Administration, who is participating for the first time in the NCC meeting. Bruce also acknowledged that this will be the last NCC meeting for Bishops Sid Haugen, Larry Kochendorfer, and Michael Pryse. He also welcomed our NCC members Linda Grainger, Rev. Dr. Marc Jerry, and Kathleen Jensen who were participating online. Bruce also acknowledged Heidi Van Schaik for the grief that she and her family were going through in the passing away of a beloved family member (Heidi's brother-in-law).

## Approval of Agenda

M/S That NCC approves the meeting agenda. **CARRIED.**

## Code of Conduct

The Complaint Handling Committee (CHC) for this meeting consisted of Sarah Harrington and Rev. Dr. Kevin Powell.

## NCC Covenant

## Declaration of Conflict of Interest

## Approval of September 7–9, 2023 NCC Meeting Minutes

M/S That NCC approves the September 7-9, 2023 NCC meeting minutes. **CARRIED.**

## Approval of E-vote Minutes

M/S That NCC approves the November 3 and 29, 2023 e-vote minutes *en bloc*.

**CC-2024-01** “That NCC approves an appeal to the ELCIC to raise funds in support to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) in response to implications they are facing from the Israel-Hamas War, setting a goal of \$263,000.00 and donating \$100,000 from the Special Projects Funds.” **CARRIED.**

**CC-2024-02** "That NCC rescinds the motion 'M/S That NCC approves to hold its March 2024 meeting online. CARRIED.' in order to have an in person meeting" and “that the meeting be held on March 1 to 3.” **CARRIED.**

**CARRIED.**

## Report of the National Bishop

Bishop Susan presented her report to NCC. In addition to her written report, she asked NCC to appoint a task force who would look into the process of electing a national bishop. She also further explained the pamphlet “Spiritual Discernment for a Group Process” distributed to NCC.

Bishop Susan shared her visit to the Holy Land in January of this year to NCC. She was reminded of the true meaning of being in solidarity with our brothers and sisters who experience imminent danger daily. She also shared on the plight of the dwellers in East Jerusalem and in the West Bank. She stressed that we should give time for the money to come, referring to the ongoing Emergency Appeal for ELCJHL that the whole church is mobilizing, so that ELCIC can fully help by meeting its goal.

## **Task Force for Election Process for the National Bishop**

Secretary Linda Grainger and Stephen Holmes have volunteered to work in the task force responsible in looking at the election process for a national bishop. They will be reporting back to NCC at its next meeting in the fall (September 2024).

**CC-2024-03** That NCC approves to remove Form 1.g *Statement from Physician* from the *ELCIC Candidacy Manual* Forms: [https://elcic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/2022-05\\_1g-Statement-from-Physician.pdf](https://elcic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/2022-05_1g-Statement-from-Physician.pdf) **CARRIED.**

## **Report of the Officers**

The ELCIC National Officers individually gave an oral report to NCC.

## **CoGS Report**

Dorothy Patterson gave an oral report to NCC.

## **Appointments**

Rev. Paul Gehrs shared with NCC the recent news of the passing away of Richard Kotowich who participated in the task force on Racism, White Supremacy, and issues of Racial Injustice.

**CC-2024-04** That NCC makes the following appointments *en bloc*:

To appoint Victoria Featherston, Rev. Nadine Schroeder-Kranz, Rev. Sarah Mowat, Donald Storch and a member of the Anglican Church of Canada (invited to appoint a member) to the Task Force Addressing Ableism for a term that runs until July 2025.

To appoint Kate McCulloch, Joyce Davison, Rev. Jennifer Wilson and a member of the Anglican Church of Canada (invited to appoint a member); and to reappoint Ronald Flamand on the Task Force Addressing Racism, White Supremacy, and issues of Racial Injustice for a term that runs until July 2025.

To appoint Rev. Tyler Gingrich, Allison Hungle and a member of the Anglican Church of Canada (invited to appoint a member), and to reappoint Rev. Lindsey Jorgensen-Skakum, Margot Reiners, Haiden Werboweski, and Rev. Steve Hoffard to the Task Force Addressing Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia for a term that runs until July 2025.

To appoint Dr. Mary (Joy) Philip, PhD; Tim Schaner; Andrea Wilhelm, PhD; and a member of the Anglican Church of Canada (invited to appoint a member); and to reappoint Rev. Jeremy Langner to the Task Force on Carbon Neutrality for a term that runs until July 2025.

To appoint Deacon Faith Nostbakken and Bishop Kathy Martin; and to reappoint Rev. Susan Climo and Kathryn Smith to the Lutheran-Anglican-Moravian Full Communion Commission for a term that runs until July 2025.

To appoint Rev. Dr. Philip Karimpanamannil Mathai, and to reappoint Rev. Paul Gehrs to The Canadian Council of Churches (CCC) Governing Board for a term that runs from May 2024 until May 2027.

To appoint Silantoi Kioso as Director from MNO Synod to the Board of Canadian Lutheran World Relief (CLWR) for a term until September 2026.

**CARRIED.**

**New ELCIC Tagline**

Trina Gallop Blank, Director of Communications and Resource Generation explained the last step in ELCIC's rebranding process. She provided a background on how the committee worked in the past few years in which the language used in the vision statement was the result of years of work asking people in the church. She further explained the rationale of the new tagline, "Living Out God's Grace and Unconditional Love." The words used in the new tagline are at the heart of everything we do and allow us to be on a new journey.

**CC-2024-05** That NCC adopts the tagline "Living Out God's Grace and Unconditional Love" as presented. **CARRIED.**

**Closing Prayer**

Led by meeting co-chaplain Rev. Katrina Vigen.

**SATURDAY, MARCH 2, 2024, 9:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.**

**Business Session Two:**

National Bishop Susan Johnson called the meeting to order.

**Opening Prayer**

Led by the meeting chaplains.

**Presentation from the Synod Bishops**

Bishop Susan reminded NCC that during the September 2023 meeting, NCC spent time to talk about or lament on the state of the church. The synod bishops continued the conversation and presented their respective SWOT Analysis. After their presentations, Bishop Susan hoped that these will stimulate some discussion among NCC members.

**Racial Justice Education Session 3: Capacity Building**

Carmen Ramirez, Assistant to the Bishop for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion introduced NCC to Session 3 of *Racial Justice Education: Capacity Building* along with co-facilitator Alcris Limongi who is an ordained minister at The United Church of Canada. Alcris works as a program staff at the Centre for Christian Studies in Winnipeg.

Co-facilitators Carmen and Alcris led the group through the session with time for small group discussions. This session was meant to “seek to learn the power of hospitality to build our capacity to sustain healthy intercultural relations within our faith context and in society,” and in this way help “to emphasize the importance of naming the spaces impacted by power relations in the ELCIC.” At the end of the workshop session, participants proposed ways to name visible, concrete and practical demonstration of racial justice in the church through an examination of the relationship between Jesus and Zacchaeus.

**(Lunch)**

### **Business Session Three – 1:00 P.M. – 5:00 P.M.**

Bishop Susan called the meeting to order.

NCC members were invited to ask Synod Bishops questions regarding their SWOT Analysis presentations.

### **Racial Justice Education Session 3: Capacity Building (continuation)**

#### **Budget Presentation**

Treasurer Gene Blishen presented the ELCIC budget to NCC.

#### **Committee Reports—**

##### **Audit**

Gene Blishen, Treasurer gave a brief update.

##### **Conference of Bishops**

Bishop Jason Zinko gave an oral report to NCC. He spoke highly of how all bishops worked together. They looked at a few policies on discipline (pertaining to disciplinary process) and with relation to management of discipline in congregations. They’ve also consulted with legal on the call process and missional work.

##### **Constitution**

Rev. Dr. Marc Jerry, Chair of this committee shared that the committee has some work in progress but no action required at this time.

##### **Governance**

Heidi Van Schaik, Chair of this committee shared that the committee has a few agenda items to be dealt with but no actions required at this time.

##### **ELCIC Mission Fund**

Bishop Susan Johnson shared with NCC that the committee for the ELCIC Mission Fund met last November 8th and came up with a proposal on rebates for the church. The committee will have a mission consultation coming up very soon. Representatives from synods will be present at the consultation and the board will also be meeting. There’s allocated money and a portion of

that will be a rebate to the synods. The ELCIC Mission Fund has also agreed to fund the Welcome Angels Ministry Program of Rhenish Church for the last three years.

**CC-2024-06** That NCC approves disbursements of a total of \$664,912.68 to synods, based on the formula below, after replenishing the reserve fund with \$200,000 and allocating \$60,000 to the Welcome Angels Program with the Rhenish Church.

Synod	Baptized Membership at 31-Dec-22	Percentage of Total	50% Baptized 332,456.34	50% Split Equally \$332,456.34	Total Allocation
ABT	6,215	15.47%	\$51,435.52	\$66,491.27	\$117,926.78
BC	3,857	9.60%	\$31,920.64	\$66,491.27	\$98,411.91
EASTERN	16,642	41.43%	\$137,729.66	\$66,491.27	\$204,220.93
MNO	5,658	14.08%	\$46,825.77	\$66,491.27	\$113,317.04
SASK	7,799	19.41%	\$64,544.75	\$66,491.27	\$131,036.01
<b>Totals</b>	<b>40,171</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>\$332,456.34</b>	<b>\$332,456.34</b>	<b>\$664,912.68</b>

**CARRIED.**

**Finance**

Treasurer Gene Blishen presented the Finance Report to NCC.

NCC members Stephen Holmes (Chair of the Charitus Board) and Bill Gastmeier (Charitus board member) declared conflicts of interest with respect to the motion regarding Charitus.

**CC-2024-07** That NCC holds a discussion on the need to define priorities of the Church and thereby allocate resources in line with those priorities. **CARRIED.**

**CC-2024-08** That NCC approves the 2024 Annual Budget as presented. **CARRIED.**

**CC-2024-09** That NCC approves the exploration of a partnership with GSI in the creation of a centralized payroll system available to ELCIC employees on an optional basis. **CARRIED.**

**CC-2024-10** That NCC approves the proposed registration fee of \$1300 for the 2025 National Convention. **CARRIED.**

**CC-2024-11** That NCC approves the transfer of 50% of investment funds held with TD Wealth to Charitus. **CARRIED.**

**Faith, Order, and Doctrine**

No report was provided at this time.

**Correspondence – SK Synod Letter**

Bishop Sid Haugen further explained on the letter presented to NCC. Bishop Susan will write back to the SK Synod and will include in her letter that we recognize the difficulty of the decision.

## **Closing Prayer**

Led by the meeting co-chaplains.

**(Supper)**

## **Business Session Four – 6:15 P.M. – 9:00 P.M.**

Bishop Susan called the meeting to order.

### **Opening Prayer**

Led by the meeting co-chaplains.

### **Conversation Around the Synod Bishops' Reports and Related Issues**

NCC had a discussion on the Synod Bishops' reports in groups.

### **Closing Prayer**

Led by the meeting co-chaplains.

## **SUNDAY, MARCH 3, 2024, 9:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.**

### **Business Session Five:**

Vice-Chair Bruce Cook called the meeting to order.

### **Opening Prayer**

Led by the meeting co-chaplains.

### **Revised Policy on Addressing Social Issues**

Rev. Paul Gehrs, Assistant to the Bishop for Justice and Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations, provided some background and further explanation on the document presented to NCC.

**M/S** That NCC adopts the *Draft Policy on How the Church Addresses Social Issues* as presented.

Rev. Katrina Vigen provided suggestions for further revision on the document being presented.

**M/S** That NCC amends on page 2 of the *Draft Policy on How the Church Addresses Social Issues* as follows: “we feel called to form relationship, communities, societies, and systems that generate justice and equity so all can thrive”. **CARRIED.**



**M/S** That NCC amends on page 2 of the *Draft Policy on How the Church Addresses Social Issues* as follows: “(from which comes the word “diaconal”. ...Diakonia”. **CARRIED.**

**M/S** That NCC amends on page 3 under “Purpose of Public Statements” of the *Draft Policy on How the Church Addresses Social Issues* as follows: 1) “To serve as teaching and learning opportunities for the people of God, and to encourage ongoing conversation, reflection, prayer, and action.” **CARRIED.**

**M/S** That NCC amends on page 4 of the *Draft Policy on How the Church Addresses Social Issues* as follows: “Honest disagreement should not be seen as a sign of disunity, but as an opportunity for dialogue, discernment, and perhaps new insights for the ELCIC.” **CARRIED.**

**M/S** That NCC amends on page 4 of the *Draft Policy on How the Church Addresses Social Issues* as follows: “After such debate, discussion, and prayerful deliberation.”. **CARRIED.**

**NCC-2024-12** That NCC adopts the amended *Draft Policy on How the Church Addresses Social Issues*. **CARRIED.**

*(Appendix A: Amended “Draft Policy on How the Church Addresses Social Issues”)*

Members of NCC thanked all the Synod Bishops for their presentations.

Homework:

Bishop Susan encouraged NCC to take some time to read over the documents and reflect on how God is calling us to be a church. The group is also encouraged to look into those policies that are not being utilized and identify the barriers which could also turn into opportunities.

Bishop Susan said to put aside time before our next meeting and look into various areas where policies are involved such as sacramental practices, authorized lay ministry, reimagining the church, study guide, and alternate route to pastoral ministry. The homework until the next NCC meeting includes looking into priorities; budget work on strategic plan; and SWOT analysis.

Next meeting in September 2024 will be online.

## **Unfinished Business**

## **New Business**

## **Meeting Highlights**

*(Appendix B: Meeting Highlights)*

## **Meeting Evaluation**

## **Closing Prayer**

The meeting co-chaplains closed the meeting in prayer.

**Next Meetings:**

2024

September 12-14 (Thursday-Saturday)

Chaplain – Rev. Dr. Kimber McNabb

2025

March 7- 9 (Friday-Sunday)

Summer Convention Dates (July 10-13) *NCC meeting yet TBD*

September 11-13 (Thursday-Saturday)

2026

March 6- 8 (Friday-Sunday)

September 10-12 (Thursday-Saturday)

**Meeting Adjourned.**

DRAFT

March 3, 2024

# Policy on How the Church Addresses Social Issues – 2024

This policy was adopted by the National Church Council in March 2024. It is a revision of *The Public Witness of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada: A Policy on How the Church Addresses Social Issues [1991]*, which was prepared by the former ELCIC Division for Church and Society and adopted by the National Church Council in April 1991.

## Introduction

The Vision Statement of Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) is *God's grace and unconditional love calls us to be a diverse, inclusive community that celebrates all and upholds life-giving relationships*. The ELCIC values compassionate justice and public policy as an expression of living into this vision. One way the church offers a public witness is through its social statements, resolutions, and study papers.

This document outlines the various ways in which the church develops policy documents for public witness.

*A Policy on How the Church Addresses Social Issues* was prepared by ELCIC Division for Church and Society and adopted by the National Church Council in April 1991 as a policy of the ELCIC. In 2024, the policy is being reviewed and revised as part of the work of NCC.

## A Mandate for Public Witness

*Learn to do good, seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow.*  
Isaiah 1: 17

The ELCIC's mandate for public witness is biblical, vocational, ecumenical, and constitutional.

Social and ecological justice are integral parts of God's mission.<sup>1</sup>

In Genesis, God creates a world that is good and invites human beings to be partners in love, respect, and care for the whole creation. In Exodus, God hears the cries of God's people and leads enslaved people to freedom. The prophet Micah boldly reminds us of God's calling: What does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8) Jesus understood his own calling to be intertwined with the work of freeing the oppressed: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because God has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. God has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. (Luke 4:18-19) Jesus critiques the proudly religious for neglecting justice: you tithe mint, dill, and cumin and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. It is these you ought to have practiced without neglecting the others. (Matthew 23:23)

Through baptism, God calls us to be disciples and sends us to let God's light shine through us by engaging in good works. Liturgies of Affirmation of Baptism remind us of the call to strive for justice and peace in all the earth and to respect the dignity of every human being. God's ongoing formation and

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<sup>1</sup>This sentence and the following three paragraphs are from [Parish Engagement Resource for Social and Ecological Justice: Let there be greenin'!](#), July 2023.

transformation move us to deeper understanding of God's world and supports us in discerning new opportunities to engage in God's mission.

A Biblical understanding of justice is about more than laws and rules. Based on God's gracious love for all people and for the whole creation, we feel called to form relationship, communities, societies, and systems that generate justice and equity so all can thrive. Listening and building relationships are key elements in following God's call to seek justice. The image of the tree of life – with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month, and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations – is an image of year-round sustenance for all and along with the medicine for healing that is needed.

In *Reimagining the Church*, the ELCIC states that *The Holy Spirit calls every baptized person and every community of the baptized into a life of service in the world, sometimes referred to with the Greek word, diakonia (from which comes the word "diaconal"). ... Diakonia refers to the serving life of churches and congregations, indeed, of every disciple of Jesus. It involves responding to immediate needs such as sponsoring refugees and providing food for the hungry. It also includes being agents of change to transform the unjust structures and violence that marginalize people and safeguarding the earth.* (Reimagining the Church, page 15)

The [Arusha Call to Discipleship](#) (World Council of Churches, 2018) highlights the connections between mission and social justice.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada holds that *The mission of this church, as an expression of the universal Church and as an instrument of the Holy Spirit, is to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with people in Canada and around the world through proclamation of the Word, celebration of the sacraments, and through service in Christ's name.* (ELCIC Constitution, Art. IV, Sect. 1)

Among the varied means to achieve its mission, the ELCIC has committed itself to *study issues in contemporary society in the light of the Word of God and respond publicly to social and moral issues as an advocate for justice and as an agent for reconciliation.*" (ELCIC Constitution, Art. IV, Sect. 2d.)

The Administrative Bylaws declare that *the National Church Council may issue official statements on social or moral issues in the name of this church between its conventions when, in the judgment of the council, an emergency exists or when delay of such action until the next convention would impair the timeliness of an utterance that this church ought in conscience to make. Concurrence of two-thirds (2/3) of the total membership of the council shall be required in each such instance.* (ELCIC Administrative Bylaws, PART IX, section 20.)

The Administrative Bylaws give the national bishop a mandate to *speak publicly and witness for the gospel on behalf of this church.* (ELCIC Administrative Bylaws, Part X, Section 4.d.)

The Administrative Bylaws declare that each synod has responsibility *for relating to regional social structures, councils of churches and the like; and for developing programs and providing resources for... social ministry.* (ELCIC Administrative Bylaws, PART VI, section 6.)

The 2019 document *Relationships, Interconnectedness, and Responsibilities in the ELCIC: One Body Working Together* describes public policy responsibilities in this way:

Faith Communities	Synods	National Church
engage in issues and projects within their local context and provide a unified voice and action	support national advocacy priorities, identify synodical advocacy issues and promote their support	create public policies and identify advocacy issues which are priorities for the ELCIC

## Purpose of Public Statements

In addressing ethical issues of church and society, the ELCIC undertakes its public witness recognizing fully the paradox and ambiguity of social ethics. The Apostle Paul reminds us of these limitations in writing, "...There is no distinction since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God..." (Romans 3:23)

The purpose of public statements is therefore:

- 1) To serve as teaching and learning opportunities for the people of God, and to encourage ongoing conversation, reflection, prayer, and action.
- 2) To guide the internal life of the ELCIC and support its corporate public witness to society.
- 3) To support individual Christians in their respective vocations.

## Principles for Public Statements

The 1987 ELCIC Convention identified the following guidelines for developing Social Statements and Study Documents:

- a) Areas of focus of Social Statements shall normally come from this church in convention or from the [National Church Council]<sup>2</sup> as it listens and responds to the ELCIC membership and to the national and international social context in which we live.
- b) It shall be the policy of this church that Social Statements be made only after this church at its various levels has taken responsibility to study the issue in question in the light of the Gospel.
- c) The [National Church Council] together with other divisions, offices and/or auxiliaries of this church shall prepare study/learning materials and study/learning opportunities for its membership.
- d) Normally an area of focus shall be studied for a minimum of two years before this church in convention addresses the issue in the form of a social statement. (NC-87-45)

In addressing social issues, the ELCIC affirms the historic witness of the apostolic church. The faith which is ours is a gift from God witnessed through those who have preceded and surround us in the community of the Church. Recognizing this relationship, our public witness is grounded in the Scriptures, the Confessions of the church, and the mutual witness of the saints through prayer, study, reflection and service. Our public witness therefore does not offer ultimate answers but the collective wisdom of faithful people gathered as a community of believers living in a specific time.

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<sup>2</sup> These guidelines were directed toward the "Division for Church and Society." Later conventions amended the Constitution and the Administrative Bylaws to remove the Division for Church and Society, and other Divisions, from the ELCIC structure. This document assumes that the responsibilities of the former divisions are now the responsibility the NCC.

It is the practice of the ELCIC to work in ecumenical partnership whenever feasible.

In engaging in a public witness, the ELCIC measures the effectiveness of this ministry by the twin criteria of prophetic credibility and pastoral responsibility. Prophetic credibility is recognizing that our statements must address the concrete social reality faced by members of the global family. Therefore, they require that the ELCIC ensure through the contribution of those with special competence, that these statements address the real questions faced by society. The test becomes, does the public statement help increase an understanding of the issues and directions for future actions?

Pastoral responsibility recognizes that the teaching of the church has an influence on individuals and communities faced with the serious ambiguities of living in a complex world. The ELCIC does not make statements simply for the sake of making statements, but for helping those faced with serious ethical and moral choices. The test of a statement's pastoral responsibility is, does a public statement help those facing such decisions?

The ELCIC's public statements are always proximate answers to the ever-changing reality of God's world. While hoping to encourage responsible Christian discipleship, such public statements do not obligate all members of the ELCIC to agree. Honest disagreement should not be seen as a sign of disunity, but as an opportunity for dialogue, discernment, and perhaps new insights for the ELCIC. After such debate, discussion, and prayerful deliberation, those delegates to a convention and members of boards, who in conscience cannot subscribe to an adopted policy statement, should always be allowed to register their disagreement in the official record of the proceedings. **However, once adopted, the Social Statements, Position Resolutions and Policy Resolutions are normative for the elected officers, staff and elected or appointed representatives of the church in representing the ELCIC.**

Adopting a Social Statement or a Policy resolution must always recognize that such decisions also require a strategy for implementation. These strategies involve at the least education and advocacy. In this public witness, the ELCIC not only helps to shape public policy, but is also shaped by the pressing social needs of the world. Therefore, the ELCIC needs to regularly evaluate its positions and policies in the light of ever new realities. This requires an on-going process of social analysis, theological reflection, and prophetic action.

## **Types of Public Statements:**

The ELCIC identifies the following types of public statements:

- Social Statements
- Convention Position Resolutions
- Church Council Policy Resolutions
- Study Documents
- Historical Documents

In addition, the Role of the National Bishop includes a mandate for public witness, that includes issuing letters and statements on behalf of the ELCIC, and endorsing letters and statements made in partnership with other churches, faith communities, and organizations.

## **Social Statements**

A Social Statement is a theological and ethical document that provides a foundation for understanding God's living word in the light of the changing realities of the modern world. A Social Statement seeks to

provide the social analysis and theological basis for the collective ELCIC understanding of a continuing crucial issue that arises out of the mission of the ELCIC.

A Social Statement normally focuses on a broad social theme rather than a specific issue. Specific issues may emerge within this broader discussion (e.g. A "Social Statement on Peace" might well include reference to disarmament).

Developing a Social Statement involves a period of church wide study and consultation. This process should involve church members, particularly theologians and those with special expertise in the theme being studied.

A Social Statement shall normally include:

- a descriptive section which indicates the reasons which give rise to the statement and an analysis of the social problem to be addressed;
- a normative section which states the biblical and theological foundations for ethical decision making;
- and a regulative section which applies these insights to the contemporary situation. Specific implementing resolutions may also be attached to a Social Statement.

The process of developing a Social Statement is as important as the Social Statement itself. The normal process for development of a Social Statement will involve:

- 1) A request from a national church convention or the Division for Church and Society.
- 2) Development of a first draft for circulation to ELCIC members for study and response. A writing team may be convened to facilitate this process.

Drafting should include:

- a) Consultation with other divisions, offices, Seminaries, institutions, and agencies of the ELCIC.
- b) Consultation with synods and synod committees.
- c) Consultation with experts in disciplines that are relevant to the topic being studied.
- d) Consultation with ecumenical partners.
- 3) Forums/workshops/gatherings at various church wide events such as ELCIC/Synod conventions, specially convened regional events, and/or online events
- 4) A Second draft may be reviewed by those individuals with special competence. The Second draft will be distributed prior to the ELCIC convention at which the statement will be considered.
- 5) The National Church Council is responsible for the development, preparation and revision of social statements.
- 6) Approval by Convention and referral back to the National Church Council for future action and/or implementation.

As per *Bourinot's Rules of Order*, (ELCIC Administrative Bylaws, Part I, Section 6) policies and statements of this church are adopted with the support of 50% plus one of voting delegates at convention.

The National Church Council is responsible for identifying resources to carry out the process of developing a Social Statement.

## Convention Position Resolutions

Approved by this church in Convention, a Convention Position Resolution establishes a policy that governs the life of the ELCIC and addresses specific public issues in society. Position Resolutions should be consistent with and informed by the analysis, theological reflection and principles in the Social Statements adopted by the ELCIC.

Position Resolutions may be of varying length and detail. These resolutions normally include a short theological rationale and social analysis. In some cases, the Social Statement format may be useful:

- a descriptive section which indicates the reasons which give rise to the statement and an analysis of the social problem to be addressed;
- a normative section which states the biblical and theological foundations for ethical decision making;
- and a regulative section which applies these insights to the contemporary situation. Specific implementing resolutions may also be attached to a Social Statement.

Position Resolutions may arise through recommendations from National Church Council or recognized taskforces, or from petitions submitted through synods, congregations, or Convention delegates.

When developing a proposed Convention Position resolution, the National Church Council may consider:

- 1) Establishing a task force to work on the social issue.
- 2) Consultation with offices, Synods, Seminaries, institutions, and agencies of the ELCIC.
- 3) Consultation with experts in disciplines that are relevant to the topic being studied.
- 4) Consultation with ecumenical partners.
- 5) Specially convened events/forums/workshops that gather people online or in-person.

When considered at the National Church Convention, position resolutions may be referred to the National Church Council for action, implementation or modification.

As per *Bourinot's Rules of Order*, (ELCIC Administrative Bylaws, Part I, Section 6) policies and statements of this church are adopted with the support of 50% plus one of voting delegates at convention.

## Church Council Policy Resolutions

In the interim between conventions, the ELCIC Church Council may adopt policy resolutions to address emerging social issues.

The National Church Council may issue official statements on social or moral issues in the name of this church between its conventions when, in the judgment of the council, an emergency exists or when delay of such action until the next convention would impair the timeliness of an utterance that this church ought in conscience to make. Concurrence of two-thirds (2/3) of the total membership of the council shall be required in each such instance.

(ELCIC Administrative Bylaws, PART IX, section 20)

These policy resolutions should be consistent with and informed by relevant ELCIC Social Statements and Convention Position Resolutions.

These actions are reviewed in the Report of the Church Council to the ELCIC Convention.

As per the ELCIC Administrative Bylaws, concurrence of two-thirds (2/3) of the total membership of the council shall be required to adopt a Church Council Policy Resolution.



## Study Documents

In order to study and discuss various social issues, the ELCIC may issue a Study Document. These Study Documents assist the ELCIC in considering crucial social questions.

Study Documents serve as a resource to the ELCIC in the following ways:

- 1) They raise relevant questions and offer a perspective on an issue of importance to the ELCIC.
- 2) They may include possible policy recommendations but need not result in policy decisions in the form of resolutions or statements.
- 3) They may be developed by the ELCIC and/or ecumenical/Lutheran/interfaith partners.

**Study Documents are not binding upon the life and public witness of the ELCIC.** They offer relevant and important background information on an issue. They may lead to a Social Statement or a Convention Position Resolution. The principal role of a Study Document is to provide opportunity for reflection and discussion on an issue.

Study Papers are reviewed and approved for distribution by the national bishop and/or the National Church Council.

## Historical Documents<sup>3</sup>

The category of historical documents includes public statements of the ELCIC's predecessor bodies, as well as public statements previously serving as ELCIC teaching and social policy that have been replaced by a more recent Social Statement or Convention Position Resolution. As historical documents, they no longer carry institutional authority. The more recent documents, as adopted by a Convention, reflect the current discerned understanding/policy of the church.

These historical documents are a rich legacy of social statements and study documents from the two ELCIC predecessor bodies: of the Lutheran Church in America and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada. Since 1991, the ELCIC has recognized the importance of these documents as resources for “instruction and guidance for the life and witness of the ELCIC,” and for the ongoing process of addressing current social issues. These documents provide a foundation from which newly developed social statements, resolutions or study documents may emerge. These historical statements are complemented, supplemented, and superseded as the ELCIC takes new and possibly different actions on emerging social concerns, questions, and issues.

The National Church Council is responsible for identifying a document as a Historical Document.

On behalf of the National Church Council, the National Office maintains a database of the ELCIC’s historical documents. The documents are available for reference and research.

## Role of the National Bishop

The national bishop has a mandate to *speak publicly and witness for the gospel on behalf of this church.* (ELCIC Administrative Bylaws, Part X, Section 4.d.)

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<sup>3</sup> This is a new category of documents. The ELCA uses this type of category. See [“Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns”](#) on the ELCA website: [Addressing Social Concerns](#).

In addition, the Role of the National Bishop includes a mandate for public witness, that includes issuing letters and statements on behalf of the ELCIC, and endorsing letters and statements made in partnership with other churches, faith communities, and organizations.

On behalf of the ELCIC, the national bishop writes letters, makes public statements, and endorses letters and statements made in partnership with other churches, faith communities, and organizations. The Social Statements, Convention Position Resolutions, and Church Council Policy Resolutions guide the bishop in this work. Each statement issued/endorsed needs to be in fundamental agreement with the public statements adopted by the Convention or the National Church Council.

The ELCIC office maintains a database of all public statements endorsed by the ELCIC National Convention and National Church Council. Adoption/endorsement is documented in the minutes of the National Convention (NC) and the National Church Council (CC).

The national bishop may identify resources prepared by ELCIC partners for distribution by the national office to support teaching, learning, and reflection across the ELCIC.

The national bishop offers support and leadership to assist synods in carrying responsibilities for social ministry.



March 2024

## National Church Council Meeting Highlights

The ELCIC's National Church Council (NCC) met March 1-3, 2024 in Winnipeg, MB at the National Office for worship, prayer, discussion and decision-making.

The following are just a few highlights from the recent council meeting. For specific wording on motions and additional actions from the meeting, please view the draft minutes which will be available online: <https://elcic.ca/national-church-council/>



*Rev. Katrina Vigen and Heidi Van Schaik led worship and prayers for the March meeting.*

### Anti-Racism Training

On Saturday, NCC members participated in anti-racism training led by Carmen Ramirez, assistant to the bishop for diversity, equity and inclusion, and Alcris Limong, program staff at Centre for Christian Studies. The session focused on capacity building and understanding the importance of naming the spaces impacted by the power relationships in the ELCIC. The main goals of the session were to: assess one's personal use of the power that is available to them and reflect on the influence this power has on their relationships; name the "racialized" spaces impacted by power relations in ELCIC's context; understand the viewpoint of the "other" by assuming their

identity and naming the emotions evoked by placing themselves (in that identity) in various racialized spaces; increase awareness of some of the 'evil or oppressive' practices of empire in society; and propose ways to name visible, concrete and practical demonstration of racial justice in the ELCIC. This was the third anti-racism training session for NCC members.

## **Conversations on the Church**

A significant portion of agenda time was devoted to conversations around considering the current landscape and future state of the ELCIC. At the September 2023 meeting of NCC, members spent time meeting in "committee of the whole" where they had frank and open conversation around their concerns and hopes for the future of the church. This conversation was meant to be the first of many conversations on this topic, with the outcomes of the conversation enabling a broad scope for where the church is at and providing a connection back to strategic planning for the council.

ELCIC Synod Bishops spent time on Friday morning each presenting a SWOT analysis to NCC from their respective synods. A SWOT analysis includes strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats and is a way of identifying a current landscape synopsis. With each synod presenting from their own perspective, a number of common themes emerged. NCC members had further agenda time to deepen the conversation around themes of a church in transition, hopeful stories of mission and ministry throughout the ELCIC, providing a vision of the wider church, the changing dynamics of the church, working together among all expressions of the church, being a relational church, and being able to articulate who we are as the ELCIC.

NCC shared that they felt the conversations at this meeting brought a sense of true reality to where we are at currently as a church. As a national church, NCC will have further reflection, prayer and discussion on this at its next meeting(s).

## **NCC welcomes Anglican Partner**

NCC welcomed Dorothy Patterson, Anglican Church of Canada representative to NCC. Dorothy is an elected member of the Council of General Synod (COGS) from the Province of Ontario. This was her first meeting with NCC.

## **Revised Policy on Addressing Social Issues**

NCC approved a revised policy on addressing social issues which reflects updated language and processes that serve the current needs of the ELCIC. The predecessor policy was adopted by NCC in 1991. The document outlines the various ways in which the church develops policy documents for public witness and serves as a guideline for when the church will issue public statements, the principles of these statements and the types of different statements that the church may consider, including: social statements, convention position resolutions, church council policy resolutions, study documents and historical documents.

The policy also identifies the role of the National Bishop who has a mandate to, "speak publicly and witness for the gospel on behalf of this church," including issuing letters and statements on behalf of the ELCIC, endorsing letters and statements made in partnership with other churches, faith communities and organizations. The National Bishop also offers support and leadership to assist synods in carrying out responsibilities for social ministry.

## **Thank You**

It was noted that this would be the last NCC meeting for Synod of Alberta and the Territories Bishop Larry Kochendorfer, Saskatchewan Synod Bishop Sid Haugen and Eastern Synod Bishop Michael Pryse. All three synods will hold elections at their upcoming synod conventions/assemblies and all three bishops have indicated they will not be letting their names stand for re-election. NCC noted with appreciation the work and contributions of the synod bishops.

## **Next Meeting**

The next NCC meeting is scheduled to take place September 12-14 2024. This meeting will take place virtually.