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ELCIC Convention 2009 Minutes

**TWELFTH BIENNIAL CONVENTION
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA
UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA, VANCOUVER, BC
JUNE 25–28, 2009**

**Holy Land policy
Support for Kyoto plus
Illegitimate debt
Housing for the poor and subsidized housing high priorities
Human Trafficking
Congregational Sanctuary for Mikhail Lennikov
Be better stewards of creation at convention**

Holy Land policy was presented by the National Church Council

The other motions came from the floor of convention, at the initiative of delegates.

The convention stewardship motion was presented by the youth assembly.

Holy Land policy

NC-09-09 MS that Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) recognizes;

- That God desires that all people live in peace and without division and that there is a deep longing among Palestinians, Israelis, and the people of the world for safety, freedom, justice, security, dignity, and respect.
- That the three Abrahamic faiths have their origins among these Semitic people whose descendants have continuously lived on this land called holy;
- That churches and faith groups have been working to build a lasting peace in the region;
- That Israel has a right to live in peace with security and that all of Israel's neighbours need to recognize this right.
- That Palestinians have a democratic right to determine their future and to a democratic and viable state, with full recognition by Israel;
- That the city of Jerusalem must be shared and that all faith groups must have open and free access to their holy places;
- The tragic loss of life and horrific human cost of the legacy of violence on individuals, families, and communities in the Holy Land;
- That attacks on civilians including suicide bombings, targeted assassinations, and military attacks in/from populated areas which are known beforehand to likely result in civilian deaths are unacceptable and must be deplored;
- The deep religious divisions this ongoing conflict causes between the three monotheistic faiths of Judaism, Christianity and Islam;
- That theological distortions of Christian faith (such as Christian Zionism) result from a misreading of the Bible and the current situation;
- The complex historic, political and social dynamics, the ongoing prejudices and the escalating anger and animosity that have fuelled this ongoing conflict;
- The considerable political work that has been done, particularly by the United Nations, governments, and voluntary organizations to develop a framework for peace and the need for renewed and more vigorous initiatives that safeguard the security of Israel and the freedom of Palestine;
- The need to address the economic consequences of increasing poverty, continuing high unemployment, and expanding social dislocation; and
- That violence, counter-violence and instability in the Holy Land is a threat to regional and global peace.

AND THEREFORE,

This convention commits this church to supporting and working for justice and peace in the Holy Land by:

PRAYING FOR PEACE IN THE HOLY LAND

- That the ELCIC calls on its members to regularly pray for peace for all people in the Holy Land, especially the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL), and to designate a Sunday annually for prayers in congregations across the ELCIC;
- That the worship resources of this church include sample petitions and prayers for the people in the Holy Land; and
- That worship resources from churches within The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and ecumenical partners be made available on the ELCIC website for congregational and synodical use.

EDUCATING FOR PEACE

1. That ELCIC members be encouraged to study the history and the current events in the Holy Land;

2. That the ELCIC commend to members the *Jerusalem Declaration on Christian Zionism* issued by the heads of churches in Jerusalem in August 2006, signed by Bishop Munib Younan of the (ELCJHL) and further that the ELCIC identify resources that help members understand the very problematic theological implications of such views that can provide a faith based justification for religious divisiveness and violence in this region;
3. That related communiqués by the LWF be distributed by the ELCIC Communications Office to congregations and synods;
4. That the ELCIC add a page to its website that identifies resources from the LWF, KAIROS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and other partners for worship, financial support, education and advocacy;
5. That congregations and synods be encouraged to host/participate in at least one event a year to discuss and learn more about the current situation;
6. That the ELCIC commend Canadian Lutheran World Relief's (CLWR) *Four Corners-Alternative Trading Program* and encourage individuals and congregations to promote the purchase and distribution of products and services from the Occupied Palestinian Territories; and
7. That ELCIC congregations, synods and institutions be encouraged to participate in multi-faith dialogues and insofar as possible to discuss concerns about the future of the Holy Land and Jerusalem.

ACCOMPANYING PEACE BUILDERS

- Give thanks for Bishop Munib Younan and his leadership in the cause of peace with justice and multi-faith healing and our appreciation for presence at this convention;
- Commend and encourage support for the initiative of the (ELCJHL) in its struggle to be a witness for peace and justice through its educational, ecumenical, diaconal, and interfaith initiatives and commend religious leaders in the region for their peace building efforts;
- Express the ELCIC's deep concern about the continued emigration of Christians from Palestine and the entire Middle East and pray for a continued presence and ministry;
- Commend the work of organizations, both Israeli and Palestinian, that are working to heal the divide between Israelis and Palestinians, working to defend human rights, and who play an essential role in building peace;
- Commend companies and investors who are supporting community based economic development and fair trade organizations in Palestinian areas and who are not making investments in goods or services that support the police, military, or occupation administration;
- Commend the ministry of the Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine and Israel under the auspices of the World Council of Churches and encourage individuals who may wish to serve in this work;
- Commend the ministry of the Palestine Israel Ecumenical Forum initiated by the patriarchs and heads of local churches in Jerusalem;
- Commend and encourage financial support for the work of The Lutheran World Federation and Canadian Lutheran World Relief (CLWR) in their support of Augusta Victoria Hospital as well as the LWF's health services and vocational training programs, emergency services and job creation programs in the West Bank that help to meet the critical needs of refugees and the poor who are most affected by the violence, closures, and loss of income; and
- Commend the ELCIC bishops for their January 2009 visit to the Holy Land and encourage the further development of the ongoing relationships between the ELCIC and the Evangelical Lutheran Church

in Jordan and the Holy Land by helping coordinate delegations and visits between members of the ELCIC and the ELCJHL.

ADVOCATING FOR PEACE

That the ELCIC communicates to the Government of Canada:

- ELCIC support for “the goal of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, including the creation of a Palestinian state living side by side in peace and security with Israel” (Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Policy);
- ELCIC support for a secure state of Israel and a viable state for Palestinians, including a contiguous West Bank;
- ELCIC encouragement to undertake further measures to reduce poverty, unemployment and improve service for Palestinians and express appreciation for funding for such services as the Gerontology Unit at Augusta Victoria Hospital; and
- ELCIC’s support for an end to terrorism and violence by individuals, organizations and states against innocent civilians and bringing to justice those who commit such crimes.

That the ELCIC calls upon the Government of Canada to;

- Renew its efforts to play a more active, constructive, and balanced role in creating the conditions for peace in the Holy Land;
- Reiterate to the Government of Israel, Canada’s continued opposition to the occupation of territories (Golan Height, East Jerusalem, and the West Bank) as called for in UN Resolution 446 and 465;
- Reiterate to the Government of Israel, Canada’s position that Israeli settlements in the occupied territories are in violation of the *Fourth Geneva Convention* and call for a cessation of all settlement activities and a withdrawal from settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory to the 1967 armistice boundary (the “Green Line”);
- Reiterate to the Government of Israel, that while Israel has a right to assure its own security, Canada’s position is that the presence of the “Security Wall” as it has been constructed on Palestinian lands is contrary to international law under the *Fourth Geneva Convention* and that Canada is strongly opposed to Israel’s illegal “expropriations and the demolition of houses and economic infrastructure carried out for this purpose.”(Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade);
- Call upon all governments in the region to fully respect human rights and international humanitarian law;
- Continue to condemn all attacks on civilians including suicide bombings, targeted assassinations and military attacks in/from populated areas which are known beforehand to likely result in civilian deaths;
- Reiterate to the Government of Israel Canada’s commitment to a negotiated, final status agreement, which includes a “shared Jerusalem” that can serve as a capital to both Palestine and Israel, with full access to religious sites and full rights in the city for Jews, Christians, and Muslims;
- Review the *Canada-Israel Free Trade Agreement* to insure that Palestinian producers have access to Canadian markets and that Canadian Trade Policy does not legitimate Israel’s tacit annexation of the occupied Palestinian territories;
- Insure that in implementing trade agreements human rights are promoted and protected and safeguards put into law to preserve the environment; and
- Support aid and policies that promote Canadian private investment for building Palestinian economic capacity. **Carried.**

Support for Kyoto plus

NC-09-39 That the ELCIC in convention

- Affirm that we are one small part of the earth community and that our Christian faith calls us to care for all of creation and to defend the rights and dignity of all our brothers and sisters. In this time of global climate-change, where ecosystems and human life are challenged as never before, we are called to make a new covenant.
- Affirm that global warming is the greatest threat to life on earth—that entire populations and ecosystems are threatened by devastating impacts such as drought, heat waves, fires, floods, storms and rising sea levels.
- Affirm that, as scientists have warned the United Nations, only urgent action can avert uncontrollable, runaway climate-change.
- Ask our National Bishop to write to our Federal, Provincial and Territorial governments urging them to support the **KYOTOplus** goals.
- Encourage members of ELCIC congregations to reduce their own carbon emissions by 25%, and to back up their personal carbon footprint reduction by signing the KYOTOplus petition (<http://www.kairoscanada.org/en/get-involved/campaign/kyotoplus-petition/>) and by contacting their Member of Parliament to say that they support the intent of the KYOTOplus goals.
- Commend **KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives** and the Global Humanitarian Forum for their support of KYOTOplus. **Carried.**

Illegitimate debt

NC-09-40 MS That the Evangelical Lutheran Church, gathered in national convention, ask our National Bishop to:

- Write the Prime Minister of Canada, asking the Government of Canada both to affirm the principle of “creditor co-responsibility” and to recognize the rights of debtor nations to publicly audit their external debts and to repudiate those debts determined to be illegitimate.
- Commend Kairos Canada for their fine work on international trade relations, corporate social responsibility, and debt cancellation, and ensure that these issues remain organizational priorities.
- Commend the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) for their leaderships in advocating for illegitimate debt cancellation and call on the LWF to develop both a position paper and an advocacy strategy for member churches to engage their national governments on this issue. **Carried.**

Housing for the poor and subsidized housing high priorities

NC-09-45 That the ELCIC in convention instruct the National Bishop to write letters to the leaders of the federal political parties, requesting them to urge the federal government to make housing for the poor and subsidized housing high priorities in the government agenda,

and that the ELCIC in convention instruct the National Bishop to urge the Synodical Bishops to write letters to leaders of political parties in their respective jurisdictions, and to mayors of the major cities in their respective jurisdictions, expressing concern for the homeless and urging them to cooperate with all levels of government to alleviate the problem of homelessness,

that ELCIC in Convention instruct the National Bishop and encourage Synodical Bishops to initiate actions to request that the Federal Government develop and then reinstate a national housing strategy to end homelessness, in terms of the recently defined UN definition of homelessness,

and that the ELCIC encourage sponsorship of low income housing projects by member congregations.

Carried.

Human Trafficking

NC-09-49 That the ELCIC Convention

- Acknowledge that the global problem of human trafficking takes on increased importance for Canadians with the 2010 Olympics coming to British Columbia,
- Ask our National Bishop to write letters to the Prime Minister, Minister of Justice, Sport, Intergovernmental Affairs, Small Business and Tourism, Citizenship and Immigration, the Secretary of State (Asia-Pacific and 2010 Olympics). Local Members of the Parliament, as well as the Premier of British Columbia, urging immediate concerted efforts to prevent human trafficking, particularly in light of the 2010 Olympics,
- Encourage members of the ELCIC, including NCC, Synodical Councils, Synodical Bishops and ELW (National and Synodical) to:
 - a) seek educational opportunities concerning human trafficking and take action where possible
 - b) monitor the Federal Government's actions to address human trafficking
 - c) monitor media reports regarding government efforts to prevent human trafficking That preventing human trafficking at the 2010 Olympics as amended be adopted.
 - d) To encourage and support the work of the Canadian Council of Churches and Lutheran World Federation to eliminate global human trafficking internationally.

Carried.

Congregational Sanctuary for Mikhail Lennikov

NC-09-50 MS That the ELCIC in convention commend the council and congregation of First Lutheran Church in Vancouver, and their Pastor, Richard Hergesheimer, for their faith and courage in extending sanctuary to Mikhail Lennikov, and encourage National Bishop Susan Johnson to send a letter to the appropriate federal minister, requesting a reversal of the deportation order for Mr. Lennikov. **Carried.**

Be better stewards of creation at convention

NC-09-51 MS That this Convention urge the National Bishop, NCC and Convention co-ordination Committees to explore and implement ways to be better stewards of creation at the 2011 National Convention.

That items to be explored include:

- Reducing quantity of paper waste
- Utilization of current technology
- Reduction of food and food waste
- Transportation to and from convention
- Others areas where we can reduce our impact on the environment. **Carried.**