

Churchwide Staff Support for Ministries in Chaplaincy, Pastoral Counseling and Clinical Education (MCPCCE)

1 WHEREAS The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) Church Council has
2 identified two of its primary strategic directions for 2004-2012 as: “stepping forward as a
3 public church that witnesses boldly to God’s love for all that God has created,” and
4 “bringing forth and supporting faithful, wise, and courageous leaders whose vocations
5 serve God’s mission in a pluralistic world,” and
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7 WHEREAS Ministries in Chaplaincy, Pastoral Counseling and Clinical Education
8 (MCPCCE) have been longstanding, primary expressions of the church’s witness and
9 outreach in and for the world, deeply rooted and integrated into the church’s total
10 mission, and
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12 WHEREAS through a call from their synod council or the ELCA Church Council, these
13 ordained, consecrated and commissioned ministers extend the love of God in Jesus Christ
14 to millions of persons annually, serving in and through a rich diversity of ELCA Social
15 Ministry Organizations, as well as hundreds of institutions and settings in the public
16 square—including health care, hospice, corrections, counseling centers, spiritual
17 direction, clinical pastoral education, long-term care, substance abuse treatment, police
18 and fire departments, and the workplace, and
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20 WHEREAS while the number of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) supervisors, pastoral
21 counselors, and chaplains in the Minneapolis Area Synod remain strong, this is not the
22 case nationwide. An alarming *30 percent decline* in the number of ELCA rostered
23 persons serving these ministries has occurred over the last 15-20 years dropping from
24 approximately 1,000 in 1988 to 690 in 2006 (CPE supervisors alone *eroding 66 percent*
25 from 148 in 1988 to 51 in 2006), the detrimental effects of these declines now impact the
26 public pastoral ministry of our church, and
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28 WHEREAS, from 1967-1987, the former Lutheran Council in the United States
29 (LCUSA) provided for three full-time staff working in direct support of these ministries;
30 reduced in 1988 to one full-time ELCA churchwide staff person; further reduced in 1994
31 to one half-time person; still further reduced in 2003 to a one-quarter time “deployed
32 consultant,” and
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34 WHEREAS, those serving as synodical representatives and regional representatives for
35 MCPCCE as well as all rostered MCPCCE ministers and those seeking positions in
36 chaplaincy fully depend on the churchwide staff to provide necessary services of support,
37 recruitment, ecclesiastical endorsement, interpretation, advocacy, and consultation, and
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39 WHEREAS the ELCA requires all candidates for word and sacrament ministry to
40 complete one unit of CPE prior to ordination and all who receive ecclesiastical

41 endorsement to have completed four units of CPE, yet our ability to have Lutheran
42 presence in these programs has decreased, and
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44 WHEREAS Resolution 14 (see background information) of the ELCA's social statement,
45 "Caring for Health: Our Shared Endeavor" (adopted in Churchwide Assembly, 8/15/03),
46 called upon the former Division for Ministry to (a) study the current trends and future
47 needs for ministries in healthcare chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, spiritual direction, and
48 clinical education, (b) examine the clinical and academic education needs for the future
49 of these ministries, and (c) present the findings and possible recommendations for action
50 to the board of the Division for Ministry by the end of the year 2005, therefore be it
51 finally
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53 RESOLVED that the 2007 Minneapolis Area Synod memorialize the 2007 ELCA
54 Churchwide Assembly to direct the Vocation and Education Unit to again fund at least a
55 half-time churchwide professional staff position by February 1, 2008 to coordinate,
56 interpret, and advocate for ministries of chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, and clinical
57 education (MCPCCE) as a vital part of the ecclesial and missional strategy of this church.

Author: Diane Greve, University of Minnesota Medical Center, Fairview, 612-273-4483

Submitted by: Diane Greve, University of Minnesota Medical Center, Fairview; Bill Dexheimer Pharris, University of Minnesota Medical Center, Fairview; James Meyer, Augustana Health Care Center; Jodi Barry, Mercy Hospital; Bruce Pederson, Fairview Health System

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Contact: Diane Greve, University of Minnesota Medical Center, Fairview, 612-273-4483

Adapted from a draft of a resolution prepared for the Metro New York Synod, ELCA.

The Reference and Counsel Committee recommends adoption of this resolution.

Background Information

“Caring for Health: Our Shared Endeavor” is the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) Social Statement, adopted at the 2003 ELCA Churchwide Assembly, that looks at the complexity of the health care situation today. Within that statement there are references to the need for people to use health resources wisely and with careful deliberation. Ethical guidelines are provided for considering health care decisions. While chaplains, pastoral counselors, and clinical educators are not identified as key resources in the hospitals and nursing homes to assist people in making those decisions, the implementing resolution 14 included at the end of the social statement calls upon the ELCA to (a) study the current trends and future needs for ministries in health care chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, spiritual direction, and clinical education, (b) examine the clinical and academic education needs for the future of these ministries, and (c) present the findings and possible recommendations for action to the board of the Division for Ministry by the end of the year 2005.

With the reorganization of the churchwide structure, the report was not completed until 2007. And, due to limited churchwide staff availability to help in conducting the study, the report does not fully address the future needs regarding these ministries. The report does affirm, however, that “given the current and future trends in health care in this country, there will be a need to increase the number of qualified and professionally trained pastoral providers.” These ELCA pastoral providers are employed by Lutheran health care institutions and by other faith-based institutions as well as those without a faith affiliation.