**Resolution #3**

**Resolution for Counseling Services for Rostered Leaders**

**BACKGROUND**

On November 16, 2011, the Rev. Eric Norgard, pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church, Hagerstown, MD, committed suicide. The following resolution is presented to the Delaware-Maryland Synod Assembly in the hope that by its enactment sufficient measures might be taken by the Church that would aid in the prevention of this extreme act of despair.

**WHEREAS, Rostered leaders** are called to high-profile, high-stress jobs with demands placed on them 24/7 and often face very high expectations that can lead to frustration, self doubt, feelings of failure and hopelessness, that can potentially lead to depression; and

**WHEREAS, S**tatistics indicate that as many as one in four (25%) of all pastors suffer depression at some time, with pressure and anxiety markedly higher in recent years as the result of cultural and economic changes which have negatively affected both worship attendance and congregational budgets; and

**WHEREAS,** Most depression can be successfully addressed and does not lead to suicide, but about two-thirds of all suicides begin with depression; and

**WHEREAS, Rostered leaders** may be particularly inhibited in even discussing their own depression because of career fears, social stigma, and spiritual taboo, and because nearly two out of three depressed people do not even seek treatment[[1]](http://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/7?userinfo=d99e75acffc90d4bf2918183550aba29&count=1332985416&randid=1891403340#_ftn1) , increasing the risk that depression may lead to suicide (which may be compounded when counseling services are not easily accessible or available); and

**WHEREAS, A**s loving Christians, we (synod, rostered leaders, and congregations) can and should do much better at caring for ourselves and those around us to minimize stress, lessen the likelihood of depression, and undertake timely and proper care of those in need; and

**WHEREAS, W**e are called by Christ to care for one another with compassion and love,

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, T**hat rostered leaders will encourage one another to (i) take better care of their spiritual, emotional, and physical health; (ii) to seek professional help; (iii) share concerns and problems with colleagues and congregational leaders; (iv) support and look after each other; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, T**hat congregations be encouraged to (i) examine their pastoral expectations and ensure they are not unreasonable (such as placing inappropriate burdens on pastors to balance budgets and increase worship attendance), (ii) work with and fully support pastors in all aspects of the life of the church; and (iii) honor pastor’s necessity for self care; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, T**hat all congregations of the Delaware-Maryland Synod be encouraged to initiate Suicide Awareness and Prevention training (classes, newsletter article, and informational brochures) at the conference and congregational levels in the year of our Lord 2013 with resource help from the Synod staff and Synod council; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, T**hat the ministry of the Delaware –Maryland Synod staff be designed to support struggling pastors (who may be reticent to seek care from Synod Staff for reasons articulated above) who need confidential, wise counsel and/or referral and that the Council initiate such a program at the earliest possible time; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, T**hat since the office of the Bishop may receive initial reports of mental health issues; that synod staff and Synod council work together to implement policies and procedures to assure that staff are equipped and prepared to immediately respond to such situations with spiritual intervention and medical referral.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** That this synod petition the ELCA to reinstitute through the ELCA Board of Pensions (Portico) the Church Renewal Center for the care and health of rostered leaders of this and other church bodies,”

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** That key resources that exist within our synod like nationally recognized experts be identified and shared with all the congregations of this synod.”

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**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, T**hat the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, at the national level, (i) be more aware of and draw attention to the serious nature of depression and suicide among its clergy; (ii) take steps to ensure that all synods are aware of this problem; and (iii) strongly urge all synods to have adequate pastoral counseling services in place as soon as possible, that all clergy are made aware of and encouraged to make use of such services.

**Submitted by:**

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**Rev. David Oravec –Trinity, Hagerstown**

**Judith W. Conrad – Trinity, Hagerstown**

**Inge Dudda - Trinity, Hagerstown**

**Rev. J. Chris Ramsey (ret.) - Trinity, Hagerstown**

**Rev. Torben Aarsand (ret.) – St. John’s, Hagerstown**

**Rev. Linda M. Alessandri – Haven Lutheran, Hagerstown**

**Diane Ballentine – St. John’s, Hagerstown**

**Rev. Julie Brigham - Pastor Foxville-Greensburg Parish**

**Bob Budnicki – Zion Lutheran, Williampsort**

**Rev. Virgil Cain – Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, Smithsburg**

**William Clark – Haven Lutheran, Hagerstown**

**Lydell Clipp – St. Peter’s Keedysville.**

**Bonita C. Distad – Haven Lutheran, Hagerstown**

**Ed Distad – Haven Lutheran, Hagerstown**

**Rev. Quentin Fleming (ret.) – Haven, Hagerstown**

**Janice Gearhart – St. Peter’s, Clear Spring**

**Carol Gregg - Christ Lutheran**

**Dan Gregg – Christ, Hagerstown**

**Brenda Hassinger – Haven Lutheran, Hagerstown**

**Rev. Ed Heim – St. John’s, Hagerstown**

**Rev. Richard Hembrock (ret.) – Trinity, Smithburg**

**Glenna Hull – St. Peter’s, Clear Spring**

**Pat Kelly – St. Mark’s, Hagerstown**

**Rev. Darrell L. Layman (ret.) – St. Peter’s, Keedysville**

**Mary Layman – St. Peter’s, Keedysville**

**Rev. Michael K. Louia – St. Paul’s, Funkstown**

**Charlotte Loveless – Haven Lutheran, Hagerstown**

**Rev. Greg Martin – Zion Lutheran, Williamsport**

**Rev. Robert McIntyre – Christ Lutheran, Hagerstown**

**Dru McNamee – St. Paul’s Lutheran, Funkstown**

**Ruth D. Mills – St. Peter’s, Clear Spring**

**Rev. Thomas Perry – St. Mark’s, Hagerstown**

**W. Allen Reed – St. Paul and Mt. Tabor, Clear Spring**