

Resolution # 2 A—Ushering in Fullness of Leadership in the ELCA for All People

Whereas Project Connect, an initiative of the Eastern Cluster of ELCA Seminaries, has been endeavoring to strengthen the efforts of the ELCA to encourage young adults (specifically those under the age of 30) to consider that God might be calling them to public ministry in the church; and

Whereas the Multicultural Planning group of Project Connect has identified several factors that inhibit this initiative from effectively strengthening the Ecology of Call in the ELCA as identified in the document, “Is There a Place?”¹, particularly as it pertains to increasing the number of young adults of color in rostered leadership; and

Whereas the scripture reminds us that we are all inheritors of God’s promises because we know that Christ “has broken down the dividing wall, that is the hostility between us.”² We are no longer foreigners and aliens but fellow citizens with all of God’s people and members of God’s household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone (Ephesians 2); and

Whereas the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is 97% people of European descent even as a commitment was made to be a church comprised of at least 10% people of color by 1998, this has not yet happened. We are convinced that one of the overwhelming factors in this reality is racism – a mix of power, privilege, and prejudice; and

Whereas the ELCA in its social statement, “Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture” acknowledges racism as a sin, a violation of God’s intention for humanity that fractures and fragments both church and society; and

Whereas studies have shown that in its institutional form, racism creates a system that allows those of European descent to stand at the center and pushes all others to the margins. Due to racism people of European descent not only maintain their privilege and status unconsciously, but all people are pressured into remaining silent about the realities of race relations even in the church³; therefore be it

Resolved, that the Bishop of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod appoint an intentionally multicultural task force on racism, and that the task force in concert with the Candidacy Committee of the synod conduct a review of the factors inhibiting people of color from experiencing the fullness

¹ Clergy of color are more likely to be paid below Synod Guidelines; clergy of color receive lower retirement benefits; clergy of color wait for a first call for a significantly greater period than those of European descent; the culture of the ELCA believes that only certain congregations have a mission for ministry in ethnic communities. Taken from the document “Is There a Place?” created by the 2007 Multicultural Planning Team for Project Connect and documented in a presentation to the Multicultural Seminar, August 1, 2008, by The Rev. Dr. M. Wyvetta Bullock, Executive for Administration, Office of the Presiding Bishop, ELCA, “New Day Begun, Engaging Our Wholeness.”

² “Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity and Culture,” ELCA Social Statement, 1993.

³ “A Place At The Table: An African American Lutheran Preaching from Margins to Mainstream,” The Rev. Dr. Andrea Walker, thesis submitted to LSTC for D. Min. in preaching, 2007.

of leadership in this synod, and that the task force present a report and recommendations to the 2010 Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly; and be it further

Resolved, that the Conference Deans of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod encourage congregations to participate in a study of the ELCA Social Statement, “Freed in Christ”⁴; and be it further

Resolved, that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod in Assembly memorialize the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in Assembly to direct the Vocations and Educations Unit of the ELCA in consultation with the Multicultural Ministries program unit to conduct a review of recent studies of the factors inhibiting people of color from experiencing the fullness of leadership in this church; develop action steps and recommendations to address these factors; and report these to the Conference of Bishops and the ELCA Church Council by the end of 2010; and be it further

Resolved, that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod in Assembly memorialize the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in Assembly to direct the Director for Anti-Racism Commitment, Office of the Presiding Bishop of the ELCA, to formulate a model of reconciliation⁵ that would be distributed to congregations, synods, and the Church wide expression for the purpose of abolishing racism by:

- Confessing and repenting from the sin of racism and its harmful effects on the Body of Christ;
- Forgiving ourselves for our own culpability and forgiving those who have participated knowingly and unknowingly in the sin of racism;
- Fostering dialogue between the diverse members of the church and acknowledging the gifts that can be exchanged;
- Reformulating views on who can serve, at what levels they can serve and in what context they can serve;
- Providing a forum for leaders of color to communicate to the whole church their “real-life” experiences as it pertains to the Candidacy and Call process in the ELCA for the purpose of uncovering the extent to which people of color are excluded from full participation;
- Accepting the varied expressions of the ELCA practiced throughout the diverse communities of the church as equally valid expressions of the Lutheran faith.

The Committee on Reference and Counsel recommends approval of the resolution.

⁴ We recommend that this review include, as a first step, the study of the ELCA Social Statement, “Freed in Christ” by the congregations and the boards and committees of the synod. A guide for leading conversations on this social statement was revised in 2008 and can be downloaded from the ELCA website.

⁵ Patterned after the **Truth and Reconciliation Committee** formed in South Africa following the abolition of apartheid. This committee was formed to oversee the implementation of the *Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act, 1995*. The act created a framework for the “establishment of as complete a picture as possible of the nature, causes and extent of gross violations of human rights committed during the period from 1 March 1960 to the cut-off date contemplated in the Constitution” (pg 1 of the ACT available online <http://www.doj.gov.za/trc/legal/act9534.htm>). It allowed victims and victimizers to speak with the promise of reparation and amnesty where necessary/appropriate for the purpose of reconciliation.