**2014 Upper Susquehanna Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America Synod Assembly**

**Resolution regarding shale gas and oil drilling and its related processes and industries**

WHEREAS the Upper Susquehanna Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America approved a resolution at the 2012 Assembly that called for the Office of the Bishop of the Upper Susquehanna Synod establish a task force within the Creation Care Committee charged with the following tasks:

• Undertake a comprehensive assessment of the justice issues surrounding the natural gas industry, including but not limited to ecological protection, public health endangerment, impacts on local communities such as housing, school districts, forced pooling, crime, violence against women, and exploitation of rural and impoverished families;

• Develop and/or acquire and make available materials and resources to address the complexities of horizontal slickwater hydraulic fracturing for the use of its congregations and affiliated organizations, and

• Provide guidance to congregations and ELCA landowners as they consider decisions pertaining to the use, development, and possible exploitation of their lands; and

WHEREAS the same resolution called for the Upper Susquehanna Synod encourage its members to inform and educate themselves about the issues pertaining to hydraulic fracturing by engaging in

 1) grassroots conversation,

 2) the sharing of pertinent stories, and

 3) workshops and study groups to discern the theological, moral, and ethical facets of this entire enterprise; and

WHEREAS the same resolution called for the Upper Susquehanna Synod to encourage its rostered leaders to work with their communities to establish responsive leadership to help facilitate discussion and resolve conflicts which may arise as a component of hydraulic fracturing; host community conversations to address issues associated with the process of horizontal slickwater hydraulic fracturing; and identify and articulate a theological stance to these issues through their preaching, teaching, and personal interaction; and

WHEREAS the Upper Susquehanna Synod approved a second resolution at the 2012 Synod Assembly calling for the Synod to convey its concerns about horizontal slickwater hydraulic fracturing in writing, including a copy of the resolution, to the Secretary of the United States Department of Energy and the Director of the US Environmental Protection Agency, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, Commonwealth Representatives and Senators who serve within the territory of the Synod, and other ELCA Synods within the Marcellus Shale region; and,

WHEREAS the same resolution called for the Upper Susquehanna Synod to encourage its conferences, congregations, and members to contact national and state legislators and prompt them to support legislation and policies that:

• Mandate the initiation and timely completion of long-range, comprehensive studies about the cumulative effects of air and water pollution, water resource depletion, public health endangerment, and other possible impacts from the drilling and fracturing processes, with regular reports to the public on findings; and

• Declare a moratorium on the issuing of future permits for hydraulic fracturing until such studies have been completed; and

• Mandate full and immediate public disclosure of chemicals used in all stages of the drilling process; and

• Eliminate the signing of non-disclosure agreements by physicians and medical staff, patients, civil suit plaintiffs, workers, and any other individuals whose health has been affected by natural gas drilling; and

• Monitor and reduce any harmful impacts found around existing hydraulic fracturing sites to the fullest extent possible; and

• Protect the rights of local municipalities to maintain their decision-making processes regarding hydraulic fracturing; and

• Develop sustainable energy solutions and increase energy conservation and efficiency in order to reduce the need for fossil fuels, and

WHEREAS the HORIZONTAL SLICKWATER HYDRAULIC FRACTURING TASK FORCE of the Upper Susquehanna Synod of the ELCA recognizes the diversity of opinions, perspectives and convictions within the synod regarding shale gas and oil drilling and its related industries; and

WHEREAS some advocate for a ban on all shale gas and oil drilling; some call for a moratorium until more scientific studies have been conducted; some encourage more and stricter regulations; some argue that current laws and regulations are sufficient; and

WHEREAS the federal Energy Policy Act of 2005 contained a provision exempting natural gas drilling and extraction from the Safe Drinking Water Act (1974), and similar exemptions are also present in the Clean Air Act (1990) and Clean Water Act (1972);

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Upper Susquehanna Synod calls for all environmental and public health exemptions on shale gas and oil drilling and its related processes to be repealed and all processes related to shale gas and oil extraction and processing to be subject to the Safe Drinking Water Act (1974), the Clean Air Act (1990) and Clean Water Act (1972); and, be it further

RESOLVED, that the Upper Susquehanna Synod send a copy of this Task Force’s final report and resolutions to the Secretary of the United States Department of Energy and the Director of the US Environmental Protection Agency, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, Commonwealth Representatives and Senators who serve within the territory of this Synod, the Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and other ELCA Synods within the Marcellus and Utica Shale region; and, be it further

RESOLVED, that the Upper Susquehanna Synod encourage its members, congregations and entities to engage in robust moral deliberation about the continuing complexities and justice issues surrounding shale gas and oil drilling and its related processes; and, be it further

RESOLVED, that the Upper Susquehanna Synod encourage its members, congregations and entities to fulfill the resolutions adopted in the 2012 Synod Assembly as they feel bound by their consciences to do so.

Respectfully submitted:

 Mrs. Betty Longfield, Convener, Holy Communion, Yeagertown

Mrs. Donna Batschelet, St. John, Jersey Shore;

 Mr. Michael Bilger, Sharon, Selinsgrove;

 Mr. James Cheunes, Grace, Shamokin;

 The Rev. Theodore Cockley, St. Luke, Williamsport;

 Mr. Mark Giesen, Zion, Sunbury;

 Dr. Mark Heuer, Susquehanna University;

 The Rev. Dr. Leah Schade, United in Christ, Lewisburg;

 Mr. Michael Schrey, Botschaft, Mt. Pleasant Mills; and,

 The Rev. Dr. Gilson Waldkoenig, LTS-Gettysburg