



2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly

Summary Reports:

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Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery



Evangelical Lutheran
Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

AMMPARO

Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities

Briefing Points

WHAT IS AMMPARO?

AMMPARO stands for Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities. It is a commitment by the ELCA, as a church in the world, to accompany vulnerable children today and in the future.

HOW AMMPARO STARTED

Although children began coming in increasingly large numbers much earlier, in 2014, as media coverage of the plight of unaccompanied children arriving from Central America began to garner attention, ELCA leaders traveled to the U.S.–Mexico border to see first-hand what children faced. In government shelters, they saw the faces of children who were seeking protection in the U.S.

In early 2015, an ELCA delegation visited El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras to listen to, pray with the Lutheran churches the ELCA accompanies, and further understand why people are fleeing their communities. Through these visits to Central America, it became apparent that the ELCA has valuable and unique connections in the region that allow the church to view the migration of children and families in a holistic way.

AMMPARO is an answer to the discovery of the church's valuable and unique perspective.

With the expertise and perspective of companion churches and connections to other ministries in the region, together with our connections in the U.S., we can spiritually walk together with unaccompanied children. Through AMMPARO, we will work to change the root causes that force children to flee their homes and communities. If they must leave their home country, however, the church will be there in their journey and welcome them as our own in the U.S.

WHAT IS OUR STRATEGY?

The strategy was drafted with input from Lutheran and ecumenical companions and partners, the ELCA bishops in October 2015, and others.

AMMPARO seeks to provide a whole church response that will:

- Uphold and guarantee basic human rights and safety of migrant children and their families;
- Address the root causes of migration in countries from Central America's Northern Triangle and Mexico and the treatment of migrants in transit;
- Work toward just and humane policies affecting migrants in and outside the U.S.; and
- Engage as a church body with all of its companions, affiliates and partners to respond to the migration situation as a whole context and to advocate for migrant children and their families.

The guiding principles of accompaniment, awareness building and advocacy will orient our work, which will include action around protection, advocacy, representation and opportunities.

In order to fulfill these commitments, the ELCA will work purposefully with companions and partners, through strategies for ministry with:

- Those in the countries of origin: Sinodo Luterano Salvadoreño (Salvadoran Lutheran Synod) in El Salvador; Iglesia Cristiana Luterana en Honduras (Lutheran Christian Church in Honduras) Comisión de Acción Social Menonita (Mennonite Social Action Committee) and Lutheran World Federation/World Service (LWF/WS) in Honduras; and Iglesia Luterana Agustina de Guatemala (Lutheran Augustinian Church in Guatemala) and LWF/WS in Guatemala
- Those in countries of transit: Iglesia Luterana Mexicana (Mexican Lutheran Church), AMEXTRA
- Those in the U.S.: through synods and congregations, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS), Lutheran Social Services organizations, Church World Service (CWS)

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Approximately, 70,000 children and another 70,000 women with their children, most from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, arrived in the U.S. in fiscal year (FY) 2014. Although this number decreased by 42 percent in FY 2015, numbers began increasing again in August 2015.

The reasons why these vulnerable populations must flee are complex and interrelated. They include violence, insecurity, lack of opportunity and environmental displacement.

Violence, insecurity and the inability of governments to protect their citizens play a significant role in the displacement of children and families. The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) found that approximately 58 percent of children have a potential need for international protection. This includes asylum or other forms of protection outside of their country. In addition, UNHCR also recently recorded the abuse that women asylum seekers face and the incredible impunity that leads to their forced displacement.

- Other sources that cite violence and insecurity as principal in the migration: The American Immigration Council, which interviewed Salvadoran children, and the U.S. Government Accountability Office, which interviewed government staff with knowledge of what is happening in the region.

The conditions that lead to children and families being displaced has not changed. In 2015, violence in El Salvador reached levels not seen since its civil war, with murder rates increasing approximately 70 percent from the year before. In addition, El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras have some of the highest rates of female homicides globally. However, in these three countries, the conviction rate for crimes committed is 5 percent or less.

Children, then, are victimized before leaving a community and continue to face violence during their journey to safety. In Mexico, they face traffickers, corrupt officials, drug cartels and criminal actors.

Human trafficking in Latin America is the third-largest illicit industry, with women and children being especially vulnerable. Nevertheless, Mexican officials do not properly screen children and actively deter them from applying for protection. In the U.S., political efforts to address the number of children that arrived in the country center on changing a trafficking bill that improved the screening of Central American children.

Instead of thinking of ways to prevent children from seeking safety or weakening screenings that could make a difference for a child in need of safety, the only humane and effective way to deal with this humanitarian crisis is by addressing the roots causes that force people to flee in the first place.

Two ELCA Actions

Churchwide Assembly 2016

Since 2005, the ELCA has been in relationship with Palestinian Lutherans. This relationship is outlined in the Strategy for Engagement and carried out through the Peace Not Walls Campaign. <https://www.elca.org/Our-Work/Publicly-Engaged-Church/Peace-Not-Walls>

The relationship is carried out in three ways:

Accompaniment
Awareness-Raising
Advocacy

In New Orleans, at the recent ELCA Churchwide Assembly, voting members approved two actions to support peace with justice in Israel/Palestine.

Israeli Settlements

And US Aid to Israel

The first action calls on Congress to take action to make US foreign aid to Israel contingent on Israel complying with internationally recognized human rights standards as specified in existing US law, and stopping settlement building and the expansion of existing settlements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

ELCA Investments

And Human Rights Screens

The second action directs “the ELCA’s Corporate Social Responsibility review team to develop a human rights social criteria investment screen based on the social teachings of this church and, in the case of Israel and Palestine, specifically based on the concerns raised in the ELCA Middle East Strategy.” And it “encourages ELCA members, congregations, synods, agencies and institutions to engage in shareholder advocacy in support of human rights.”

Read the full text and background information for both actions and find study resources:
<http://rmselca.org/peace-not-walls>

<http://RMSelca.org/peace-not-walls>



RESOURCES FOR STUDY:

- [Http://RMSELCA.org/peace-not-walls](http://RMSELCA.org/peace-not-walls)
- Invite a speaker from RMS Peace Not Walls: millerjan68@gmail.com
- Faith in the Face of Empire – book by Pastor Mitri Raheb; see study guide: https://www.rmselca.org/sites/rmselca.org/files/resources/faithfaceempire-study_guide_0.pdf
- Film - The Stones Cry Out – the story of Palestinian Christians: <http://www.thestonescryoutmovie.com>
- Kairos Palestine – a statement from Palestinian Christians asking for our support: <http://kairospalestine.ps>
- Read and study the Kairos statement: <http://kairospalestine.ps/index.php/about-us/kairos-palestine-document>
- Steadfast Hope - a congregational study: <http://new.israelpalestinemissionnetwork.org/component/content/article/5/3-steadfast-hope>
- Zionism Unsettled – a congregational study: <http://new.israelpalestinemissionnetwork.org/study-resources/publications>
- A Land in Fragments - two-minute video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ewF7AXn3dg>
- ELCA Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine: http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/PNW_Strategy.pdf

Learn about and Support Lutheran ministries:

- Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land - <http://www.elcjh.org>
- Bright Stars of Bethlehem - <http://BrightStarsBethlehem.org>
- Tent of Nations educational and environmental farm and peace center – <http://TentofNations.org>
- Lutheran World Federation and Augusta Victoria Hospital - <https://jerusalem.lutheranworld.org>



Declaration on the Way: Church, Ministry, and Eucharist

Executive Summary

This *Declaration on the Way* is both an expression of the consensus achieved by Lutherans and Catholics on the central topics of church, ministry, and Eucharist and an indication of differences remaining to be resolved. The document consists of five sections:

- I. Introduction
- II. Statement of Agreements on Church, Ministry and Eucharist
- III. Agreements in the Lutheran/Catholic Dialogues—Elaborated and Documented
- IV. Remaining Differences and Reconciling Considerations
- V. Conclusion: Next Steps on the Way

The Introduction explains the inspiration for the document and its purposes. The inspiration comes from Cardinal Kurt Koch, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU), who in December 2011 proposed such a declaration “on the way” on these three topics; from the ecumenical leadership of Pope Francis and General Secretary Martin Junge of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF); and from the 2012 document of the International Lutheran—Roman Catholic Commission on Unity titled *From Conflict to Communion*.

Two key points from the conclusion of *From Conflict to Communion* guided the work:

- 1) Catholics and Lutherans should always begin from the perspective of unity and not from the point of view of division in order to strengthen what is held in common even though the differences are more easily seen and experienced.
- 2) Lutherans and Catholics must let themselves continuously be transformed by the encounter with each other and by mutual witness of faith.

Declaration on the Way seeks reception of the Statement of Agreements from the LWF and the PCPCU and their commitment to address the theological questions that remain. The *Declaration* also seeks from Catholics and Lutherans at local levels a deeper commitment to Christ and greater engagement and collaboration with one another. Thus the *Declaration* makes more visible the unity Catholics and Lutherans share as they approach the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

Section II presents 32 Statements of Agreement drawn from the international and regional dialogues of the last 50 years. This powerful litany of consensus reflects the real, if still incomplete, common affirmation possible in these crucial and inter-related areas. For example:

- (1) Catholics and Lutherans agree that the church on earth has been assembled by the triune God, who grants to its members their sharing in the triune divine life as God’s own people, as the body of the risen Christ, and as the temple of the Holy Spirit, while they are also called to give witness to these gifts so that others may come to share in them.
- (14) Catholics and Lutherans agree that all the baptized who believe in Christ share in the priesthood of Christ. For both Catholics and Lutherans, the common priesthood of all the baptized and the special, ordained ministry enhance one another.

(31) Catholics and Lutherans agree that Eucharistic Communion, as sacramental participation in the glorified body and blood of Christ, is a pledge that our life in Christ will be eternal, our bodies will rise, and the present world is destined for transformation, in the hope of uniting us in communion with the saints of all ages now with Christ in heaven.

The following section elaborates and documents each of the 32 consensus affirmations that comprise the Statement of Agreements. The longest and most detailed part of the document, this section grounds the Agreements in the work of the international and regional dialogues

Section IV looks to the future. It treats 15 topics that have arisen in dialogue where there are varying degrees of doctrinal difference. A number of them are seen not to be church dividing, and some possible ways forward are sketched. This section is more tentative and not intended to be comprehensive; it shows the “on the way” character of the *Declaration on the Way*.

The concluding section, practical in tone, speaks of next steps. It recommends that the LWF and the PCPCU “together receive, affirm and create a process to implement consequences of the 32 statements.” Recognition of these agreements is itself a further step on the way to unity.

This reception and affirmation naturally lead to practices that advance the growing communion between Lutherans and Catholics. Thus the Conclusion also invites the PCPCU and the LWF to create a process and timetable for addressing the remaining issues. It suggests that the expansion of opportunities for Catholics and Lutherans to receive Holy Communion together would be a sign of the agreements already reached and the distance traveled. It also encourages attention to “moral issues that are often deemed to be church dividing” that would be conducted “in the same spirit of mutual respect and commitment to unity characterized by work on justification, church, Eucharist and ministry.” Reception of the Statement of Agreements also invites local and regional responses. While much is already being done together, communities may look afresh at their collaboration. The Conclusion offers suggestions for initial, continued or enhanced collaboration at local and regional levels.

This *Declaration on the Way* invites church leaders, church scholars and church members to act in the spirit of Jesus’ prayer “That they all may be one” (John 17:21).

**ASSEMBLY
ACTION
CA16.02.04**

YES-912; NO-28

Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery

To receive with gratitude memorials from the Alaska, Northwest Washington, Montana, Southwest California, Rocky Mountain, Eastern North Dakota, South Dakota, Minneapolis Area, Saint Paul Area, Arkansas-Oklahoma, Northwest Wisconsin, East-Central Wisconsin, Indiana-Kentucky, Upstate New York, Northwestern Pennsylvania, Metropolitan Washington, D.C., North Carolina and Southeastern synods regarding the Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery;

To repudiate explicitly and clearly the European-derived doctrine of discovery as an example of the “improper mixing of the power of the church and the power of the sword” (Augsburg Confession Article XXVIII, Latin text), and to acknowledge and repent from this church’s complicity in the evils of colonialism in the Americas, which continue to harm tribal governments and individual tribal members;

To offer a statement of repentance and reconciliation to native nations in this country for damage done in the name of Christianity;

To encourage the Office of the Presiding Bishop to plan an appropriate national ceremony of repentance and reconciliation with tribal leaders, providing appropriate worship resources for similar synodical and congregational observances with local tribal leaders, at such times and places as are appropriate;

To direct the Domestic Mission unit, together with the American Indian and Alaska Native community and ecumenical partners, to develop resources to educate members of the ELCA and the wider community about the doctrine of discovery and its consequences for native peoples;

To direct the Domestic Mission unit to develop a strategy with the American Indian and Alaska Native community during the next triennium to be referred to the Church Council for action, including a mechanism to grow the Native American Ministry Fund of the ELCA; and

To affirm that this church will eliminate the doctrine of discovery from its contemporary rhetoric and programs, electing to practice accompaniment with native peoples instead of a missionary endeavor to them, allowing these partnerships to mutually enrich indigenous communities and the ministries of the ELCA.