

REFERENCE AND COUNSEL

- I. **The following resolution was received from the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Mission District Task Force on the SALM/Similar program.**

THE REINSTATEMENT OF THE SALM OR SIMILAR PROGRAM.

WHEREAS, the NEPA Synod desires to have all congregations of the Synod have access to pastoral services; and

WHEREAS, more congregations, including vacant ones, are opting for weekly Eucharist services; and

WHEREAS, the NEPA Synod cannot adequately fill vacant congregations with appropriate ordained pastors; and

WHEREAS, many smaller congregations cannot adequately compensate ordained pastors; and

WHEREAS, the number of pastors who would desire a mover ate limited as are retired pastors who desire to travel, and the number of available seminary graduates is also limited; and

WHEREAS, the SALM program proved to be a valid method to provide pastoral services to vacant congregations; and

WHEREAS, there are lay persons available who could be trained to function as SALMS, lay pastors and/or designated eucharistic celebrants in congregations including vacant ones.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Mission District memorialize the NEPA Synod to reinstate the SALM or similar program and provide the training for such persons who participate in these programs; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that those who enter and complete the training be utilized in vacant congregations as SALMS, lay pastors, and/or designated eucharistic celebrants; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that said persons be authorized to provide pastoral services including the sacraments only in the congregation to and with which they serve as a SALM, lay pastor, and/or designated eucharistic celebrant; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the NEPA Synod memorialize the ELCA to adapt the same or similar resolution and program as defined in this resolution.

Response of the Reference and Counsel Committee

In light of the fact that the ELCA has a Synod-Authorized Minister program (*Manual of Policies and Procedures for Management of the Rosters of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, page 76) and the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod has a Pastoral Care Provider Program that serves as the successor to the SALM Program, the Committee recommends that this resolution be received by the Assembly as an expression of support for these initiatives, and that promotional materials be developed to make congregations aware of this resource.

II. The following resolution was received from Rev. Joseph Veres and pastors and Council of the Pocono Mission District.

RESOLUTION TO ENGAGE THE CURRENT DIMINISHING NUMBERS OF THOSE SERVING AS ROSTERED LEADERS.

WHEREAS, The ELCA is facing a crisis in pastoral rostered leadership due to the retirement of pastors wherein alone something over 200 pastors (without regard to other rostered individuals) are coming to retirement age over the number of new individuals who are approved to serve in congregations; and

WHEREAS, the number of congregations who can afford pastoral leadership are growing faster than the pastors are becoming available to serve; and

WHEREAS, the commitment of all the congregations is necessary to help answer this issue; and

WHEREAS, by the small collective action of all churches within the North Eastern Pennsylvania Synod an example may be set to help the financial ability of additional individuals to consider ministry within the church; and

WHEREAS: we proclaim “God’s work, our hands” as a reflection of our stewardship for the mission of this church by choice,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that every congregation commit itself to providing \$5.00/month in support for three new seminarians (a total of \$180.00 for the year) to be given to the United Lutheran Seminary to advance its mission and to start the process to redress the shortage of rostered leaders creating a crisis in leadership.

Response of the Reference and Counsel Committee

The committee recommends that each congregation of the synod be encouraged to make a generous annual gift to the Samuel and Linda Zeiser Fund for Leaders Scholarship.

III. The following was received from Youth, Young Adult and Family Ministry Team, Rev. Lauren Applegate, New Life, New Tripoli, Rev. Colleen Cox, Grace, Shillington, and Rev. Becca Middeke-Conlin, St Paul’s & Good Shepherd, Easton

A RESOLUTION REGARDING YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT, PERSONS OF COLOR, AND/OR PERSONS WHOSE PRIMARY LANGUAGE IS OTHER THAN ENGLISH REPRESENTATION AT SYNOD ASSEMBLY

WHEREAS, youth, young adults, persons of color and persons whose primary language is other than English are a vital and active part of the membership of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; and

WHEREAS, youth, young adults, persons of color and persons whose primary language is other than English themselves, and thus their voices, experiences, and perspectives, are underrepresented in the membership of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly; and

WHEREAS, the involvement of youth, young adults, persons of color and persons whose primary language is other than English in decision-making as members of the Synod Assembly deepens their commitment to and understanding of the Church, develops their gifts for leadership and ministry, and strengthens them in their faith; and

WHEREAS, youth, young adults, persons of color and persons whose primary language is other than English serve faithfully and capably in numerous leadership roles in their congregations, campus ministry sites, outdoor ministry sites, social ministry organizations, and boards, committees, and other ministries of this synod and of the ELCA; and

WHEREAS, the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod constitution calls for a goal of the synod to have 10 percent of synod assemblies, councils, committees, boards and/or other organizational units of this synod be persons of color and/or persons whose primary language is other than English established in S6.04.01; and

WHEREAS, the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod constitution calls for a goal of the synod to have 10 percent of the voting members of the Synod Assembly, Synod Council, committees, organizational units of this synod be youth and young adults established in S6.04.02;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that, in addition to the voting members to Synod Assembly established in S7.21 of the synod constitution, and determined by the Synod Council through a formula as per S7.21.c, each congregation may send one additional voting member as long as at least one of the voting members from each congregation is a person under the age of thirty, a person of color and/or whose primary language is other than English; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Synod Council is directed to adjust the formula described in S7.21.c of the synod constitution to include this voting member in addition to the regular allotment of lay voting members necessary to reach a minimum of 60% of the Synod Assembly.

Response of the Reference and Counsel Committee

The committee recommends that the assembly affirm the intent of the resolution and direct the Constitution Committee to craft an appropriate bylaw to address its concerns, bringing that proposed bylaw to the 2021 synod assembly for action.