



News of the Week March 16, 2022

Prayers of the Week

Please remember in your prayers this week:

From the Montana Synod Prayer Calendar:

Trinity Lutheran Church Hot Springs

Delaware-Maryland Synod



Words from the Bishop: Government Social Statement

In 2019, the ELCA Churchwide Assembly directed this church to develop both a Social Message and a Social Statement concerning how ELCA Lutherans understand the relationship between church and state. As a presidential election approached and people felt trapped in the messiness of political polarization, the assembly issued a call to provide guidance from the Lutheran perspective concerning how this church ought to interact with the government and nation, how the government ought to interact with the church and other religions, and how followers of Christ can and should engage in voice and work in the public sphere (civic engagement).



As a recent article in the *Living Lutheran* explains, the Churchwide Council first adopted a social message in November 2019 entitled [“Government and Civic Engagement in the United States: Discipleship in a Democracy.”](#) This message, says Michael Cooper-White who authored the *Living Lutheran* article, functions as a small catechism, teaching us the basics of how Christians can decide whether a government is “achieving God’s intention for it, that the neighbor is being served.”

The development of the social statement began shortly after the social message was released. This document will serve as a larger teaching statement concerning the relationship between “government, the nature of civic engagement and the relationship of church and state.” The development of the social statement is a five-year process involving lay people and clergy, academics and experts on multiple topics, as well as geographically and socially diverse individuals from all over the ELCA. I am one of two bishop representatives on the Social Statement task force which has been meeting regularly over the past two years to study, listen and deliberate about the topic (by zoom; we have yet to meet in person).

Soon, however, you will have your opportunity to weigh in on this important topic in a couple of ways. First, throughout the ELCA, listening posts are currently being held that are open for all ELCA members to share their thoughts and opinions. Such listening posts will be held at the MT/NWY Synod Assembly in June for our voting members. If you are interested in hosting a listening event concerning this topic in your area of the synod, you may email civicsandfaith@elca.org for more information.

Also, a study resource will be released in the next year to the whole church so you that you, your leaders and your congregations can enter into the study process along with the task force. After going through the study you will have the opportunity to offer your thoughts and concerns in writing to the task force. This study process is a time to engage in moral deliberation *together* about how church and state ought to relate to one another and how we as followers of Christ who are also citizens in a democracy can and should participate in the life of our nation and world.

Remember that we in the ELCA do our best to discern and deliberate on these matters from the ground up, including as many voices as possible who want to participate, rather than someone issuing a statement from on high. Although it will be written by a small task force with members represented from across the church, we will take the input from members of the wider church very seriously when composing the ELCA’s social teaching on this issue. And then voting members whom you will send to the Churchwide Assembly in 2025 through your Synod Assembly election in 2023 will vote to approve (or not) the social statement as the guide and teaching of the ELCA regarding church, state and civic engagement.

As followers of Christ in the ELCA, you have the opportunity and the responsibility to participate in developing this social statement. I invite and encourage you find various ways to do so over the next two years.

For more information on this social statement concerning church, state and civic engagement, please check out the article in the January 2022 edition of *The Living Lutheran* entitled [“Government that Serves the Neighbor: ELCA Social Statement on Civic Engagement Underway.”](#)

Blessed week to you all!

Bishop Laurie

Resolutions and Memorials at the Assembly

-From the 2022 Assembly rules approved by the Montana Synod Council

Resolutions and Memorials

Resolutions submitted by the April 15th deadline will be considered by the Resolutions Committee and presented to the Synod Assembly, if appropriate. Other resolutions will be dealt with as time permits.

Regarding communication with Churchwide

The Montana Synod Assembly may only address the ELCA Churchwide Assembly by means of a **memorial**. References: ELCA Constitution 12.11.c and ELCA Bylaw 12.51.21. This bylaw states that a Memorials Committee shall review memorials from synodical assemblies and make appropriate recommendations for assembly action.

The Montana Synod Council may only address the ELCA Church Council by means of a **resolution**. ELCA Bylaws 14.21.11 and 14 pertain to resolutions sent to the Church Council

(which involves a report to the Churchwide Assembly). ELCA Bylaw 14.41.11 pertains to resolutions sent to the Executive Committee of the Church Council with referral to, and additional action to be taken by, the appropriate churchwide unit.

The memorial route is the most direct route to the churchwide assembly, but, at the same time, it is perhaps the least effective route. The churchwide Memorials Committee has to work through hundreds of memorials from synod assemblies. Consequently, most memorials (especially if they are poorly written) wind up with a “do not pass” recommendation. However, reworked resolutions from the ELCA Church Council or a churchwide unit have a tendency to meet with a much more favorable review.



Time to register for the Chico Hot Springs Pastoral Conference!

[Click here](#) to go to the registration page and to find out speaker and registration info, as well as instructions on how to make sure you have a room at Chico!

You will need to reserve your room at Chico separately from the conference registration!
Room reservations can be [made here](#).

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