



Details about Churchwide Assembly Actions

Our denomination, the ELCA, holds a churchwide assembly triennially - to worship, vote on matters of governance and policy, and be church together for the sake of the world. You can read all of the memorials, resolutions, and reports in full at <https://www.elca.org/cwa-2019/guidebook-web-version>. The 2019's Churchwide Assembly was full of important votes and actions, including:

- **Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton was reelected for a second six-year term on the first ballot. Deacon Sue Rothmeyer was elected Secretary of the ELCA, a full-time position serving as executive administrator and leader on all constitutional matters and interpretation. Deacon Rothmeyer is the first deacon and first woman to serve in this role.**
- **A declaration of apology to our siblings of African descent, which was received by the African Descent Lutheran Association with thanks and a call for accountability and living into the words shared.**
 - **What does this mean?** Through a [formal apology](#), “The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) apologizes to people of African descent for its historical complicity in slavery and its enduring legacy of racism in the United States and globally. We lament the white church’s failure to work for the abolition of slavery and the perpetuation of racism in this church. We confess, repent and repudiate the times when this church has been silent in the face of racial injustice.” The apology builds on our social statement *Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture* and is issued alongside the Lutheran World Federation’s “Resolution on Commemorating the 2019 Quad-centennial of the Forced Transatlantic Voyage of Enslaved African Peoples to the Americas—Human Beings Not for Sale!,” adopted at the LWF Council meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, June 13-18, 2019. The [African Descent Lutheran Association response included receiving the apology and a call for living into this statement of reconciliation](#).
- **Approved resolution declaring the ELCA is a “sanctuary church body,” encouraging participation in the ELCA AMMPARO initiative for migrant children, discernment of care for our immigrant neighbors in our context, and the promise of forthcoming resources for this work.**
 - **What does this mean?** In its simplest form, becoming a sanctuary denomination means that the ELCA is publicly declaring that walking alongside immigrants and refugees is a matter of faith. *Being a sanctuary denomination will look different in different contexts.* It

may mean providing space for people to live or providing financial and legal support to those working through the immigration system. The ELCA churchwide expression, the churchwide assembly, and synods cannot mandate or direct our congregations to respond in specific ways. Each must work out what this means for them in their context.

There is no call for Civil Disobedience or for actions breaking the law in any way. If individuals, congregations or others feel called to such actions, they are strongly encouraged to consult an immigration attorney and become well educated about the potential risks and consequences before taking action. With any action, a congregation should be a well informed and it a strongly supported decision.

The ELCA's action is binding only on the churchwide expression of our church, not Synods, congregations, institutions or agencies. So, this sanctuary declaration will take many forms across our church. To know more, we encourage you to engage with the following:

- [The proposed memorial that includes background information](#)
- The final approved memorial with the [sanctuary declaration](#)
- Videos of the discussion on the floor of the Assembly. You will need to use the slide bar on the bottom of the video to get to the time mark indicated (hour:minute).
 - [Wed. morning](#) – Discussion begins at 1:09
 - [Wed. afternoon](#) – Discussion starts at 1:21
- [Talking points from the ELCA](#)
- [Message from Bishop Eaton](#)

Many more ideas for how to live out this sanctuary declaration in your life and ministry context can be found on the website of our ELCA ministry called, [Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities, or \(AMMPARO\)](#).

- **Adopted a new social statement, “Faith, Sexism, and Justice: a Call to Action” and its implementing resolutions.**
 - **What does this mean?** After nearly seven years of work on this social statement, it was adopted with 97.02% as an official teaching of our church. Grounded in God’s intention of abundant life for all, it confesses patriarchy and sexism as sin. It names the resources of the Lutheran faith to address this sin and identifies what needs to be done both in the church and in society. The statement is coupled with implementing resolutions that call on each expression to examine where we are complicit in patriarchy and systems of injustice. You can read the statement in detail - as well as a shorter version - at <https://www.elca.org/womenandjustice>. The short statement is forty articles and expresses the comprehensive list of convictions and commitments. The full statement includes those same forty articles with explanations of each one, as well as a preface and conclusion, to more thoroughly explore the deeper meaning of the statement.
- **Constitutional change for deacons (rostered ministers of word and service) to be ordained, from the previous practice of consecration**
 - **What does this mean?** There were changes to the constitution. Many were semantic. There will be changes that need to be adopted and ratified in each congregation constitution. If you have questions about this, please contact Michael DeNise in the synod office at mdenise@nclutheran.org.

In regards to the rite of entrance for deacons, it has been changed from consecration to ordination. This affects the entrance rite alone. Deacons are rostered in Word & Service and will not be able to preside at sacraments. Additionally, deacons will now be counted among the clergy in regards to representation as opposed to serving as lay members. Deacons currently serving in a lay role can finish their terms, but they must be filled by a non-rostered minister in the future. [You can read the full recommendation of the Discernment Group.](#)

- **Approved support for the World Council of Church's *Thursdays in Black* awareness movement for a world without rape and violence.**
 - **What does this mean?** The campaign is simple but profound. Wear black on Thursdays. Wear a pin to declare you are part of the global movement resisting attitudes and practices that permit rape and violence. Show your respect for women who are resilient in the face of injustice and violence. Encourage others to join you. Often black has been used with negative racial connotations. In this campaign black is used as a color of resistance and resilience. You can find out more information including where to get a congregational toolkit at: <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/get-involved/thursdays-in-black>

- **Voted to commemorate June 17 as a day of repentance, in honor and remembrance of the martyrdom of the Emmanuel 9.**
 - **What does this mean?** We will commemorate June 17th as a day of repentance. The names of the Emmanuel 9 will be added ELCA publications to commemorate their martyrdom. The day is to be grounded in prayer as the Emmanuel 9 were murdered while praying and reading scripture. The office of the Presiding Bishop and ELCA Worship staff will develop worship prayers and litanies around repentance from racism. The resolution calls us all to be in deeper conversations with the AME and AME Zion church on ways of reconciliation and repentance on the matters of white supremacy and racism. You can read more about the why [in an article published by The State.](#)

- **Approved a declaration for inter-religious commitment, reaffirming ecumenical and interfaith partnerships.**
 - **What does this mean?** The ELCA has been engaging in inter-religious partnerships since its formation in 1988, building upon the legacy of its predecessor bodies, the work of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), and the witness of our ecumenical partners. The policy provides 12 commitments (found on pg. 12 of the document) which is a succinct summary of the policy and may prove useful in certain contexts as a stand-alone aid. The afterword goes deeper into the biblical, confessional, and theological basis for the policy. The document holds together our calling: to be faithful witnesses to Christ and to love God by loving and serving our neighbors. [Read the full statement.](#)

- **Approved the recommendations from a strategic task force which has been studying how to work toward authentic diversity in our church.**
 - **What does this mean?** In 2017, the ELCA Church Council established a task force of all persons of color to make recommendations about authentic diversity. The report calls not for a brand-new strategic plan but for this church, in faith and with integrity, to “go deeper.” It seeks: Theological Framing and Equipping, Healing Action, Structural Accountability, Theological Education & Leadership Development, Partnership with Full Communion, Ecumenical & Interreligious Partner. You can read the full strategy on ELCA

guidebook under Recommendations of the Church Council:
<https://www.elca.org/cwa-2019/guidebook-web-version>

- **Approved memorials: affirming but not “endorsing” the Poor People’s Campaign, care for immigrants and refugees, and other statements.**

- **What does this mean?** 26 were approved en bloc with the recommendations of the Memorials Committee. Several others were considered on the floor of the assembly. You can read the memorials and their recommendations on the ELCA guidebook under Pre-Assembly Report, Report of the Memorials Committee:
<https://www.elca.org/cwa-2019/guidebook-web-version>.

In regards to the Poor People’s Campaign, the assembly understood endorsement to have legal implications. Despite endorsement from full communion partners, the assembly chose to support the campaign but not endorse.

- **Adopted a resolution to condemn white supremacy, calling all ELCA congregations to engage in a "study of the structures and rhetoric that empower and fuel racism and white supremacy and to take to heart the teaching of Scriptures, so we may all be better equipped to speak boldly about the equal dignity of all persons in the eyes of God."**

- **What does this mean?** This resolution is a call to more fully live into our church teaching that racism is a sin. We are called to examine the use of our language and condemn hateful rhetoric. Find the resolution on the ELCA guidebook under Pre-Assembly Report, Report of Reference and Council - Motion B:
<https://www.elca.org/cwa-2019/guidebook-web-version>.

- **Celebrated the ELCA milestones of 50 years of women's ordination, 40 years since the first woman of color was ordained, and 10 years since the ELCA's decision to remove barriers to ordination for people in same-gender relationships**

- **What does it mean?** As you hopefully know, we are moving into a year celebrating major milestones for women clergy. The assembly included a worship procession of nearly 500 rostered women. Events, resources including Bible studies and adult forum curriculum. Details can be found at <https://elca.org/50yearsofordainedwomen>

- **Celebrated the end of *Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA*, which concluded June 30 with nearly \$250 million raised in cash, multi-year commitments and planned gift commitments**

- **What does this mean?** At the 2013 ELCA Churchwide Assembly, voting members approved the \$198 million campaign to help sustain and grow ministries of the church. We exceeded that goal. The campaign’s focus was: to Grow our communities of faith; Form and support new leaders; Welcome our neighbors, and serve those in need; Confront disease, hunger and poverty – at home and worldwide; Spread the good news of Jesus Christ, working alongside our global companions. Learn more at <https://www.elca.org/Campaign-for-the-ELCA>