

1 **RC2022-03 Resolution on Substance Abuse and the Addiction Crisis**

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3 WHEREAS, Jesus sends us forth to “heal the sick” (Matthew 10:8); and

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5 WHEREAS, “Substance abuse is America’s number one health problem, a problem that touches the life of
6 every American child, family, congregation, and community” (Pre-Covid statement, “Faith Matters:
7 Race/Ethnicity, Religion and Substance Abuse,” Annie E. Casey Foundation 2004); and

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9 WHEREAS, as declared in its “Statement of Purpose,” the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America must
10 “lift its voice in concord and work with forces for good, to serve humanity, cooperating with church and
11 other groups participating in activities that promote justice, relieve misery and reconcile the estranged”
12 (Section 4.03(l) of the ELCA Constitution); therefore be it

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14 RESOLVED, that the Minneapolis Area Synod Assembly direct the Synod Council to respond to the
15 substance abuse crisis by creating a Synod Task Force on Substance Abuse which will advise how Synod
16 leaders and congregations can collaborate and form effective partnerships with state and local authorities
17 and nongovernmental organizations including but not limited to Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics
18 Anonymous, Al-Anon, the Center of Addiction and Faith and Fellowship of Recovering Lutheran Clergy;
19 and be it further

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21 RESOLVED, that the Bishop of the Minneapolis Area Synod appoint members to the Synod Task Force
22 on Substance Abuse including rostered and lay leaders, (especially those with experience-based
23 perspectives) and a Synod staff member with responsibility to support the Task Force; and be it further

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25 RESOLVED, that participants in the Synod Task Force on Substance Abuse specifically consider those
26 most vulnerable in this crisis--young people, people of color, people who identify among LBGTQIA +,
27 people who have been in prison or jail, military veterans, and people from other groups that are
28 disproportionately affected by this crisis; and be it further

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30 RESOLVED, that the Synod Task Force on Substance Abuse encourage and promote ways that Synod
31 staff, rostered leaders and congregations can bring hope and healing to those affected by the substance
32 abuse, and in so doing consider the actions suggested by the Center for Faith Based and Neighborhood
33 Partnerships in its Opioid Epidemic Practical Toolkit¹, and be it further

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35 RESOLVED, that the Minneapolis Area Synod Assembly direct the Bishop of the Minneapolis Area
36 Synod to share this resolution with the Presiding Bishop of the ELCA and the appropriate ELCA staff and
37 Units to explore the formation of a churchwide task force on substance abuse and addiction that will
38 provide information, support, educational materials and networking for ministries dedicated to combating
39 this crisis.

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44 **Adopted and submitted by the Central Conference and Bloomington Conference, February 6, 2022**

¹ Such as Hosting or connecting people to recovery programs and support groups (Open Your Doors); Providing educational opportunities that create understanding and encourage compassion (Increase Awareness); Offering training programs to build the capacity of communities to respond (Rebuild and Restore); Focusing efforts on youth prevention (Get Ahead of the Problem); Joining substance-use prevention coalitions, to inform, connect, and strengthen efforts (Connect and Collaborate); Helping congregations to be informed about federal, state, and local resources available.

45 ***Background Information to RC2022-03***

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47 Nearly one-third of people in the U.S. who drink alcohol have increased their consumption since the
48 pandemic began and nearly 30 percent who use drugs reported an increase in that activity (LifeWorks and
49 the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation, May 2021), and deaths from overdoses rose 27 percent in the 12
50 months ending in August 2020 over the prior 12-month period (Centers for Disease Control and
51 Prevention).

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53 According to the Centers for Disease Control, March 2021, predicted 2021 alcohol-related deaths in the
54 U.S. number 95,000; tobacco-related deaths number 480,000; illegal drug-related deaths number 70,000.

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56 In 2020 there were 678 overdose deaths involving opioids in Minnesota (MN Department of Health).

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58 The cost of substance abuse in the U.S. includes \$249 billion for alcohol abuse; \$300 billion for tobacco
59 abuse; \$271 billion for illegal drug abuse (Verywell Mind, 2020)