

Memorial

Stand up for Human Rights, an End to the Occupation of Palestine, and Recognition of Palestinian Statehood

WHEREAS the ELCA in its 2017 social message *On Human Rights* states that “concern for the well-being of others lies at the very heart of Christian faith (Matthew 22:36-40)”; and that “The ELCA as a church... supports human rights around the globe in its work with global partners” and “our church seeks to accompany those among our global partners who suffer human rights violations” (p. 10); and

WHEREAS the United Nations in its Resolutions 446, 452, 465, 471 and 476 has already declared that the state of Israel’s military occupation of the West Bank is illegal according to international law; and

WHEREAS Israel’s ongoing occupation of the Palestinian Territories of the West Bank and Gaza continues to endanger the security and well-being of both Palestinians and Israelis and makes peace in the region an unattainable goal; and

WHEREAS the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) in 2005 established the initiative, “Peace Not Walls: Stand for Justice in the Holy Land” (recently renamed “SUMUD¹: for Justice in Palestine and Israel”) and continues to call for equality, human dignity, safety, and security for all the Jews, Christians, and Muslims of the Holy Land; and

WHEREAS the ELCA, in its 1995 Social Statement “For Peace in God’s World,” states:

“Recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.” These words from the Preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) are consistent with our understanding of humans created in God’s image. Human rights provide a common universal standard of justice for living with our differences, and they give moral and legal standing to the individual in the international community.

We therefore will continue to teach about human rights, protest their violation, advocate their international codification, and support effective ways to monitor and ensure compliance with them. Our priorities are to:

- oppose genocide and other grievous violations of human rights such as torture, religious and racial oppression, forced conscription (impressment), forced labor, and war crimes (including organized rape);
- provide for the most basic necessities of the poor; and
- defend the human rights of groups most susceptible to violations, especially all minorities, women, and children; and

WHEREAS illegal military occupation has included the following activities that contravene these international human rights:

- Restriction of the freedom of movement within the Palestinian Territories due to checkpoints, and restrictive residency cards;
- Military incarceration without due process or a civil trial;
- Demolition of family homes;
- Restriction of electricity and water usage that is administrated by the state of Israel;
- Appropriation of Palestinian homes in Jerusalem;
- Appropriation of Palestinian land by illegal Israeli settlements; and

WHEREAS Israel's human rights violations against Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, are egregious and include war crimes, crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing, and genocide, including

- Indiscriminate and disproportionate bombing resulting in tens of thousands of civilian deaths, including over 15,000 children since October 7, 2023, and the displacement of more than 1.9 million people;
- Deprivation of adequate access to safe drinking water, food, medical care, and electricity;
- Destruction of buildings – including hospitals, places of worship, homes, and schools – and the destruction of electricity, sewage and water infrastructure essential for survival;
- Expropriation of Palestinian land and the expansion of Israeli settlements;
- Settler violence and vandalism with the aim of instilling fear into Palestinian communities;
- Cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment of prisoners;
- Sexual and gender-based violence, including public stripping and nudity, sexual harassment and sexual assault;
- Demolition of homes;
- Administrative detention (being held without trial, without charges, without the disclosure of alleged evidence for periods ranging from several months to several years);
- Restrictions on the freedom of movement within the Palestinian Territories leading to a life of constant uncertainty and obstructing the development of a stable economy; therefore, be it

RESOLVED: That the Rocky Mountain Synod memorialize the 2025 ELCA Assembly to encourage ELCA members, congregations, synods, and appropriate Churchwide units to advocate for human rights, justice, and peace for all Palestinians and Israelis and support policies that bring to an end the occupation and promote a peaceful resolution of the conflict; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED: That the Rocky Mountain Synod memorialize the 2025 ELCA Assembly to urge the Presiding Bishop to direct a letter to the President of the United States, to the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House, calling on the U.S. government to

- recognize Palestine as a sovereign state and support Palestine's full membership in the United Nations;
- halt military assistance to Israel (especially bombs and equipment that have been used to devastate Gaza), investigate the use of U.S. military aid to Israel to ensure compliance with U.S. and international human rights law, and work to end the genocide against the Palestinians of Gaza;
- reject schemes to remove Palestinians from Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, address the catastrophic living conditions that could force Palestinians to leave, and work to end the rampant settler violence against Palestinians in the West Bank; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED: That the Rocky Mountain Synod memorialize the 2025 ELCA Assembly to encourage individuals and congregations of the ELCA to pray for Palestinians and Israelis as they work to create a future of justice, equality, reconciliation, and peace for all in both communities, including specifically our sisters and brothers of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL), Augusta Victoria Hospital operated by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), and the World Council of Churches/Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (WCC/EAPPI), as they bring comfort, support, accountability, and relief.

Submitted by the Rocky Mountain Synod Global Church Network

Rev. Dr. Pamela JS Challis	Trinity Lutheran, Boulder, CO
Ralston Deffenbaugh	Shepherd of the Mountains, Estes Park, CO
Rev. Leta Arndt Behrens	Our Saviour's, Fort Collins, CO
Terry Cole	St Paul Lutheran Church Albuquerque NM
Mary Templeton	Community of Joy, Rio Rancho, NM
Rev. Rebecca Aardahl	St. Paul Lutheran Community of Faith, Denver, CO
Rev. Michael Stadmueller	Our Saviour's, Fort Collins, CO
Rev. Rich Reiten	Trinity Lutheran, Fort Collins, CO
Peter Kapenga	Peace Lutheran, El Paso, TX
Rev. Diana Linden-Johnson	Atonement Lutheran, Boulder, CO
Jan Miller	Augustana Lutheran, Denver, CO
Rev. Joel W. Pancoast	Zion Lutheran Church, Loveland, CO
Sara Love	St. Paul Lutheran Church, Albuquerque, NM
Rev. Chris J. Davis	Trinity Lutheran Church, Loveland, CO
Jo Ann Wacker-Farrand	Augustana Lutheran Church, Denver, CO
Kristian Aardahl	St. Paul Lutheran Community of Faith, Denver, CO
Rev. Inga Oyan Longbrake	Messiah Community Church, Denver, CO
Rev. Hannah DiPasquale	Peace Lutheran Church, Las Cruces, NM

Resolutions

- Honoring Indigenous Peoples Through Faith, Respect and Action
- Renewing Our Welcome: Strengthening Our Reconciled in Christ Commitment
- Campus Ministry

2025 Rocky Mountain Synod Resolution

Honoring Indigenous Peoples Through Faith, Respect and Action

For this is the message you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another... Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action. 1 John 3:11 and 18.

Whereas: the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA adopted the "Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery" (1); and the ELCA Church Council approved in 2021 a statement "To American Indian and Alaska Native People" to act on issues of indigenous justice and equity (2); and the 2021 Rocky Mountain Synod (RMS) Assembly adopted a Resolution "Renewed Relationship: a 21st Century Resolution to Care for Creation" (3); and

Whereas: The lands of Indigenous peoples in the RMS are experiencing increasing drought, wildfires and other climate changes. For Indigenous communities where people are culturally connected to the land, these changes are leading directly to food and water insecurities, extreme heat and other health problems, and threatening livelihoods, cultural practices and mental health;(4) and

Whereas: the ways Indigenous peoples care for the land is rooted in core values – respect, responsibility, reciprocity, gratitude, mindfulness, humility, and agency – that are learned through the intimate relationships Indigenous peoples have with the land (5), recognizing that we can learn from their wisdom and work alongside Indigenous communities to live in harmony with creation as stewards, not owners, of creation.

Therefore, be it resolved: that Lutherans of the RMS, in this time of natural resource challenges and opportunities, address Indigenous peoples through meaningful action appropriate to each state and local setting in the RMS.

Be it further resolved: that congregations be encouraged to engage with ELCA documents to guide their understanding of the underlying causes of harm to Indigenous peoples in the United States and within the RMS,

Be it further resolved: that congregations be encouraged to use appropriate land acknowledgements (6,7) of Tribal nations and Indigenous peoples for church gatherings, worship, programs and written materials,

Be it further resolved: that congregations be encouraged to study and utilize educational resources that address changing climate impacts to the entire RMS with special attention to the long-term stewardship of land, air and water,

Be it further resolved: that congregations be encouraged to recognize the value of indigenous ways of caring for land and creation and work to incorporate these values and methods in creation care policies and activities,

Be it further resolved: that congregations be encouraged to engage with and support Indigenous peoples and organizations that educate, assist and lift up tribal rights, repair social injustices, and spread stewardship knowledge.

Submitted by: Rocky Mountain Synod Creation Care Team

References:

- (1) Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Social Policy Resolution CA16.02.04, "Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery", 2016
<https://www.elca.org/our-work/publicly-engaged-church/justice-portal>
- (2) ELCA Church Council "A Declaration of the ELCA TO AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE PEOPLE, 2021
<https://www.elca.org/our-work/publicly-engaged-church/justice-portal>
- (3) Rocky Mountain Synod Resolution "Renewed Relationship: a 21st Century Resolution to Care for Creation", 2021
- (4) [**Climate Change and the Health of Indigenous Populations | US EPA**](#)
- (5) Caring For The Land: Indigenous Practices, Community Values, Changes Over Time, and Building Values-Based Environmental Initiatives A Report from the "Weaving Indigenous knowledge systems and Western science towards conservation and management of wildlife and the environment" Project. [Menzies-et-al CaringForTheLandReport 16-03-2022 for-Results-Sharing.pdf](#)
- (6) ELCA Land Acknowledgement Guide, Oct 26, 2021,
[Land Acknowledgement Guide - ELCA Resources](#)
- (7) Whose Land are You On? Chatham University - Jennie King Mellon Library
<https://library.chatham.edu/whoseland>

2025 Rocky Mountain Synod Resolution

Renewing Our Welcome: Strengthening Our Reconciled in Christ Commitment

Whereas all people are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27) and are called to love one another as Christ has loved us (John 13:34) and all people include those who identify as Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, or Asexual (LGBTQIA+);

Whereas the Rocky Mountain Synod in assembly adopted its welcome statement and became a Reconciling in Christ Synod, affirming its commitment to LGBTQIA+ inclusion in the life of the church;

Whereas LGBTQIA+ people celebrate their identities at various times throughout the year, including but not limited to Coming Out Day (Oct. 10), Transgender Day of Remembrance (Nov. 20), Transgender Day of Visibility, Bisexual Awareness Day, and Pride Month;

Whereas the ELCA Conference of Bishops has affirmed in its statements a commitment to stand with those who are marginalized and oppressed;

Therefore, be it resolved that the Rocky Mountain Synod renew its commitment as a Reconciled in Christ Synod in the following ways:

1. Public Acknowledgment & Education

- o The Synod office is encouraged to prominently acknowledge LGBTQIA+ observances (Coming Out Day, Transgender Day of Remembrance, Pride Month, Bisexual Awareness Day, etc.) through the Synod newsletter, website, and other communications.
- o The bishop, alongside other pastors, deacons, synod staff, and lay leaders of this synod, resolve to publish statements and reflections in the synod newsletter to highlight the significance of these events for the life of the church and the wider world.

2. Worship & Community Engagement

- o The Synod office is encouraged to support, encourage, and provide resources for congregations to observe Transgender Day of Remembrance and RIC Sunday.
- o Synod staff is encouraged to actively participate in these services, reaffirming the synod's Reconciled in Christ status and commitment to LGBTQIA+ justice.

3. Advocacy & Public Witness

- o The Rocky Mountain Synod, through the leadership of Bishop Megan and Lutheran Advocacy, will advocate against laws targeting LGBTQIA+ individuals in accordance with the social statements of this church.
- o The Synod office will provide resources and guidance for congregations, clergy, and lay leaders to engage in advocacy and public witness in their communities.

4. Congregational Encouragement & Support

- o The Synod office is encouraged to equip and encourage congregations to consider becoming Reconciled in Christ congregations, offering training, mentorship, and networking with existing RIC communities.

Submitted by: Pastor Bill Dohle, King of Kings, Pueblo

Pastor Michael Stadtmueller, Our Savior, Ft. Collins

2025 Rocky Mountain Synod Resolution

Campus Ministry Resolution

WHEREAS, the ELCA states the mission of campus ministry “is to invite people in academic settings to engage more deeply with the teachings of Jesus Christ and the community that bears his name, so that they can discover and fulfill their vocation as disciples”² and synods are also called to advance this ministry in higher education by advocating for campus ministry within the synod,³ and acknowledging campus ministry has developed lay and rostered leaders for the church for more than 100 years¹ and continues to raise up leaders for the church and for the world, who today are campus pastors, scientists, organizers, congregational leaders, musicians and more¹; and

WHEREAS, Campus Ministry bears witness to God’s amazing grace and provides an important voice of justice in the academic community and higher education,² providing an important ministry to young adults that includes discipleship building, faith development/formation, living out a call to share the good news by serving God, the community and our neighbors, and are places where students experience belonging and safety, often serving as safe havens for young adults of marginalized communities (i.e. LBGTQUIA+ community), and provide opportunities for communal meals, fellowship events, worship, and the invitation for students to connect and be nourished; and

WHEREAS, financial limitations are a major concern for most campus ministries with decreased funding through traditional and institutional avenues, budget deficits, and a decline in centralized funding sources, we recognize the Rocky Mountain Synod and ELCA Churchwide continue to provide valuable support to campus ministry, both financial and otherwise, but have been unable to provide the same levels of funding as in previous years due to decreases in benevolence, however continued financial support for campus ministries is essential for the continued survival, health, viability, and flourishing of Campus Ministry in the Rocky Mountain Synod and many ministries have been forced to consider fundraising campaigns and development programs requiring pastors and leaders to concentrate on funding which takes time away from the focus on ministry to young adults; and

WHEREAS, many Campus ministries operate as independent nonprofits, some as stand-alone ministries, some as partners within intergenerational congregations, and are often ecumenical working with one or more full communion partners (Episcopalian, Methodist, Presbyterian, United Church of Christ, and others), and continue to serve a vital and creative mission in promoting the Word of God and in ministering to college and university students, faculty, and staff in the synod; and

WHEREAS, our campus pastors and site leaders, local campus boards, students, congregational members, friends, alumni, Rocky Mountain Synod Campus Ministry Committee, Rocky Mountain Synod Council, bishop, and other supporters deserve recognition for their dedication to the cause of campus ministry;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Rocky Mountain Synod in Assembly support and affirm Campus Ministry as a crucial part of the whole church's ministry to and with young adults by:

- encouraging all of its members, pastors, support staff, representatives, and friends to pray for and support Rocky Mountain Synod Campus Ministries in proclaiming God's Word on our college and university campuses.
- lifting up campus ministry in print, online publications, and other media systems
- encouraging financial support from congregations and individual members both through benevolence to the Rocky Mountain Synod and direct support to RMS campus ministries
- encouraging congregations to highlight campus ministry one Sunday each year and strengthen their ongoing relationships with campus ministry and develop new relationships and methods of support, and

RESOLVED, that we embrace campus ministry as a way to encourage young adults in faith formation and leadership and celebrate that these young people grow to be rostered ministers, lay leaders, teachers, and more within our congregations, and become leaders in our communities, and across the globe.

Signed:

- Rocky Mountain Synod Campus Ministry Committee,
- Board of Directors, Lutheran Campus Ministry of New Mexico/Open Table Connections, Albuquerque, NM, Rev. Rhonda Newby-Torres, Diane Brauer, Board President
- Lutheran Episcopal Campus Ministry, Greeley, CO: Deacon Korra Looschen
- Bread + Belonging Campus Ministry, Boulder, CO: Rev. Monica Butler
- LuMin – CSU Campus Ministry, Ft. Collins, CO: Rev. Paul Judson; Victoria Burkett, campus minister
- The Rev. Diana Linden-Johnson, Rocky Mountain Synod, Synod Minister for Rostered and Lay Leadership

References

- (1) Living Lutheran article April 2021 <https://www.livinglutheran.org/2021/04/perspective-historical-impact-and-future-hopes-of-lutheran-campus->

[ministry/#:~:text=However%2C%20LCM%20has%20been%20a,the%20needs%20of%20all%20stud ents.](#)

- (2) **ELCA page on campus ministry** <https://www.elca.org/our-work/related-ministries/campus-ministry>
- (3) **2017 Vision, Process, Practice – ELCA** <https://www.luminelca.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Guidelines-and-Recommendations-ELCA-Campus-Ministry-2017.pdf>