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## Recommendations: Funding of the HIV and AIDS Strategy

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### Background

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, including its predecessor church bodies, has a long history of work related to HIV and AIDS. Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson and several representatives from this church have participated in the International AIDS Conference and ecumenical pre-conference event in both 2006 and 2008. Following the conference in 2006, Presiding Bishop Hanson encouraged consideration by the Church Council and the 2007 Churchwide Assembly of a request to develop a comprehensive churchwide strategy on HIV and AIDS.

A planning group was organized, which included representatives from the Church in Society unit, the Global Mission unit, the Communication Services unit, and the Office of the Presiding Bishop. In September 2007, a consultation was convened involving members of an existing interunit staff working group on HIV and AIDS, missionaries, advocacy staff, and others. Prior to the meeting, staff conducted an inventory of existing work, policies, and funds that support AIDS ministries in this church. The meeting consisted of an asset-mapping process designed to lead to the development of a comprehensive strategy on AIDS ministries in this church.

The 2007 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) called for a churchwide strategy for responding to HIV and AIDS to build on and deepen current denominational engagement with the pandemic in the U.S. and around the world. The assembly voted [CA07.03.12]:

1. To commit the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to a deeper engagement in addressing the AIDS pandemic through the development of a churchwide strategy for action in the coming decade, which will:
  - a. build on the experience and commitments of the past and the strength of ELCA congregations, synods, churchwide structures, institutions, and agencies;
  - b. utilize the best thinking of ELCA experts, practitioners, congregational leaders, related institutions and agencies, and people living with HIV and AIDS, as well as ecumenical and global companions, in the development of this strategy;
  - c. express the ELCA's commitment to work in cooperation with the Lutheran World Federation and in tandem with ecumenical partners both in this country and throughout the world;
- d. express the ELCA's commitment to engage proactively with others of good will in civil society and in government as they respond to the AIDS crisis; and
- e. continue to move from crisis management to a more integrated, effective, and sustainable long-term response to the AIDS pandemic;
2. To express the solidarity of the ELCA with all people who are living with HIV and AIDS and with their families, both in this country and throughout the world:
  - a. recognizing and giving thanks for the gifts, skills, and experience that people living with HIV and AIDS bring to addressing the pandemic and committing this church to work closely with them in its response;
  - b. rejecting categorically the stigma and discrimination that are at times associated with HIV and AIDS;
  - c. working to ensure universal access both to compassionate care and to effective treatment and prevention;
  - d. engaging in education to prevent the further spread of HIV and AIDS; and
  - e. providing a welcome in all aspects of church and congregational life to people living with or affected by HIV and AIDS;
3. To encourage ELCA members, congregations, agencies and institutions, synods, and the churchwide organization, at the same time this strategy is being developed, to:
  - a. continue and extend their ministries among and with people living with HIV and AIDS;
  - b. pray for people directly affected by HIV and AIDS and for churches, communities, and governments that they may have both the will and the wisdom to act boldly and effectively to address this crisis;
  - c. intensify their support for the second-mile "Stand with Africa" campaign as well as the broader World Hunger Appeal, which enable this church to assist companions throughout the world as they respond to the AIDS crisis; and

- d. advocate with the U.S. government, urging it to:
  - (1) demonstrate global leadership to achieve agreed upon international goals, including universal access to treatment, care, and prevention by 2010;
  - (2) contribute its proportionate share to fund fully the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria; and
  - (3) abolish the extraordinary requirements that make it difficult and painful for people living with HIV to receive a visa to enter the United States for any purpose, and prohibit discrimination against people living with HIV and AIDS;
- 4. To convey the deep appreciation of this church:
  - a. to all those who provide care and support for those living with HIV and AIDS and those who seek a cure for this disease, in particular those members of this church who live out their Christian vocation as nurses, doctors, health researchers, and care providers;
  - b. to ELCA pastors and congregations actively engaged in ministry with people living with HIV and AIDS as they support, counsel, and advocate with them for just and compassionate action in this church and in the wider society;
  - c. to all those who have provided financial support to HIV and AIDS research and care, both in this country and throughout the world;
  - d. to all those ELCA members whose financial gifts have enabled the ELCA to walk with companion churches in their response to the AIDS crisis, in particular through their “second-mile” giving to the World Hunger Appeal’s “Stand with Africa” campaign and companion synod action;
  - e. to Lutheran social ministry organizations, hospitals, health facilities, and voluntary organizations, including the Lutheran AIDS Network (LANET), that provide assistance to people living with HIV and AIDS as well as leadership in church and society on this issue;
  - f. to the Lutheran World Federation, Lutheran World Relief, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, ecumenical agencies (both domestic and global), and others with which the ELCA partners to provide care, address the impact of HIV and AIDS in communities, prevent the further spread of the disease, and advocate with governments to step up their action in addressing this pandemic; and
  - g. to companion churches in other countries, with which the ELCA is privileged to walk in ministry, as they respond to often overwhelming human need resulting from the spread of HIV; and
- 5. To request that the Church in Society and Global Mission program units take the lead in developing this strategy, which will be brought to the Church Council for adoption in 2008 and reported to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly.

The 2007 Churchwide Assembly took an additional action [CA07.06.35]: “. . . to instruct the Church Council to take steps to develop a plan to provide up to an additional \$1 million in funding to implement the HIV and AIDS strategy.” The action was referred to the Church Council, the Office of the Treasurer, and the Office of the Presiding Bishop not only to encourage continued support of the development and funding of this church’s strategy on HIV and AIDS, but also to defer action related to funding requirements for the implementation of the HIV and AIDS strategy until a strategy with funding requirements was adopted by the Church Council. The “additional \$1 million” referred to in the assembly action is now understood to be included in the \$10 million goal for funding the strategy.

Since the 1980s, the ELCA has worked with partners in Africa to address HIV and AIDS. In 2001, at the urging of companion churches, the ELCA launched the World Hunger Appeal’s “Stand with Africa” campaign, which supports education, advocacy, and fund-raising that enable ELCA members to walk faithfully with companions in Africa as they address the devastating interrelated dynamics of HIV and AIDS, civil strife, poverty, and food security issues. “Stand with Africa” addresses HIV and AIDS not just in medical terms but as a disease of poverty.

Beginning in 2007 and 2008, the ELCA considered the wisdom of engaging in a possible malaria initiative at the same time it lives out its commitment to intensify its HIV and AIDS response and develops a comprehensive churchwide HIV and AIDS strategy, as mandated by the 2007 Churchwide Assembly. From the beginning of the conversations, churchwide staff emphasized with partners in the Lutheran Malaria Initiative (LMI)—Lutheran World Relief, The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod, and the United Nations Foundation—that engagement in malaria work would not come at the expense of its HIV and AIDS commitment. Rather, the two would need to be held together strategically in the ELCA, both in interpretation and in work with companions. Developing synergy with existing health-related and HIV and AIDS efforts would need to be a high priority in the ELCA’s engagement with malaria work.

By the fall of 2008, the ELCA’s HIV and AIDS efforts and the LMI were separated as far as the other LMI partners and the financial campaign component were concerned. The ELCA views its work with HIV and AIDS as a priority for this church, evidenced by the call for this strategy. In addition to

this important focus, the ELCA at its 2009 Churchwide Assembly also will consider the proposed Lutheran Malaria Initiative.

At its November 2008 meeting, the Church Council and its advisors had the opportunity to review and respond to the draft strategy document. The HIV and AIDS strategy has been shared with many groups in an effort to gain perspectives on the strategy from varying viewpoints. Groups and individuals include the ELCA Conference of Bishops, ELCA clergy of color, Lutherans Concerned/North America, Lutheran AIDS Network (LANET), the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), and people living with HIV or AIDS. Additionally, there was continuing review by the domestic and international staff of the ELCA as well as rostered and lay leaders, some of whom work with ministries and organizations related to HIV and AIDS. Ecumenical feedback also was received, including responses from the United Church of Christ and the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

At its March 2009 meeting, the Church Council received the HIV and AIDS Strategy and voted:

To adopt the ELCA Strategy on HIV and AIDS;

To add the voice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to that of the Lutheran World Federation and the World Council of Churches in recognizing one of the most important lessons the church has learned in the past 25 years: “the body of Christ has AIDS”;

To call on the ELCA—its members, congregations, synods, churchwide organization, and related agencies and institutions—to implement this strategy, thereby embracing the goal of becoming an HIV and AIDS-competent church and contributing to the efforts of the wider global community:

1. To halt the spread of HIV through effective prevention, treatment, and care;
2. To eliminate the stigma and discrimination experienced by those who are HIV-positive; and
3. To reduce the conditions of poverty and marginalization that contribute to the spread of HIV;

To express thanks for the many individuals, groups, and global companions who have contributed to the development of this strategy and have encouraged and assisted this church as it prepares to embrace HIV and AIDS work on a larger scale, both domestically and internationally;

To commend the ELCA Conference of Bishops for its engagement of the spirit of the HIV and AIDS strategy by being tested at its March 2009 meeting;

To acknowledge the new threshold of domestic ministry among people living with HIV and AIDS in the United States that is represented by this strategy;

To commend the Lutheran World Federation for its leadership within the Lutheran communion—in particular its “Breaking the Silence” initiative and its call for all member churches to develop an HIV and AIDS strategy that reflects their particular context

and that grows out of shared Lutheran theology and experience;

To pledge to join the Lutheran World Federation in an intensified global campaign that will focus attention and resources on those regions most affected by HIV and AIDS, in particular, sub-Saharan Africa;

To express appreciation for the partnership of companion churches, ecumenical and interfaith partners, and international and domestic organizations in the ELCA’s past global engagement and as the ELCA seeks to live out this new strategy internationally and domestically;

To encourage synods and congregations to embrace this strategy, both on their own territory and through their global companion synod relationships, coordinating their efforts with each other and with the Global Mission program unit;

To celebrate the significant HIV and AIDS work that was carried out through the World Hunger Appeal’s second-mile initiative, “Stand with Africa: A Campaign of Hope” and to commit to continue that work through this new HIV and AIDS strategy;

To thank World Hunger donors for their faithful giving to the Stand with Africa campaign and to invite them and others into continuing this work through the generous funding of this strategy;

To anticipate synergies in addressing global health issues—in particular, diseases that are intensified by poverty—as a possible Lutheran Malaria Initiative is developed in the 2009–2011 biennium;

To forward the HIV and AIDS strategy to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly for information and affirmation; and

To request the 2009 Churchwide Assembly to approve the raising of \$10 million to begin and build over the next three years (2009–2012) to support the HIV and AIDS strategy through additional designated gifts within the World Hunger Appeal, acknowledging that the \$1 million goal encouraged by the 2007 Churchwide Assembly is to be included in the \$10 million goal.

The full HIV and AIDS Strategy is printed in Section V of the *2009 Pre-Assembly Report*.

## **Recommendation for Assembly Action**

**To request the 2009 Churchwide Assembly to approve the initiation of efforts over the next three years (2009–2012) to raise \$10 million to support the HIV and AIDS strategy through additional designated gifts within the World Hunger Appeal, acknowledging that the \$1 million goal encouraged by the 2007 Churchwide Assembly is to be included in the \$10 million goal.**

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