

A LETTER FROM A PASTOR TO HIS CONGREGATION  
REGARDING THE ELCA'S "MYTHS AND FACTS" DOCUMENT

March 29, 2025

Dear Westchester Members,

I was recently contacted by the Bishop of the Pacifica Synod (San Diego/Orange County area) and asked to share this document with my congregation with the hope that Westchester Lutheran members wouldn't make a decision to disaffiliate from the ELCA based on "myths and misinformation." Our own Bishop Bos recently reiterated that request.

I said I would share the document, and as soon as I said that I regretted it because I realized that, like every study or document I have ever received from the ELCA, this would likely be an attempt at manipulation and misdirection. I was correct.

Upon reviewing this document, I found that it made use of one of the ELCA's historically favorite manipulation tactics: the "**Strawman Fallacy.**" They don't call it that, of course, but that's what it is. Have you heard of this? In debates and discussions, it involves setting up an easily knocked down "Strawman" of the other person's argument by misstating it, leaving out important parts of it, simplifying it or overstating it so that it seems ridiculous, but it ultimately is no longer a truthful statement of the other person's concerns or issues. Then they knock it down and dismiss it as irrelevant or easily proven to be false.

The problem, of course, is that this is a deceptive manipulation tactic, designed to sway people who are not well-informed and want to just trust the ELCA. I have seen this tactic used by ELCA leadership over the years dozens of times. It is especially useful with large groups of laypeople who have limited understanding of scripture or of the Lutheran Confessions. The reason the ELCA uses it is because it usually works – but it is dishonest and misleading. How does this belong in the church? How does it serve God? It does not.

Here is the document that was sent to me. I have highlighted all the concerning sections in **red** and made comments in blue. The ELCA document is in black.

## ELCA Office of the Secretary

### Myths and Facts About Congregational Governance

Recently, a number of rumors have been circulating regarding supposed changes to ELCA governance coming before the 2025 Churchwide Assembly from the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church (CRLC). **Some** are suggesting that the Churchwide Assembly will eliminate congregational autonomy. **Others** are claiming that the Churchwide Assembly will authorize synods or the ELCA churchwide organization to seize congregational property. To be clear, these rumors are untrue.

No one that I know is claiming that the 2025 Churchwide Assembly will eliminate congregational autonomy or authorized synods to seize property. This is a **Strawman** argument – setting up a falsehood that they then knock over. In actual fact, congregational autonomy is **already under attack**. The changes that are going to be **recommended** by the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church and the DEI Audit (more on these later) do, in fact, facilitate a top-down management of churches by synod bishops and the national church. The intent is clear.

- 1) There is ample evidence CURRENTLY that bishops and their assistants are quick to use “synodical administration” to prevent churches from leaving the ELCA, resulting in very expensive lawsuits. This is literally what the Lutheran Congregations Support Network videos are all about – actual stories of such synodical overreach. These stories are not “myths and disinformation.” This tactic has already been deceptively used in our own synod at the Synod Assembly in 2023 (making false statements, misleading assembly voters into approving their plan).
- 2) The forced inclusion of **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility** (DEIA) mandates on all 3 levels of constitutions (including those for congregations) **ARE** the mechanism for punishing pastors and churches who see DEI-A for what it is: Racist, divisive, destructive, and the path to destroying or “deconstructing” what was in the ELCA (and formerly, in the ALC) to rebuild it. These mandates are already in the Churchwide constitution and the Synodical constitution. The congregation constitutions are next.
- 3) Bishops and staff are already trying to impose this on congregations, as they have with institutions of the ELCA, and only those who actually read constitutions are refusing to comply (I have experienced this and called the bishop’s assistant on it). Soon all the constitutions (churchwide, synodical and congregational) will be brought into alignment, and automatically exclude non-compliant pastors and churches as being therefore racist and sinful. Such pastors are and will be excluded

from serious consideration in the call process, and such congregations will not be sent pastoral candidates unless, according to the results of the DEIA audit on the ELCA website (linked below), they comply and go through a re-education process.

- 4) Already conservative pastors and churches who express opinions contrary to the prevailing DEIA narrative are insulted and excluded. Conservative views are not welcome at all in the ELCA.

### **What is the Churchwide Assembly?**

The Churchwide Assembly is the highest legislative authority in the ELCA churchwide organization. It meets every three years. This year, the 2025 Churchwide Assembly will meet in Phoenix, Arizona from July 28 through August 2.

### **Will the Churchwide Assembly consider constitutional changes?**

Yes, as it always does. At every meeting, the *Churchwide Assembly considers changes to the Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA*, which include the *Constitution for Synods* and the *Model Constitution for Congregations*. These proposed changes come to the Churchwide Assembly from the Church Council, which serves as the churchwide organization's board of directors. The Church Council must act on the proposed changes and transmit them to the synods at least six months prior to the Churchwide Assembly. [They neglect to mention that a “re-constituting convention” is planned to be held shortly after the Churchwide Assembly meeting, which will institute changes in all constitutions, especially those of congregations.](#)

### **Do any of the proposed changes eliminate congregational autonomy?**

No. The proposed changes can be found [here](#), and the rationales can be found [here](#). As you can see from reading these documents, there is nothing in the proposed changes that would eliminate, or even reduce, congregational autonomy and self-governance. In particular, the proposed changes to the *Model Constitution for Congregations* are minimal and do not reduce congregational autonomy in any way.

This is classic **misdirection** by **omitting** some important information. What ISN'T mentioned is this: **the results of a DEIA audit**, which have been on the ELCA website since 2023, that have proposed changes to ALL of the model constitutions of synods **and** churches imposing a uniformity of “ELCA institutional culture” on churches. It would require that churches “get in line” with the discriminatory DEIA policies that they want to impose.

All pastors and church leaders will be required to go through DEIA indoctrination training, and for those who refuse to participate, will be subject to synodical administration for what

will be declared “sinful.” Scripture is being reinterpreted to mean exactly the opposite of what it has always been understood to mean. Against Black Lives Matters? “Racist!” Against DEIA? “Racist!” Pro-Israel? “REALLY Racist!!!!” Against reparations? “RACIST!” Won’t use preferred pronouns? “Evil, sinful and hurtful!” Anti-abortion/pro-life? “Sexist!” Anti-trans agenda? “Cruel, hateful, transphobic!!!!” Want to allow scripture to mean what it says? “The Bible says what WE say it says! Never mind what you actually read for yourselves!”

This DEIA audit is on the ELCA website here <https://resources.elca.org/office-of-the-secretary/deia-report-part-1/> and here <https://resources.elca.org/office-of-the-secretary/deia-report-part-2/> DEIA IS the mechanism for disciplining non-conforming congregations and bringing them in line.

All it takes is a vocal minority to organize a vote on the Churchwide Assembly meeting floor to get things rolling. This is always the pattern, and any opposition is minimized and outmaneuvered. Also, there are plans to call an immediate reconstituting convention of the ELCA quickly after the Churchwide Assembly, to implement these changes.

**Do any of the proposed changes allow synods (or the churchwide organization) to seize congregational property?**

No. The proposed changes do not affect congregational property ownership. Likewise, there are no changes to the provisions related to synod administration or preservation of congregational property. [Same issues as above, and it will come so slickly and quickly that people won’t know what hit them.](#)

**Do any of the proposed changes affect the disaffiliation process?**

No. There are no proposed changes to the disaffiliation process. [While this is technically true, the United Methodist Church denomination, in dealing with its conservative churches that wanted to leave recently, actually manipulated their disaffiliation process to keep churches from leaving. They lied and used delaying tactics to assume control of congregations. Multi-million-dollar lawsuits are happening over this. The precedent has been set for churches. The ELCA would absolutely do the same thing if it means silencing or getting rid of conservative pastors and keeping control of hundreds of millions of dollars’ worth of church properties and endowments.](#)

**What is the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church (CRLC)?**

The 2022 Churchwide Assembly instructed the Church Council to create the CRLC to review the constitutional Statements of Purpose and Principles of Organization of the three

expressions of the church (congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization), keeping in mind this church's commitment to **dismantle racism**.

This is called GASLIGHTING! (another manipulation tactic that basically says "don't believe your lying eyes! Just believe US"). I notice they **left off the end of the purpose of the CRLC**: to **"present its findings and recommendations to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly in preparation for a possible reconstituting convention to be called under the rules for a special meeting of the Churchwide Assembly."** THIS is where the changes will be implemented, at this special meeting where the existing constitutions of churches will be reworked by the recommendations of the CRLC and the DEIA audit – and churches will have no say in the process.

And by claiming that the ELCA is 97% Caucasian as a result of racism (which it is NOT the reason), the CRLC can say and do whatever it wants and it will get away with it.

### **Does the CRLC have the authority to make any changes?**

No. It is an advisory body formed to make findings and recommendations. True, however they operate under a mandate engineered for them at the 2022 Churchwide Assembly. The CRLC has as its members people who work with (and for) special interest, agenda-driven groups which know how to exercise power in the ELCA and make their agendas pass.

I attended a pastors' conference in 2023 (I was there providing audio and video support for them) at which the leaders of the CRLC made a presentation on what they were planning to do. They ALREADY HAD EVERYTHING PLANNED about their vision for the Renewed Lutheran Church. Their ongoing meetings really are all about how to force those changes onto the ELCA and its congregations. **This very letter** from the ELCA's Office of the Secretary is an attempt to confuse people and block opposition to the coming changes.

### **Do the CRLC's recommendations eliminate congregational self-governance, threaten congregational property, or affect the disaffiliation process?**

**No.** Although the CRLC's report is not yet complete, none of the recommendations advanced to date would do any of these things. Some of the CRLC's recommendations are already incorporated in the proposed changes the Church Council is sending to the Churchwide Assembly. Those recommendations are specifically noted in the rationale document. The CRLC has **not** been open about its deliberations and recommendations, and as it started to experience pushback, became less and less open about what it was doing. Literally everything they have published about their activities has been so general that it is meaningless. And again, they do not mention the DEIA audit referenced above. These two things, recommendations from the CRLC and the DEIA audit, are the

primary/only inputs for the new constitutions. They have an agenda, and it involves tighter control over congregations, pastors and church leaders.

### **Where can I learn more?**

The proposed changes to the constitutions offered to the assembly by the Church Council are [here](#), and the rationales are [here](#).

The CRLC's home page is here: <https://www.elca.org/about/leadership/church-council/crlc>.

I don't like being manipulated and misled – do you? What's being planned for the ELCA is going to completely change the nature of the church and its congregations. The intention is that the Gospel we preach will no longer be about the forgiveness of sin by God, or salvation through Jesus' death and resurrection. Salvation in the new ELCA will come only through adherence to the new DEIA and "anti-racism" rules. Scripture will be interpreted by THEM and not allowed to speak for itself.

Although these changes and new rules claim to be against racism and discrimination, they substitute an imagined **Strawman** of "white racism" (which as far as I can see does not really exist in the church!) for the hellish reality of their own racism directed against anyone who dares to question them. The gospel of God's love through Jesus Christ is not necessary in the ELCA – just follow their law. And don't ask questions.

All the CRLC has to do at the 2025 Churchwide Assembly in July is to say that if we don't follow along with their "Authentic Diversity" plan and make their changes, we're white supremacist racists, sexist, homophobic, colonialist, anti-Bible (their interpretation), anti-Jesus (again, their interpretation of what Jesus would do), cruel, uncaring, hateful, spiteful, greedy, selfish and whatever other slander they can think of, and people will be silenced (I have already experienced this form of manipulation from a bishop's assistant when I dared ask questions). The ELCA Churchwide Assembly voters' aversion to change and concerns, if there even are any, will collapse like a house of cards. It always eventually works in the ELCA.

They honestly will tell you that if they can make the vote go their way, it is "the work of the Holy Spirit" – even if it's contrary to scripture. Funny how they don't say that it's the work of the Spirit when they don't get their way – so they've become very good at manipulating votes and agendas.

Pastor Larry Becker  
Westchester Lutheran Church  
Los Angeles, CA