

Faith Partners Network Collaborative

- 1 WHEREAS, alcohol, drug problems and addictions cause pain and suffering in the lives of individuals and
 2 families in our congregations and in our communities. Statistics show that one family in four has
 3 direct experience with someone with an addiction experience. Addictions strike equally individuals
 4 and families of every faith, culture, income level and community. This is reinforced in the 2001
 5 National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University (CASA) Study, “So
 6 Help Me God,” wherein it cites 94% of those clergy surveyed consider substance abuse to be an
 7 important issue they face; 38% find alcohol abuse involved in half or more of the family problems
 8 they confront; and
- 9 WHEREAS, communities will not be able to reduce these problems without the help and resources of clergy,
 10 people of faith, and active healing ministries. An informed clergy, supported by committed and
 11 trained members of the congregation, has a tremendous opportunity to serve by addressing
 12 addiction problems in very early stages; and
- 13 WHEREAS, offering love, hope and support is part of the Christian witness and central to the life and service of
 14 our congregations. Responding to those who were sick was integral to the life and ministry of Jesus
 15 and has been a central aspect of the Church’s mission throughout its history. Recovery and healing
 16 are concrete manifestations of God’s ongoing care for and redemption of all creation; and
- 17 WHEREAS, seven of Saint Paul Area Synod ELCA congregations are effectively addressing addiction issues
 18 through Faith Partners lay ministry teams that create awareness and educate the congregations.
 19 They involve all ages in prevention activities, help people in need find community resources, and
 20 support those who have experienced healing and recovery, thus becoming part of the solution
 21 to this pervasive problem. These are: Grace Lutheran of Apple Valley, Christ Lutheran, Lake
 22 Elmo, Gloria Dei Lutheran, St. Paul, Our Redeemer Lutheran, Maplewood, Prince of Peace
 23 Lutheran, Burnsville, Roseville Lutheran, Roseville, Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran, Apple Valley,
 24 and other ELCA congregations in the Minneapolis, Southeast, Northeast, and Southwest Area Synods; and
- 25 WHEREAS, at the heart of these ministries is most often a person who is in recovery from addictions, one who
 26 is well-versed in the disease and its impact, one who has been properly equipped and possesses a
 27 passion for helping others. Surveys reveal there are people in recovery in every congregation. Such
 28 individuals serve as “wounded healers” as they participate in Christ’s “greater love” (John 15:13).
 29 They give of themselves for others and share their stories of suffering, strength, experience, recovery
 30 and hope. As Christ who bore the suffering for all; like the Good Samaritan, these people respond
 31 to the neighbor in need of healing, whoever the neighbor may be (Luke 10:29-37); and
- 32 WHEREAS, ELCA congregations possess untapped resources to provide help and solace to those who suffer
 33 from addictions. These congregations value and honor those who have experienced healing and are
 34 committed, equipped, and available to serve others. The preparation of these lay ministers and
 35 their congregational teams is accomplished through partnership with Faith Partners, an initiative
 36 of the Rush Center of the Johnson Institute in Austin, Texas. Faith Partners offers training,
 37 expertise, support and resources for these ministries; therefore be it
- 38 RESOLVED, that the congregations in Saint Paul Area Synod affirm the Faith Partners Network Collaborative,
 39 and, further, designate Faith Partners, Rush Center of the Johnson Institute, Austin, Texas, as its
 40 partner in establishing initiatives and ministry teams with and among congregations as they strive to
 41 serve the addicted and their families; and be it further
- 42 RESOLVED, that the congregations in the Saint Paul Area Synod currently collaborating with Faith Partners
 43 participate in the initiation, support and expansion of these lay ministry teams in other ELCA

- 44 congregations. This to be accomplished by:
- 45 • Endorsement and affirmation of the work of the Faith Partners, Rush Center of the Johnson Insti-
- 46 tute, Austin, Texas, and the team approach they use;
- 47 • Affirmation of the Faith Partners Network Collaborative and its expansion;
- 48 • Highlight Faith Partners team ministries in Saint Paul Area Synod publications;
- 49 • Encourage and promote an annual recovery worship service in all congregations in the Saint Paul
- 50 Area Synod;
- 51 • Establish a Saint Paul Area Synod leadership team to work in partnership with Faith Partners Net-
- 52 work Collaborative to ensure the established goals are accomplished and sustained; and
- 53 • Initiate a process for the preparation and presentation of a Faith Partners Network Collaborative
- 54 resolution to be presented to the ELCA Churchwide Assembly in 2009. The purpose of the resolu-
- 55 tion will be to gain support at the churchwide level for addressing addiction problems that are so
- 56 prevalent in our society and in our ELCA congregations.

Submitted by the church council of Grace Lutheran Church, Apple Valley.

The reference and counsel committee strongly supports congregations' active involvement in recovery ministries for addicted persons, including using resources from the one named in this resolution and others. However, the committee recommends defeat of the resolution presented, for the following reasons:

- **There is wide support and celebration in this synod for all congregations that offer support to persons in the grips of addiction and in the variety of ways that support is given.**
- **Our congregations use resources from a wide variety of programs and organizations, both Lutheran and non-Lutheran, local and distant, in person and through materials, at little cost and at considerable cost.**
- **These resources and collaborations and working agreements are done without specific "synodical endorsement" of any one program, an assembly action of a synod "partnership," establishing a "synod leadership team," commitment of synod publications, or any other specific actions related to one specific outside organization. Such terminology adopted by a synod assembly leaves open possibilities for widely varying and unclear expectations, including funding, publicity, sponsorship, and legal liability, to name a few.**
- **Regarding the final bullet point: the method of addressing a churchwide assembly is specifically through the use of synod assembly memorials; it is not possible for this synod assembly to "initiate a process" for a "Faith Partners Network Collaborative resolution" to address the 2009 Churchwide Assembly.**