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Our Calling in Education

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Prologue: Education and Vocation

The calling of Lutherans and of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in education is closely tied to a Lutheran understanding of vocation. While many understand vocation as a job or career or as the call to be a pastor or priest, Lutherans understand vocation as a calling from God that encompasses all of life for all the faithful.

Vocation involves God’s saving call to us in baptism and life lived in joyful response to this call. In Jesus Christ we are loved by a gracious God who frees us to love our neighbor and promote the common good; in gratitude for God’s love, we live out our vocation in our places of responsibility in daily life—home, congregation, work place, neighborhood, nation, and global society.

Education belongs to our baptismal vocation. Our particular calling in education is two-fold: to educate people in the Christian faith for their vocation and to strive with others to ensure that all have access to high quality education that develops personal gifts and abilities and serves the common good. This calling embraces all people in both Church and society.

We of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America express gratitude for homes and congregations that carry out this calling in education. We give thanks to God for other institutions and individuals in all of education’s varied settings: for public, Lutheran, and other private early childhood education centers, schools, colleges, and universities; for outdoor ministries and for campus ministries; and for all who live out their vocation as students, parents, pastors, lay professionals, teachers, administrators, staff members, directors, board members, and trustees in these educational settings.

The ELCA’s calling in education recognizes special responsibilities and accountability in certain specific areas:

- It affirms the essential role of parents and congregations in the faith formation of young people and urge revitalization of the baptismal commitment to educate in the faith for vocation, a commitment that continues throughout life.
- In light of the essential role of public education in serving the common good of the society and in the face of continuing concern for the effectiveness of some public schools, the lack of equitable access for many students to high quality schools, and the often inadequate provision of financial resources, the ELCA affirms and advocates for the equitable, sufficient, and effective funding of public schools.

- In view of the expanding role of ELCA early childhood education centers and schools in providing outreach and distinctive religious educational opportunities to growing numbers of children, this church affirms these schools and encourage synods, pastors, congregations, and members to claim and support this unique mission opportunity.
- In gratitude for the extraordinary work of ELCA colleges and universities in preparing students for vocation in the Church and world and for ELCA seminaries in their preparation of leaders for our church, this church affirms the role of these institutions and encourages them to sustain and strengthen those elements that distinguish the Lutheran tradition in higher education and theological education.
- In gratitude for public higher education and the vital role of ELCA campus ministries in public and private universities and in recognition of the special cultural, missional, and financial challenges they face, the ELCA affirms these ministries and urges new and creative collaborative efforts in their support.
- In recognition of the growing costs of Lutheran, public, and private higher education, which limit access for many students, the ELCA affirms foundations, corporations, congregations, institutions, and individuals who provide financial assistance to students and urge both state and federal governments to expand grant funding for low- and middle-income students who need it.

1. What Does God Have to Do with Education?

Education, as understood in this social statement, refers in a broad sense to learning, teaching, and knowing as a dimension of human life. It is a lifelong activity that permeates all that we do. In a narrower sense, education refers to intentional activity in which we engage one another in learning. People create institutions and situations whose purposes are to encourage, transmit, and advance human learning and to shape and equip new generations. Through education human beings are formed as people, acquiring knowledge, wisdom, attitudes, beliefs, skills, and abilities to think, feel, and act in particular ways.

When the Christian church talks about education, it does so in the light of its faith in God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Christians believe that God creates human beings with ability to learn, teach, and know and that God is active in and through education. God's creative activity encompasses all people and their education, and the redeeming gospel of Jesus Christ gives the Church a distinctive mandate in education.

The Lutheran Legacy

From the time of the Reformation, the Lutheran church has been a teaching and learning church. Martin Luther, a university professor, pursued the reform of education on all levels as an integral part of his reform of Church and society. With his teaching on vocation, Luther understood the Christian life to be one of service to God and neighbor in one's everyday places of responsibility; education equipped Christians for this vocation. He taught that education served the common good of Church and society: In a move unusual for his day, he taught that schools for all—both those who were wealthy and those who were poor, both boys and girls—were necessary so that the Church would have learned and faithful pastors and the civil community would have wise and good rulers.¹ He insisted that Christians learn to read, understand, and interpret the Bible and know the content of their faith. He stressed the importance of teaching faith and love in the home by word and example, writing “The Small Catechism” to assist parents in this task.²

Lutherans in North America and the Caribbean followed Luther's call to educate in home, Church, and society. They prayed and held devotions in the home, taught the faith in Sunday school and through catechetical instruction, founded schools, colleges, and seminaries of all sorts, and established campus ministries and outdoor ministries. They strongly supported public education, and many Lutherans have carried out their calling as educators in a wide array of educational institutions. This legacy lives on in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America as one of its defining characteristics.

The God Who Calls Us

In baptism Christians are called to live in faith and hope in God and in love to neighbor in the ordinary relationships of daily life. God's wondrous and awesome call to us gives joy, confidence, seriousness, and purpose to all of life. It holds together faith and love, God and neighbor, the individual and community, and a person's gifts and the needs of others and of the earth. In our places of responsibility in family, work, society, and Church, God's living call comes to us to serve others, seek justice, promote the common good, and care for creation competently and creatively with our gifts and abilities. This Lutheran understanding of vocation is especially important for our approach to education today.

Faith in the God who calls provides a critical and constructive perspective to guide Christians in their calling in education today.³

The God Who Calls Us Is “the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth”

God's good creation, with its amazing variety and diversity, presents the context for vocation. A

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patterned and structured reality that is reliable and knowable, creation is also changing, open, and inexhaustible in what it discloses to human knowledge. Dependent on the one who calls it into existence out of nothing (cf. Romans 4:17), creation's purpose is to glorify and be in communion with the triune God. Education belongs to the goodness of creation through which Christians praise the Creator.

Education depends on and should reflect who people are as creatures of God. Humanity is one, and all are of equal worth before God. Education is always to respect the dignity we receive in being created in "the image of God." The Creator gives us responsibility for the life and education of new generations and for making the earth a fitting home for human beings and other creatures (Genesis 1:26-28). To carry out these divine mandates we are enabled to learn, teach, and know in a world that can be known, at least in part.

Because God creates all people as embodied minds and spirits, education involves us as whole persons. Our affections, will, and intellect interact in our learning and teaching. We come to know in a variety of ways. We are limited creatures, subject to death, who learn, teach, and know with particular perspectives, assumptions, and commitments. Our knowledge is always partial and we cannot know everything, so we are always compelled to select what we should learn and teach. As social beings who rely on other people, we are created for living in love with God and others and for caring for the earth on which we depend. We accept personal responsibility to learn and know throughout our lives with and for others.

The necessity, capacity, love, and delight to learn, teach, and know come from God. Human beings are blessed with the gifts of memory, self-consciousness, and anticipation. We marvel at the divinely given abilities to communicate, reason, explore new realities, discover meaning and truth, create art, technology, and complex societies, enjoy beauty, and discern what is right and good. We approach education with awe, wonder, and gratitude to the triune God.

The God who calls all people continues to preserve and bless a good but fallen creation. The Bible identifies the root of what corrupts creation as human sin, the rupture in our relationship with God. Instead of loving God with all our being, we turn away from our Creator and center our lives on ourselves, consistently loving ourselves more than we do God and our neighbor. Sin profoundly disrupts and distorts human community, penetrating the heart of individuals and entangling human institutions.

Sin's power persistently warps and corrupts human learning and educational institutions. Our lives are marked by ignorance—the opposite of knowledge—and

by folly—the opposite of wisdom. In a society of inequalities, our school systems often reinforce privilege, denying equitable access to a high quality education for all. In pride humans claim too much for our limited grasp of intellectual or moral truth, and in despair we think that there is no truth and no right and wrong. We use knowledge to dominate or harm others, to deny them their humanity, and to ravish the earth rather than to serve the neighbor. We put our trust in our knowledge or wisdom to justify our existence before God.

Although creation is bound in sin and death, God continues to preserve, create, bless, and govern the world, bringing forth ever-new wonders. People and institutions are "masks of God," in Luther's phrase. That is, God provides for the health and well-being of the earth and its creatures through the actions of people and the working of human institutions, as well as by the processes of nature. At the same time, God holds all people accountable to act responsibly in human affairs and enables them to strive for and achieve degrees of "civil righteousness," that is, a peace and justice necessary and possible in a sinful world.⁴

All people share the need and responsibility to be educated in civil righteousness and the matters of earthly life. We see God at work when people dedicate themselves to this responsibility and in the good they accomplish through their efforts. God's continuing creative activity calls us to support governments and other institutions that enact just education policies and create schools that foster human flourishing, serve the common good, and care for creation.

The God Who Calls Us Is "Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord"

Through the gospel, the saving news of God's love in Jesus Christ for sinners, Christians are freed to care for education as an arena for service to the neighbor. The gospel forgives us, liberates us from the power of sin, death, and evil, and empowers us to amend our lives to love the neighbor, seek justice, and care for the earth. Education is not a means to secure our personal salvation but a way to benefit the neighbor.

Justified before God by grace alone, through faith alone, on account of Jesus Christ alone, Christians do not look to human learning, teaching, and knowing as means to reconcile us with God. Our lives do not receive ultimate meaning by how much learning or academic recognition we have. The gospel frees us from judging our human worth and that of others by their education or any other accomplishment.

Christians live the paradox of being sinners and saints at the same time, struggling with the realities of imperfection, ambiguity, and evil in and around us; yet

we are people on the way, constantly transformed by God's grace and awaiting the resurrection of the dead and the fulfillment of the whole creation in God's eternal reign. Confident of the gospel's promise of God's final victory, we live out our calling in education now under the cross as forgiven sinners, turning daily to God to confess our sin and receive forgiveness and new life.

The one who saves us is also our teacher. By his life and teachings, Jesus of Nazareth teaches us what it means to be truly human, living and dying for others. He teaches us to love God with our whole being—including with all our mind—and our neighbor as ourselves (Luke 10:27). He bids us to care for "the least of these who are members of my family" (Matthew 25:31-46; 40).

The God Who Calls Is "the Holy Spirit"

By means of the gospel the Holy Spirit calls us into the Church, the community of believers that gathers around Word and Sacrament. The risen Lord Jesus instructs his followers to "go . . . make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and *teaching* them to obey everything that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20; italics added). Christians teach and learn in the Church so that we will not be conformed to the world but instead be disciples who are transformed by the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2).

The Church has been given the distinctive mandate to educate in the faith for vocation—to instruct, form, and bring forth faithful, courageous, and wise disciples to live out their baptismal vocation in Church and world. In baptism, believers are buried with Christ into death and freed to "walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4), to a new way of being in the world marked by faith, hope, and love.

In educating for our vocation given in baptism, Christians rely on the Holy Spirit to work through us to shape our character and to produce "the fruit of the Spirit[:] . . . love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23). The same Spirit gives us varieties of gifts "for the common good" (1 Corinthians 12:4-7). Sharing one hope, "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all," we members of the body contribute in different ways "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:5, 12). We build up life in community by discerning and nurturing members' gifts, receiving them in gratitude, and sharing our gifts joyfully.

Dependent on the Holy Spirit, education in the Church centers in worship—in Word and Sacrament—and permeates all of congregational life and mission. It addresses us as whole people in our relationships, shaping the way we think, feel, and act. It strengthens our trust in the gospel, cultivates the gifts of the Spirit, and teaches us what is true about God's relationship

with creation on the basis of the Bible and the Church's doctrines. It encourages us to understand and affirm the content of our faith in ways that invite us into the wondrous mystery of God's love for the world that passes all understanding.

The Church in education confesses and gives voice to God's ultimate truth for humankind and creation revealed in the gospel. In seeking to discern and understand God's truth and its meaning for life, the Church teaches the knowledge of faith boldly and in a spirit of humility, knowing "now we see in a mirror, dimly" (1 Corinthians 13:12). At the same time the Church in education learns from and is challenged by knowledge and insight coming from all people. Instead of dismissing this learning in the name of faith or faith in the name of such learning, Christians say "yes" both to faith and its knowledge and to God's gift of reason. Confident that the God revealed in Jesus Christ is the source of all truth, we affirm and value the discovery and transmission of true knowledge wherever and however it occurs. Paul's admonition voices our open, discerning attitude toward human learning: "Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things" (Philippians 4:8).

The ELCA's calling in education energetically pursues excellent education in this church and society. If we neglect teaching the faith for vocation, we betray our distinctive mandate and are unprepared to serve our neighbor in the world. If we neglect our responsibilities for the education of all people in earthly matters and civil righteousness, we close our eyes to God's continuous creating activity and fall short in loving our neighbor and serving the common good. Education in both society and Church is God-pleasing, for the God who calls us in vocation is both Creator and Preserver and Redeemer and Sanctifier.

Our Calling in Education Today

The ELCA lives its calling in education today in a world that is increasingly interconnected and in a society that is becoming more pluralistic. Contemporary culture brings new marvels yet also conveys messages that hinder learning and clash with the Church's beliefs. Science and technology continuously reshape our world, bringing new benefits as well as new dangers and creating new moral dilemmas and theological challenges. Many voices point to the crucial significance of early childhood education as well as to the need for and the possibilities of lifelong learning. Millions of men, women, and children in our affluent society live in poverty, and most young people who live in poverty do not have fair access to good schools. The needs of students with differing abilities are not always being met effectively. Recognizing how essential formal education is for living in today's world, our

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society has developed an elaborate array of public and private schools from preschool through post-graduate. Yet performance of educational institutions in this society is often criticized, and many reform proposals are advanced.

Within this complex, changing, and challenging context the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America claims and aspires to renew its calling in education. We are grateful for and challenged by the legacy we have received, and we are aware that we too often fall short in our calling. We pledge to sustain, renew, and where need be, reform our calling in education for this time and place so that we will be a stronger, livelier, and more faithful teaching and learning church.

This calling in education belongs to this whole church. Individuals, families, congregations, early childhood education centers and schools, colleges and universities, seminaries, outdoor ministries, campus ministries, lifelong learning centers, publishing ministry, social ministry organizations, synods, and the churchwide organization all participate in this calling. It involves lifelong learning in formal and informal settings. It includes pastors and bishops as teachers of the faith who speak to heart and mind and who address public issues of education. In this calling in education we learn from ecumenical partners, other churches, and the Church throughout the world and ages as well as from other religions and secular knowledge. We honor and support parents, pastors, students, educators, citizens, and all who carry out their callings in education.

This social statement calls the ELCA in light of our faith to engage, deliberate, and act with respect to four contexts: home and congregation, public education, this church's educational institutions, and public colleges and universities. Our calling in education is to:

- communicate the faith to children and youth with power and conviction in home and congregation where lifelong learning in the faith is expected and encouraged;
- advocate equitable access to excellent education for all young people;
- sustain and strengthen early childhood education centers, schools, colleges and universities, and seminaries as an integral and integrated part of this church's mission in education; and
- support public higher education to serve the common good and rejoice in the faithful presence of campus ministry in public colleges and universities.

2. What Faith Will Our Children Have?

Faith Formation from Generation to Generation

Luther taught, "Anything on which your heart relies and depends, I say, that is really your God."⁵ All have faith in something; the question is, is it trust in the living God or in something else? Will our children be nurtured and transformed by the faith and community that trust and confess the God who calls us?

Few questions are more urgent and significant for this church's life and mission. The answers will depend in large part on whether or not we nurture our children and encourage adults to grow in faith throughout their entire lives. Children brought to the baptismal font often become distant from the community of faith as they move toward becoming adults. Many adults do not consider their own ongoing and intentional faith formation to be vital to their lives as Christians.

Each generation faces its own challenges in maintaining, nurturing, and passing on the faith. In our time these challenges are profound and pervasive. Attempts to communicate the faith face the demands and the fragmentation of modern life, numerous religions and ideologies competing for our loyalty, and the ever-present messages that tell us that success and happiness come from consuming goods and pursuing individual desires and pleasures. The disconnect between home and congregation, the hesitance of Christians to witness to the gospel, and their lack of commitment to be lifelong learners impair continued faith formation.

Lifelong Learning

Faith formation is a gift of the Holy Spirit that continues throughout life. This truth shapes the ELCA's understanding and practice of educating in the faith for vocation. A teaching and learning church invites the baptized of all ages—from infants to older adults—into a continuous discipline of learning and faith formation.

As Christians mature in their knowledge and experience in the world, their faith also should deepen and mature. If their knowledge of the faith fails to keep up with their knowledge of the world, then their understanding of God will be affected. As people grow older, a changing world presents new questions and dilemmas to them, and based on their continuing life experience, they raise new questions about their world and faith. Continued growth and learning in the faith enable Christians to see how their faith gives direction and sheds light on their changing lives.

Because learning and being formed in the faith are lifelong opportunities and tasks, the ELCA urges Christians throughout their lives to assume personal responsibility to grow in their faith by:

- deepening their relationship with God through worship and prayer;
- maturing in their knowledge of the Bible and the Church's doctrines;
- learning by doing, practicing their faith in daily living, service, and justice;
- learning and using the art and skills of speaking the truth in love and discerning together the gospel's meaning for life;⁶ and
- connecting their baptismal vocation and their specific callings in daily life.

Where adults are vigorous learners in the faith, children and young people will have models and companions for their own learning, adults will learn from children and young people, and all generations will grow together in their faith.

"Let the little children come to me."

While adults are responsible for their own lifelong learning, they also bear a particular responsibility to nurture the faith of the next generation. The Bible communicates a keen sense of how generations are bound together in networks of mutual obligation. The elder generation is to transmit its knowledge, wisdom, and faith, and the younger generation is to honor the blessings it receives. "Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray" (Proverbs 22:6). The Bible as well as church history testifies to the significance of educating children in the faith. Experience and contemporary studies confirm the importance of early childhood education. Passing on the faith to a new generation begins in infancy and continues through adulthood.

Jesus invited the children (Mark 10:13-16; cf., Matthew 19:13-15; Luke 18:15-17), and so we are to welcome children, teaching and learning from them in ways that recognize their dignity and complexity. The Church's traditions on children help us to understand children from different perspectives and to hold these diverse ways together in tension.⁷

For example, children are both:

- *gifts of God.* God entrusts parents, the Church, and society to welcome and care for children as full participants of their communities. As gifts of God, children are sources of hope, joy, delight, and also obligation.
- *and sinful creatures and moral agents.* Children, "re-born" in baptism, share in the solidarity and equality of sin common to all (Romans 3:10). Furthermore, children are moral agents who have growing degrees of responsibility for what they do and who may act in ways that are self-centered and harmful to themselves and others. Recognizing that children are sinful is never a warrant to abuse and treat them inhumanely; rather it is a caution against an idealistic view of children as primarily innocent beings who automatically love God and others.

Children, therefore, need to be formed for their vocation and that with gentleness and love.

Children are both:

- *fully human and made in the image of God.* Children, therefore, are worthy of the dignity and respect due to all human beings. Jesus reinforced the dignity of all children by welcoming and blessing them and saying that to them belongs the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 19:14, 15).
- *and developing beings who need instruction and guidance.* Children require nurture and guidance to develop into intellectually, morally, and spiritually mature adults.

Children are both:

- *models and teachers of faith.* In striking ways, Jesus held up children as teachers of adults. "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3, 4).
- *and orphans, neighbors, and strangers in need of justice and compassion.* The Bible also reminds us that children may be among the most vulnerable members of society. Many are impoverished, neglected, abandoned, and abused. They need protection, justice, and compassion. Children are our neighbors whom we are called to love.

Christians enrich our welcoming of children to a life of faith by holding together these diverse perspectives on whom they are. Because they are gifts of God, for example, we will respect their dignity and bring joy, laughter, and a sense of obligation into teaching and forming them in home and congregation. Because they—like all the baptized—are sinners as well as saints and in need of instruction, we will emphasize the vital role of families in instilling the habits and practices of faithful living, and we will develop substantial congregational programs of faith formation. We will introduce them to good examples, mentors, and stories of faith and service and help them discern their callings. Remembering that Jesus saw children as teachers of the faith, we will listen attentively to them, honor their insights and questions, and learn from them. We will give special attention to children who are most vulnerable and those who have been wounded, and we will become stronger advocates for them.

A Mutual Environment of Living Faith

Both home and congregation are responsible for passing on the faith to children and youth. Where each carries out its responsibility faithfully and is engaged in a fruitful partnership with the other—trusting in the Holy Spirit to bless their faithfulness—children and youth are baptized, grow, and dwell in an environment of living faith.

In such an environment, both home and congregation anchor their teaching in the Bible and in Luther's "The Small Catechism." They nurture in children and youth faith, hope, and love. They teach and discuss the Church's doctrines, creeds, the liturgy, and moral beliefs. They live out together Christian practices, such as praying, worshiping, singing, visiting people who are sick, seeking justice with people who experience poverty or discrimination, and caring for the earth.

Many children and youth, however, do not experience a mutually supportive environment in home and congregation. Most baptized children grow up in homes where faith formation is not part of everyday living, even among families who are active in congregational life.⁸ Adolescent youth who identify themselves as Christians often have great difficulty explaining what they believe. Many have a vague concept of God and view religion as merely an instrument to make them happy and morally good.⁹ After catechetical instruction many young people begin to lose interest in participating in congregational life. Parents and other caregivers often do not educate their children in the faith for vocation, and congregations often do little to encourage and assist them. We dare not ignore the seriousness of this state of affairs.

Reform begins at baptism, where congregations and sponsors and home meet. At baptism, through which God grants us new life, parents and sponsors commit themselves before God and the congregation to educate children in the faith.¹⁰ Pastors, associates in ministry, diaconal ministers, deaconesses, and the community of faith need to remind parents, caregivers, and sponsors of their pledge and help them fulfill it, and parents need to remind pastors and the community of faith to help them.

Parents nurture and instruct in the faith by offering a good example to their children. They do so by modeling prayer, hymn singing, Bible study, and private devotional reading; attending worship and Sunday school with their children and participating in the life of the congregation; serving the poor and caring for creation, and witnessing to the gospel and faithfully living out their callings. Providing a good example, however, is not enough. Parents' awesome responsibility also includes encouraging their children to pray publicly and privately, read devotions, witness to their faith, deepen their knowledge of their faith, and take part in activities of generosity, service, and justice. Families have unique opportunities to talk together about matters of faith and vocation. As parents teach the faith, they learn from their children and are themselves more deeply formed in the faith. The home itself is to be a domestic church for the whole family.

Parents cannot undertake this important task unsupported. In baptizing children, congregations also accept responsibility for forming children and youth in the faith. Equipping parents for their vocation as parents belongs among a congregation's chief priorities. This begins by teaching persistently and boldly that it is the calling and obligation as well as the delight of parents to educate their young people in the faith. Where parents are not involved in educating in the faith, congregations have heightened responsibility to take on this challenge.

Congregations' responsibility includes providing strong programs of faith formation for children and youth that involve parents and other adults. Through classes, parenting groups and mentoring programs, congregations provide opportunities to study the Scriptures, to discuss fears and hopes, to learn new ideas, and to become acquainted with resources to support those responsible for the task of forming children in the faith.

Congregations should welcome children and youth of all ages in worship, Sunday school, catechetical instruction, and youth ministry and be attentive to the changes going on in young peoples' lives. They will give special attention to engaging post-confirmation youth in the congregation's life. Parents and congregations may also encourage lifelong growth in faith through Lutheran schools, lifelong learning centers, Lutheran campus ministries, and Lutheran colleges and universities.

Congregations also can strengthen the faith formation of children, youth, and adults by encouraging them to take part in this church's outdoor ministries. Congregations also should encourage outdoor ministries to offer programs to those with disabilities. Numerous conference centers, camps, and retreat centers positively shape the faith and lives of people of all ages. Many young people, families, and leaders of this church testify to the important role of these outdoor ministries in their faith formation and spiritual development.¹¹

ELCA seminaries provide important support for those involved in the faith formation of all ages. The Lutheran tradition has long valued the teaching role in the congregation of those trained in theological education, and we look to pastors, deaconesses, diaconal ministers, associates in ministry, and lay leaders to work with congregations and parents in the crucial task of forming the faith of all generations. This church, therefore, expects seminaries to take seriously the importance of Christian education and youth and family ministry and to educate all students for excellence in leadership in these areas.

We also call upon the ELCA to continue and expand the provision of creative and comprehensive resources necessary to enable parents and congregations to help form the faith of all generations.

Equipping Faithful and Discerning Students

During their formative years, young people face the challenge of learning to discern and pursue what is good and right amid conflicting ideas and enticing alternative ways of living. An environment of living faith equips them to grow and mature in their baptismal calling in a pluralistic culture that exhibits both God's goodness and sin's corruption. In such an environment parents willingly accept their obligation for their children, create the structure and climate for children to grow in freedom, and set parameters on how the culture will be allowed to influence their children.

Especially important during these formative years is their schooling experience. Parents as well as congregations will teach their children and young people that being a student is a calling—a way to serve God and others. They will convey to them a love for learning that opens youthful minds to the exciting quest for knowledge. Faith inspires us to understand God's world and to delight in the discovery of truth. Students are called to take the wonderful opportunity and demanding responsibility of learning with utmost seriousness, showing diligence, discipline, lively interest, honesty, creativity, and respect for their teachers.

In fulfilling their baptismal pledge, parents will carefully consider where their children attend school and the education they receive. Whether they send their children to a public school, a Lutheran school, other Christian school, private school, or home school them, parents will be concerned that their children receive a high quality education and develop a vibrant faith active in love. Parents weigh many factors in selecting a school. Some of these factors are the gifts and needs of the child, the schooling options available, the desire or not for a faith-based education, and the cost. Pastors, other rostered leaders, and other congregational members can help parents think through their possibilities, and congregations can support them in their options.

Schools rightly expose their students to a wide variety of ideas, beliefs, and values but often find it difficult to provide a basis on which to evaluate moral and belief systems. When schools do not teach about religion, students may conclude that religion is not important for "real life" or that what is right and wrong is only a "matter of opinion." Some schools, including religious ones, may promote beliefs and attitudes that denigrate certain racial, ethnic, religious, or other groups of people.

Attentive to what their children are learning in school, home and congregation will seek to deepen

their young people's understanding of their faith and vocation. Pastors, other educational leaders, and parents will seize opportunities to listen carefully to their questions, to explore openly their struggles and concerns, to help them make sense of their faith and learning, and to discern what is good and true in a contested world.

Guidelines for the Ministry of Faith Formation

How congregations carry out their educational responsibilities for children, youth, and adults of all ages takes many forms. The following guidelines are designed to help congregations focus intentionally on faith formation:

Educational ministries will:

- rely on the Holy Spirit to work through education to form, guide, and enlighten learners in the faith;
- inspire, inform, and challenge children, youth, and adults, including those with disabilities, with faithful, interesting, and effective teaching and learning;
- implement educational materials and programs that are rooted in the triune God, the Bible, and the Lutheran Confessions;
- plan and assure that the education ministry of the congregation is centered in and flows out of worship;
- encourage Christians to be lifelong learners in the faith, providing opportunities for all to grow in their faith and to be equipped for their vocation in the Church and the world;
- provide opportunities for discussing and studying social issues, ethics, science, and other religions in light of faith;
- incorporate the best teaching and learning methods available with a willingness to try new approaches; and
- incorporate educational programs and practices appropriate to the age, interest, learning abilities, and other characteristics of the people for whom they are intended.

Children, youth, and family ministries will:

- welcome and educate all children and youth in ways that recognize their wonderful complexity and dignity;
- give priority to the ministries of children, youth, and families through trained leadership, finances, and resources; and
- work to strengthen the family and to create an intentional partnership between the congregation and the home.

Educational ministry leadership will:

- support the pastors and other leaders who are called to be teachers of the faith;
- provide for the ongoing education of teachers;¹² and
- draw on the resources and people available in this church including ELCA program units and take

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advantage of opportunities offered by our seminaries, colleges, and lifelong learning centers.¹³

A vibrant congregational ministry in education for children, youth, and adults carries out the biblical mandate “to equip the saints” (Ephesians 4:12) and prepares them for their vocation in daily life. It gives us hope that all of the generations will have a living faith in the God who calls us.

3. Will All Children and Youth Have Access to High Quality Education?

Schools for All

“A city’s best and greatest welfare, safety, and strength consist in its having many able, learned, wise, honorable, and well-educated citizens.”¹⁴ So wrote Luther in his appeal to city governments to establish schools. Then as now, effective schools are a blessing to society, preparing students for their future callings and responsibilities. In order that students will be prepared for their callings and responsibilities, the ELCA expects all schools—public, private, Lutheran, other religious or home schools—to fulfill at least four purposes for students in age-appropriate ways. Schools should:

- 1) prepare students academically;
- 2) encourage their personal flourishing, developing their knowledge and wisdom and instilling a delight in learning;
- 3) prepare students for productive work and financial responsibility; and
- 4) equip them to live and serve in a complex, diverse, and interdependent global society and to be responsible and civil citizens.

High quality schools excel in accomplishing these purposes.

While public, religious, and private schools, as well as home schooling, contribute to the common good of our society, public schools remain the principal educational institutions for children and youth from kindergarten through high school. Most students in our society—nearly 90 percent—are enrolled in public schools. These government-run and tax-supported schools represent the most significant public commitment to provide formal education for all young people.

The American and Puerto Rican societies rightly place high expectations on public schools. In providing access to education for all, public schools are to generate a more equitable society. By bringing together students from all sectors of society, they are to help nurture shared values, cultural understanding, and social harmony. By developing the potential of each

student, they are to prepare students for work, family life, and citizenship and thereby promote economic well-being and the common good. Some also expect public schools to help solve pressing social issues such as poor health, violence, poverty, and disability. Yet resources to support these expectations compete with the demands of other public responsibilities such as health, human services, and public safety.

While public schools historically have enjoyed widespread public support, in recent decades public discourse about them often has been shaped by criticism and discontent. The ELCA reaffirms its commitment to the concept and work of public schools, and joins with others in seeking change where they do not live up to expectations. Especially do we call for public attention and action on behalf of those children and youth who are not receiving a good education. The ELCA urgently presses the question: Will all children and youth have access to high quality education?

The Commitment to Public Schools

Public schools vary in size, culture, and quality. The challenges and opportunities they face differ according to their context, and people’s experiences with them vary. Recognizing both this diversity and what is common about public schools, and drawing upon our theology, the ELCA sets out certain attitudes, guidelines, and expectations to inform its commitment to public schools.

We of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America view public schools with *gratitude*. We are grateful for the educational achievements of public schools in the past and present. We rejoice in the opportunity for education that public schools offer to all children, including children who suffer the effects of poverty and discrimination and to children with special learning needs. We recognize how public schools in various situations bring together children and youth from many different social, economic, and ethnic backgrounds—including those from new immigrant populations—for a common education in a spirit of civic equality. We are thankful for all who teach and work in and for public schools with dedication, ability, and care.

The ELCA views public schools with *realism, hope, and wisdom*. Because we recognize human limitations and the power of sin, we are prepared to be critical where public schools fall short, and we seek to be conscious of our own limitations and how our self-interest may influence and distort our views. Our faith in God keeps alive our hope to seek workable solutions to seemingly insolvable problems, including those in public education. This is a tough hope that calls for sustained effort, not easy answers. It treasures wisdom

and knowledge in discerning what actions best serve the education of children and youth.

This church understands the education of young people to be a *shared responsibility*. Parents and schools as well as religious bodies and community all share this responsibility. A responsibility requires a corresponding right or authority to fulfill it. Parents have primary, but not exclusive, responsibility for the education of their children. This responsibility obligates them to be involved in their children's education in home, school, and congregation. It also gives parents the right to select whether to send their children to public, religious, or private schools or to home school them.

Because children are God's gifts to society and the Church as well as to parents, society through government also has responsibility and authority to provide for young people's education. This responsibility and right are derived both from parents' consent and from government's mandate to provide for the common good and the well-being of those in its jurisdiction. This responsibility gives government the right to levy taxes for education, enact compulsory attendance laws, set educational standards, and operate public schools. The shared responsibility between parents and public schools and their teachers should be one of partnership.

Expectations for Public Schools

We of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America expect schools to be *communities of learning and teaching*. Schools—all schools—should strive above all to be communities in which people with distinct roles join together in mutual respect around the common concern for learning, teaching, and knowing. Communities of learning and teaching ought to be places of thoughtful and civil instruction and dialogue. In addressing social needs (to reduce poverty or improve health, for example), schools should do so principally as an educational community, as occasions for learning and teaching. When public schools perform other social functions for the best interest of children (for example, providing breakfast or caring for children after school), government should ensure they have adequate resources in addition to resources supporting their primary educational purpose. Their extracurricular opportunities in sports, the arts, and forensics should develop healthy leadership and encourage strong academic performance. School organization should facilitate schools' identity as communities of learning and teaching.

In a community of learning students should learn to think and read critically, write and speak clearly, and understand math and science competently. They will know how to analyze, reformulate, synthesize, and solve problems. They will become acquainted with a wide variety of humanistic, scientific, artistic, and practical subject matters. They will be introduced both

to the broadly accepted content of different disciplines and to the processes and methods by which these disciplines arrive at their conclusions. They will come to think on their own, to ask questions, and to be creative in their learning. They will learn to care for their health and how to stay physically fit.

To prepare their students, schools require competent leadership from principals and boards, good teachers and counselors, research-based teaching methods and curricula, adequate facilities and resources; parental and community support and involvement; and eager students. When public schools are not accomplishing these purposes adequately, citizens have a responsibility to work to improve them. Public attention to social and economic influences on student readiness is also essential so that students are not hungry, in ill health, or victims of violence or abuse.

The ELCA expects communities of learning and teaching to be safe places. We recognize that school safety is an issue for all students, staff, and teachers. Unfortunately, incidents of bullying, intimidation, and other forms of violence are not unusual. We affirm that personal safety and security are essential for optimal teaching and learning.

In recognition of the differing ability and needs of students, this church is committed to the education of students with disabilities. This entails the provision of needed technical and adaptive technology, qualified teachers and staff, appropriate curricula and programs, and support services.

This church affirms that public schools have a role in *teaching and forming students to live morally in society*, what Lutherans call "civil righteousness." This task raises many dilemmas in our pluralistic society. Yet no education is morally neutral, and public schools do communicate moral beliefs and values. Public schools, therefore, ought to teach the principles and virtues of living together in responsible freedom in a democratic society, which includes respect for the diverse cultures and beliefs of their students. Moral education suited for public schools will draw upon what the community holds in common and teach in a fair and impartial way on those issues on which the community is divided.¹⁵

This church expects public schools *to teach about religion* as a vital part of human life and culture. When they do not teach about religion, public schools leave students with a distorted picture of the world. Public schools as government institutions should not sponsor religious exercises such as prayer or devotional reading of religious texts nor advocate for or against any particular religion.¹⁶ They should, however, help their students understand the importance of religion for individuals, history, and contemporary life by teaching about the beliefs, practices, and history of different religions in fair and informative ways. This will require competent teachers and good curricula.

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The ELCA affirms the search for truth and meaning in its many different forms. Public schools, therefore, should address the full scope of human knowing, including the arts, humanities, social and natural sciences, mathematics, and technology. The curricula should present the best current knowledge and method in each discipline. *In teaching the natural and physical sciences*, we expect public schools to *acknowledge the distinctions between them and religion*. Both ways of knowing have their own integrity and limits in method and purpose. While religion and faith provide subject matter and methods to speak of God's role in the origin and purpose of creation, we do not claim that they provide a scientific account of how the natural world functions. While the natural and physical sciences have tested methods to describe and explain the natural world and we learn from them, we do not look to science to answer religious questions. Schools and teachers should respect the distinct approaches to truth and knowledge in the natural and physical sciences and religion, explore the philosophical issues in their relationship, and recognize moral questions that may arise from them and various proposed answers to these questions.

Expectations of this Church

The ELCA encourages its congregations and pastors to *develop strong connections with their public schools* for the sake of the children in their communities. While respecting the other's purpose and character, congregations and public schools should understand themselves to be allies in serving children and youth.

- Congregations can join with public schools in affirming the importance of education and countering views that devalue or denigrate education.
- Congregations can ask their public schools how they can assist students and provide space and volunteers for after-school activities such as tutoring.
- Pastors and other rostered leaders can make themselves available as resource people in teaching about religion, and they and Lutheran social ministry organizations can be of assistance when schools experience a crisis where counseling and support are needed.
- In communities with release-time programs, congregations and public schools have special opportunities to work together in providing religious instruction for those families who want it.
- Congregations should encourage members to be involved in their schools, willing to serve in

volunteer and elected positions, and support teachers and students in their calling.

- Congregations and public school officials can meet to discuss scheduling of activities and events and other issues of mutual interest.
- Lutheran and public schools can enter into mutually beneficial relationships.
- Congregations and public schools can cooperate in instructing teachers and students about how students may appropriately exercise their religious freedom in public schools, including the right of equal access for student-led religious groups. Public schools are not "religion-free zones"; voluntary and non-disruptive religious expressions by students are permissible.¹⁷

Equitable Access to High Quality Education for All

Because all are created in God's image, all have equal worth and dignity and should be treated accordingly. This belief stands behind our strong support for our society's expectation that all young people have equitable access to high quality schools. All students are entitled to good schools, and when they receive a high quality education, society benefits. In educating millions, public schools continue to achieve notable successes in fulfilling this expectation.

Public schools have provided a widespread, high level of education as the country's scientific, technological, cultural, and economic leadership demonstrates. Researchers differ, however, on the quality of public school education. Some argue that given the nature of public support and the resources provided, public schools do well when compared to public education systems in other countries. Others argue that public schools are not meeting the challenges of an increasingly complex and competitive global economy.¹⁸ All agree that public schools face the enormous task of offering high-quality education to prepare citizens and workers for today's knowledge-based global world.

The ELCA's commitment to equitable access for all calls us to attend to the glaring inequities in this country's schooling. The disturbing reality persists that too many young people do not have access to good public schools. This reality is most pervasive in poor communities, especially where poverty is intertwined with a history of racism and discrimination. More than a half-century after the Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, many schools remain racially separate and unequal,¹⁹ often in connection with residential segregation. Schools where a substantial majority of students live in poverty consistently represent schools with the fewest resources and some of the lowest performances.²⁰

Federal, state, and district funding often shortchange schools that serve students who need the most support from their schools, for example, educational funding from the federal government to American Indian and Alaska Native communities, both on and off reservations.²¹

The connection between persistent poverty along with discrimination and lack of equitable access to high quality schools means that many factors contribute to this society's failure to educate all young people. People who are poor face daily a vast assortment of interlocking hardships related to low-paying jobs, inadequate housing in dangerous and unhealthy environments, poor health and physical disabilities, disrupted families, language barriers, unwise personal choices, as well as inadequate schools. One of this society's greatest challenges is to attend to all the factors that contribute to poverty. Good schools alone cannot break the cycle of generational poverty, yet they have an indispensable role in doing so. American and Puerto Rican societies have an obligation to do all they can to realize the dreams of children and youth who live in poverty that education will improve their lives.

We of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, therefore, commit ourselves to work with others for public policies that boldly and consistently push toward ensuring that all students have equitable access to high quality schools. We oppose all forms of invidious or harmful discrimination. We affirm that public schools and their teachers should set high expectations for all students, challenge them all to achieve these expectations, and have the means to meet these expectations. Commitment to equitable access to high quality schools for all, along with commitment to combat poverty in all its dimensions, has great potential to improve the academic performance of students who do not now have opportunity to benefit from good education.²²

As a church body, the ELCA has the calling to focus public attention on the vast inequities in our educational system, to voice the hope and obligation of achieving equitable access to high quality schools for all students, and to help create conditions to deliberate about and act on that calling. As individual Christians in our calling as citizens, we have responsibility and competence to determine what specific measures will most improve equitable access for all students to high quality schools in our communities, states, and nation.

Evaluating Educational Reforms

Citizens, political officeholders, educators, and researchers representing a wide range of attitudes toward public schools recognize that public schools should and can do better in improving the performance of their students. When they are considering any proposed school reform, we encourage all citizens to evaluate it in terms of its appropriateness, effectiveness, and cost. They should ask of a proposal:

- Does it improve educational quality for all students?
- Is it effective in enhancing student learning?
- Does it assist educators in their work?
- Is it affordable and sustainable?
- Does it protect students from invidious discrimination?
- Is it supported by reliable research?
- Is there a means to evaluate the results of the program and decide if the program should be continued, modified, or ended?

Moving Toward Equitable Access

The ELCA calls upon its members to consider the following measures:

Countering the Negative Effects of Poverty and Discrimination

Because poverty and discrimination have such a large and negative impact on student learning, this church calls for public policies that give top priority to children and youth who do not have equitable access to good education, both in large cities and rural areas, and on American Indian reservations and in Alaska Native communities. This requires compensatory measures for children and young people who are encumbered by social disadvantages to increase their chances of equal opportunity for a good education. This includes:

- providing resources and opportunities to overcome the negative effects of poverty and injustice;
- broadening the tax base and funding strategies to achieve adequate funding for every school;
- expanding and funding good early childhood education for children in poverty and special education, which increases the possibilities of later educational success. Such education is a model for developing other programs for students who live in poverty and suffer discrimination;
- creating incentives to attract high quality teachers, administrators, and staff to schools where most students live in poverty. Such incentives will go beyond higher salaries to include providing a supportive climate for teachers to innovate and be more effective in their instruction;
- involving parents and care givers in their children's education through parental classes and other means; and
- creating opportunities for education that cross ethnic, social, economic, and jurisdictional lines.

Equity in Funding

Large discrepancies in per pupil funding in school districts within the same state are a major barrier to equitable access to high quality schools for all students. While increased funds by themselves do not ensure better educational results, their strategic investment

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can make a difference.²³ Moreover, equity in funding among school districts is a matter of justice and is mandated in most state constitutions. In states where per pupil funding is vastly unequal (usually where school districts rely on local property taxes for their revenue), citizens should work actively to reform the funding system.²⁴ Reforms should be evaluated in terms of their effectiveness in improving student learning.

School Choice

A growing number of school districts and states seek to increase the range of schools students can attend through policies that establish magnet schools, open enrollment, charter schools, tax credits, and vouchers. Research on this whole range of options continues.²⁵ Many families and communities are encouraged by the experiences of their children with these options, particularly in urban neighborhoods. Increasing school options appeals to the idea that parents and students can choose among schools and to the belief that competition among schools improves educational quality. It also recognizes that there are diverse ways to educate young people. Others argue that some of these options will increase racial segregation, weaken public schools, benefit principally the privileged sectors of society, and leave too many students in poor-performing schools. The effects of each of these policies—or proposed policies—need to be evaluated in the local context with a special focus on whether or not the option improves educational quality and offers greater opportunities for children and youth living in poverty. ELCA members considering these choice options are encouraged to study the ELCA’s 2001 social policy resolution on school voucher proposals²⁶ as well as to use the questions listed above under “Evaluating Education Reforms.”²⁷

Accountability

Public schools should be held accountable for educating all their students, but how to do so is a source of ongoing contention. What should the standards be? Who should set them? What is their impact on student learning? What should be the consequences for schools that fail to meet them? What policies and funding exist to improve schools that do not reach standards? Intended to spur academic achievement, federal and state legislation holds public schools accountable by means of standards and regular testing and by requiring change in low-performing schools. The effects of such laws require continuing assessment. Policies to implement accountability, therefore, should address the whole education agenda, including to:

- provide for appropriate periodic adjustment in outcome goals;
- evaluate academic progress with both qualitative and quantitative measures;
- take into account the individual situation of students, especially those who are negatively affected by language, disabilities, or social disadvantages;
- provide, where indicated, adequate resources to implement remediation and improve the quality of education in the schools where students attend;
- offer, as a last resort, adequate alternatives for students attending schools that consistently do not meet performance standards; and
- give careful and comprehensive assessment to measure the impact on student learning.

Improving Educational Quality

In addition to the above-mentioned reforms, efforts to improve educational quality focus on every other aspect of public schools. Proposals include:

- changing who controls public schools;
- restructuring school administration and organization;
- creating smaller schools in urban areas or consolidating smaller schools in rural areas;
- reducing class size;
- extending school calendars or school hours;
- improving teacher and administrator education and development;
- introducing merit pay;
- improving teaching methods and classroom environments; and
- changing curricula.

Whether or not these reform proposals will improve education may vary from one context to another. In each context citizens must ask the basic questions suggested above under “Evaluating Education Reforms.”

Counsel to Parents

In some circumstances parents may be able to choose from among a number of options to meet the educational needs of their children, including public, magnet, private, charter, religious schools, and home schooling. In these cases we urge parents to be aware of the options and to consider:

- the special needs and gifts of their child;
- whether or not they desire a faith-based education for their child;
- how well each option will achieve the purposes of education (see page);

- how well the options prepare the student for life with and for service to others in a complex, diverse, global society; and
- the affordability of each option.

Because education is a shared responsibility, the ELCA encourages parents to consult with others who may be of assistance in making their decision.

4. Will Our Church Have Schools and Colleges? Will Our Schools and Colleges Have a Church?

The Commitment to Lutheran Educational Institutions

In a living tradition devoted to educating in the faith for vocation in the Church and world, it is not surprising to find that institutions of learning and teaching have been integral and vital to its life and mission. “When schools flourish,” Luther was recorded as saying, “then things go well and the church is secure. Let us have learned citizens and teachers. The youth furnish recruits for the church; they are the source of its well-being. If there were no schools, who would there be to take our place when we die? In the church we are forced to have schools. God has preserved the church through schools; they are its conservatories.”²⁸ Since the Reformation Lutherans have taken on the demanding task of establishing and maintaining educational institutions in hope and commitment to equip a new generation to witness to the gospel and carry out their vocation in society.

A steward of this tradition, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has an extensive network of educational institutions to benefit Church and society. In 2006, ELCA congregations owned and operated 267 elementary schools, 18 high schools, and 1722 early childhood centers, involving more than 225,000 students.²⁹ Twenty-eight colleges and universities are affiliated with this church, which enrolled nearly 58,000 students in 2007.³⁰ There are eight ELCA seminaries, and dozens of centers and programs for continuing education.³¹ Under the auspices of the three seminary clusters, other educational programs and institutions of the ELCA are joining as interdependent lifelong learning partners with the seminaries to expand access to lifelong learning in the faith for all the baptized by building a theological education network. The ELCA’s Study of Theological Education, adopted by the Churchwide Assembly in 1995, guides the building of this new network.³²

What are the ELCA’s hopes for and commitment to the future of its schools (early childhood education centers through high school), colleges, and universities? All are highly prized by the constituencies that directly support and benefit from them, yet they are too often not well known or appreciated by many ELCA members. For the most part all must find their

own financial support. Yet we face an opportune moment. The number of schools is growing, and many colleges and universities are reclaiming their Lutheran connections. This situation provokes the question: Will our schools and colleges and universities have a church—laity, pastors, bishops, congregations, synods, seminaries, and churchwide organization— that affirms and supports them?

This church’s fervent hope is that it be so. We affirm anew our historic commitment to Lutheran schools and colleges and universities and encourage its deepening and extension. If we follow through on this commitment, then, yes, this church will have vibrant schools and colleges and universities, benefitting both Church and society and valued as indispensable educational arms of this church’s mission.

Lutheran Schools and Centers

ELCA congregations are becoming increasingly involved in offering preschool, elementary, and secondary education to their surrounding neighborhoods. From 1995 to 2006 the number of schools and centers grew by 15 percent, and many congregations continue to express interest in beginning a school or center.³³ This remarkable development means that today nearly one of every five ELCA congregations operates some type of school.

Through their schools and centers, congregations aim to offer a strong academic education in a caring Christian environment. By word and example, teachers, administrators, and pastors seek to motivate students to learn and nurture their gifts in service to others in response to God’s love for them. Students learn in a setting where they pray, sing, and worship, and where they study the Bible, the Church’s beliefs, and Christian moral teachings. Families who send their children to Lutheran schools and centers take on an extra financial burden. Often families desire that their children be firmly educated in the faith to prepare them for engaging aspects of a culture that they perceive to be indifferent to or in conflict with the Christian faith.

Lutheran schools and centers enroll students of different religious, ethnic, cultural, and economic backgrounds. At least 17 percent of children who attended Lutheran schools in 2005 were people of color other than white, a percentage more than five times higher than ELCA congregations as a whole.³⁴ Students and teachers are especially diverse in urban settings. Through the care and witness of faculty, staff, pastor, and congregational members, Lutheran schools and centers offer students and their families opportunity to hear the gospel and, if desired, to become part of the congregation. In so doing they have proven to be a significant means of evangelizing unchurched families. They also have been important in educating many

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children who later became leaders in this church and in society.

Lutheran schools and centers face many challenges in offering excellent education in a caring Christian environment. They work, for example, to maintain low tuition while providing fair and adequate salaries for their staffs, to find rightly qualified teachers and administrators, and to develop a wholesome relationship between congregation and school and center. Schools and centers serving the poorest neighborhoods are often the most fragile, under resourced, and in need of the most improvement.

We of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America view Lutheran centers and schools as a significant part of this church's mission; commend congregations that sponsor them; and honor the teachers, administrators, staff, and pastors who work in them. Wherever they exist, Lutheran schools and centers should be an integral part of a congregation's witness to the gospel and public service to the community. Congregations should fulfill their responsibility to provide oversight, support, and direction for their educational institutions.

Expectations of Lutheran Centers and Schools

The ELCA expects our early childhood education centers and schools to continue serving this church's mission by:

- promoting academic excellence in age-appropriate ways according to accepted standards;
- reaching out to others with the good news of Jesus Christ;
- educating in the faith for vocation; and
- serving their community.

Lutheran schools and centers will offer a secure, welcoming, and caring learning environment for children of all cultural, ethnic, religious, and economic backgrounds, and special needs. As they are able, Lutheran Schools (sometimes in cooperation with public schools) are expected to make provision for students with special learning needs. They will provide scholarships for low-income students and involve families in their children's education. Lutheran schools and centers will offer service education and prepare students to be responsible citizens and productive members of society. They will work in partnership with other schools in their community.

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In order to provide a more supportive climate for enacting this vision, the ELCA calls for renewed efforts to assist schools and centers in areas that include:

- expecting churchwide and synodical leadership and ELCA publications to promote Lutheran centers and schools;
- encouraging members to consider sending their children to Lutheran centers and schools;
- preparing pastors, associates in ministry, deaconesses, and diaconal ministers for service in congregations with centers and schools;
- encouraging our seminaries, colleges, and universities to prepare teachers, principals, pastors, and other staff for Lutheran centers and schools both in their degree programs and through in-service training;
- encouraging alliances for financial support for struggling centers and schools, such as pairing congregations in affluent areas with congregations in low-income areas;
- providing seed money to ensure that Lutheran centers and schools have a good foundation in areas of defining purpose, education, faith formation, governance, administration, and finance;
- strengthening the network among Lutheran schools to meet common opportunities and needs; and
- disseminating information on and ensuring equity in public funding for all children as laws require and the United States Constitution permits.

Lutheran Colleges and Universities

A Tradition of Academic Excellence and Service

"A Christian cobbler makes good shoes, not poor shoes with little crosses on them," Luther was reported to have said.³⁵ Likewise, Lutherans, out of commitment to the common good, have insisted that their colleges and universities have a first duty to be excellent schools. This has been and continues to be the case. Following the example of Luther's and Philip Melancthon's leadership at the time of the Reformation, Lutheran colleges and universities have conceived of education in holistic terms and shaped their academic programs in the liberal arts tradition. Today they appear regularly in lists of the best regional and national colleges.

ELCA colleges and universities perform valuable service to Church and society. At their best, they offer an excellent curriculum that aims at educating the whole person. Their emphasis on broad and integrated learning and critical thinking equips students for a whole life. Within this liberal arts context they prepare

students for professions in education, health care, science, technology, social work, the arts, business, law, and other specific callings, and they provide many future pastors and other future leaders in this church with a well-rounded education.

Furthermore, ELCA colleges and universities find excellent ways to introduce their students to the essential questions of meaning and purpose. Many prominently feature the Lutheran teaching on vocation—that the purpose of life is to serve God and the neighbor in one’s callings in everyday life. More specifically, many ELCA colleges and universities also educate students in the faith by offering—and often requiring—courses in Bible, theology, church history, and ethics. They help students engage the intellectual claims of the faith with the claims of other disciplines.³⁶ They sustain strong programs of service to the neighbor in both local and global settings. They offer opportunities for worship, Bible study, mentoring, and participation in strong music programs that praise God. When they take their heritage seriously, they impart a vision of the world in which Christian faith plays the central integrating role. Graduates testify and a comprehensive national survey confirms that Lutheran colleges and universities have a positive and lasting impact on students in matters related to academic quality, faith, ethics, civic engagement, and church affiliation and leadership.³⁷

The Changing Context

In the history of higher education in the United States, many church-founded institutions of higher learning have disengaged from their sponsoring churches—some totally, some partially. Nearly all church-related colleges have experienced some measure of disengagement from both the institutional church and from the religious heritage that once influenced nearly every facet of the college’s life. ELCA colleges and universities represent a broad range on the spectrum of engagement. Most have maintained a significant connection with their Lutheran heritage, and many are giving renewed attention to their Christian identity in a world of many faiths and cultures.

ELCA colleges and universities persist in their mission as church-related colleges in the midst of a sharply changing environment that brings both opportunity and challenge. The major opportunity is that they will continue to be excellent schools that bring the Lutheran voice to bear in an increasingly global, ecumenical, diverse, and competitive educational scene. This church’s colleges and universities can continue to embody in a vastly new environment a persuasive vision of Christian higher education that is embedded in the Lutheran tradition. Especially encouraging are the vigorous global outreach programs on many campuses, the affirmation of Lutheran distinctiveness in a changing and sometimes hostile culture, and the growing cultural and ethnic

diversity in many settings. Among the challenges are that our colleges and universities might lose their connection with the Christian heritage completely, that they may lose their academic vitality due to inadequate resources, that their costs might exceed the financial resources of most Lutherans, or that they may not achieve the diversity they seek.

Life in Relationship

A strong and vibrant relationship between this church and its institutions of higher learning assumes mutual commitments. In shaping the future of that relationship, this church may ask whether or not its colleges and universities are authentically and recognizably Christian in the Lutheran tradition, urging them to manifest that identity. Conversely, colleges and universities that are faithful to their Christian character may ask whether or not this church vigorously supports them: Will congregations encourage students to consider an ELCA college or university? Will pastors and bishops promote them? Will ELCA high school graduates attend our colleges and universities? In these matters the ELCA will need to manifest its commitment to its colleges and universities.

Due to shrinking resources and competing priorities, there has been a forty-year decline in churchwide and synodical financial support for colleges and universities. The ELCA is grateful that Lutheran colleges and universities have developed alternative sources of financial support, and many individual Lutherans are generous and faithful benefactors. It has provided advocacy and support, maintained a strong network among college leaders, provided leadership development opportunities for faculty and staff, nurtured the conversation between faith and learning, and provided valuable research to assist the colleges and universities in their mission. Fortress Press, the academic arm of this church’s publishing ministry, continues to publish texts in biblical studies, theology, ethics, and pastoral care that are used widely in ELCA colleges and universities as well as in this church’s seminaries.

In the future as in the past, the survival and flourishing of ELCA colleges and universities will depend on a delicate ecology of school, church, and family. Where the colleges and universities live out their calling as significant ventures in Lutheran education, churches and families demonstrate interest and confidence in those institutions. Without the churches and families that give important support to Lutheran ventures in education, the colleges and universities may re-define themselves and their missions for people who will support them. The ecology that once made Lutheran colleges, churches, and families a viable interdependent organism must be shaped in ways that respond to these new realities and opportunities.

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The ELCA, therefore, urges its colleges and universities and this church in all its expressions to maintain their connections where they are strong, strengthen them where they are weak, and rebuild them where they are lacking. It calls for mutually beneficial relationships built on trust, commitment, and collaboration.

Expectations of ELCA Colleges and Universities

In such a relationship the ELCA expects that its colleges and universities will:

- reaffirm their commitment to maintain a living connection with the Christian faith;
- offer excellent, broad education in service to Church and society in a setting of academic freedom;
- educate in the faith with courses in Bible, Lutheran theology, church history, and ethics;
- serve as incubators for the discovery of knowledge, preserve it in scholarly collections, and communicate it through scholarly publications;
- nurture an ongoing dialogue between the claims of the Christian faith and the claims of the many academic disciplines as well as explore issues at the crossroads of life;
- feature prominently the Lutheran teaching on vocation;
- embody important elements—worship, music and the arts, service, personal moral standards, international education— as part of the ongoing Lutheran ethos;
- maintain programs that serve as a liaison between the college or university and the various expressions of this church;
- make adequate provision to meet the needs of students with disabilities; and
- continue to attempt to make it financially possible for qualified students—especially Lutheran students—who desire to attend a Lutheran college or university to do so.

Expectations of this Church

To make the relationship a mutual one, this church also expects that:

- the presiding bishop and synodical bishops will voice persistently and persuasively their commitment to our colleges and universities;
- the churchwide organization will demonstrate persistently and persuasively its commitment to this church's colleges and universities;
- the churchwide organization will continue its consultative and informative roles with ELCA

colleges and universities and foster contact and collaboration among them;

- synods will support colleges and universities on their territory in intentional and visible ways;
- colleges and universities, seminaries, synods, schools, and other ELCA institutions and ministries will initiate and welcome partnerships with one another;
- congregations will support colleges in helping them recruit students and in aiding students financially who attend ELCA colleges and universities;
- ELCA youth and their parents will give careful consideration to Lutheran colleges and universities; and
- advocacy ministries will call on lawmakers to find means of public support for students to attend private and religious colleges and universities and urge lawmakers in those states that make grants to students going to private colleges to maintain them at the highest level possible.

This church individually and corporately should give its schools, colleges, and universities its full loyalty and support so that they faithfully and competently exercise their calling in education.

Supporting Lifelong Learning

Education is a lifelong process and takes a variety of forms, involving non-formal learning experiences as well as each person's own more formal discipline and study. This ongoing learning may occur in museums, art galleries, planetariums, aquariums, theaters, concert halls, zoos, botanical gardens, nature preserves, book clubs, travel programs, and lecture series. We of the ELCA value and support these non-formal institutions and activities. We also affirm the more formal role of public universities, colleges, and other educational institutions in providing a broad range of extension and continuing education programs that serve an increasingly diverse adult population. We welcome the opportunities for learning provided by new forms of electronic communication.

Just as many congregations offer quality educational experiences for people of all ages to continue to grow in their faith, our Lutheran colleges and universities, seminaries, lifelong learning partners, and outdoor ministries also offer opportunities for lifelong learning in knowledge of the faith as well as in knowledge of the world. The ELCA commends Lutheran colleges and universities for expanding their academic programs to serve the needs of non-traditional students for both graduate and undergraduate studies. We also commend our seminaries and other study centers of this church for

responding to the learning needs of both lay and rostered leaders in congregations as well as to the desire of adults of all ages for personal growth in faith and knowledge through lifelong learning.

We urge the churchwide organization to continue to provide leadership and support to the institutions and agencies of the church that provide these essential educational services and to encourage them to deepen their interdependent partnership in a network that educates for vocation. In order that lifelong learning be encouraged and well-resourced, the full range of teaching institutions and programs in this church should continue their progress toward fulfillment of the vision of the ELCA's Study of Theological Education, deepening their emerging partnerships with the three seminary clusters to form an interdependent network of education providers throughout this church. Only such a network for lifelong learning is adequate both to our calling in education and the callings of all learners.

5. Will Public Higher Education Serve the Common Good?

Expectations for Public Universities and Colleges

Higher education in the United States embraces a broad range of religious, private, and public colleges and universities. These academic institutions vary in their philosophy of education, history, culture, quality, specialties, cost, size, and status. This variety gives vitality to higher education, making it one of our country's strongest assets.

Public institutions are the most numerous institutions of higher education and serve the most students. Public four-year colleges and universities, public community colleges, and technical colleges provide the primary access point to higher education for millions of people of all economic classes and every racial and ethnic group, including thousands of international students. As public institutions, we as citizens share responsibility for them. Their future is vital to the common good, which we are to serve and promote as part of our vocation.

Institutions providing technical education make important contributions to the common good by preparing skilled professionals for careers in a wide range of trades and professions. Individuals prepared for these occupations are enabled to make their way in society and to serve their neighbors in practical ways.

We of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America look to all colleges and universities to transmit knowledge through teaching, advance knowledge through research, preserve knowledge in scholarly collections, and communicate knowledge through publications.³⁸ They thereby contribute to the common good by connecting their knowledge to the world in which we live. Public universities and colleges do these things across a wide spectrum of disciplines. They teach undergraduate students the humanities, arts,

languages, and sciences; and their post-graduate programs educate professors and other professions such as doctors, lawyers, and scientists. Public universities along with many private universities are centers of basic scientific research and technological development. Their libraries and Internet resources make vast learning available, and publications by their professors profoundly influence our culture. They also sponsor continuing education for adults who have concluded formal degree programs but wish to continue learning throughout their lives.

The Commitment to Public Higher Education

Lutherans have long had a commitment to public higher education. The ELCA is grateful for the role public universities and colleges play in preparing people—including most Lutherans who attend college—to act competently in their callings and responsibilities. Because knowledge of how the world functions and learning how to learn continue to benefit both individuals and society, we encourage vigorous public support for the many institutions of higher learning. As society's expectation increases about how many years of schooling people should have, the importance of public universities and colleges also increases.

The ELCA honors and supports the broad network of community and technical colleges and their students, faculties, and staffs. These institutions of higher education provide strategic opportunities for many students who wish to continue their education and obtain training in sought-for practical skills. In addition to preparing students for their careers, these educational institutions often invigorate the economies of their communities.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America expects all universities and colleges to be places of free inquiry that exhibit intellectual honesty, the disciplined search for knowledge and truth, and civility. We support the academic freedom of public higher education and oppose its restriction for ideological or political reasons. We expect that the diversity of perspectives among professors will enable public universities and colleges to be settings for genuine dialog on the major ideas and values that shape and often create controversy in our society.

Universities and colleges are charged to engage in ongoing discussion about what counts as knowledge in contrast to ignorance and misunderstanding. The boundaries and shape of this discussion change as new discoveries are made. This has led to new areas of inquiry such as the history of religion. It also has led to the study of peoples and cultures that may have been ignored or excluded, in the past. This church challenges and encourages public universities and colleges to take up the full range of religious traditions and their intellectual content as legitimate participants in their search for knowledge and truth.

Our Calling in Education—

The extraordinary growth of higher education since World War II is closely tied to the increased emphasis it gives to occupational education.³⁹ College and university education has become the principal—almost exclusive—way for people to gain access to higher earnings and occupational or professional status. Most students today look to their college education chiefly as a means for them to become well-off financially.⁴⁰ The danger is that occupational purposes will overwhelm moral, civic, and intellectual goals.

Concern for the purpose of life, justice and neighbor, and the common good are central to nearly all religions and intrinsic to our civic values. We, therefore, commend and encourage renewal of disciplines in which these matters are examined, such as the humanities, the arts, and the social sciences. We commend efforts in higher education to engage students in service learning, and we applaud student-led groups that struggle with questions of life's purpose and society's good. On campuses where many students ask such questions,⁴¹ Lutheran campus ministry takes on special significance.

This Church's Presence and Campus Ministry

The ELCA is present in public universities and colleges, as well as private ones, through students, professors, administrators, and staff living out their calling in these institutions. More Lutherans teach at public and non-Lutheran private universities and colleges than do at Lutheran institutions. Many of them not only perform their callings with excellence but also provide models of Christian teaching and the engagement of faith and learning. All have opportunities to witness to their faith. We celebrate those who carry on these tasks and encourage this church to support them.

Lutheran Campus Ministry

This church also is present in these institutions of learning through campus ministries. Lutherans launched their first foray into intentional ministry on public campuses in 1907 at the University of Wisconsin—Madison Campus. A century later there are nearly 200 recognized ELCA campus ministries that receive churchwide and/or synodical annual operating grants. In addition, more than 400 Cooperating Congregations in Campus Ministry carry on some form of outreach to a nearby campus.⁴² In some places, this ministry is ecumenical and carried on in partnership with other denominations.

Today campus ministries face the challenge of both nurturing Lutheran students and reaching out to seekers. Campus ministries sometimes face the tension of addressing controversial issues on campus while being communities that welcome individuals with

different viewpoints. While some students may consider a certain attitude as prophetic, others who disagree may feel unwelcome, perceiving that promoting the issue has come to define the ministry more than the gospel that unites them. Limited resources may often mean campus ministries are unable to meet the diverse expectations and opportunities presented to them.

Campus ministry in this church “invites people in academic settings more deeply into Jesus Christ and the community that bears his name, so that they discover and fulfill their vocation as disciples.”⁴³ This ministry gives young adults on campus opportunity to participate in the life of the Church and deepen their faith during an important time of their lives when they are experiencing change, growth, and challenge.

Expectations of Campus Ministry

Lutheran campus ministry is an integral part of our calling in education. Many former students testify to ways in which campus ministry helped them grow in their understanding of their faith and vocation as they gained new knowledge. As it has done for decades, this ministry continues to provide leaders for Church and society. The ELCA expects its campus ministries to:

- be worshiping communities that proclaim the gospel and celebrate the sacraments;
- educate in the faith, teaching the Bible and Christian doctrine, exploring Christian perspectives on ultimate questions, and creating settings for students, staff, and professors to ask questions and to discuss their concerns;
- call students to live out their baptismal vocation, challenging them to regard their learning itself as a worthy calling and providing them with theological wisdom to accompany their growing learning and technical competence;
- engage faith and learning, showing how faith and its knowledge deepen and enliven learning in the classroom, library, and laboratory and how that learning deepens and enlivens faith and its knowledge;
- model thoughtful and respectful dialogue on controversial issues;
- provide opportunities for service in Church and society; and
- offer opportunities for friendships, fun, and community life.

Expectations of This Church

Lack of financial support threatens campus ministries in many places. Most depend almost entirely on funds from outside sources, primarily from synods and the churchwide organization, which have been in a forty-

year decline. Let us be fully aware of the growing crisis in this church's ministry to a large, influential segment of young adults living and studying at public (and private) universities and colleges. In reaffirming its ministry on these campuses, the ELCA calls for creative action to support campus ministry that takes into account opportunities, challenges, and resource constraints. This action includes:

- calling upon the presiding bishop, synodical bishops, pastors, and other leaders to support this church's campus ministry;
- urging congregations to alert their students on non-Lutheran campuses about Lutheran campus ministry;
- encouraging congregations near colleges and universities to reach out to professors, students, and staff of these institutions; and
- thinking in new ways about how we establish and maintain campus ministries which may involve new models of ministry, of partnership, and of staffing and support.

Will Students Have Access to Higher Education?

Higher education in the United States has long been seen as the portal of opportunity to upward mobility and the realization of the American dream. Following World War II, the GI Bill provided educational opportunity for millions of veterans and fueled a vigorous postwar economy and a growing middle class. Higher education, then and now, enables individuals to transcend the boundaries of class and race and contributes to the economic and civic well being of the nation.

The high cost borne by students and their families, however, is limiting access to higher education, depriving many individuals of opportunity and depriving society of highly educated citizens. The cost of higher education has grown substantially in recent years, significantly outpacing inflation in the rest of the economy. This cost is funded from four sources:

- tuition paid by students and their families;
- charitable contributions of individuals, corporations, and foundations;
- financial assistance in the form of grants, loans, and work; and
- in the case of public education, direct appropriations from state or local government.

In recent years financial assistance and direct appropriations have declined in relationship to the growth in the cost of education, and charitable contributions have not made up the difference. As a result, the burden upon students and their families has grown. This high and growing cost to students prevents many, including people who live in poverty, from pursuing a college degree.⁴⁴

In spite of the general acknowledgment that educated citizens are key to this country's economic vitality and that more needs to be done to provide

equitable access for all, public investment in higher education has been declining for some time relative to its rising cost. Funding for federal and state grants to students lags behind increases in educational costs, and state subsidies to public colleges and universities fail to keep pace with increased costs.⁴⁵ In addition, college- and university-funded aid has increased for middle and upper-income students at the expense of students from low-income families.⁴⁶

The consequences of this trend limit equitable access and jeopardize academic quality. Specifically:

- Students are carrying increasingly larger debt loads and requiring more time to complete their education.⁴⁷
- While college completion rates have improved among all income groups over the past thirty years, the gaps in completion rates between students who are affluent and those who are poor have increased.⁴⁸

Although the growth of community colleges is a promising development, lack of funding weakens our country's leadership in higher education and compromises our capacity to meet the educational requirements of an increasingly knowledge-based world. Colleges and universities are being stretched thin in their capacity to provide high quality education, and, most importantly, equity in educational opportunity.

ELCA colleges and universities have responded to this situation with a variety of scholarship and grant programs of their own, several with considerable success as seen in the relatively strong enrollment of people of color and from low- and middle-income families. For most colleges and universities, however, it is impossible to close the opportunity gap created by inadequate state and federal funding for students' financial aid. As a consequence, many low- and middle-income families find it difficult if possible to access this church's colleges, and the colleges struggle to extend financial aid while maintaining academic quality and financial viability.

In light of this situation, the ELCA calls upon its advocacy ministry to support adequate funding for higher education to increase equitable access, and urges members as citizens to consider how public policy can improve equitable access to higher education. The ELCA urges the following public policy remedies:

- increase state and federal funds for need-based financial assistance;
- support targeted incentive programs for low-income and under-represented groups;
- increase state subsidies to public institutions as a way of ameliorating tuition increases; and
- increase efficiency wherever feasible.

We also:

Our Calling in Education—

- urge ELCA colleges and universities to continue to seek ways to help redress the growing opportunity gap;
- encourage members to help fund scholarships for low-income students and congregations to provide scholarship assistance to their students who attend ELCA colleges;
- affirm this church's practice of providing financial assistance to ELCA colleges and universities as a sign of continuing commitment to them; and
- call upon the churchwide organization to work with synods to expand scholarships for United States and international students who need assistance.

Living Our Calling

We of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America give thanks to God whose gracious gift of new life in baptism frees us for the vocation to love our neighbor and contribute to the common good in our places of responsibility in daily life. We are grateful that God, who has created humans with ability to learn, teach, and know, blesses human life through education. We pray that the Holy Spirit will sustain, renew, and transform us as we live our calling in education in this church and society with its many amazing opportunities and daunting challenges. May we in this calling exhibit the character of our new life in Christ, to which St. Paul summons us: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Romans 12:2). May we faithfully and boldly be a teaching and learning church, educating in the faith for vocation and striving with others so that all people have equitable access to a high quality education.

Endnotes

¹ "To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany That They Establish and Maintain Christian Schools," 1524, ed. Walther I. Brandt, *Luther's Works*, 45 (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1962), 339-378. See also, "A Sermon on Keeping Children in School," 1530, ed. Robert C. Schultz, *Luther's Works*, 46 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), 207-258.

² *The Book of Concord. The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, eds. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 345-375.

³ The quotations in the text are from the Apostles' Creed, *Book of Concord*, 21-22. The social statement follows the Apostles' Creed and Luther's explanations of this creed in his catechisms in connecting one of the persons of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—with a particular work of God: creation, redemption, and sanctification. The Christian tradition also teaches that the whole

Trinity and all three persons of the Trinity in communion with one another are agents of creation, redemption, and sanctification.

⁴ See "The Augsburg Confession," Article XVI, for how the Lutheran confessions affirm civil affairs and distinguish the justice and goodness of civil affairs from "the eternal righteousness of the heart" transmitted by the gospel. *The Book of Concord*, 49. In the *Apology to the Augsburg Confession*, Philip Melancthon speaks often of civil righteousness in distinction from the righteousness before God given in the gospel. "Civil righteousness that reason understands" deals with "the commandments of the second table" of the Ten Commandments. *Ibid.*, 125.

⁵ "The Large Catechism," *The Book of Concord*, 386.

⁶ *Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective*, the first ELCA social statement, called on this church to be "a community of moral deliberation," 5-6, 7-8. That social statement was adopted by the 1991 Churchwide Assembly. The seven subsequent social statements adopted by the ELCA as well as the 11 messages adopted by the ELCA Church Council provide resources and guidance on various societal topics that are often the subject of education in this church. This social statement assumes what these social statements and messages say on topics related to education, such as economic justice, care for creation, racism, and health care. ELCA social statements and messages are online (www.elca.org/socialstatements).

⁷ For a more complete development of the following six themes on which the text depends, see Marcia J. Bunge, "Rediscovering the Dignity and Complexity of Children: Resources from the Christian Tradition," *Journal of Lutheran Ethics* 4, 1 (January 2004). Online at www.elca.org/jle/article.asp?k=165. These major themes were published in Bunge's articles, "The Child, Religion, and the Academy: Developing Robust Theological and Religious Understandings of Children and Childhood," *Journal of Religion* 84, 4 (October 2006), and "A More Vibrant Theology of Childhood," *Christian Reflection* 8 (2003), 11-19.

⁸ See Merton P. Strommen and Richard Hardel, *Passing on the Faith: A Radical New Model for Youth and Family Ministry* (Winona, Minn.: St Mary's Press, 2000), 14. According to one survey of youth and adults cited in the book, for example, "only 9 percent reported holding family devotions with any degree of regularity."

⁹ In studying the religious lives of teenagers, Christian Smith concludes that at the level of consciousness, "adolescent religious and spiritual understanding and concern seem to be generally very weak. Most U.S. teens have a difficult to impossible time explaining what they believe, what it means, and what the implications of their beliefs are for their lives" (262). Most Protestant teens in effect discard the belief of salvation by grace and faith alone to voice the idea that they are saved by living a morally good life (136). Smith suggests that the dominant religion among contemporary teens is what he calls "Moralistic Therapeutic Deism" (162ff). Christian Smith with Melinda Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (New York: Oxford Press, 2005).

¹⁰ In the liturgy for Holy Baptism, parents and sponsors pledge that they will "faithfully bring [their children] to the services of God's house, and teach them the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments. As they grow in years, you should place in their hands the Holy Scriptures and provide for their instruction in the Christian faith, that, living in the covenant of their Baptism and in communion with the Church, they may lead godly lives until the day of Jesus Christ." *Lutheran Book of Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1978), 121.

¹¹ For information about ELCA Outdoor Ministry see www.elca.org/camps.

¹² Visit the Christian Education page on the Web site of the Evangelical Outreach and Congregational Mission unit for resources and support for congregational teachers (www.elca.org/christianeducation). See also the book written by Christian education professors in our seminaries: *The Ministry of Children's Education: Foundations, Contexts, and Practices*, with an Introduction by Margaret A. Krych (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004).

¹³ For more information on these resources and opportunities, visit the ELCA Web page (www.elca.org) and the Web page of the ELCA Publishing House (www.augsburgfortress.org). For information on lifelong learning and links to ELCA colleges and seminaries, go to www.elca.org/vocationeducation.

¹⁴ "To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany That They Establish and Maintain Christian Schools," *Luther's Works*, 45, 356.

¹⁵ Among other possibilities, the character education movement offers various models for consideration (see www.character.org).

¹⁶ We reaffirm the position of the social statements of the Lutheran Church in America and The American Lutheran Church that supported the U.S. Supreme Court's decisions in 1962 and 1963 declaring it unconstitutional for states to require religious exercises in public schools and permitting public schools to teach about religion. See *Prayer and Bible Reading in the Public Schools*, social statement of the Lutheran Church in America (1964), and *Church-State Relations in the USA*, social statement of The American Lutheran Church (1966). They are online at the Web site of *Journal of Lutheran Ethics* (www.elca.org/jle).

¹⁷ The Web site of The First Amendment Center (www.fac.org/re_liberty/publicschools/Index.aspx) provides helpful resources on religious liberty in public schools. It includes the important consensus document developed by individuals representing very different views, "Public Schools and Religious Communities."

¹⁸ For those who argue that public schools are doing well compared to other countries, see Gerald W. Bracey, *The War Against America's Public Schools: Privatizing Schools, Commercializing Education* (Needham Heights, Mass.: Allyn and Bacon, 2002) and Bruce J. Biddle and Lawrence J. Saha, *The Untested Accusation: Principals, Research Knowledge, and Policy Making in Schools* (Westport, Conn.: Ablex Publishing, 2002). Those who do not think that public schools are meeting today's challenges argue: "Having reviewed trends in the United States and abroad, the committee is deeply concerned that the scientific and technical building blocks of our economic leadership are eroding at a time when many other nations are gathering strength." *Rising Above the Gathering Storm: Energizing and Employing America for a Brighter Economic Future*, Committee on Prospering in the Global Economy, created by the National Academy of Sciences, National Academy of Engineering, and Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, "Executive Summary" (2005), 4 (www.nap.edu/execsumm_pdf/11463.pdf). Among the "worrisome indicators" the committee noted are: "US 12th graders recently performed below the international average for 21 countries on a test of general knowledge in mathematics and science." And "In 1999, only 41% of US 8th grade students received instruction from a mathematics teacher who specialized in mathematics, considerably lower than the international average of 71%."

¹⁹ "One-sixth of the country's black students now attend virtually all non-white schools, many of which are impoverished, and only one-seventh of the whites attend multiracial schools, defined as those with 10 percent or more minority enrollment." David K. Shipler, *The Working Poor: Invisible in America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004), 294.

²⁰ For example, according to the National Center for Educational Statistics' publication "Dropout Rates in the United States: 2001": "In 2001, students living in low-income families were six times more likely than their peers in high-income families to drop out of high

school over the one-year period of October 2000 to 2001 (table 1). (Low income is defined as the lowest 20 percent of all family incomes, while high income refers to the top 20 percent of income distribution.)" While the national dropout rate from high school is 10.7 percent, more than 25 percent of young people in virtually every large city leave high school without graduating (www.nces.ed.gov/pubs2005/dropout2001).

²¹ A new study, *Funding Gaps 2006*, documents how school financial policy at the federal, state, and district levels systematically stacks the decks against schools that serve low-income students and students of color. The study was prepared by The Education Trust (www2.edtrust.org).

²² See the 1999 ELCA social statement *Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All* for a comprehensive perspective for combating poverty. For the ELCA's stance against racism, see the 1993 social statement, *Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture*.

²³ See Eric A. Hanushek, "The Alchemy of 'Costing Out' an Adequate Education." Unpublished paper, 2005, Program on Education Policy and Governance, Harvard University. This paper can be found at http://edpro.stanford.edu/hanushek/admin/pages/files/uploads/a_chemy_revision.pdf

²⁴ "In 2005 funding systems had been challenged in 36 states on the basis that inter-district funding was inequitable. Increasingly, cases are focusing on the inadequacy of funding in achieving learning goals." *Education Next*, 21 (Winter, 2007). (Online at www.educationnext.org).

²⁵ Examples of different perspectives and research on these options may be found online (www.educationnext.org, www.ksg.harvard.edu/pepg, www.aft.org/pubs-reports, www.nea.org).

²⁶ Churchwide Assembly action CA01.06.26 (adopted in 2001), online at www.elca.org/socialpolicyresolutions/resolution.asp?id=83&ref=hts.

²⁷ In its Churchwide Assembly in 2001, the ELCA adopted a social policy resolution on school vouchers. This resolution neither favors nor opposes all voucher proposals, but sets out a number of goals by which to evaluate specific legislative proposals. These goals, set forth as questions, ask to what degree proposals:

- provide public schools the support and resources necessary to fulfill their tasks?
- increase equal access to high quality education for all, especially for children and youth who live in poverty or are otherwise disadvantaged?
- enhance the ability of families—especially families living in poverty and other situations of hardship—to select the right high quality education for their children?
- allow participating schools, including religious ones, to maintain their distinctive character and mission?
- protect against all forms of invidious discrimination against students?
- ensure just, equitable, and long-term viable sources of funding?
- provide eligible families sufficient and accurate information of students in participating schools?
- ensure ways for measuring the educational achievements of students in participating schools?
- establish means to evaluate the positive and negative results of the program and in light of these results to consider if the program should be continued, modified, or ended?

The complete text of the resolution is online (www.elca.org/socialpolicyresolutions/resolution.asp?id=83&ref=hts).

²⁸ *Conversations with Luther*, translated and edited by Preserved Smith and H.P. Gallinger (Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1915), 96. Quoted from *A Compend of Luther's Theology*, edited by Hugh T. Kerr (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1966), 192-193.

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²⁹ These statistics were provided by Donna Braband, director for schools and early childhood centers, Vocation and Education unit. They are for the 2005-2006 school year. For more information on ELCA centers and schools see the Web page of the ELCA Schools and Early Childhood Ministries of the Vocation and Education unit (www.elca.org/schools).

³⁰ Information on ELCA colleges and universities is found on the Web page of ELCA Colleges and Universities of the Vocation and Education unit (www.elca.org/colleges). At the beginning of the 2006-2007 school year, there were 50,088 full-time undergraduate students, 2,271 full-time graduate students, 3,892 part-time undergraduate students, 1,670 part-time graduate students, for a total head count of 57,921 and a full-time equivalent of 55,224 in ELCA colleges and universities. These figures were provided by Arne Selbyg, director for colleges and universities in the Vocation and Education unit.

³¹ ELCA seminaries are an integral part of this church's network of educational institutions, and references are made to them in relation to our schools and colleges and universities. The 1995 Churchwide Assembly adopted a report on them and theological education. See "Faithful Leaders for a Changing World: Theological Education for Mission in the ELCA. Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Study of Theological Education. Report to the 1995 Churchwide Assembly." Available from the ELCA's Vocation and Education unit.

³² "Lifelong learning partners" refers to education programs for lifelong learning in theology that have joined in a collaborative association with the Vocation and Education unit to form the ELCA Lifelong Theological Education Partnership. This partnership is an association for planning, programming, and advocacy for lifelong theological education for ministry, including ministry in daily life. As of January 2007 34 programs are members of the partnership. Lifelong learning partners include programs sponsored by a variety of accredited and non-accredited institutions, including colleges, conference centers, seminaries, synods, congregations, and other institutes and organizations.

³³ Web page of the ELCA Schools and Early Childhood Ministries (www.elca.org/schools). The Web page reports that during the last year 100 congregations had expressed interest in beginning a school or center.

³⁴ For data on the diverse ethnic and racial composition of ELCA schools and centers, see "Summary: ELCA Schools and ECE Centers Survey 2004-2005" (www.elca.org/education/survey).

³⁵ This statement is widely attributed to Luther although scholars seem unable to locate where he said it. For one effort to track down its source in Luther, see William A. Decker, "In Search of Quotes," *Lutheran Partners* 20, 2 (March/April 2004), online at www.elca.org/lp.

³⁶ Robert Benne, Marcia Bunge, Tom Christenson, Paul Dovre, Mark Edwards, Darrell Jodock, DeAne Lagerquist, Mark Schwehn, and Ernest Simmons are among ELCA scholars who have been particularly active in thinking through Lutheran approaches to the engagement of faith and learning.

³⁷ A recent survey compared a large sample of Lutheran graduates from Lutheran colleges and universities and from public flagship universities on a number of key issues. Compared to Lutheran alumni of flagship public universities, for example, Lutheran alumni of Lutheran colleges and universities:

- said their colleges placed more emphasis on personal values and ethics (90% to 41%);
- discovered more opportunities to develop spiritually (87% to 20%);
- experienced more help in integrating faith into other aspects of life (72% to 11%);
- were more likely to have been engaged in church or religious activities (74% to 31%);

- felt there was a greater sense of community among students (88% to 57%);
- found more faculty who were interested in students personally and academically (85% to 41%);
- reported that their colleges were more effective in developing moral principles for careers and leadership (90% to 36%); and
- were more likely to be "completely satisfied" with the quality of education they received (59% to 35%).

The survey was done under the auspices of the Lutheran Education Conference of North America in 2005 (www.lutherancolleges.org). The alumni who were surveyed had graduated between 1991-1999.

³⁸ Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Idea of the University: A Reexamination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 16-17.

³⁹ "In 1900 only 2.3 percent of those aged eighteen to twenty-four went to college; in 2000, 36 percent of this group attended college. In 1940, only 4.5 percent of the entire population had completed four years of college; by the end of the century it was 25.2 percent" (56). About two-thirds of graduating students in 2000 received their college degrees in occupational or professional fields (57). The authors argue for the following point: "As higher education became a mass institution by exalting its public purposes—its benefits to the nation's economy, the protection of national defense, the creation of new knowledge, and the promise of equal educational opportunity—its private benefits in helping individuals gain access to professional status and earnings became its dominant rationale" (56). They claim that "the ethos of a moral and civic purpose to higher education has never disappeared, but it has become a minority view in the world of scholarly research and in the vocational preparation of students" (61). W. Norton Grubb and Marvin Lazerson, *The Education Gospel: The Economic Power of Schooling* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2004).

⁴⁰ "While the post-World War II expansion drew on a rhetoric of public purposes, students attended college because of the possibilities for individual gain. One measure of advancing vocationalism was the attitude of students, reflected in an annual survey of freshmen. In the late 1960s, developing a meaningful philosophy of life was the most important goal of freshmen, rated "essential" or "very important" by 80 percent of respondents, while fewer than 45 percent thought it important to be well-off financially. At the end of the century these two values had traded places: developing a meaningful philosophy was most important for only 42 percent of freshmen, while 74 percent cited being well-off financially." *Ibid.*, 65.

⁴¹ See "The Spiritual Life of College Students: A National Study of College Students' Search for Meaning and Purpose," Higher Education Research Institute (Graduate School of Education & Information Studies, University of California, Los Angeles, 2005). This extensive survey of first-year students at colleges and universities across the country found high levels of interest in spiritual and religious questions. For example, more than three-fourths of students say that they are "searching for meaning/purpose in life." Pages 4-5. While this report seems to differ from the one referred to in the previous endnote, it may indicate the complexity of contemporary students, or perhaps differences in methodologies between the two studies.

⁴² For more information visit the Web site of ELCA Lutheran Campus Ministry in the Vocation and Education unit (www.elca.org/campusministry).

⁴³ "Policies and Procedures for Campus Ministries," approved by the ELCA Church Council (November 15, 2003), 4 (www.elca.org/campusministry/policies).

⁴⁴ "Pervasively dismal grades in affordability show that for most American families college is less affordable now than it was a decade ago. The rising cost of attending college has outpaced the growth of family income. Although financial aid has increased, it has not kept

pace with the cost of attendance. Every state should reexamine college tuition and financial aid policies, and each should formally link future tuition increases to gains in family income. In the meantime, the conclusion from *Measuring Up 2004* is clear: The vast majority of states have failed to keep college affordable for most families” (8). “The nation’s gap in college participation between affluent and poor students has widened. The college-going gap between white, African-American, and Latinos persists” (10). *Measuring Up 2004*, The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education (2004), 8 (http://measuringup.highereducation.org/_docs/2004/NationalReport_2004.pdf).

The report evaluates and grades the 50 states in their higher education performance in four categories: preparation, participation, affordability, and completion.

⁴⁵ The federal Higher Education Act of 1965 carried the hope and promise of ensuring access to higher education for low- and middle-income students. It created the Pell grants, which enabled millions of students to receive a higher education who would not otherwise have received one. In addition, several states initiated grant and scholarship programs with similar objectives. Funding for these federal and state grants, however, has fallen behind educational costs. “For example, in 1975 the average Pell grant covered 84% of the cost of college and in 2006 it covers only 36% of the cost.” Kati Haycock, “Promise Abandoned” (www2.edtrust.org).

⁴⁶ Kati Haycock, “Promise Abandoned” (www2.edtrust.org).

⁴⁷ National Conference on State Legislatures, *Transforming Higher Education: National Imperative—State Responsibility*, 2006 (www.ncsl.org) documents both the heavier debt load and the more time required to complete students’ education.

⁴⁸ “For example, in 1975 40% of students in the top income quartile completed college by age 24 compared to 6% of the lower quartile students. By 2003 the completion rates were 75% and 9% for the two groups” (Haycock).

Implementing Resolutions

Faith Formation and Lifelong Learning

1. To embrace our legacy as a teaching and learning church with gratitude and new vigor and to pray for God’s guidance and power to renew and live boldly our calling in education for a new century;
2. To call upon congregations and families to educate all generations in the faith and to be partners in creating and funding compelling and creative curricula and programs for all ages (children, youth, and adults), thus forming an environment of living faith;
3. To call upon members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to renew their calling in education as students, parents, educators, and citizens and to live out their baptismal vocation as lifelong learners in the faith and in their knowledge of the world;
4. To call upon the Evangelical Outreach and Congregational Mission and the Vocation and Education program units to collaborate with Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, to continue to expand the provision of creative and comprehensive resources necessary to enable parents and congregations to help form the faith of all generations;
5. To call upon the presiding bishop, synodical bishops, and the Evangelical Outreach and Congregational Mission and the Vocation and Education program units to work with Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, and other churchwide units persistently and persuasively to ensure that Christian

education for all ages and abilities (adult, children, youth, and family ministry) is a priority in congregational life, seminary education, and synodical planning;

6. To call upon the Evangelical Outreach and Congregational Mission, Vocation and Education, and Augsburg Fortress program units to work with synods, regions, congregations, rostered leaders, the Lutheran Association of Christian Educators, Lutheran outdoor ministries, seminaries, lifelong learning centers, and other groups and organizations to share best practices for Christian education and faith formation and to encourage their use in congregations and other ministries;

7. To call upon ELCA seminaries and other teaching institutions of this church to continue their emphasis on preparing pastors, diaconal ministers, deaconesses, associates in ministry, and lay people for excellence in the practice of teaching Christian education and faith formation in service of lifelong learning;

8. To give thanks to God for and to recognize members who are educators in public, Lutheran, and other private schools at all levels of education, to encourage congregations to support them in their callings as educators, and to urge members and all expressions of this church to encourage youth and others to enter these callings;

Public Educational Institutions

9. To call upon all schools to prepare students for living in a complex and global society as persons who are capable of critical thinking, continuing personal growth and concern for others, family responsibility, civic participation, artistic appreciation, productive work, and financial responsibility;
10. To call upon members of this church to advocate for equitable access to an excellent education for all children and youth and to support early childhood education, their public schools, colleges, and universities, advocating for policies that provide adequate resources and their fair distribution for these educational institutions;
11. To call upon members and congregations to develop strong connections with their public schools and to work with others to ensure high quality education for all students;
12. To call upon this church's advocacy ministries to support legislative initiatives that improve public schools and ensure excellent education for all students in ways that are consistent with this social statement and to support financial aid and tuition policies that provide more equitable access to higher education for low- and middle-income students;
13. To call upon this church's advocacy ministry to support legislative initiatives that ensure adequate funding and support for students with disabilities;

Lutheran Institutions

14. To recognize and affirm early childhood education centers, elementary and secondary schools, colleges and universities, seminaries, campus ministries, and outdoor ministries of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America as part of this church's mission, and to call upon this church's leaders to support them publicly and actively;
15. To call upon this church's colleges, universities, seminaries, and lifelong learning partners to prepare and sustain leaders for schools and early childhood education centers of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and to provide ongoing professional development opportunities for them; to expect sponsoring congregations to ensure that their schools and early childhood education centers provide high quality Lutheran education; to encourage non-sponsoring congregations as well as synods to be in partnership with them; and to call upon the Vocation and Education unit to convene consultations throughout this church for the purpose of addressing the challenges and opportunities facing ELCA schools and early childhood education centers;
16. To call upon synods and congregations to support ELCA colleges and universities in their ministry of preparing people to fulfill their vocations in church and

- world; to call upon the Vocation and Education unit to continue its support of ELCA colleges and universities through the convening of administrators and faculty; to call upon the Vocation and Education unit to convene consultations throughout this church for the purpose of furthering the respective and mutual ministries of ELCA colleges and universities and this church; to call upon parents and prospective students to consider ELCA colleges and universities when choosing an institution of higher education; and to call upon all members of this church to remember these institutions in their ongoing giving and estate planning;
17. To call upon synods and congregations to support campus ministries and to call upon the Vocation and Education unit to convene consultations throughout this church for the purpose of addressing the challenges and opportunities facing Lutheran campus ministry and developing a strategy to increase financial support, build new and stronger partnerships, and take such additional actions as may enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of this vital ministry;
18. To affirm the Study of Theological Education, as approved by the 1995 Churchwide Assembly, and its continuing value as a guide for the strengthening of the ELCA's theological education network;

Social Statement Reception

19. To call upon the Church in Society, Evangelical Outreach and Congregational Mission, and Vocation and Education units, in cooperation with other churchwide units, to provide leadership and consultation for synods, seminary clusters and networks, and congregations on the basis of this social statement;
20. To call upon the Vocation and Education and the Evangelical Outreach and Congregational Mission units, in consultation with the Church in Society unit, to collaborate with Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, to develop educational resources to study and act upon this social statement;
21. To call upon teaching theologians, bishops, pastors, diaconal ministers, associates in ministry, deaconesses, educators, and others to continue to deepen the theoretical and practical understanding of our calling in education through intellectual discourse and continued reflection;
22. To call upon all congregations, synods, early childhood education centers, elementary and secondary schools, colleges and universities, seminaries, campus ministries, outdoor ministries, social ministry organizations, public policy advocacy ministries, and churchwide units to carry out the substance and spirit of this statement; and
23. To call upon the Vocation and Education, Church in Society, Evangelical Outreach and Congregational Mission units, and Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, to

oversee a process of implementation and accountability for this social statement and to report on implementation of this social statement to the Church Council in 2009.