



## Talking Points

### *Living into the Future Together: Renewing the Ecology of the ELCA (LIFT)*

Revised May 5, 2011

The LIFT report was authorized by the ELCA Church Council, which appointed a study design group in March 2009 and subsequently formed the LIFT task force in November 2009. The task force met for the first time in January 2010. It submitted its report to the recent April 2011 meeting of the Church Council, which received the report with appreciation and referred the development of implementing resolutions from the report to a writing team.

The LIFT report is about the identity of the ELCA and deals with opportunities offered by the ELCA's changing context. The task force recognized the ways these changes have impacted interrelationships within this church, congregations, partnerships, financial resources, structure and governance. As the report states, the task force believes God has given the ELCA "the present moment as an opportunity, unparalleled in our history, to confess the center of our faith to the world."

The LIFT report, amended by the ELCA Church Council, recommends:

1. that an invitation be sent to congregations, in partnership with synods, to begin, develop, review or redefine their unique mission plan by the end of 2012.
2. that synods become catalysts for mission planning.
3. that the Conference of Bishops in consultation with synod leaders and the churchwide organization prepare a report for the 2013 Churchwide Assembly that includes:
  - a. a description of the current pattern or patterns of synodical life in the ELCA that effectively supports vital congregations, mission growth and outreach;
  - b. a proposal to establish a pattern or a set of patterns that will allow synods to receive and distribute financial resources to support the whole ministry of this church in all its forms and expressions;
  - c. strategies for increased mission vitality that may include consideration of redrawing synodical boundaries; and
  - d. recommendations for revising and reordering the constitutional responsibilities of bishops.
4. that regions expand their roles as centers for exploring the possibilities of cooperative mission and ministry.
5. that the churchwide organization
  - a. build the capacity of synods to work with congregations;
  - b. continue the strategic priorities of accompanying congregations and building the capacity of this church for evangelical witness and service and to alleviate poverty and work for justice and peace;
  - c. maintain its commitment to building interdependent relationships among the agencies of this church;
  - d. deploy directors of evangelical mission;
  - e. provide and support the vision of a multicultural, multi-ethnic church;
  - f. support the capacity of this church for global mission;

- g. continue its long-term commitment to international development and disaster relief; and
  - h. recognize the locating of responsibility for theological discernment in the Office of the Presiding Bishop.
6. that the development of leaders for this church take place through increased collaboration in leadership development, faith formation and theological education.
  7. that the building of accompaniment in relationships with this church's global companions and ecumenical partners be continued.
  8. that networking be used as an organizational principle that embodies interdependence and enhances increased collaboration and connections across this church.
  9. that a culture of communal discernment in all parts of this church be nurtured, and, with the exception of the social statement on genetics, bring no social statement to churchwide assemblies until the Church Council, in consultation with the Conference of Bishops and the Communal Discernment Task Force, completes a review of current procedures for the development and adoption of social statements. *The preceding information reflects a separate action taken by the ELCA Church Council at its April, 2011 meeting regarding social statements. However, the actual recommendation from the LIFT task force was not amended.*
  10. that the Churchwide Assembly move to a triennial cycle; that the Church Council be enlarged to a range of 33 to 45 members; and that the number of advisory members paid by the the churchwide organization be reduced.
  11. that the chair of the Conference of Bishops have voice and vote on the Church Council and that the role of the Conference of Bishops be expanded in its consultative capacity with the Church Council.
  12. that the program committees for churchwide units be eliminated and that new strategies for obtaining input from constituencies be developed.
  13. that intra-synodical and inter-synodical networks be developed that organize for unified and specific purposes, have fluid and flexible structures and serve to strengthen relationships among congregations and synods.
  14. that the Conference of Bishops, synod vice presidents, the Church Council and the churchwide organization collaborate to work on a proposal for renewed, sustainable mission support to be brought to the 2013 Churchwide Assembly.
  15. that all parts of this church utilize global digital media as a new opportunity for the Spirit's work among us.
  16. that work on the functions assigned to the LIFT task force continue regarding the following items:
    - a. review of the constitutional responsibilities of synods;
    - b. process addressing legislative decision-making in this church;
    - c. exploration, including legal implications, of the use of social media and technology options;
    - d. facilitation of non-legislative forums and gatherings that bring together rostered and lay leaders to address mission issues, theological study and reflection, and that foster leadership development and enhanced interdependence in this church;
    - e. proposals by the units of the churchwide organization to generate and foster participatory conversations that communicate their work and receive feedback; and
    - f. the consultative role of the Conference of Bishops.