



*Christ-Centered
Mission-Driven
Traditionally-Grounded
Congregationally-Focused*

October 3, 2011

Mr. John G. Kapanke, President
Board of Pensions
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
800 Marquette Ave., Suite 1050
Minneapolis, MN 55402-2892

Dear Mr. Kapanke,

I deeply appreciate your kind words and affirmation. Even more, I appreciate your prayers. I apologize for the delay in responding to your letter but I wanted to insure that I had a comprehensive understanding regarding the previous agreement and our current context so I could engage you in a meaningful dialog. I appreciated receiving a copy of the agreement and have now been briefed by Bishop Emeritus Paull Spring and Pastor Mark Chavez regarding the agreement and recent conversations.

We have deeply appreciated your willingness to be the primary provider for health, disability, survivor, and retirement plans for the North American Lutheran Church. With few exceptions you have created an almost seamless process for pastors and congregations to remain with the ELCA Board of Pensions.

The Hahn Financial Group was engaged by Lutheran Core and the NALC as a result of serious concerns raised by congregations and pastors concerning the future direction of the ELCA in relating to the NALC. In addition to the real and substantial sense of uncertainty produced by a Synod memorial, the animosity and anxiety raised by a number of ELCA Bishops in dealing with NALC pastors and congregations has produced a ground-swell of concern for finding one or several alternatives to the current arrangements that exist with the ELCA. In some cases the incivility and rancor has reached an untenable and intolerable level. For those who have experienced such difficulties, the need for alternative options beyond the ELCA Board of Pensions is realistic and necessary. While I appreciate your personal assurance and the resolution passed by the ELCA Church-wide Assembly, those who have been so affected will not be dissuaded.

You should know that it has never been your leadership or any action by the Board of Pensions that produced these concerns. However, as Bishop Spring and others discussed with you at the time of our original agreement, there are many congregations and pastors in the NALC who do object to current policies of the Board of Pensions as a matter of conscience. Those issues include policies related to abortion and coverage for same gender domestic partners. For this reason, and consistent with our discussions at the outset, we would have entered

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into a process to develop alternative health benefits plans even if the Synod memorial and other issues had not arisen.

The Hahn Financial Group is providing us with expertise to find suitable alternatives. It is my understanding that within the current structure of the ELCA a congregation still has the right to pursue an alternative health plan or pension option. Our congregations are requesting assistance in securing the expertise necessary to deliver viable options, thereby preventing them from mobilizing efforts within each congregation to accomplish the same objective.

The goal for the NALC and Lutheran Core is not to find a single replacement for the ELCA Board of Pensions. When we are finally ready to provide additional information to our congregations, we will certainly include the option to stay with the ELCA Board of Pensions. There will be no mandate from us to leave. I firmly believe many will choose to stay with the ELCA Board of Pensions so long as the level of trust is not further diminished and there are legitimate efforts made to restore civility and dignity to the rapport that must exist for further conversations and partnerships.

If you consider our actions a substantial departure from the existing "Memo of Understanding," such that a new document must be prepared, we are willing to engage in that conversation. Should you decide that our actions constitute a breach that cannot be bridged by any agreement we would appreciate knowing that as well. Those decisions will impact our next steps.

John, we have met many times in the course of my ministry within the ELCA and I have always appreciated the integrity of your leadership and the quality of your wisdom. You have served the ELCA Board of Pensions with great distinction and will be sorely missed by those who have trusted you over these many years. I appreciate your willingness to speak on a more personal level regarding your concerns. I am certain to benefit by your insights and advice. I look forward to that conversation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rev. John Bradosky". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Rev. John Bradosky,
Bishop