

**RESOLUTION ON FORGOING CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY  
APPROVAL OF SOCIAL STATEMENTS**

WHEREAS, the church council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is assigned responsibility for the process by which social statements are developed; and

WHEREAS, current practice is that social statements require approval by a Churchwide Assembly and that documents approved by one Churchwide Assembly can only be modified by a subsequent Churchwide Assembly; and

WHEREAS, modifications, updates, and corrections of existing social statements therefore require a complex, multiyear legislative process, and further, with the historical accumulation of social statements, such document maintenance will likely require increasing amounts of churchwide assembly time; and

WHEREAS, the relatively brief exposure of social statements to the legislative process of a churchwide assembly is insufficient to carefully consider the weighty issues in these often lengthy teaching documents; and

WHEREAS, forgoing Churchwide Assembly approval of social statements (and assigning that responsibility to another entity within the church) would allow the Church Council to develop a more straightforward process for modifying, updating, and clarifying social statements or specific points within them, making social statements more responsive to the Church and to the world we live in; and

WHEREAS, social statement implementation resolutions, as policy documents, would still come before the churchwide assembly and be subject to its modification and authority;

WHEREAS, Rev. Michael Burns, First and Trinity Lutheran Parish, Tioga, requested the Western North Dakota Synod Council to submit this memorial to the Synod Assembly; and

WHEREAS, on May 12, 2026, the Western North Dakota Synod Council approved the submission of this memorial to the Synod Assembly;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the 2026 Western North Dakota Synod Assembly direct its Synod Council to send a letter to the ELCA Church Council to ask the Church Council to conduct a formal review of the process for developing social statements and specifically to reconsider the practice of having Churchwide Assemblies approve social statements, recognizing that individual members, pastors, bishops, and other expressions of the Church will remain entirely free to address social issues as led by Scripture and the Holy Spirit.

RESOLVED FURTHER that the letter include a request that the Church Council consider having those who prepare social statements and social messages sign them, thereby increasing transparency, and add information identifying those responsible for maintaining the documents.

SUBMITTED BY:

Western North Dakota Synod Council

Note:

On May 13, 2026, the Reference and Counsel Committee voted to take no position regarding this resolution, believing it should be considered by the Synod Assembly.