

Lutheran Advocacy – Minnesota

Statement of Roles and Responsibilities

I. Purpose

As an advocacy ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), Lutheran Advocacy – Minnesota (LA-MN) derives its purpose from the Constitution of the ELCA, which states:

To participate in God's mission, this church shall: . . . Serve in response to God's love to meet human needs, caring for the sick and the aged, advocating justice and dignity for all people, working for peace and reconciliation among the nations, and standing with the poor and the powerless and committing itself to their needs. (4.02.c)

To fulfill these purposes, this church shall: . . . Lift its voice in concord and work in concert with forces for good, to serve humanity, cooperating with church and other groups participating in activities that promote justice, relieve misery, and reconcile the estranged. (4.03.g) . . . Study social issues and trends, work to discover the causes of oppression and injustice, and develop programs of ministry and advocacy to further human dignity, freedom, justice and peace in the world. (4.03.l)

The purpose of LA-MN is to advocate for justice in the areas of hunger, poverty, and care of God's creation by speaking with and for those who have little or no political power. LA-MN will work with congregations, ELCA Lutherans, and others to create and use networks for advocacy on these issues.

II. Authority

The Holy Scriptures, the Lutheran Confessions, the Ecumenical Creeds, the ELCA Constitution, ELCA Social Statements, ELCA Messages, social policy actions¹ adopted by the ELCA, the social statements of the predecessor church bodies of the ELCA, and the actions of the assemblies of the six Minnesota ELCA Synods provide LA-MN the basis on which to choose issues, to develop statements, and to advocate positions. The counsel of the ELCA Domestic Mission Unit, and the boards and committees of the six synods relating to issues of hunger and justice are also used in discerning the authority of LA-MN.

III. Partnership

LA-MN is a partnership advocacy ministry of the six synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in Minnesota and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. This ministry is an instrument for coordinated Lutheran impact on public policy on hunger, poverty, and the care of God's creation in Minnesota.

IV. Operating Principles

A. Overview:

LA-MN speaks on behalf of the official positions of the ELCA applied to the specific context of these public policy issues in Minnesota. Careful research and study is used in developing LA-MN's positions based on official church body statements. The objectives of LA-MN include the following:

1. To identify priority advocacy issues according to the authority established in Section II and articulate the position of the ELCA on these issues;
2. To develop support for and disseminate information about these issues in order to educate and empower members of ELCA congregations;
3. To monitor the progress of bills in the legislature and to advocate for justice on issues of hunger, poverty, and care of God's creation;
4. To interpret the work of LA-MN and help to connect the six synods on issues of justice and advocacy; and
5. To cooperate ecumenically and with other community groups and organizations to influence policy change for the public good.

LA-MN recognizes the plurality of individual opinions held by ELCA members in Minnesota. Each member has access to the decision-making of the ELCA through a democratic process. Individuals and groups who have specific interests and expertise are encouraged to participate in this process. LA-MN acknowledges that its advocacy positions need careful interpretation to the Lutheran constituency. No individual member is personally bound by the positions taken by LA-MN.

The ELCA is responsible for the care of congregations and ordained ministers. This includes nurturing ordained ministers and congregations in awareness and involvement in matters relating to social justice action. LA-MN is an instrument for coordinated involvement of members of the ELCA in Minnesota.

Local congregations shall be encouraged to work in cooperation with LA-MN to develop a communication, information, resource, and action network. All members of ELCA churches in Minnesota are potentially active participants in the advocacy efforts of LA-MN.

LA-MN recognizes, celebrates and affirms that ELCA social policy is interpreted by all members as they live out their baptismal calling.

B. Ecumenical and Interfaith Relationships:

Because the six Minnesota ELCA synods are constituent members of the Minnesota Council of Churches, LA-MN collaborates wherever possible with the Minnesota Council of Churches and its relevant component groups. LA-MN also collaborates with other ecumenical and interfaith bodies where appropriate.

C. Association with Other Advocacy Groups:

LA-MN participates in coalitions which will enhance its advocacy on issues of hunger, poverty, and care of God's creation. Participation shall not imply agreement with any policy or position which is in conflict with ELCA policies or positions (Refer to Appendix II). The LA-MN mailing list will not be made available to other organizations without consent of the Policy Council and the six synods.

V. Organization

A. Governance

LA-MN is governed by the six ELCA synods of Minnesota through a Policy Council. The goals, objectives and activities of LA-MN are administered by a Director and the Policy Council.

B. Policy Council

1. **Role:** The Policy Council is responsible for the policy decisions of LA-MN and in an advisory relationship to the Director for setting advocacy priorities; establishing with the Director its goals and objectives; interpreting the work of LA-MN; advising in budget development and management; securing funds to support the program; and providing support, advice and counsel to the Director.
2. **Responsibilities:** Members are expected to attend Council meetings, to read materials in preparation for the meetings, to plan and participate in advocacy and educational events, to keep up-to-date on issues and concerns of LA-MN, to help with the interpretation of LA-MN in all possible situations, to assist in work with legislators, to develop a working knowledge of social statements and other official positions of the ELCA (Refer to Appendix I), and to interpret the need for involvement in advocacy and public church in the areas of hunger, poverty, and care of God's creation.
3. **Evaluation and Strategic Planning:** The Policy Council shall evaluate its purpose, function and operation every two years. This evaluation will lead to a strategic plan for the upcoming two years.
4. **Membership:** The Policy Council is comprised of no more than twenty-two members. Each of the six Minnesota ELCA synods shall appoint or elect three representatives including one lay member, one rostered minister, and a program staff person from the Synod office (preferred) or a representative of the bishop. One of the bishops shall represent the six ELCA bishops in Minnesota on the Policy Council as well as his/her own synod. The Policy Council may appoint no more than four at-large members, with voice and vote, taking into consideration diverse representation. The Policy Council may appoint other advisors representing particular concerns and areas of expertise. These advisors will have voice but no vote and will be appointed on an on call, when needed basis. No LA-MN staff member may serve as a member of the Policy Council. Any Council member missing two meetings consecutively without extenuating circumstances will be informed by the Executive Committee that further absence will terminate their position on the Council.
5. **Term of Office:** Except for bishops, synod staff and advisors who may be appointed because of job descriptions, members of the Policy Council shall normally serve one three-year term with the possibility of being elected or appointed to a second three-year term.

6. **Officers:** The officers of LA-MN shall be a chairperson, a vice-chairperson, a secretary, and a treasurer. The duties of the officers shall be specified below. The officers shall be voting members of the LA-MN Policy Council. The officers shall attend and participate in Executive board meetings. Officers are responsible to ensure that all meetings are conducted according to the most recent edition of *Robert's Rules of Order* and the governing documents of the organization.

The Policy Council shall elect a chairperson, vice-chairperson, secretary, and treasurer from among its membership at its spring meeting to assume office by June 1. Officers shall be elected for a term of two years. Terms of one-half of the officers shall expire each year. Elected officers may serve no more than two consecutive terms in the same office.

Should a vacancy occur among the officers, the Executive Committee shall appoint to fill the position until the next spring meeting. The election at that time shall be for the remainder of the unexpired term.

The duties of the Officers shall be as follows:

a. The Chairperson shall:

1. Preside at meetings of the Policy Council and Executive Committee;
2. Collaborate with Executive Committee and Director to prepare the agenda for all meetings of the Policy Council;
3. Receive written reports from the Treasurer, task forces, work groups, and/or subcommittees prior to Policy Council meetings;
4. Ensure that decisions and actions made by the Policy Council are carried out;
5. Be authorized as one of the signing or countersigning officers for certain correspondence, application, reports, contracts, or other documents, which the Policy Council has authorized on behalf of LA-MN; and
6. Perform other duties at the request of the Policy Council or Director.

b. The Vice-Chairperson shall:

1. Assist the Chairperson in the performance of duties of the Chairperson for LA-MN;
2. Act on behalf of the Chairperson when that officer is not available;
3. If the position of Chairperson is declared vacant, the Vice-Chairperson shall serve as the Chairperson for the remainder of the term; and
4. Perform other duties at the request of the Policy Council or Director.

c. The Secretary shall:

1. Document, distribute, and archive the minutes of Policy Council meetings within 15 days of the meeting;
2. Maintain a record of attendees at Policy Council meetings;
3. Organize and maintain roster of Policy Council members and their terms;
4. Preserve permanent electronic copies of:
 - a) Minutes of all Executive Committee meetings;
 - b) Minutes of all Policy Council meetings;
 - c) Governing documents of LA-MN; and
 - d) Minutes and reports provided for Policy Council from the treasurer, task forces, work groups, and/or subcommittees.
5. Collaborate with Executive Committee members to prepare Policy Council meeting agenda. Distribute agenda to Policy Council at least ten days prior to meeting;
6. Notify Policy Council members about meetings.
7. Be authorized as one of the signing or countersigning officers for certain correspondence, applications, reports, contracts, or other documents, which the Policy Council has authorized, on behalf of LA-MN; and
8. Perform other duties at the request of the Policy Council or Director.

d. The Treasurer shall:

1. Interact with the bookkeeper to reconcile monthly bank and credit card statements, and monitor bills and expenses;
2. Present financial reports to the Executive Committee and Policy Council at their regular meetings;
3. Submit a short treasurer's report to be filed with the meeting minutes;
4. Work with the Director to prepare an annual budget for presentation to and approval by the Policy Council;
5. Work with ELCA professionals to facilitate audit work, and responsively address matters that arise in the audit process;
6. Be a signatory on financial accounts; and
7. Perform other duties at the request of the Policy Council or Director.

7. **Executive Committee:** The Executive Committee is composed of the Director and the elected officers of the Policy Council. The Executive Committee is responsible for the management function of LA-MN, and for decisions that must be made between Council meetings. Any two members of the Executive Committee must approve disbursements over \$500. All such necessary decisions are to be consistent with LA-MN's strategic planning and governing documents.

8. **Subcommittees, Talk Forces, and Work Groups:** The Policy Council or Executive Committee may appoint and convene sub-committees, task forces, and work groups composed of Policy Council members and others, as needed.
9. **Meetings:** The Policy Council will normally meet four times a year. Agenda and preparatory materials will be in the hands of the members ten days prior to the date of the meeting. One half of the Policy Council members plus one (not including advisory members) shall constitute a quorum.

C. Personnel

1. **Director:** The Director shall have overall responsibility for the work of LA-MN. The five functional areas of responsibility of this position are:
 - a. Development of a Lutheran advocacy network among congregations, agencies, and institutions for the purpose of education and a shared advocacy strategy;
 - b. Collegial collaboration with public policy coalitions with similar commitments;
 - c. Advocacy with Minnesota state government public policy makers in accordance with the public policy social justice commitments of the ELCA;
 - d. Research, study, analysis and theological consideration of pending public policy concerns; and
 - e. Administration of the office, its budget, and resources. The position includes public presentations with various ELCA entities and work with the LA-MN Policy Council.
2. **Staff:** The Policy Council and Director shall determine need for additional staff to fulfill the mission of LA-MN, and work with appropriate ELCA staff to fill the position(s).
3. **Job Descriptions and Personnel Policy:** The Policy Council shall have input into the job description for the position of Director and all additional staff positions created to fulfill LA-MN's mission.

VI. Financial Support

Financial responsibility for the operation of LA-MN is shared between the six Minnesota ELCA synods, the ELCA, and fundraising efforts.

VII. Adoption & Review of the Statement of Roles and Responsibilities

This Statement of Roles and Responsibilities is intended to provide LA-MN with the framework to support and empower the public ministry of advocacy.

The Executive Committee of the Policy Council will review this Statement of Roles and Responsibilities every three years and will make recommendations to update or to amend the Statement accordingly. After a two-thirds vote by the Policy Council, these updates and amendments will be adopted.

Notes:

¹ Social policy resolutions are actions on matters of social concern, in addition to social statements and social messages. They are adopted either by an ELCA Churchwide Assembly or the ELCA Church Council to address the need for special resolutions or actions related to specific social concerns. As a consequence, social policy resolutions normally are brief and limited in scope. They present timely resolutions that commit this church to particular actions that are derived from and consistent with the teachings and policy of the ELCA.

Approved at LA-MN Policy Council meeting on December 2014

Revised at LA-MN Policy Council meeting on March 2017

Revised at LA-MN Policy Council meeting on June 2017

Revised at LA-MN Policy Council meeting on June 19, 2020

Appendix I:

Social Statements

ELCA social statements are teaching and policy documents that provide broad frameworks to assist us in thinking about and discussing social issues in the context of faith and life. They are meant to help communities and individuals with moral formation, discernment and thoughtful engagement with current social issues as we participate in God’s work in the world. Social statements also set policy for the ELCA and guide its advocacy and work as a publicly engaged church. They result from an extensive process of participation and deliberation and are adopted by a two-thirds vote of an ELCA churchwide assembly.

The description and procedures for developing and adopting these social teaching and policy documents are established by “Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns.”

ELCA Social Statements:

- Abortion / Aborto (1991)
- Caring for Creation / Medio ambiente (1993)
- Church in Society / Iglesia en la sociedad (1991)
- Criminal Justice / La iglesia y la justicia penal (2013)
- Death Penalty / Pena de Muerte (1991)
- Economic Life / Vida economica (1999)
- Education / Educación (2007)
- Genetics (2011)
- Health Care / Salud y asistencia sanitaria (2003)
- Human Sexuality / La sexualidad humana (2009)
- Peace / Por la paz (1995)
- Race, Ethnicity and Culture / Raza, etnicidad y cultura (1993)
- Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Call to Action (2019)

ELCA Social Statements:

Available at <http://www.elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Statements>

Social Messages

Social messages of the ELCA are topical documents adopted by the ELCA Church Council to focus attention and action on timely, pressing matters of social concern to the church and society. They are used to address pressing contemporary concerns in light of the prophetic and compassionate traditions of Scripture and do not establish new teaching or policy. Rather, they build upon previously adopted teaching and policy positions, especially from social statements.

These messages draw attention to specific topics or social concerns that arise from our participation in God's work in the world, and they encourage moral discernment, thoughtful discussion and action. Each message is reviewed by the Conference of Bishops and adopted by the ELCA Church Council, and expresses the convictions of the leadership of this church.

- AIDS / El SIDA (1988)
- Commercial Sexual Exploitation / Explotación sexual (2001)
- Community Violence / Violencia comunidad (1994)
- End of Life Decisions / Final de la vida (1992)
- Gender-based Violence / La violencia de genera (2015)
- Government (2020)
- Homelessness / Gente sin vivienda (1990)
- Human Rights / Los derechos humans (2017)
- Immigration / Inmigración (1998)
- Israeli Palestinian Conflict (1989)
- Mental Illness / Las enfermedades mentales (2012)
- People Living with Disabilities / Personas discapacidades (2010)
- Sexuality / La sexualidad (1996)
- Suicide Prevention / Suicidio (1999)
- Terrorism / Terrorismo (2004)

ELCA Social Messages:

Available at <http://www.elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Messages>

Inter-Religious Policy Statement:

- A Declaration of Inter-Religious Commitment / Declaración de compromiso interreligioso: Una declaración de política de la Iglesia Evangélica Luterana en América (2019)

ELCA Inter-Religious Policy Statement:

Available at <https://www.elca.org/Faith/Ecumenical-and-Inter-Religious-Relations/Inter-Religious-Relations/Policy-Statement>

Appendix II:

GUIDELINES FOR LUTHERAN ADVOCACY – MINNESOTA FOR WORK WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS ON ISSUES WHICH ARE NOT PRIORITY ISSUES FOR LA-MN

Understanding that the time, energy and efforts of the Director of LA-MN (and LA-MN advocates) need to be focused during each legislative session, it is also important that the voice of ELCA Lutherans in Minnesota be heard and seen in support of partners and friends whose goals are the same as ours. These guidelines will assist as LA-MN works to be “church together”.

- (1) Lutheran Advocacy – Minnesota (LA-MN) will only support/speak on behalf of agencies and organizations whose values and goals are the same as ours.
- (2) Lutheran Advocacy – Minnesota will work mainly with agencies and organizations that work in the areas of poverty, hunger and care of creation or areas which relate to these areas.
- (3) Lutheran Advocacy – Minnesota will speak on behalf of and support our partner organizations by educating our own constituency. By using newsletter, website, and Facebook, LA-MN will be able to provide brief information, contacts and links to inform and educate.
- (4) The Director of LA-MN will be able to “sign on” in support in the name of LA-MN if he/she feels that the issue is one that is consistent with our efforts. (See #2).
- (5) Lutheran Advocacy – Minnesota will continue to work cooperatively with these agencies and organizations and ask them to offer support to our priority issues in the same ways we are able to support their issues. Continued networking and information sharing will benefit everyone in Minnesota.

September 2015
Executive Committee