

July 7, 2016

Dear 2016 Synod Assembly Voting Members and Friends:

Over the past year, the executive directors/presidents of the North Carolina Synod's agencies and institutions have discussed with the Bishop our desire for our already close relationships with the Synod to become even closer. The ELCA defines the three divisions that make up the legal entities of the church as expressions. The legal expressions of the church are congregations, synods, and churchwide. While we Lutheran institutions don't have a desire to be involved in the legal structure of the church, we are an expression of the church. The agencies and institutions of the North Carolina Synod proposed that the church might view affiliated ministries as, in principle and in fact, an essential fourth expression of the church. We join the other expressions in being the Church in the world.

Several months ago, Lenoir-Rhyne University, Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, Agape/Kure Beach Ministries, Lutheran Retirement Ministries of Alamance County, NovusWay, and Lutheran Services Carolinas, after consultation with Bishop Tim Smith, began collaborating on a resolution to put into words what we are already doing in practice: all being Church together. Dr. Robert Allen agreed to put our resolution in proper form, and he did a wonderful job. Thank you, Dr. Allen.

The Reference and Counsel Committee recommended its adoption to the Assembly. In hindsight, we now realize there was a piece of the process missing. This was made clear by a few questions that arose when the resolution was considered at Synod Assembly. The Rev. Dr. Mark Fitsimmons noted that he did not understand the context of the resolution. That made perfect sense, as we had failed to provide the important background for bringing this resolution before the Synod.

Dr. Allen was not present to speak for the resolution as he was recovering from surgery, and none of us directors of institutions were Voting Members with the right to speak, so the resolution came to the Assembly with no context. While it passed with no negative votes, we missed an opportunity to completely explain our thought process. We can rectify that now, after the fact.

Many denominations and even some other Lutheran synods do not have the close relationships we enjoy here in North Carolina. The congregations and the North Carolina Synod have extremely close ties and very good working relationships with all of the agencies and institutions of the church. That is not true in all denominations or even in all synods. In some denominations and in some locations, organizations and institutions are loosening or severing ties with their church bodies, or they just don't get along. The resolution was a way to spark more discussion about all of us being Church together. We are all expressions of our church!

We may be discussing this again at a future Synod Assembly. We originally intended that an additional final "be it resolved" clause include that this concept be memorialized to the ELCA, as there are Lutheran agencies and institutions around the ELCA that desire closer relationships and partnerships with the church. But in the interest of time, and until we could discuss this further, we decided to leave that piece for future consideration.

Thank you for allowing me to share this background on the resolution. In the meantime, please contact me at tgoins@LSCarolinas.net if you have any questions or would like to discuss this further. And thank you for our partnership across our North Carolina Synod.

Yours in Christ,

Ted W. Goins, Jr., President
Lutheran Services Carolinas