

2024 BULLETIN OF REPORTS

ASSEMBLY

June 8, 2024

ATONEMENT LUTHERAN CHURCH
WYOMISSING, PENNSYLVANIA



NORTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD
of the
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

37th Annual Synod Assembly
Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA
Saturday, June 8, 2024

2024 Synod Assembly Program (05/6)

		Saturday, June 8, 2024
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7:30 AM - On-site Registration

8:30 AM Plenary space open

9:00 AM Festival Worship with Holy Communion
Offering to ELCA World Hunger Appeal
Bishop Christopher deForest, presiding and preaching

10:30 AM - 12:30 PM Plenary Session One

Order For Opening, Adoption of Program, Introductions & Welcome
Elections: Review of Nominations and Nominations From Floor
Stories of Transformation – “God’s Work, Our Hands”
Report of the Bishop
 Licensed Lay Ministry Candidates, Rostered Ministry Candidates, New to Synod
Elections – First Ballot
Reference and Counsel – First Report
NEPS Hunger Ministry Moments
ELCA Representative: Marie Anne Sliwinski, Senior Dir, Building Resilient Communities
Announcements

12:30 PM - 1:50 PM Lunch

1:50 PM - 4:10 PM Plenary Session Two

Stories of Transformation – 6261 Ministry Community Pilot
Report of the Vice President and Synod Council
Elections – Report of the First Ballot, Second Ballot
Report of the Secretary
Reference and Counsel – Second Report
Report of the Treasurer
Presentation of 2025 Budget

Plenary Session Two (con't)

Presentation of the Compensation guidelines for 2025

NEPS Hunger Ministry Moments

Elections—Report of the Second Ballot, Third Ballot

Unfinished Business

Closing Worship and Sending

I. Executive Reports

- Report of the Bishop
- Report of the Vice President
- Report of the Secretary
- Report of Synod Council
- Report of the Committee of Deans
- Report of the Director for Evangelical Mission
- Report of the Treasurer

II. Financial

- 2025 Proposed Budget
- Treasurer's Acknowledgements

III. Synod Committees and Ministry Teams

- Witness and Service Ministry Team
- God's Work, Our Hands Storytellers
- A-Team
- Green Team
- Racial Justice Ministry Team
- NEPA Synod Candidacy Committee
- LGBTQIA+ Task Force
- Leadership Development Ministry Team (w/ 2025 Compensation Guidelines)
- Growing Young
- Committee on Governance

IV. Partners in Ministry

- Good Shepherd Rehabilitation
- Lutheran Archives Center at Philadelphia
- Lutheran Congregational Services
- Muhlenberg College
- United Lutheran Seminary
- Diakon
- Portico Benefit Services
- Bear Creek Camp
- LAMPa
- Region 7 & 8 Candidacy

V. Minutes of the 2023 Synod Assembly



37th Northeastern PA Synod Assembly

HUNGRY FOR LIFE **TOGETHER IN CHRIST**

Section I

Executive Reports

REPORT OF THE BISHOP for 2023-24

(April 29, 2024)

*Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob,
whose hope is in the Lord their God,
who made heaven and earth,
the sea, and all that is in them;
who keeps faith for ever;
who executes justice for the oppressed;
who gives food to the hungry. [Psalm 146:5-7]*

Trusting in God – following Christ – empowered by the Spirit: for 50 years (and more!), fighting hunger has been at the center of ministry and mission for the congregations and people of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod. This 2024 Synod Assembly, and the year that follows, gives us ample opportunity to highlight and grow God’s work through our hands, in overcoming food insecurity and inequality – locally, nationally and globally. With our partners in ELCA World Hunger; with other denominations and other faiths; and with secular and government organizations – we are called to love our neighbors through good food, clean water, sound agriculture and land management, and through best practices in farming, distribution and storage. I can tell you, every time I visit a congregation in this synod, I never leave without being well-fed – in body, mind and spirit!

Our Assembly theme – “Hungry For Life Together In Christ” – is a perfect launching point for all the different kinds of “hunger” work that we are doing as synod. We live in divisive and uncertain times. The planet hungers for healing. People hunger for connection and meaning. War-torn places hunger for peace and safety. Those who are experiencing depression, anxiety, loss and grief – hunger for hope and a way back into life.

We cry out in prayer: and God hears. God answers. God makes ways through the desert and the darkness. And even more: God raises the dead and brings into being – new life, new creation.

Since October 2023, on a great many wonderful Monday afternoons and evenings, I have been visiting congregations in groups of 6 to 12 at a time. I have been accompanied by our Synod Vice President who chairs the Synod Council, VP Nancy Reichelt; along with our Director for Evangelical Mission, Deacon Kat Tigerman; and our Director for Congregational Legacy and Purpose, Deacon Travis Woodfield. These visits will continue through June 2024, with the goal of giving every congregation, every pastor, and every deacon in our synod a chance to meet with us and take stock of their congregation, sharing good ideas and understanding our common problems. We are still gathering input and stories, but some common issues are emerging:

- How to reach and engage with youth, young adults and families;
- How to deal with costly buildings and properties;
- How to connect with neighbors and neighborhoods in common life and mission;
- How to share the “family responsibilities” of congregational life, as older members pass and new members are fewer and feel less able to commit or take on the work like before.

What we see, across the synod, is a “hunger for life together in Christ” that lines up pretty well with our three “Vital Sign Goals” – GROWING YOUNG, GAINING STRENGTH, and GOING BEYOND DEATH TO LIFE. Within the time-period of this Bishop’s Report – from May 2023-April 2024 – we have made significant strides in moving these goals from dreams into realities, trusting that our “help is the God of Jacob”; and our “hope is in the Lord our God” (Ps 146:5).

LICENSED LAY MINISTRY

Our synod has met its goal to create and implement a process for training and deploying lay persons to serve as “Licensed Lay Ministers.” On April 20 we welcomed 12 new candidates to the 2-year formation process. We anticipate at least that many more to join them over the next year. Our website (<https://nepasynod.org/llm/>) gives a full description of the LLM Formation Path and process. The goal is to provide well-trained and supervised pastoral support to congregations who are in transition between pastors, who have difficulty affording a pastor, or want to help their current and future pastors with support. If you have specific questions about Licensed Lay Ministry, I invite you to contact Pastor Jira Albers, part-time LLM Coordinator. His contact info is also available on our website.

GAINING STRENGTH COHORTS

Since Fall of 2021, we have brought together 34 pastors and deacons in our synod into three “cohorts” or working groups who are being trained and guided to become even stronger, healthier, more collaborative leaders, building on their existing strengths and connections. They are led by Pastor Doug Hill, from Abiding Hope LC in Littleton, Colorado. Pastor Doug grew up in western Pennsylvania and has been working with clergy and lay leaders for 25 years to become stronger by discovering and sharpening their strengths, and showing them ways to work more collaboratively with others and build connections and share strengths across congregations and mission districts. The pastors and deacons taking part in this unique approach, which we are pioneering here in NEPA, have come through the 18-month process with new skills and energy and a stronger sense of hope and vitality. Our plan is to offer this support and training at low or no cost to every pastor and deacon in the synod. With our current pace, 12 at a time for each cohort, it will take us another 4 years to reach that goal.

6261 MINISTRY COMMUNITIES

At Synod Assembly 2023, I laid out another new concept in collaboration for our congregations to consider. It involves bringing together six congregations – not to merge or consolidate, but to remain fully active and distinct in themselves. Sharing 2 Pastors. Lifting up 6 Licensed Lay Ministers. And working with 1 Deacon, who serves to help the 6261 Ministry Community grow into its interconnected ministry and moves them to make connections in the larger community beyond themselves. A full description of the concept can also be found on our Synod website (<https://nepasynod.org/6261mc/>).

In the past several months, discussing this across the synod has generated a lot of interest and questions. In December 2023, Synod Council designated 6261 as a “Synod Priority,” which means we maintain this focus over the next 4-6 years. Deacon Kat Tigerman, our Director for Evangelical Mission, has taken the lead in this initiative, and she works closely with me and with Synod Council to move this forward from the idea-stage into a pilot phase. Our goal was to launch two pilot groups this year, with two more in the first half of 2025. We are thankful to God that we are on target. Our first group in the West Berks Mission District says they will be ready to start their pilot by the fall; and we have 2-4 others who will be discerning their plans within the next 10 months.

SYNOD REDESIGN TEAM UPDATE

This task force was called for by resolution to and approved by Synod Council to consider changes to our synod structure based on our current needs and new directions. The team includes: Pastor Lauren Applegate; Dr. Donald Boyer; Ms. Gail Colahan; Bishop Chris deForest; Pastor Bob Machamer; Ms. Laura Pride; VP Nancy Reichelt; Pastor Carl Shankweiler; and is chaired by former VP Kristen Edelman Weiner. Our first meeting was held on February 1, which allowed us to build relationships and set ground rules for our work. Our second meeting was held April 18. Pastor Doug Hill was with us to observe and give input to improve the clarity and productivity of our work together, so that we can set goals and milestones for creating a recommendation report to bring to Council and then to our 2025 Synod Assembly.

NEW MINISTRY: “FREE TO BE”

Our Synod Council has approved a new outreach ministry to connect with young parents, who may no longer have any ties or any trust in traditional ways of joining or engaging with church. Pastor Lauren Applegate is the “Mission Developer” who will focus on bringing together this ministry on playgrounds, in coffee shops and small groups over meals. The hope is that the good news of Jesus Christ, still grounded in our Lutheran core values but brought into conversation outside our traditional worship times and places, can bring meaning and community to younger persons “hungering for life together in Christ.” This new direction is also being supported by the ELCA with a new designation: as a “Synod Authorized Outreach Community (SAOM).” By this time next year, we look forward to seeing how this new planting by the Holy Spirit will spring forth.

IMPROVEMENTS IN CONGREGATIONAL SUPPORT

In the past year, we have sought to realign and streamline our Synod staff to provide better support to congregations and leaders, and to help us better support new directions such as LLM and 6261. Below are two specific examples:

Improved Communications and Support of LLM & 6261: Stacey Burke has been promoted from within our Staff to move into the full-time role of “Synod Communication and Growing Young Coordinator.” She is moving out of the role of “Sunday Supply Contact Coordinator.” This work will be picked up by a new staff role, which will also support both Licensed Lay Ministry and 6261. We are in the process now of finding the right person for this role.

Improvements In Mobility, Candidacy, and Leadership Development: Pastor Rachael Dietz’s role has been sharpened to focus on finding and developing new pastors and deacons. This was made possible by bringing in Pastor Drew Neidig to support the congregations in Berks County (our largest county). Pastor Dietz can now turn even more of her experience and skill to attracting new leaders and increasing our training and support of leaders already here.

Both the concepts of Licensed Lay Ministry and 6261 have the goal of helping our congregations to find new vitality and new sustainability, by working more together and making the most of the resources they can share. However, these are not initiatives intended for survival only, or to “prolong the inevitable.” There will continue to be congregations who discern that their most faithful direction and lasting legacy will be to close. But as people who follow Christ, we hunger as well for more ways to work together and find common life together, rather than remain isolated and competitive, refusing to bring together our strengths and needs and efforts, and to show this divided world that it is Christ who makes us united in purpose and love, as Jesus says: “that they may all be one.” [John 17:21]

As we move into the rest of this year, may the hunger we feel for life together in Christ, move us to love and follow Jesus more deeply than ever. In these coming days, Loving God, lead us out of fear and darkness, into your light and life, your perfect love that drives out fear [1 John 4:18] and leads us into new ways to LOVE THE LAND, HEAL THE HURT, and ENGAGE THE STRANGER.

In Christ's Life Together,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christopher deForest". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name and last name clearly legible.

Christopher deForest, Your Bishop

REPORT OF THE VICE PRESIDENT

This has been an exciting, amazing, and educational year for me. Thank you for your confidence in me and your support and prayers as I have navigated through this first year in office. For me personally it has been so spiritually uplifting and a blessing to have served. I have received far more than I've been able to give.

I've attended the constitution committee (and now committee on governance) meetings, finance committee meetings, executive committee meetings, the synod assembly planning meeting, and I have participated in the newly begun restructuring committee. I would like to take this time to thank all of you who have been patient with my questions and those who have taken the time to help me with understanding the role of VP. By the time of synod assembly I will have been on twenty synod tours. As I have shared at synod council, every one of them is different, exciting, educational, and spiritually uplifting in very different ways. I have attended by zoom the debrief meetings that follow every couple of tours. If I tried to share information on the tours, it would take several pages so in summary I would just like to say that these meetings have affirmed that we are a church of love, understanding, diversity and that God is with us at every place, time and situation. As a result of the tours, I have received several calls from a variety of people looking for guidance and care and sometimes just wanting to add to what was talked about at the meetings. People that have reached out to me have been so grateful for our time and willingness to come to them that it makes this incredibly uplifting. This is a gigantic start for building a stronger community. Special thanks to the Bishop and Deacon Kat Tigerman for their willingness to participate in these visits. Also, thanks to Deacon Travis Woodfield for taking notes.

As of this writing, I have also had the privilege and honor of representing our synod at three call vote worship services. In all cases a new pastor was called and it was a joyous and happy time for the congregations. The first one was St. John's Tamaqua calling Dillon Epler, the second was St. Paul's Summer Hill calling Marie Meeks and the third was Faith, Whitehall calling June Wann. I am so grateful for the opportunity to have celebrated these days with them.

I have participated in the monthly zoom meetings of VP's from across the country and attended the conference of VP's in Chicago in early March, for two days. The monthly meetings are an opportunity to learn many things about how other synods are handling different situations and to better understand the opportunities that are available to us. We also discuss and share ideas for the future. Our church is diverse and amazing! During the two days (actually Thursday night until Saturday noon) I had an opportunity to have dinner with the VP's from region 7 and region 8 that were in attendance. This opportunity to get to know our "neighbors" was very special. I also had the opportunity to hear from the Commission for a renewed Lutheran church, the treasurer's report for churchwide, an amazing worship, conversations with Bishops Curry and Fidler, secretary Sue Rothmeyer, and general council Tom Cunniff, (including discussion on conflict management). We heard about bishop elections and the variety of ways they are handled and had a discussion of the VP's

role at Churchwide Assembly. We had a tour of the Lutheran Center 11th floor. We then learned about the ELCA Social Statement process & Human Sexuality Social Statement reconsiderations with Rev. Dr. Roger Willer & Dr. Ryan Cumming, Theological Discernment. We participated in a hearing of the Civic Life & Faith draft social statement. The final morning was spent in conversation with Imran Siddiqui the ELCA VP, followed by conversation with Victoria Flood, Senior Director of Mission Support, and a review of the ELCA org chart. We closed the event with table conversations to discuss “what will you bring home from this gathering”? It was a great opportunity and it was decided that this gathering will now be done every 3 years to better equip VP’s going forward.

In thankfulness of the many blessings and gifts that God has given us, I think it is appropriate to acknowledge that each and every one of your congregations and each of you enable us to do the good work of being stronger together. We can accomplish so much more than any one of our congregations can do on their own – your mission support – benevolence- is what allows us to do the great work we do. Thank you for your continued support of all of us together.

I continue to be honored and humbled to serve as the VP. Please continue to pray for me and this synod, the church, and the world.

In Christ,
Nancy Reichelt
NEPA Synod VP

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY

This report covers the period between May 1, 2023, and April 30, 2024.

A cross + indicates Ministers of Word and Sacrament.

*An asterisk * indicates Ministers of Word and Service.*

ORDINATIONS	
Name	Date
+Epler, Dillon	January 28, 2024
+Roth, Stephanie	February 18, 2024

RECEIVED FROM OTHER SYNODS		
Name	Transferred From	Date of Transfer
+Schroeder, Dana	Metropolitan Chicago Synod	May 15, 2023
+Becklin, Hans	Lower Susquehanna Synod	November 27, 2023

TRANSFERRED TO OTHER SYNODS		
Name	Transferred To	Date of Transfer
+Lang, Thomas	Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod	February 12, 2024

ROSTER CHANGES			
Name	From	To	Effective
+Schroeder, Dana	Metropolitan Chicago Synod	St. Luke's University Health Network	May 15, 2023
+Applegate, Lauren	New Life, New Tripoli	On Leave from Call	June 11, 2023
+Thompson, William (UMC)		St. John's Heights, Jim Thorpe	June 26, 2023
+Lyon, Katie	Atonement, Wyomissing (Interim)	Atonement, Wyomissing (Lead Pastor)	July 1, 2023
+Labagh, R. Zachary		Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod (Associate of Bishop)	July 1, 2023
+Holben, Brian	St. Peter (Hanover), Allentown (Interim)	St. Peter (Hanover), Allentown (Lead Pastor)	August 6, 2023
+Richards, Elton	Retirement	Deceased	August 7, 2023
+Carstens, Jeffrey	St. John, Emmaus	Retirement	August 13, 2023
+Owens, Mary	St. Matthew United, Scranton	St. Peter, Reinerton	August 25, 2023
+Possinger, Jami	Hope, Cherryville	Retirement	August 31, 2023
+Ruggles, Susan	St. John, Easton	Retirement	September 1, 2023
+Lingenfelter, Scott	Trinity, Tipton	Retirement	September 1, 2023
+Neidig, Drew		Retirement	September 1, 2023

+Miller, James	Retirement	Deceased	September 30, 2023
+Wolfe, Mary	Hope, Reading & Hope's Table, Reading	Retirement	October 1, 2023
*Brooks, Kelly	Good Shepherd Rehabilitation Network	Step by Step, Allentown (Therapist)	November 1, 2023
+Spatz, Barry	Jacobs, Pine Grove & Outwood, Pine Grove	Retirement	November 1, 2023
+Sharkey, Eugene	Retirement	Deceased	November 9, 2023
+Epler, Dillon	Seminarian	St. John, Tamaqua	November 12, 2023
+Moore, Nancy	Trinity, Lehighton	Deceased	November 22, 2023
+Becklin, Hans	Lower Susquehanna Synod	Trinity, Reading	November 26, 2023
+Steltzer, Jack	Rosemont, Bethlehem	Blessed Trinity at Rosemont, Bethlehem	December 3, 2023
+Roth, Stephanie	Seminarian	Zion, Perry Township	December 3, 2023
+Remer-Osborn, Jan (UCC)		Zion, Orwigsburg	January 1, 2024
+Eisenhuth, David		Christ, Hazleton	January 8, 2024
+Burkhart, Melissa (UCC)		Zion's Union, Maxatawny	January 29, 2024
+Laufer, Mary	Retirement	Deceased	January 25, 2024
+Lang, Thomas	St. Paul, Fleetwood	Retirement	February 1, 2024
+Boyer, Timothy		Retirement	February 1, 2024
+Moore, Richard	St. John, Sinking Spring	St. Joseph Hill, Boyertown	March 10, 2024
+Kaffine, Helmut	Retirement	Deceased	April 3, 2024
+Wann, June	Zion, Womelsdorf	Faith, Whitehall	April 21, 2024
+Mraz, Jerry	Retirement	Deceased	April 24, 2024

CONGREGATIONAL CHANGES			
Name	Status	To	Effective
Blessed Trinity, Bethlehem	Consolidation	Blessed Trinity at Rosemont, Bethlehem	December 3, 2023
Rosemont, Bethlehem			

Removals

+David Brown, removed, October 28, 2023.

Holy Cross, Hanover Township, withdrawn October 28, 2023.

St. John, Nanticoke, withdrawn April 20, 2024.

-The Rev. Kenneth Melber, Jr., *Synod Secretary*

In Memoriam

The Rev. Helmut Hans Kaffine (10/1/30-4/3/24)



Pastor Kaffine was born in Reading, Pennsylvania, to Heinrich and Margarete (Leins) Kaffine. He married Frances Runge on August 27, 1955.

Pastor Kaffine graduated from Muhlenberg College (1953) and the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, now United Lutheran Seminary (1956). Following his ordination on May 24, 1956, by the Ministerium of Pennsylvania, Pastor Kaffine served in the following calls: Christ, Freemansburg (1956 - 1961) and St. Matthew, Bethlehem (1962 – 1995). Following his retirement in 1995 he was invited to preach in various churches while he served as volunteer director of the ELCA's Hunger Appeal in NEPS.

The Rev. Mary Laufer (8/17/47-1/25/24)



Pastor Laufer was born in Gainesville, Florida, to Edward and Helen (Wenzel) Laufer.

Pastor Laufer graduated from Pacific Christian College, California (1980) and the Pacific Lutheran Seminary in California (1986). Following her ordination on May 31, 1987, by the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Lutheran Church in America, Pastor Laufer served in the following calls: pastor of Holy Emmanuel Slovak, Pittsburgh (1987 - 1990); Chaplain at Hospice St. John of Lutheran Welfare Service (1990 – 1995); pastor of Messiah and St. Mark, Wilkes-Barre (1996 – 2020).

The Rev. James B. Miller (3/25/26-9/30/23)



Pastor Miller was born in Lansford, PA, to Stephen and Edith (Bulmer) Miller. He married Mary Showalter in October 1949.

Pastor Miller graduated from Muhlenberg College (1946) and the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, now United Lutheran Seminary (1949). Following his ordination on May 19, 1949, by the Ministerium of Pennsylvania, Pastor Miller served in the following calls in PA: Cross Roads Parish, Sunbury (1949 - 1957); St. Daniel, Robesonia (1957 – 1976); Christ Yocum's, Grill (1976 – 1996); as well as other intentional interim assignments.

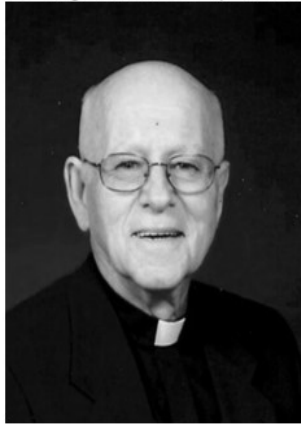
The Rev. Nancy Moore (9/11/57-11/22/23)



Pastor Moore was born in Philadelphia to Richard and Dolores (Matthias) Penrod. She married Robert A. Moore on February 15, 1986.

Pastor Moore graduated from East Stroudsburg University (2002) and the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, now United Lutheran Seminary (2006). Following her ordination on November 5, 2006, by the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Pastor Moore served in the following calls: assistant pastor at St. John, Nazareth (2006 – 2008); St. Matthew, Weissport (2008 – 2014); Trinity, Lehighton, (2016 – 2023).

The Rev. Jerry Mraz (4/16/3—4/24/24)



Pastor Mraz was born in Partizanska Lupca, Slovak Republic, to Adam Julius and Ludmila (Sokol) Mraz. He married Elizabeth (Marecek) on August 27, 1955.

Pastor Mraz graduated from Wagner College, New York (1955) and Hamma Divinity School, Springfield, Ohio (1960). Following his ordination on June 14, 1960, by the Slovak Zion Synod of the ULCA, Pastor Mraz served in the following calls: Holy Emmanuel, Pittsburgh (1960 - 1965), Holy Trinity, Akron, Ohio (1965 – 1972), and Holy Trinity Slovak, Northampton (1972 – 2010).

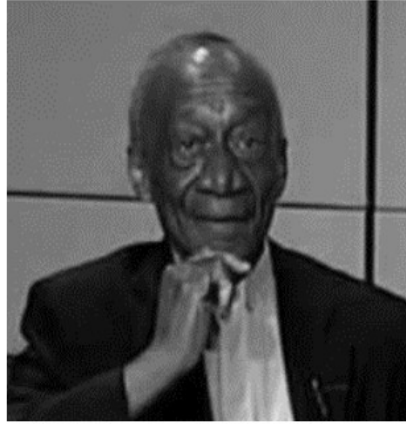
The Rev. Dr. Elton Phillips Richards, Jr. (7/24/32-8/7/23)



Pastor Richards was born in Chester, Pennsylvania, to Elton and Lillian (Russell) Richards. He married Anne Sohland in June 1962.

Pastor Richards graduated from Dickinson College, Carlisle (1954), and the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia (1959). Following his ordination on May 24, 1959, by the Ministerium of Pennsylvania, Pastor Richards served in the following calls: St. Paul, Ardmore (1959-1962); Resurrection, Levittown, (1962 – 1968); Trinity, Reading, (1968 – 1989); and St. John, Des Moines, Iowa, (1989-1997); as well as other intentional interim assignments in Illinois.

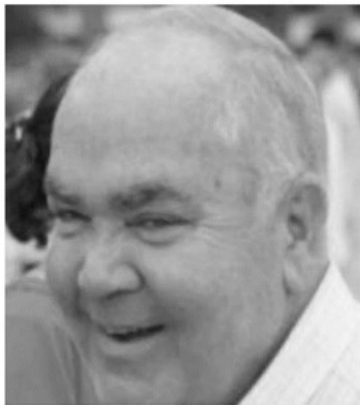
The Rev. Luther H. Routté (10/17/39-6/9/23)



Pastor Routté was born in Jamaica, New York, to Jesse W. and Maude (Gomez). Routté. He was predeceased by his first wife, Fern, and his second wife, Carole. He is survived by his third wife, Rosemary Routté.

Pastor Routté graduated from Wagner College, Staten Island, NY (1960), and the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia (1988). Following his ordination on November 6, 1988, Pastor Routté served as Assistant Pastor and then as Associate Pastor at Atonement, Wyomissing, (1988 - 2007). He also served in intentional interim assignments at Robeson, Plowville, and Salem, Bethel.

The Rev. Eugene Francis Sharkey (7/14/50-11/9/23)



Pastor Sharkey was born in Wilmington, Delaware, to Eugene F. Sr. and Anna M. (Malloy) Sharkey.

Pastor Sharkey graduated from Albright College (1973) and the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, now United Lutheran Seminary (1977). Following his ordination on June 15, 1977, by the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Lutheran Church in America, Pastor Sharkey served in the following calls in PA: Grace, Gouldsboro (1973 - 1982); Messiah, Bethlehem (1982 – 2015).

REPORT OF THE SYNOD COUNCIL

The Synod Council of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod held five regular meetings since the 2023 Synod Assembly: July 15, 2023; October 28, 2023; December 16, 2023; February 17, 2024; and April 20, 2024.

The resolutions are numbered according to the year and month of the meeting, followed by a consecutive numbering of the resolutions passed at that meeting. For example, the first resolution passed at a meeting of April 2024 would list the year, April as the 4th month, and the first resolution (2024.04.01). The next resolution at that meeting would be subsequently numbered (2024.04.02).

The resolutions below are listed in categories, based on the “best guess” of the Secretary. Within categories, resolutions are listed in chronological order.

Synod Assembly

(2023.12.05) That the registration fee for the 2024 Synod Assembly—to be held at Atonement Lutheran Church in Wyomissing—be \$130.

(2023.12.10) That the 2024 Synod Assembly be held on June 8, 2024.

(2023.12.11) That the 2024 Synod Assembly be held at Atonement Lutheran Church in Wyomissing.

(2024.04.02) That the following resolution concerning the 2024 assembly program be recommended to the 2024 Synod Assembly:

Resolved, that the 2024 Assembly program (as printed in the Bulletin of Reports) be adopted.

(2024.04.09) That the 2024 Assembly of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod be held on June 8, 2024, at Atonement Lutheran Church, Wyomissing, PA.

Roster Maintenance

(2023.07.07) Resolved, That in accordance with ELCA bylaws 7.41.07 and 7.71.04. and upon endorsement by the bishop, the following rostered leader be granted the roster status of “retired”: Deacon Sherrie Sneed , April 1, 2020

(2023.07.08) Resolved, That in accordance with sections 7.31.07. and 7.61.08. of the ELCA Constitution, “on leave from call” status be approved as follows: The Rev. Cindy Camp (first year), effective March 22, 2022

(2023.10.03) That the Rev. David Brown is to be removed from the Roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of the ELCA, effective October 28, 2023.

(2023.10.13) That in accordance with ELCA bylaws 7.41.07 and 7.71.04 and upon endorsement by the bishop, the following rostered leaders be granted the roster status of “retired”:

The Rev. Frank Stinner	1/1/2023
The Rev. Jeff Carstens	8/13/2023
The Rev. Jami Possinger	8/31/2023
The Rev. Drew Neidig	9/1/2023
The Rev. Susan Ruggles	9/1/2023
The Rev. Mary Wolfe	10/1/2023
The Rev. Barry Spatz	11/1/2023

(2023.10.14) That in accordance with sections 7.31.07 and 7.61.08 of the ELCA Constitution, “on leave from call” status be approved as follows:

Deacon Linda Maule (first year)	6/1/2023
The Rev. Lauren Applegate (first year)	7/1/2023
The Rev. Carl Filer (second year)	9/1/2023

(2023.10.18) That a Call to Special Service be issued to Rev. Dana Schroeder 2023.10.18 as Manager, Clinical Pastoral Education for St. Luke Health System, Bethlehem, PA, beginning May 15, 2023.

(2023.10.19) That a Call to Special Service be issued to Deacon Kelly Brooks to serve as a therapist with Step By Step, Allentown, PA, Beginning November 1, 2023.

(2023.10.20) That a Call to Special Service be issued to Deacon Christine Summy to serve as Hospice Chaplain and Bereavement Coordinator for Aspire for Well-Being Hospice at The Highlands, beginning September 18, 2023.

(2023.12.13) That in accordance with ELCA bylaws 7.41.07 and 7.71.04. and upon endorsement by the bishop, the following rostered leaders be granted the roster status of “retired”:

The Rev. Timothy Boyer (02/01/2024)
The Rev. Thomas Lang (02/01/2024)

(2023.12.14) That a Call to Special Service be issued to Deacon Linda Zawaski to serve as Pastoral Care Provider at Beckers St. Peter Lutheran, Fleetwood, PA, from July 1, 2021 to December 31, 2024.

(2023.12.15) That the Synod Council extend an invitation to the Rev. Melissa Burkhart, an ordained Minister of Word and Sacrament in the United Church of Christ, to serve as pastor of Zion Union Church, Maxatawny, PA, beginning January 29, 2024.

(2024.02.03) That in accordance with sections 7.31.07. and 7.61.08. of the ELCA Constitution, “on leave from call” status be approved as follows:

The Rev. Cindy Camp (second year) 03/01/24

(2024.02.04) That a Call to Special Service be granted to Rev. Elizabeth Haines to serve Haven House, Inc., Allentown, PA, for a period of two (2) years, beginning April 1, 2024.

(2024.04.10) That in accordance with sections 7.31.07. and 7.61.08. of the ELCA Constitution, “on leave from call” status be approved as follows:

The Rev. Kim Truebenbach (second year), effective 02/01/2024

(2024.04.12) That a Call to Special Service be issued to the Rev. Timothy Garman to serve as interim pastor of St. John Lutheran Church, Coplay, PA, for a period of two (2) years beginning May 12, 2024.

Finance

(2023.07.03). Resolved, That the Resolution of Deposit Account with Truist Bank be approved wherein the synod’s Designated Representatives are Bishop Christopher deForest, Treasurer Donald Boyer, and Bookkeeper Eric Gombert and with the full Resolution document appended to these minutes.

(2023.07.04) Resolved, That (a) for the current fiscal year (2023) the interest earned from the two Sweep accounts with M&T Bank be deposited into the General Fund and used by that fund and (b) the Finance Committee be asked to consider how the interest earned by these Sweep accounts after this fiscal year can be allocated to the various funds with principal held in the Sweep accounts.

(2023.07.06) Resolved, That the fees owed to the Lutheran Archives Center at Philadelphia for the perpetual care of the records of San Martin de Pores, Allentown, (\$4,900) and St. John, Shenandoah, (\$5,000) be paid from the Mission Development Fund.

(2023.10.05) That the Authorized Payment Schedule, dated October 2023, be approved as presented.

(2023.10.06) That the Portico Gold+ plan be approved for employee health benefits for 2024.

(2023.10.07) That the amounts designated as housing allowance shall apply to the calendar year 2024 and all future years unless otherwise provided by this Synod Council:

Rev. Christopher deForest, \$25,000

Rev. Rachael Dietz, \$30,000

(2023.10.08) That Campbell, Rappold, & Yurasits LLP be retained as auditors for the fiscal year ending 1/31/2024 at a cost not to exceed \$25,000.

(2023.12.01) That all salary and expenses related to the work of the Associate of the Bishop for the Lehigh Mission District be paid from the Flach Fund beginning with Fiscal Year 2023.

(2023.12.02) That the Leadership Development Fund be used to underwrite the Licensed Lay Ministry program, inclusive of the LLM program director, and that the spending cap restriction on that account be suspended for Fiscal Years 2024 and 2025.

(2023.12.03) That for FY beginning 2/1/2024 Executive, Coordinating, and Contracted Staff compensation be set in accordance with the following schedule, with amounts reflecting total compensation for Executive and Contracted Staff and hourly rate for Coordinating Staff. Amounts for existing staff represent a 3.0% increase with the exception of The Rev. Carl Shankweiler, who is receiving the maximum desired salary. Funding is from General Fund, except as noted:

<u>Executive Staff</u>	<u>Defined Compensation</u>
deForest	\$115,077
Deitz	\$80,523
Woodfield	\$34,523
Huber	\$26,739 (\$20,000 from Flach Fund)
Grube	\$18,685
Labagh	\$18,540
Drennan	\$18,685
Shankweiler	\$1,000
Gombert	\$28,456
E/W Berks	\$26,000
Communicator	\$30,000
<u>Contract Staff</u>	<u>Defined Compensation</u>
Nielsen	\$21,034 (paid to Holy Trinity, Dingman's Ferry)
LLM Coord	\$12,000 (all from Lay Leadership Fund)
Doug Hill	\$14,000 (all from Mission Development Fund)
<u>Coordinating Staff</u>	<u>Hourly Rate</u>
Christman	\$23.73
Burke	\$21.35 (\$30,000 from Mission Development Fund)
Skinner	\$21.35

(2023.12.04) That the Synod Council approve funding in the amount of \$6,000 from the Mission Development Fund for the “Free to Be” community.

(2023.12.06) That for calendar year 2024, Deacon Tigerman having taken Portico’s Silver+ plan, \$150 per month be paid for Deacon Tigerman and her family’s health insurance and that \$2,736 be paid into her Health Savings Account.

(2023.12.12) That the proposed budget for the 2024 Synod Assembly be approved.

(2024.02.01) That the exploration period for the “Free to Be” ministry be 2024.02.01 extended for a period of 2 months (March and April 2024), and that the Rev. Lauren Applegate be compensated for 30 hours/week, at a rate of \$4,500/month. Therefore, the Synod Council approves the expenditure of up to \$9,000, with the hope that ELCA Churchwide will continue their contributions in a sign of partnership.

(2024.02.02) That the financial report ending January 31, 2024 be accepted, pending audit.

(2024.04.07) That the following resolution concerning the 2025 budget be recommended to the 2024 Synod Assembly:

Resolved, that the 2025 budget (February 1, 2025 to January 31, 2026) be adopted. The Synod Council is hereby authorized to establish the 2025 budget no later than its January 2025 meeting, making any necessary adjustment to the proposal in light of both realistic anticipation of receipts and synod priorities (in consultation with the ELCA Treasurer with respect to the ELCA portion thereof.)

Synod Organization and Policies

(2023.07.01) Resolved, That in accordance with synod provision S8.52., Nancy Reichelt’s tenure as synod vice president begin with the adoption of this resolution.

(2023.07.02) Resolved, That in accordance with *S8.13., Blake Marles be appointed the synod’s attorney.

(2023.07.05) Resolved, That Bishop deForest be authorized to rent, on behalf of the synod, the Lutheran Center, Schoenersville, to the Metropolitan Community Church of the Lehigh Valley for an initial monthly fee of \$1,000.00, which may be adjusted as costs become better known for the increased use of utilities, cleaning services, and the increased wear and tear to the building, it being understood that for this amount the congregation will have use of the sanctuary (when not being used for synodical functions, including funerals), two offices dedicated solely to the congregation’s use, and the main conference room, social hall, and kitchen (when not being used for synodical functions).

(2023.10.01) That in accordance with BLS 10.03.f., the following persons be appointed to Synod Council to fill vacancies: Ms. Jean Sandberg (lay female), Ms. Seraphina Ware (female youth), The Rev. Carl Shankweiler (finishing the last year of Rev. Wes Poole’s “clergy at large” term).

(2023.10.04) That the Synod Council normally hold six regular meetings per year.

(2023.10.11) That the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod affirm and approve the 6261 Ministry Communities Initiative as a Synod Priority.

(2023.10.12) That the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod Office be closed each year from December 24 through January 2.

(2023.10.17) That Ms. Louise McCloughan and Mr. Fred Wuertele be appointed to serve on the Synod Council Finance Committee.

(2023.12.07) That the name of the synod's Constitution Committee be changed to the Committee on Governance.

(2023.12.09) That the contract for Deacon Woodfield be extended to the end of April 2024.

(2024.04.03) That the position of Director of Congregational Legacy and Purpose be extended until the close of the current fiscal year.

(2024.04.04) That Deacon Woodfield continue in the position of Director of Legacy and Purpose, concurrent with the position's extension to the close of the current fiscal year, provided he receive coaching and counseling at the bishop's discretion.

(2024.04.06) That Easter Monday and Juneteenth be added to the list of official holidays when the Synod Office is closed.

Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions

(2023.10.09) That in keeping with provision *S18.13.b. of the synod's constitution, the Synod Council recommends to the 2024 Synod Assembly of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod for adoption the following addition to the synod's constitution:

S7.28. A Licensed Lay Minister who is serving as a pastoral presence in a congregation or parish of this synod shall have voice and vote at the Synod Assembly.

(2023.10.10) That in keeping with provision *S18.13.b. of the synod's constitution, the Synod Council recommends to the 2024 Synod Assembly of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod for adoption the following two additions to the synod's constitution:

S8.33. The secretary shall be ex-officio a member of the Churchwide Assembly.

S8.43. The treasurer shall be ex-officio a member of the Churchwide Assembly.

(2024.04.08) That the proposed bylaw concerning the Archives Committee, BLS11.06.01., as prepared by the Committee on Governance, be approved by the Synod Council and recommended by the council to the 2024 Synod Assembly of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod for adoption.

**Congregations, Synod Authorized Worshipping Communities,
and Synod Authorized Outreach Ministries**

(2023.10.02) That in accordance with section *C6.05. of the Model Constitution for Congregations, that the decision of Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Hanover Township, Northampton County, PA to terminate its relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and become a member of the North American Lutheran Church (NALC) be approved, effective October 28, 2023.

(2023.10.15) That Hope's Table, housed at Hope Lutheran Church, 601 N. Front St, Reading, PA, 19601, be reauthorized as a Synodically Authorized Worshipping Community (SAWC) of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod.

(2023.10.16) That Common Ground Recovery Community, housed at Atonement Lutheran Church, 5 Wyomissing Blvd, Wyomissing, PA, 19610, be reauthorized as a Synodically Authorized Worshipping Community (SAWC) of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod.

(2023.12.08) That the Free to Be Community be approved as an exploration.

(2024.04.01) That in accordance with section *C6.05. of the ELCA Model Constitution for Congregations – with two duly called congregational meetings,, November 19, 2023, and March 4, 2024, and no outstanding financial obligations to the ELCA or predecessor bodies – that the decision of St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church, City of Nanticoke, Luezerne County, PA, to terminate its relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and become a member of the North American Lutheran Church (NALC) by approved, effective April 20, 2024.

(2024.04.05) That the Northeastern PA Synod Council officially designates “Free to Be” as a Synod Authorized Outreach Ministry (SAOM) and designates the Rev. Lauren Applegate as its mission developer, and be it further resolved, that in celebrating what the Spirit is doing in the “Free to Be” exploration, the Synod Council provide from the Mission Development Fund no more than \$35,000 and to recommend to the 2024 Synod Assembly for inclusion in the FY 2025 budget no more than \$35,000 toward meeting that ministry's budget, these amounts not limiting Witness and Service grants to “Free to Be.”

Miscellaneous

(2023.07.09) Resolved, That Polly Beste, Pamela DeCampi, David Fessler, and Thomas Lynch be re-elected to three-year terms on the Board of Trustees of the Good Shepherd Rehabilitation Network, 2023-2026.

(2024.04.11) That David DeCampi (returning trustee), Matthew Green, Blake Marles (returning trustee), and Jo-Ann Mendles be elected or re-elected to three-year terms on the Board of Trustees of the Good Shepherd Rehabilitation Network, 2024 – 2027.

Items to be Voted on at Synod Assembly

(1) S7.28. A Licensed Lay Minister who is serving as a pastoral presence in a congregation or parish of this synod shall have voice and vote at the Synod Assembly.

(2) S8.33. The secretary shall be ex-officio a member of the Churchwide Assembly.

S8.43. The treasurer shall be ex-officio a member of the Churchwide Assembly.

(3) BLS11.06.01. The Archives Committee of this synod shall consist of the synod archivist, the secretary of the synod, and at least two other persons appointed by the Synod Council. This committee shall assist the archivist in providing for the secure and permanent preservation of the important documents of the synod organization and of the synod's congregations, especially closed congregations.

The Archives Committee shall advise congregations of this synod (a) in the creation and maintenance of congregational records and archives, (b) in the preservation and interpretation of congregational history, and (c) in the identification of items of historical, ecclesial, or artistic merit that should be preserved or require conservatory care, particularly in the case of congregations in the process of closing.

The Archives Committee shall coordinate this synod's efforts with regional and churchwide archivists and historians. As necessary, the Archives Committee shall make recommendations to the Synod Council regarding long-range planning for, and the management of, the archives.

The archivist shall be nominated by the bishop and appointed by the Synod Council for a term of four years with no term limits.

The archivist shall be responsible to see that the documents and files of the synod organization are taken to the Lutheran Archives Center at Philadelphia. The archivist shall also be responsible, when possible, to see that the records of closed congregations are taken to the Lutheran Archives Center at Philadelphia. The archivist or the archivist's designee shall be the synod's representative on the board of the Lutheran Archives Center at Philadelphia. The archivist shall report as necessary or as requested to the Synod Council and shall report annually to the synod assembly.

The Synod Council may appoint a synod historian. The synod archivist may also serve as the synod historian. The historian shall work with the archivist in identifying appropriate source materials for inclusion in the archives. The historian shall be expected to point out and interpret the synod's history, bringing that perspective to the discussions of the Synod Council and synod assemblies. If the historian is not a voting member of the Synod Council or an assembly, the presiding officer may grant the historian voice without vote.

-The Rev. Kenneth Melber, Jr., *Synod Secretary*

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE OF DEANS

The Committee of Deans met frequently since the last synod assembly. New Members this year include Rev. Brian Beissel, Rev. Cindy White, and Rev. Inge Williams (interim).

In October 2023, Muhlenberg College hosted the deans as they held a special luncheon for rostered ministers. Those rostered ministers (and their families) celebrating milestone anniversaries were invited for a meal, program, and pictures.

Following the success of last year's sabbatical guidelines, the deans are working on best practices for deacons/pastors and their congregations/ministry sites when they depart a call.

Bishop deForest asked for input from the deans as he thinks through celebrating Holy Communion at our upcoming Synod Assembly. I also send deans relevant reminders to distribute to leaders and congregations, such as mission support intents, parochial reports, and annual reports to the Bishop.

The deans plan to meet approximately every other month, alternating between virtual meeting space and in-person at the Lutheran Center. At each meeting, they also handle routine roster matters and recognitions.

Anniversaries of Rostered Service

2024 marks the 15th anniversary of service for:

Deacon Jaqueline Grauel
Deacon Diana Pelletier
Rev. Marjorie Dean
Rev. Rachel Hacker
Rev. Paul Metzloff
Rev. Paulette Obrecht

The following rostered ministers are celebrating 25 years of service:

Rev. Robert Argot, Jr.
Rev. Kathleen Ash-Flashner
Rev. Kathleen Coleman
Rev. Peggy Wuertele

Observing their 40th anniversary of ordination are:

Rev. Linda Bonfiglio
Rev. Kurt Garbe
Rev. William “Woody” Maxon
Rev. Thomas Neel
Rev. Grace Olson
Rev. Keith Rohrbach
Rev. William Zimmerman

Celebrating their 50th anniversary of ordained service are:

Rev. William “Chip” Fairchild
Rev. Gary Langensiepen
Rev. John Minnich
Rev. Charles Oldland III
Rev. Fred Opalinski
Rev. Joseph Scholtes, Jr.
Rev. Glen Segond
Rev. Glenn Simmons
Rev. Robert vonFrisch
Rev. Theodore Zimmerman

Marking 55 years of rostered ministry are:

Rev. Burlington Latshaw III
Rev. Kenneth Feinour, Jr.

Celebrating their 60th anniversary of ordination are:

Rev. John Deisinger
Rev. Harry Goos
Rev. Arthur Hahn, Jr.
Rev. Thomas Keener
Rev. Thomas Reinsel

Celebrating their 65 years of ordained service are:

Rev. C. David Godshall
Rev. Dale Sandstrom

Celebrating their 75th ordination anniversary is:

Rev. John Aurand

THE REV. WILLIAM WESTLEY FAIRCHILD, JR. (“Chip”), son of William Westley Fairchild, Sr., and Blanche Verna (Himmelberger), was born on December 21, 1947, in Reading, PA. He attended Kutztown State College (now University) and graduated with an A.B. in Liberal Arts from Muhlenberg College in 1970 and a M.Div. from The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia (now United Lutheran Seminary-Philadelphia Campus) in 1974.

He was ordained by the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Lutheran Church in America on May 21, 1974, at Good Shepherd Lutheran, Easton, PA. Pastor Fairchild served the following calls: He served the following calls: Pastor, St. Luke, Freeland, PA (1974-1979); Assistant to the President (Bishop), NEPA Synod (1979-1986); and, Pastor, Christ, Conyngham, PA (1986-2013).

Pastor Fairchild married Sandra Jean (Rentz) on August 14, 1970. They are the parents of Laura Kate and Timothy Carl.

THE REV. GARY JOSEPH LANGENSIEPEN, son of Eugene and Mary (Szivos) Langensiepen was born on January 7, 1949, in Bethlehem, PA. He graduated with a B.A. in English from Muhlenberg College in 1970 and a M.Div. from The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia (now United Lutheran Seminary-Philadelphia Campus) in 1974.

He was ordained by the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Lutheran Church in America on May 21, 1974, at Good Shepherd Lutheran, Easton, PA. Following his ordination, he served the following calls: Pastor, St. John Lutheran, Pine Grove, PA (1974-1979); Pastor, Grace Lutheran, Macungie, PA (1979-1985); Case Worker, Topton Children’s Home (1985-1986); Pastor, St. Michael Lutheran Church, Hamburg, PA (1986-1990); and, Pastor, St. John Windish, Bethlehem, PA (1990-2012). In retirement, he also served St. Mark, Allentown.

He has also earned an STM and D.Min. from The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia (now United Lutheran Seminary-Philadelphia Campus).

Pastor Langensiepen was married to Kathleen (Holetz) on August 15, 1970, and they had one son, Scott Geoffrey. He married Elizabeth (Carter) Langensiepen on August 7, 1992.

THE REV. JOHN PHILLIP MINNICH, son of Rev. Harold F. and Mildred S. Minnich, was born on February 7, 1948, in Reading, PA. He graduated from Kutztown State College (now University) with a B.A. in 1970. He also earned a M.Div. and STM from The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia (now United Lutheran Seminary-Philadelphia Campus) in 1976 and 1980, respectively.

Pastor Minnich was ordained by the Central Pennsylvania Synod of the Lutheran Church in America on June 23, 1974. Following his ordination, he served the following calls: Pastor, Good Shepherd Lutheran, Southampton, PA (1974-1982); Pastor, Redemption Lutheran, Philadelphia (1982-1996); Pastor, St. Michael, Hamburg, PA (1996-2001); Interim Pastor, St. Paul, Trexlertown, PA (2002-2003); Pastor, Nativity, Allentown, PA (2004-2008); and, Pastor, St. Michael Evangelical Church of the Nativity, Allentown, PA (2008-2020).

Pastor Minnich married Margaret R. (McClurg) on June 9, 1973, and they had two children: Rebekah Elizabeth and John Charles.

THE REV. CHARLES HOWARD OLDLAND III, son of Charles H. Oldland, Jr. and Emiy Katharine (Holland), was born on September 7, 1946, in Uniontown, PA. He graduated with a B.M. in Sacred Music from Wittenberg University in 1970 and a M.Div. from Hamma School of Theology in 1974.

He was ordained by the Western Pennsylvania-West Virginia Synod of the Lutheran Church in America on June 9, 1974. He served the following calls: Associate Pastor, Bethany Lutheran, Montoursville, PA (1974-1976); Pastor, Seven Valleys Pastoral Charge, Seven Valleys, PA (1976-1984); Pastor, Salem Lutheran Church, Elizabethville, PA (1984-2001); Chaplain, Susquehanna Lutheran Village Millersburg, PA (2001-2006); Pastor, St. Peter, Reinerton, PA (2010-2012).

Pastor Oldland married Sanya Sue (Phillips) June 20, 1969, and they are parents to John C. Oldland, Mark Colin Howard, and Elizabeth Holley Katharine.

THE REV. FRED STANLEY OPALINSKI, son of Fred and Margaret (Mihovich) Opalinski was born on April 16, 1948, in North Charleroi, PA. He graduated from Thiel College in 1970 with a B.A. in Philosophy and The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg (now United Lutheran Seminary-Gettysburg Campus) in 1974 with a M.Div.

He was ordained on June 9, 1974, by the Western Pennsylvania-West Virginia Synod of the Lutheran Church in America. Pastor Opalinski served the following calls: Pastor, Williamson-Upton Parish, Mercersburg, PA (1974-1980); Associate Pastor, Trinity Lutheran, Latrobe, PA (1980-1987), Senior Pastor, Trinity Lutheran, Latrobe, PA (1989-2003; and, Senior Pastor, Trinity, Reading. (2003-2014).

Pastor Opalinski married Janet Ruth (Kepple) on September 4, 1971. They have two daughters: Megan Ruth and Kristen Lucille.

THE REV. JOSEPH JOHN SCHOLTES, JR. son of Joseph J. Scholtes, Sr. and Mavis (Neal), was born on March 3, 1948, in Pittsburgh, PA. He graduated with a B.A. in Social Sciences from Muhlenberg College in 1970 and a M.Div. from The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg (now United Lutheran Seminary-Gettysburg Campus) in 1974.

He was ordained on July 14, 1974, at St. John Lutheran Church, Sinking Spring, PA, by the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Lutheran Church in America. Pastor Scholtes served the following calls: Pastor, First English, Minersville, PA and Trinity, Buck Run, PA (1974-1980); St. John, St. John, PA (1980-2000); and, St. Paul, Orwigsburg, PA (2000-2013).

He also earned an STM and D.Min. from The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia (now United Lutheran Seminary-Philadelphia Campus) in 1999 and 2006, respectively.

Pastor Scholtes married Bonita “Bonnie” (Boyer) on August 29, 1970. They are the parents of Christie Elizabeth and Rev. Michael Joseph.

THE REV. GLEN THOMAS SEGOND, son of Francis and Evelyn Segond, was born on October 8, 1948 in Brooklyn, NY. He graduated from Upsala College, East Orange, NJ, in 1970 with a BA in Religion and Psychology. He attended Concordia Seminary—St. Louis and then Seminex. Pastor Segond graduated from Seminex with an M.Div. in 1974, support by the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago.

He was ordained at King of Kings Lutheran Church, Mountain Lakes, NJ, by the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod on June 15, 1974.

Pastor Segond earned a MSW in Social Work from the Marywood School of Social Work in 1979.

Following his ordination, Pastor Segond served the following calls: Pastor, Zion Lutheran Church (LC-MS), Owego, NY (1974-1978); Assistant Pastor, St. Paul, Craigs Meadow, PA (1978-1985). Pastor, St. Mark, Minisink Hills, PA (1985-present). Pastor Segond also practiced as a counselor within several health systems in New Jersey and currently operates a private practice in Stroudsburg, PA.

Pastor Segond married Hannelore (Stoeffler) on January 17, 1970, and they had one son, Samuel.

THE REV. GLENN LEROY SIMMONS, son of Russell and Virginia (Allison) Simmons was born August 25, 1948, in Greenville, OH. He graduated with a BA in English Literature from Wittenberg University in 1970 and a M.Div. from Yale Divinity School in 1973.

Pastor Simmons was ordained by the Ohio Synod of the Lutheran Church in America on August 4, 1974, at Trinity Lutheran Church, Versailles, OH. He served the following calls: Metropolitan Lutheran Council, Wilkes-Barre, PA (1974-1975); Pastor, Salem-St. Paul's Lutheran, Kresgeville, PA (1975-1982); Assistant to the Bishop, Northeastern PA Synod and Division for Mission in North America, LCA (1982-1988); Assistant to the Bishop, Northeastern PA and Mission Director, Division for Outreach, ELCA (1988-2009); Associate of the Bishop for the Lehigh Mission District, Synod Assembly, and Bishop's Conference, Northeastern PA Synod (2009-2015).

Pastor Simmons married Mary K. (Bolton) on December 30, 1983.

THE REV. ROBERT ALVIN VONFRISCH, son of Alvin W. and Arline June (Smith) vonFrisch, was born on August 12, 1948, in Southington, CT. He graduated with a BA in German from Wagner College, Staten Island, NY, in 1970. He earned a MA from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in 1971 and a M.Div. from The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg (now United Lutheran Seminary-Gettysburg Campus) in 1974.

He was ordained on September 8, 1974, at First Lutheran Church, Southington, CT, by the New England Synod of the Lutheran Church in America. Pastor vonFrisch served the following calls: Pastor, St. John, Towamensing, PA (1974-1983); Pastor, Zion and St. Matthew, Weatherly, PA (1983-1993); Pastor, Schwarzwald, Jacksonwald, PA (1993-2003); and, Pastor, Trinity, Lehighton, PA (2003-2012). In retirement, he served as designated pastor to Christ Lutheran, Hazleton, PA.

Pastor vonFrisch married Karen Marie (Levan) on April 19, 1975, and they are the parents of three children: Michael, Drew, and Joshua.

THE REV. THEODORE IRL ZIMMERMAN, son of Herbert A. and Ellenia (Sells) Zimmerman, was born on April 14, 1948, in Peking, China.

He graduated in 1969 with a B.A. in Psychology and French from Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter, MN. In 1974, he earned a M.Div. from the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago.

Pastor Zimmerman was ordained by the Southeastern Synod of the Lutheran Church in America on November 29, 1974. He served the following calls: Assistant Pastor, Trinity Lutheran Church, Tullahoma, TN (1974-1980); Missionary, Division for World Mission and Ecumenism, Taipei, Taiwan (1980-1989); Missionary, Division for Global Mission, Hong Kong (1993-2014).

He also earned a Ph.D from Luther Northwestern Theological Seminary (now Luther Seminary) in 1993.

Pastor Zimmerman was married to Jane (Davis) on August 29, 1971, and they have three children, Daniel, Sarah, and Jonathan.

The Rev. Rachael C. R. Dietz
Executive Associate of the Bishop for Leadership

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR FOR EVANGELICAL MISSION

Dear coworkers of the Gospel,

What a pleasure it has been serving you and alongside you in the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod as the Director for Evangelical Mission this past year. Thank you for your welcome and hospitality as I have ventured around the Synod and begun getting to know you.

As you may remember, my goal was to visit each of our 240 congregations by this Synod Assembly. I must confess that while I have achieved this goal in part – by meeting with representatives of each congregation and at least driving by nearly all of your ministry sites – I have not yet been *inside* each and every congregation on our NEPA territory. This year, it is my goal to see the inside worship spaces for those of your congregations I have not had the opportunity to see yet!

It has also been a delight to travel with Bishop deForest, Vice President Nancy Reichelt, and Deacon Travis Woodfield each Monday from October to May to meet with our rostered ministers, pastoral care providers, and lay folks. Thank you for making the time to meet with us and to share your joys and challenges so that we may rejoice in the Lord together and begin addressing the challenges you have laid before us. I am heartened to hear that as a Synod we are indeed living into the core commitments of Growing Young, Gaining Strength, and Going Beyond Death to Life in so many ways! The hope you all have in our God who does wondrous things and who is always doing something new in our midst is inspiring. I look forward to working with you on a deeper level as, together, we seek to Heal the Hurts, Love the Land, and Engage the Stranger.

Some of the ministries the DEM works most closely with are our SAWCs (Synodical Authorized Worshipping Communities) and a new category called SAOMs (Synodical Authorized Outreach Ministries). We celebrate the transformational ministry happening on the ground in the Reading area: Common Ground Recovery Communities led by Rev. Tom Scornavacchi and Hope's Table led by interim Rev. Bruce Osterhout. Rev. Osterhout is serving as the interim in light of Rev. Mary Wolfe's retirement. We thank her for her good and faithful service, for the commencement of this ministry on the margins, and for her generous dedication to growing this ministry over the last decade. To learn more about Hope's Table please visit their website at <http://www.jcishope.org> and to learn more about Common Ground please visit their website at <https://cgrcommunity.org>.

We also give thanks for a new ministry in Bethlehem and the first SAOM of our Synod – a ministry called Free to Be led by Rev. Lauren Applegate. Free to Be is a community that connects with young people, families, and kiddos in a ways that experience the love of God and seek to build lives that honor God, self, and neighbor. They center around providing mutual support, truth speaking, story sharing, and connection building. Feel free to join a Playground Pop-up this summer! To learn more about Free to Be please visit their webpage at www.godslove.org/freetobe.

It has been a privilege and joy to discern with you about 6261 Ministry Communities, Licensed Lay Ministry, coaching, and other creative opportunities to share and live the Gospel with our neighbors. I am excited to see where the Spirit leads us in this upcoming year and am grateful to you for being open and invested in these conversations. We never know where the Spirit may blow next and we trust that God has provided the companions for the journey!

Grace upon grace,
Deacon Kat Tigerman

REPORT OF THE TREASURER

The fiscal year 2023 was a difficult year. We lost \$69,704 on the Synod Assembly and the Mission Support received was \$100,602 less than the budgeted amount. However, by controlling expenditures and increasing interest earnings the fiscal year ended with a deficit of \$13,320.

I would like to thank the congregations of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod for their financial support received during the 2023 fiscal year. Our fiscal year begins on February 1 and ends on January 31 of the following year. In the 2023 fiscal year the synod received \$100,602 less in Mission Support than was budgeted. This loss was \$32,802 more than the average loss of \$67,800 per year since fiscal year 2014.

The total revenue budgeted for the 2023 fiscal year was \$1,961,400. The actual revenue received was \$1,988,788 resulting in an increase of \$27,389. This increase was due to \$74,676 of interest and \$5,100 of rental income which were not budgeted. The actual expenditure of \$2,002,108 was \$59,292 less than the budgeted expenditure of \$2,061,400. The 2023 fiscal year ended with a deficit of \$13,320.

S15.14 of the Constitution of The Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod provides for the use of Deferred Revenue to balance a budget. The 2023 Spending Plan contained \$100,000 of Deferred Revenue. \$13,320 of this revenue was used to balance the 2023 Spending Plan.

What were the sources of the Synod's Revenue?

REVENUE SOURCES

Mission Support	86.95%
Synod Assembly	04.37%
Interest Earnings	03.75%
Building Rental	00.37%
DEM Grant (ELCA)	00.51%
Event Income	00.98%
Other	03.07%
Total Revenue Sources	100%

How did the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod spend it's money?

EXPENDITURES

ELCA Support	40.60%
Administration	01.21%
Synod Staff	33.16%
Building & Office	07.27%
Institution & Agency Support	08.35%
Executive Committee	06.15%
Ministry Teams	00.71%
Other	02.55%
Total Expenditures	100%

Approximately 87% of the Synods Revenue comes from Mission Support contributed by Synod Congregations. What follows is a ten year history of Mission Support contributions:

Fiscal Year Ending	Amount Received	Change from Prior Year
1/31/2015	\$2,326,513	(\$80,874)
1/31/2016	\$2,297,903	(\$28,610)
1/31/2017	\$2,223,377	(\$74,526)
1/31/2018	\$2,038,976	(\$184,401)
1/31/2019	\$2,175,805	\$136,829
1/31/2020	\$1,979,894	(\$195,911)
1/31/2021	\$1,811,016	(\$168,878)
1/31/2022	\$1,860,637	\$ 49,621
1/31/2023	\$1,849,133	(\$11,504)
1/31/2024	\$1,729,398	(\$119,735)

Mission Support dollars received in Fiscal Year 2023 were \$597,115 less than received in Fiscal Year 2014. The average loss in Mission Support in the years shown in the above chart was (\$67,800).

Where are NEPA Synod funds invested?

1. ELCA Endowment Fund Polled Trust

SYNOD FUND	Balance 1/1/2023	Balance 12/31/2023
Student Education	\$ 136,816	\$ 149,978
Church Loan	\$1,306,573	\$1,491,109
Disaster Response	\$ 89,372	\$ 101,995
Social Ministry	\$ 404,340	\$ 443,240
Global Mission	\$ 367,063	\$ 418,905
Mission Development	\$ 659,372	\$ 752,500
Leadership Devt.	\$ 99,135	\$ 113,136
Bishop Discretion	\$ 153,759	\$ 175,475
Clyde Kelchner 1	\$ 400,681	\$ 457,272
Clyde Kelchner 11	\$ 760,590	\$ 756,383
Kerschmar Memorial	\$ 258,912	\$ 283,820

2. ELCA Mission Investment Fund

CD#...1778

Matures 11/20/2024

Fixed Rate APR 2.13%

Breakdown between Funds

Mission Development	\$106,949
Church Loan	\$101,453
Social Ministry	\$73,141
Total	\$281,545

CD#...5819

Matures TBD

Fixed Rate APR TBD

General Fund	\$310,012
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3. TRUIST Bank

CD#...81475

Matures 10/07/2024.

Fixed Rate APR 4.45%

General Fund

\$110,223

4. M&T Bank

Sweep Accounts

M&T Checking

Minium Balance \$50,000

Beginning Date 5/12/2023

Earnings as of 1/1/2024 \$12,951

Large Sweep Account

Minium Balance \$10,000

Beginning Date 5/12/2023

Earnings as of 1/1/2024 \$61,105

What is new for Fiscal Year 2025?

The name Spending Plan will be replaced with Budget. Budgets usually contain Revenue as well as Expenditures.

The Revenue will include Transfers from other Funds. A Fund Management Fee will be transferred from each special fund to the General fund. This fee will be 1% of the balance of each special fund as of the last day of the prior fiscal year.

Expenses will include:

- | | |
|--------------------|----------|
| 1. Free to Be | \$35,000 |
| 2. Café Esperanza | \$ 5,000 |
| 3. Hmong Community | \$ 1,500 |
| 4. 6261 | \$25,000 |

It has been a pleasure serving as Synod Treasurer and working with the Synod Staff and Finance Committee in doing God's work in the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod.

Yours in Christ,
Donald E Boyer, Treasurer



37th Northeastern PA Synod Assembly

HUNGRY FOR LIFE **TOGETHER IN CHRIST**

Section II

Financial

NEPA Synod of the ELCA
Special Fund Distribution Calculation -for FY 2025

<u>Fund</u>	<u>as of</u>	<u>1/31/21</u>	<u>1/31/22</u>	<u>1/31/23</u>	<u>1/31/24</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>5%</u>	<u>6%</u>	<u>7%</u>	<u>8%</u>	<u>9%</u>	<u>10%</u>
		<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>Five Year</u>						
Mission Development Fund		1,510,983	1,571,955	1,637,840	1,516,322	1,616,101	1,570,640	78,532	94,238	109,945	125,651	141,358
Leadership Development Fund		98,018	109,003	117,802	104,578	113,438	108,568	5,428	6,514	7,600	8,685	9,771
Student Education Fund		157,333	173,541	186,579	144,328	150,378	162,432	8,122	9,746	11,370	12,995	14,619
Social Ministry Fund		493,831	529,877	549,300	499,681	520,741	518,686	25,934	31,121	36,308	41,495	46,682
		2,260,165	2,384,376	2,491,521	2,264,908	2,400,658	2,360,326					
<u>Average</u>												
<u>Three Year</u>												
Clyde Kelchner Fund												
II-Temporarily Restricted			877,477	850,484	802,350	758,396						
I-Permanently Restricted			412,477	448,039	422,681	458,489						
Total			1,289,954	1,298,522	1,225,030	1,216,886	1,246,813	62,341	74,809	87,277	99,745	112,213
												124,681

PROPOSED FY 2025 BUDGET

Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod
FY beginning 2/1/2025 Proposed Budget-approved by Synod Council 4/20/2024

Account Description	2023 Approved Budget	Unaudited Actual	2024 Approved Budget	2025 Proposed Budget
Deferred Revenue Available for Appropriations	100,000	0	150,000	150,000
REVENUE				
TOTAL REVENUE	1,961,400	1,988,788	1,914,100	2,152,402
Mission Support	1,830,000	1,729,398	1,800,000	1,700,000
Synod Assembly	90,000	86,943	35,000	50,000
Events Income	24,000	19,561	30,000	30,000
DEM Support Grant	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000
Transfers			31,700	208,389
Fund management fees				62,013 *Table A
Interest Earnings		74,676		75,000 *Table B
Rental Income	2,400	7,500	2,400	12,000
Miscellaneous Income	5,000	60,569	5,000	5,000
Estate Donations		141		
Total Funds Available for Appropriations	2,061,400	1,988,788	2,064,100	2,302,402

EXPENDITURES				
ELCA MISSION SUPPORT	860,100	812,817	846,000	47% 799,000
INSTITUTION & AGENCY SUPPORT	146,400	138,352	144,000	7.7% 130,900
INSTITUTION SUPPORT	16,470	15,564	16,200	0.6% 10,200
Diakon	5,490	5,188	5,400	0.0% 0
Lutheran Congregational Services	5,490	5,188	5,400	0.3% 5,100
Good Shepherd	5,490	5,188	5,400	0.3% 5,100
AGENCY SUPPORT	129,930	122,788	127,800	7.1% 120,700
United Seminary	91,500	86,470	90,000	5.0% 85,000
Bear Creek Camp	25,620	24,212	25,200	1.4% 23,800
Muhlenberg College	5,490	5,188	5,400	0.3% 5,100
PA Conference of Churches	3,660	3,459	3,600	0.2% 3,400
LAMPA	3,660	3,459	3,600	0.2% 3,400
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE TOTAL	123,200	173,754	73,200	128,894
Synod Assembly Expenses	100,000	156,647	50,000	50,000
Candidacy	15,000	8,920	15,000	16,243
Archives	6,000	6,000	6,000	6,000
Synod Council Expenses	200	237	200	1,000
Legal Services	2,000	1,950	2,000	4,000
6261				25,000
Additional MDF projects				26,651

<u>Account Description</u>	2023		2024	2025
	<u>Approved Budget</u>	<u>Unaudited Actual</u>	<u>Approved Budget</u>	<u>Proposed Budget</u>
SAWCs & SAOMs	29,000	29,000	29,000	75,000
Common Ground (SAWC)	17,000	17,000	17,000	25,000
Hope's Table (SAWC)	12,000	12,000	12,000	15,000
Free to Be (SAOM)				35,000
WORKSHOPS-boundary/anti-racism/1st call	2,000	65	10,500	13,500
TOTAL TEAMS	67,100	14,253	70,900	93,300
WORSHIP TEAM	400	0	400	400
FAITH FORMATION RESOURCE TEAM	2,500	1,212	3,500	3,500
GROWING YOUNG	3,700	1,722	4,000	14,000
RESOURCE CENTER OPERATIONS	2,000	713	2,500	2,500
GWOH STORYTELLERS	1,000	42	1,000	500
FIRST CALL AND COACHING GRANTS	3,500	4,440	5,500	5,500
WITNESS & SERVICE TEAM	54,000	6,124	54,000	66,900
Witness Service Operations	200		200	300
LGBTQ+ task force	100	2,719	100	9,600
Accessibility Team	100	20	100	
World Hunger Advocates	100		100	
Green Team	100		100	250
Witness & Service Grants	9,150	1,800	9,150	45,000
Support Intern & Other Leaders	5,500	85	5,500	5,000
New Initiatives	17,000		17,000	
Campus Ministry	20,000		20,000	
Leisure Ministry	1,500	1,500	1,500	
Café Esperanza				5,000
Hmong Community				1,500
Global Mission	250		250	250
ADMINISTRATION TOTAL	813,800	833,867	870,700	955,900
BISHOP'S OFFICE	32,900	24,393	35,400	33,100
Bishops Discretionary Fund	1,500		1,500	1,500
Consultations-Cong/Professional Ldrs.	2,000	191	2,000	2,000
Interim Ministry	500		500	500
Anniversary Celebration		2,669	2,500	3,000
Bishop Conference	23,000	20,629	23,000	23,000
Ecumenism	100		100	100
Stewardship	2,800		2,800	
Chrism Mass	1,500	114	1,500	1,500
Miscellaneous Expenses	1,500	790	1,500	1,500
SYNOD STAFF	626,600	663,846	679,000	766,500
Contract Services	20,000	22,329		
Executive Staff (2024/2025-all staff combined)	442,000	443,775	645,000	732,500
Travel - Executive Staff (2025-combined)	30,600	32,510	30,000	31,500
Coordinating Staff	132,500	162,535		
Staff Events/Bonus		1,301	2,500	2,500
Travel - Coordinating Staff	1,500	1,396	1,500	
BUILDING AND OFFICE	154,300	145,628	156,300	156,300
Building Expenses/Occupancy	81,300	90,211	81,300	90,700
Office Expenses	40,000	39,927	40,000	30,600
Visitor/Hospitality Meals	1,000	475	3,000	3,000
Computer Expenses	6,500	4,989	6,500	6,500
Auditors	25,000	10,000	25,000	25,000
Miscellaneous Expenses	500	26	500	500
BUDGETARY RESERVE	19,800		19,800	19,800
TOTAL PROPOSED EXPENDITURES	2,061,400	2,002,108	2,064,100	2,216,294
TOTAL INCOME MINUS TOTAL EXPENSES	0	-13,320	0	86,108

Table A-TRANSFERS WORKSHEET

FY beginning 2/1/2025

Mission Development Fund	\$	125,651.00
Student Education Fund	\$	16,243.00
Social Ministry Fund	\$	41,495.00
Flach Fund	\$	25,000.00
TOTAL TRANSFERS	\$	208,389.00

Table B-FUND MANAGEMENT FEES WORKSHEET

FY beginning 2/1/2025 Propo January 31, 2024

unaudited fund balances

	Beginning Balance <u>1/31/2024</u>	<u>1% of balance</u>
Student Education	\$150,377.68	\$1,503.78
Church Loan/Development	\$1,600,941.26	\$16,009.41
Disaster Response	\$102,266.57	\$1,022.67
Social Ministry	\$520,740.54	\$5,207.41
Global Mission	\$420,020.63	\$4,200.21
Mission Development	\$1,616,101.21	\$16,161.01
Leadership Development	\$113,437.62	\$1,134.38
Bishop Discretion	\$175,942.49	\$1,759.42
Clyde Kelchner I	\$458,489.32	\$4,584.89
Clyde Kelchner II	\$758,396.39	\$7,583.96
Kerschmar Memorial	\$284,576.32	\$2,845.76

Potteiger

**under review*

Flach

**under review*

TOTAL	\$6,201,290	\$62,013
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TREASURER'S ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

East Berks

Location, Congregation	World	Homes &	Other	2023	2023	2024
	Hunger	Agencies	ELCA	Commit	Response	Commit
	2023	2023	2023			
BECHTELSTVILLE, TRINITY-3001	4,042.00	0.00	285.00	6,000.00	10,124.00	6,000.00
BLANDON, MAIDENCREEK-3002	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5,700.00	0.00
BOWERS, HOPE-3003	0.00	0.00	0.00	700.00	381.00	600.00
BOYERTOWN, ST. JOHN-3004	643.00	188.00	298.00	0.00	35,000.00	0.00
MOHRSVILLE, (SALEM) BELLEMAN'S-3005	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,000.00	3,931.50	3,000.00
DOUGLASSVILLE, ST. PAUL-3007	1,545.00	260.00	1,552.00	46,200.00	46,200.00	46,200.00
DRYVILLE, CHRIST-3008	155.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	21,000.00	0.00
FLEETWOOD, ST. PAUL-3009	1,959.79	0.00	595.43	12,000.00	14,500.00	0.00
HAMBURG, ST. JOHN.-3010	22.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	15,138.52	15,000.00
HAMBURG, ST. PAUL-3012	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,200.00	900.00	2,400.00
BOYERTOWN, ST. JOSEPH (HILL) - 3013	1,123.00	72.00	0.00	10,000.00	10,008.00	10,000.00
ALBURTIS, HUFFS, - 3014	0.00	2,500.00	700.00	12,775.00	14,326.59	0.00
FLEETWOOD, NEW JERUSALEM-3015	20.00	0.00	20.00	0.00	2,382.77	2,000.00
KEMPTON, NEW BETHEL-3017	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	750.00	0.00
STONY RUN, FRIEDENS-3018	1,790.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,500.00	0.00
KRUMSVILLE, MT. ZION-3019	693.00	0.00	600.00	2,000.00	2,000.00	2,000.00
KUTZTOWN, ST. JOHN-3020	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	7,599.96	0.00
KUTZTOWN, TRINITY-3021	2,678.00	0.00	6,348.00	0.00	24,636.00	0.00
OLEY, ST. PAUL (LOBACHSVILLE)-3023	240.00	0.00	0.00	1,200.00	614.00	1,200.00
FLEETWOOD, SALEM.(SHALTERS)-3024	831.23	0.00	375.85	3,600.00	2,940.19	3,000.00
MAXATAWNY, ZION-3025	0.00	0.00	0.00	10,000.00	11,318.54	10,000.00
MERTZTOWN, ST. PAUL-3026	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,600.00	0.00	2,600.00
KUTZTOWN, ZION MOSELEM-3027	0.00	0.00	229.00	50.00	50.00	0.00
FLEETWOOD, ST. PETER (BECKERS)-3028	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,000.00	2,000.00	2,000.00
OLEY, FRIEDENS-3029	2,029.00	190.30	0.00	19,000.00	18,460.00	19,000.00
PERRY TOWNSHIP, ZION -3030	4,047.30	0.00	0.00	11,000.00	11,000.00	11,000.00
SHOEMAKERSVILLE, ST. LUKE-3031	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	500.00
LEESPORT, ST. JOHN. (GERNANTS)-3032	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,000.00	2,000.04	2,000.00
OLEY, CHRIST (SPANGSVILLE)-3033	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,800.00	1,800.00	0.00
READING, ZION SPIES-3034	802.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	7,537.67	7,000.00
TOPTON, TRINITY-3035	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5,250.00	0.00
TOPTON HOME, GRACE-3036	725.00	625.00	410.00	8,000.00	8,250.00	0.00
LEESPORT, HOLY TRINITY-3037	500.00	0.00	0.00	3,000.00	3,000.00	3,000.00
SHARTLESVILLE, FRIEDENS-3038	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	8,574.07	8,000.00
EAST BERKS DISTRICT	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
DISTRICT TOTALS	23,845.32	3,835.30	11,413.28	157,125.00	299,872.85	156,500.00

Total churches responding

35

35

Note: Amounts above do not include benevolences sent directly to agencies.

Hazleton-Lehigh

Location, Congregation	World	Homes &	Other	2023	2023	2024
	Hunger	Agencies	ELCA	Commit	Response	Commit
	2023	2023	2023			
ASHFIELD, DINKEY MEMORIAL-4001	1,295.00	0.00	0.00	2,800.00	2,800.00	2,800.00
BIG CREEK, ST. PAUL-4002	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	400.00	0.00
AUDENRIED, SALEM-4003	155.00	0.00	0.00	1,000.00	915.00	1,000.00
BEAVER MEADOWS, ST. PAUL-4004	124.00	0.00	0.00	3,100.00	3,251.00	3,150.00
BOWMANSTOWN, TRINITY-4005	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
PENN FOREST. TWP, CHRIST-4006	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3,500.00	3,500.00
CONYNGHAM, CHRIST-4007	9,518.00	0.00	0.00	52,000.00	54,445.00	52,000.00
MAHONING, ST. JOHN-4008	0.00	0.00	0.00	10,000.00	10,173.00	0.00
FREELAND, ST. LUKE-4009	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	500.00	500.00
HAZLETON, CHRIST-4011	1,520.00	963.00	1397.50	20,500.00	9,147.60	15,500.00
HAZLETON, TRINITY-4012	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,342.00	0.00
JIM THORPE EAST, ST. JOHN-4013	238.91	0.00	164.00	0.00	5,162.00	5,000.00
JIM THORPE HGHTS, ST. JOHN-4014	2,087.00	0.00	0.00	7,608.00	8,242.00	7,608.00
LANSFORD, TRINITY-4015	120.00	0.00	40.00	5,000.00	6,330.00	5,000.00
LEHIGHTON, TRINITY-4016	4,050.00	2,097.50	20.00	10,000.00	11,252.23	10,000.00
PACKERTON, ZION-4018	0.00	0.00	0.00	3,200.00	3,347.00	3,200.00
MAHANOEY CITY, CHRIST-4019	254.00	190.00	0.00	0.00	10,000.00	10,000.00
NEW RINGGOLD, FRIEDENS-4022	703.00	0.00	312.00	1,000.00	843.00	0.00
N WEISSPORT, ST. MATTHEW-4023	798.25	818.25	0.00	0.00	3,978.25	4,000.00
NUREMBERG, EMMANUEL-4024	0.00	0.00	0.00	6,000.00	6,000.00	0.00
ZION GROVE, MT ZION-4025	0.00	0.00	118.00	4,800.00	4,800.00	5,000.00
PALMERTON, HOLY TRINITY-4026	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,400.00	2,400.00
BARNESVILLE, CHRIST-4028	0.00	0.00	375.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
RINGTOWN, ST. JOHN-4029	1,658.00	0.00	420.00	9,000.00	9,150.00	9,200.00
BRANDONVILLE, ST. JOHN-4030	0.00	50.00	0.00	5,800.00	5,800.00	5,800.00
SAINT JOHNS, ST. JOHN-4031	2,470.00	0.00	285.00	3,500.00	3,500.00	3,500.00
SUMMIT HILL, ST. PAUL-4033	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	423.50	0.00
TAMAQUA, ST. JOHN-4035	0.00	0.00	165.00	5,000.00	5,858.25	5,000.00
TAMAQUA, ZION-4036	2,360.00	0.00	0.00	6,000.00	6,330.00	0.00
TOWAMENSING, ST. JOHN-4037	0.00	0.00	0.00	5,000.00	4,992.00	5,000.00
TRACHSVILLE, JERUSALEM-4038	0.00	0.00	0.00	3,000.00	3,000.00	3,000.00
WEATHERLY, ST. MATTHEW-4039	0.00	0.00	0.00	50.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
WEATHERLY, ZION-4040	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,200.00	0.00
WEST HAZLETON, TRINITY-4042	163.93	0.00	0.00	4,500.00	4,500.00	4,500.00
MANTZVILLE, ST. PETER-4043	0.00	200.00	0.00	0.00	5,963.98	0.00
WEST PENN, ZION STONE-4044	500.00	500.00	500.00	0.00	500.00	0.00
WHITE HAVEN, ST. PAUL-4045	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
HAZLETON-LEHIGH MISC	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
DISTRICT TOTALS	28,015.09	4,818.75	3,796.50	168,858.00	202,045.81	167,658.00

Total churches responding

38

38

Note: Amounts above do not include benevolences sent directly to agencies.

Lehigh

Location, Congregation	World	Homes &	Other	2023	2023	2024
	Hunger	Agencies	ELCA	Commit	Response	Commit
	2023	2023	2023			
ALBURTIS, ZION LEHIGH-1001	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	633.50	0.00
ALLENTOWN, CHRIST-1002	907.12	0.00	2,125.00	41,000.00	41,004.00	25,000.00
ALLENTOWN, REDEEMER-1005	370.00	1,062.00	1,265.00	0.00	6,000.00	0.00
ALLENTOWN, ST. JOHN-1007	0.00	0.00	0.00	28,020.00	28,020.00	0.00
ALLENTOWN, ST. LUKE-1009	128.00	500.00	0.00	0.00	715.00	500.00
ALLENTOWN, ST. MARK-1010	50.00	300.00	665.00	1,890.00	1,890.00	1,890.00
ALLENTOWN, ST. PETER/HANOVER-1014	0.00	0.00	146.00	2,400.00	2,400.00	1,600.00
ALLENTOWN, ST. TIMOTHY-1017	2,704.00	0.00	2,290.00	8,000.00	8,000.00	9,000.00
ALLENTOWN, TRINITY MEMORIAL-1018	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	300.00	0.00
CETRONIA, CEDAR-1019	808.00	0.00	0.00	12,000.00	10,237.14	0.00
COOPERSBURG, ST. JAMES-1020	649.00	1,044.00	0.00	23,000.00	23,004.00	23,000.00
COOPERSBURG, ST. PAUL-1021	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
EMMAUS, HOLY SPIRIT-1022	1,200.00	180.00	9,221.25	33,000.00	33,000.00	33,000.00
EMMAUS, ST. JOHN-1023	1,938.00	0.00	25.00	15,000.00	16,950.84	12,800.00
FOGELSVILLE, ST. JOHN-1024	537.00	1,891.29	100.00	5,119.00	5,920.56	5,119.00
FRIEDENSVILLE, FRIEDENS-1025	409.00	0.00	340.00	1,760.00	1,760.00	0.00
MACUNGIE, GRACE-1027	341.00	1,000.00	0.00	10,000.00	10,000.00	10,000.00
OLD ZIONSVILLE, ZION-1028	20.00	0.00	0.00	13,000.00	14,293.73	13,000.00
EAST SALISBURY, JERUSALEM-1030	0.00	0.00	0.00	500.00	500.00	500.00
SUMMIT LAWN, ST. ANDREW-1031	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	750.00
BREINIGSVILLE, ST. PAUL-1032	0.00	2,040.00	748.00	20,100.00	20,100.00	21,100.00
MACUNGIE R. D., ST. PETER-1033	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,000.00	0.00
WEST SALISBURY, JERUSALEM-1034	1,000.00	900.00	200.00	0.00	6,200.00	6,000.00
ALLENTOWN, ST. MICHAEL/NATIVITY-1037	4,640.00	0.00	2,250.00	37,905.00	37,648.58	37,253.00
LEHIGH DISTRICT, MISC.	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
DISTRICT TOTALS	15,701.12	8,917.29	19,375.25	253,694.00	270,577.35	200,512.00

Total churches responding

25

25

Note: Amounts above do not include benevolences sent directly to agenices.

Northern Lehigh

Location, Congregation	World	Homes &	Other	2023	2023	2024
	Hunger	Agencies	ELCA	Commit	Response	Commit
	2023	2023	2023			
BATH, ST. JOHN-5001	0.00	0.00	0.00	4,000.00	4,463.26	4,000.00
CATASAUQUA, HOLY TRINITY-5002	240.00	102.00	750.00	10,800.00	10,800.00	10,800.00
CHERRYVILLE, HOPE-5004	1,428.23	0.00	376.87	41,240.00	41,240.00	41,240.00
COPLAY, ST. JOHN-5005	755.00	2,799.97	0.00	11,500.00	11,500.08	12,000.00
EMANUELSVILLE, EMMANUEL-5006	1,409.00	0.00	966.00	29,000.00	29,000.00	0.00
HEIDELBERG, HEIDELBERG-5007	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
SLATEDALE, HOLY TRINITY-5008	0.00	200.00	0.00	1,500.00	1,500.00	1,500.00
KREIDERSVILLE, GOOD SHEPHERD-5010	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5,421.00	0.00
LOWHILL TWNSP, MORGENLAND-5011	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,000.00	0.00
NAZARETH, ST. JOHN-5013	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	20,000.00	20,000.00
SCHNECKSVILLE, UNION-5014	603.37	0.00	1,050.00	10,000.00	10,000.00	0.00
NEW TRIPOLI, NEW LIFE-5015	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	835.90	0.00
NORTHAMPTON, HOLY TRINITY-5016	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
NORTHAMPTON, ZION-5017	3,325.00	0.00	2.00	8,400.00	8,400.00	0.00
NORTHAMP HOLY TRINITY SLOVAK-5018	330.00	0.00	0.00	1,200.00	1,200.00	1,200.00
SLATINGTON, ST. JOHN-5019	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,500.00	2,935.00	0.00
OREFIELD, JORDAN-5020	2,395.00	1,249.96	2,305.00	20,000.00	20,000.04	20,000.00
WEISENBERG TWP, WEISENBERG-5021	4,620.00	4,655.00	3,301.00	0.00	20,571.00	0.00
WEISENBERG TWP, ZIEGELS-5022	2,205.00	4,300.00	0.00	0.00	8,375.00	0.00
WHITEHALL, FAITH-5023	1,096.00	2,460.00	259.00	0.00	22,998.96	0.00
WHITEHALL, SHEPHERD OF THE HILLS-5024	2,315.00	875.00	437.09	18,174.00	18,174.00	18,439.00
BELFAST, GRACE-5026	320.00	0.00	410.00	4,600.00	3,068.00	4,000.00
WHITEHALL, ST. JOHN-5027	445.00	250.00	213.50	6,975.00	7,725.00	7,693.00
HECKTOWN, TRINITY-5028	210.00	500.00	1,756.00	17,000.00	17,000.00	0.00
KEMPTON, JERUSALEM (RED)-5029	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,500.00	1,500.00	1,500.00
NORTHERN LEHGH VALLEY MISC.-5099	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
DISTRICT TOTALS	21,696.60	17,391.93	11,826.46	188,389.00	267,707.24	142,372.00

Total churches responding

26

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Note: Amounts above do not include benevolences sent directly to agenices.

Pocono

Location, Congregation	World	Homes &	Other	2023	2023	2024
	Hunger	Agencies	ELCA	Commit	Response	Commit
	2023	2023	2023			
ALBRIGHTSVILLE, ST. PAUL-6001	100.00	900.00	0.00	2,000.00	2,000.00	0.00
APPENZELL, ST. MARK-6002	0.00	0.00	185.00	0.00	4,000.00	3,000.00
BANGOR, TRINITY-6003	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,300.00	1,535.00	0.00
BLAKESLEE, FAITH-6005	0.00	0.00	0.00	5,400.00	5,400.00	5,400.00
BRODHEADSVILLE, ZION UNITED-6006	0.00	0.00	0.00	6,000.00	0.00	0.00
SMITHFIELD, ST. PAUL-6007	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	7,000.00	0.00
DINGMANS FERRY, HOLY TRINITY-6008	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3,600.00	3,500.00
EFFORT, ST. JOHN-6010	55.00	0.00	0.00	1,700.00	1,700.00	1,700.00
GOULDSBORO, GRACE-6011	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,900.00	2,900.00	2,900.00
GREELEY, ST. LUKE-6012	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	200.00	0.00
HAMILTON SQUARE, CHRIST-6013	316.00	0.00	1,561.00	0.00	442.00	0.00
HAWLEY, ST. PAUL-6014	245.00	0.00	0.00	1,200.00	1,100.00	1,200.00
HONESDALE, ST. JOHN-6015	375.01	0.00	0.00	4,500.00	4,600.00	4,500.00
JOHNSONVILLE/PRINCE OF PEACE-6016	974.00	0.00	0.00	17,604.00	16,835.97	13,309.00
KRESGEVILLE, SALEM-ST. PAUL-6017	509.21	0.00	879.25	5,500.00	5,846.00	0.00
MINISINK HILLS, ST. MARK-6019	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
PEN ARGYL, ST. JOHN-6020	0.00	0.00	0.00	500.00	500.00	600.00
PLAINFIELD, ST. PETER-6021	0.00	65.00	185.00	0.00	15,999.96	16,000.00
SCOTRUN, ST. JOHN-6023	925.39	0.00	0.00	2,600.00	2,600.00	2,600.00
SHOHOLA, ST. JACOBI-6024	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	340.00	0.00
STONE CHURCH, CHRIST-6025	50.00	310.00	0.00	2,000.00	2,000.00	2,000.00
STROUDSBURG, ST. JOHN-6026	1,772.00	1,300.00	2,500.00	0.00	8,000.00	0.00
TANNERSVILLE, ST. PAUL-6027	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,800.00	2,800.00	0.00
POCONO DISTRICT	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
DISTRICT TOTALS	5,321.61	2,575.00	5,310.25	56,004.00	89,398.93	56,709.00

Total churches responding

24

24

Note: Amounts above do not include benevolences sent directly to agenices.

Schuylkill

Location, Congregation	World	Homes &	Other	2023	2023	2024
	Hunger	Agencies	ELCA	Commit	Response	Commit
	2023	2023	2023			
ASHLAND, GOOD SHEPHERD-7001	0.00	0.00	0.00	3,500.00	1,637.00	3,500.00
AUBURN, ST. JOHN-7002	0.00	0.00	0.00	900.00	788.00	0.00
FRACKVILLE, ZION-7003	65.00	0.00	0.00	5,300.00	5,315.67	0.00
FRIEDENSBURG, ST. JOHN-7004	0.00	336.00	0.00	5,000.00	2,069.00	0.00
ASHLAND, CHRIST. UNITED-7005	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	13,057.05	0.00
HEGINS, FRIEDENS-7006	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,800.00	0.00
PITMAN, ST. JAMES-7007	9,795.00	0.00	0.00	8,000.00	10,795.36	8,000.00
LLEWELLYN, FRIEDENS-7009	0.00	0.00	0.00	600.00	0.00	200.00
MINERSVILLE, ZION-7010	1,045.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,036.00	0.00
BUCK RUN, TRINITY-7012	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,500.00	2,500.00	2,500.00
ORWIGSBURG, ST. PAUL-7013	0.00	0.00	900.00	8,000.00	10,592.00	9,000.00
ORWIGSBURG RD, ZION-7014	0.00	0.00	0.00	500.00	0.00	500.00
PINE GROVE, ST. JOHN-7015	540.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	760.00	1,000.00
PINE GROVE, ST. PETER-7016	2,229.00	0.00	150.00	0.00	1,346.00	0.00
PINE GROVE RD 1, JACOBS-7017	765.50	765.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
PINE GROVE RD 1, OUTWOOD-7018	0.00	0.00	1,275.25	0.00	0.00	1,815.00
PINE GROVE, SALEM-HETZELS-7019	536.00	0.00	0.00	4,000.00	2,000.00	4,000.00
PORT CARBON, ST. PAUL-7020	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
MIDDLEPORT, ST. PAUL-7021	0.00	0.00	0.00	480.00	480.00	480.00
POTTSVILLE, TRINITY-7022	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
RAVINE, ST. MATTHEW-7023	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
REINERTON, ST. PETER-7024	450.00	0.00	0.00	1,200.00	1,285.00	1,200.00
SUMMER HILL, ST. PAUL-7027	2,000.00	0.00	340.00	2,000.00	3,777.12	0.00
TOWER CITY, ST. PAUL-7028	605.00	0.00	0.00	500.00	500.00	500.00
TREMONT, ST. JOHN-7029	300.00	0.00	0.00	300.00	300.00	300.00
VALLEY VIEW, TRINITY-7030	50.00	190.00	0.00	0.00	5,229.00	0.00
SCHUYLKILL HAVEN, JERUSALEM-7033	2,011.00	17.00	524.40	0.00	11,866.22	10,000.00
SCHUYLKILL DISTRICT MISC.	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
DISTRICT TOTALS	20,391.50	1,308.50	3,189.65	43,780.00	78,133.42	43,995.00

Total churches responding

28

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Note: Amounts above do not include benevolences sent directly to agenices.

Scranton-Wilkes Barre

Location, Congregation	World	Homes &	Other	2023	2023	2024
	Hunger	Agencies	ELCA	Commit	Response	Commit
	2023	2023	2023			
ARCHBALD, ST. LUKE-8001	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
DUSHORE, SHEPHERD OF HILLS-8003	809.00	517.00	431.00	2,090.00	5,016.00	4,758.00
HOBBIE, ST. JAMES-8004	955.00	0.00	0.00	5,000.00	3,094.00	0.00
POND HILL, ST. MARK-8005	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3,650.04	0.00
KINGSTON, HOLY TRINITY-8006	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,000.00	2,000.00	2,000.00
MOUNTAINTOP, ST. PAUL-8007	934.98	0.00	300.00	0.00	8,124.99	0.00
NANTICOKE, ST. JOHN-8008	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
ZENITH, ST. JAMES-8011	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
HUGHESTOWN, ST. PETER-8012	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,165.00	1,000.00
SAYRE, ST. JOHN-8013	1,827.00	0.00	0.00	3,000.00	1,648.00	0.00
NESCOPECK, FAITH UNITED-8016	830.00	50.00	0.00	5,000.00	5,354.00	5,000.00
SCRANTON, ST. PETER-8017	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
DALLAS, ST. PAUL-8018	600.00	900.00	1,512.73	12,372.00	700.00	11,489.00
TOWANDA, TRINITY-8019	0.00	0.00	0.00	4,075.00	4,075.00	4,075.00
WILKES-BARRE, GOOD SHEPHERD-8020	126.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	7,000.00	0.00
WILKES-BARRE, ST. JOHN-8022	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
SCRANTON, ST. MATTHEW UNITED-8025	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5,935.00	0.00
SCRANTON/WILKES-BARRE MISC.	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
DISTRICT TOTALS	6,081.98	1,467.00	2,243.73	33,537.00	47,762.03	28,322.00

Total churches responding

17

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Note: Amounts above do not include benevolences sent directly to agenices.

West Berks

Location, Congregation	World	Homes &	Other	2023	2023	2024
	Hunger	Agencies	ELCA	Commit	Response	Commit
	2023	2023	2023			
KNAUERS, ALLEGHENY-9001	1,154.50	0.00	750.00	15,300.00	15,300.00	0.00
BERN TOWNSHIP, BERN-9002	1,500.00	0.00	1,300.00	0.00	3,000.00	3,000.00
BERNVILLE, FRIEDENS-9003	843.94	0.00	175.00	1,200.00	1,200.00	1,200.00
BIRDSBORO, ST. MARK-9004	2,000.00	0.00	0.00	4,000.00	9,000.00	6,000.00
GEIGERTOWN, ST. JAMES-9005	2,771.00	0.00	750.00	5,000.00	1,323.00	5,000.00
GOUGLERSVILLE, TRINITY-9007	0.00	0.00	74.00	600.00	600.00	600.00
GRILL, CHRIST-9008	0.00	0.00	650.00	0.00	1,000.00	1,100.00
JACKSONWALD, SCHWARZWALD-9009	135.00	0.00	0.00	12,000.00	12,000.00	12,000.00
LAURELDALE, CALVARY-9010	453.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,052.00	0.00
MOHNTON, ST. JOHN-9011	0.00	0.00	200.00	8,725.00	8,736.00	9,000.00
MT PENN, FAITH-9012	0.00	0.00	0.00	5,400.00	4,950.00	5,040.00
PLOWVILLE, ROBESON-9013	1,785.00	0.00	0.00	3,000.00	3,000.00	3,000.00
READING, CHRIST-9015	573.00	0.00	0.00	5,000.00	5,000.04	0.00
READING, GOOD SHEPHERD-9016	0.00	0.00	0.00	4,800.00	4,800.00	0.00
READING, GRACE-9017	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
READING, HOLY SPIRIT-9018	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
READING, HOPE-9019	1,349.62	0.00	0.00	3,000.00	1,776.42	0.00
READING, INCARNATION-9020	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,000.00	0.00
READING, NATIVITY-9021	360.00	0.00	3,265.00	3,500.00	3,504.00	3,500.00
READING, (ST. JOHN) RENEWED SPIRIT-9024	2,351.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	36,493.33	45,000.00
READING, ST. LUKE-9025	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
READING, ST. MARK-9026	175.00	0.00	0.00	3,500.00	3,178.42	0.00
READING, ST. PAUL-9027	0.00	0.00	800.00	2,712.00	2,712.00	2,715.00
READING, TRINITY-9028	1,720.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	45,000.00	33,000.00
BETHEL, SALEM-9030	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,500.00	0.00	0.00
REIFFTON, REFORMATION-9031	3,783.00	0.00	0.00	21,656.00	22,720.72	22,742.00
ROBESONIA, ST. DANIEL-9032	2,482.60	0.00	1,558.25	4,020.00	3,855.00	0.00
ROBESONIA, TRINITY-9033	2,318.00	0.00	3,750.00	0.00	30,000.00	27,000.00
SHILLINGTON, GRACE-9035	836.00	0.00	560.00	8,000.00	8,000.00	0.00
SINKING SPRING, ST. JOHN-9036	0.00	0.00	215.00	6,300.00	6,523.50	0.00
STONY CREEK MILLS, BETHANY-9037	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,380.00	1,200.00
STOUCHSBURG, CHRIST-9038	1,374.00	0.00	1,770.00	0.00	400.00	0.00
WERNERSVILLE, TRINITY-9042	824.51	0.00	0.00	19,290.00	15,019.26	17,100.00
WEST LAWN, ADVENT-9043	75.00	1,500.00	0.00	0.00	20,488.04	0.00
WEST READING, BETHANY-9044	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
WOMELSDORF, ZION-9045	2,390.00	180.00	0.00	3,700.00	3,700.00	3,000.00
WYOMISSING, ATONEMENT-9046	2,750.00	0.00	0.00	62,000.00	57,500.04	0.00
WYOMISSING, COMMON GROUND MINISTRIES-9047	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	500.00	0.00
READING, HOPE'S TABLE - 9050	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
READING. COMMON GROUND RECOVERY MINISTRIES-9051	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
READING, HMONG COMMUNITY - 9052	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,000.00	0.00	0.00
WEST. BERKS MISC	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	9,000.00	0.00
TOTAL WEST. BERKS	34,004.17	1,680.00	15,917.25	206,203.00	344,711.77	201,197.00

Total churches responding

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Note: Amounts above do not include benevolences sent directly to agenices.



37th Northeastern PA Synod Assembly

HUNGRY FOR LIFE **TOGETHER IN CHRIST**

Section III

Synod Committees and Ministry Teams

WITNESS AND SERVICE MINISTRY TEAM

The Witness and Service Team provided 10 grants for the calendar year of 2023, which totaled \$26,452.81.

Stories provided in the Evaluation forms which are submitted after the grant project is completed, shared the impact of these ministries in the communities of our NEPA Synod. Children experienced kindness, patience, and God's love in their interactions with leaders of various summer and after-school programs. Parents were appreciative of there being opportunities offered through the church for music, fine arts, drama, and Bible stories as an alternative to competitive sports. Grandparents were grateful for some childcare relief during the summer. Kids in need were provided breakfasts and a safe place to be before school. A podcast on religious trauma reaches people beyond the church doors and helps those who have had negative experiences in the church. Several Synod ministry teams received grants to help provide Racial Justice trainings throughout the Synod, the We Love event, and to participate in Pride events throughout the Synod territory.

As of the end of April 2024, the Witness & Service Team has awarded 6 grants, gifting ministries and collaborative projects throughout the Synod approximately \$23,000! Many of these projects are centered on feeding ministries and finding creative ways to feed our hungry neighbors. People are hungry! Hungry for the daily bread that gets us from one day to the next – but also hungry for the Word of God and a place to experience Jesus incarnate. The Grants Team is excited to follow these ministry projects throughout the summer and fall and to hear the impact these ministries are having on our communities. The Team hopes to share these stories so that we can rejoice in what God is doing through our congregations as well as connect you and any other congregations curious about starting a food ministry.

These are just one way in which the Synod provides support and partnership in the Gospel to our congregations and their associated ministries. If your congregation is considering a capital campaign or has upcoming building expenses, please know that the Synod also has a loan program with the lowest interest rate you will ever find. To learn more about applying for a Witness and Service ministry grant or loan, please visit the Synod's website at: <https://nepasynod.org/witness-service/>.

The Grants Team also serves as on-the-ground support for ELCA Domestic Hunger Grants. This year, NEPA Synod had 2 recipients: Common Ground, Reading and Café Esperanza, Reading.

The Green Team, LGBTQ+ Team, We Love, Hunger Ministries, Specialized Ministries, Coaching, and Racial Justice Team also relate to the Witness and Service Team. In a world where we are often isolated or working on our ministries in silos, it is a gift that these Synod Ministry Teams share with one another and support the work each member of the Body of Christ does as a part of the whole. To learn more about the good work each of these ministry teams is doing and how you can be involved, please see their individual reports or check out the Synod's website (www.nepasynod.org) under "Ministry Teams" at the top.

Respectfully submitted,
Deacon Kat Tigerman

GOD’S WORK, OUR HANDS STORYTELLERS

(FORMERLY MISSION INTERPRETATION MINISTRY)

The Mission Interpretation Ministry has a new identity. The ministry is now “God’s Work, Our Hands Storytellers”. The ministry shares stories and communicates with congregations on how we are using our hands as church together to do God’s work. Visits are to say thank you and help congregations understand how their Mission Support commitments fulfill many ministries.

Charlotte Gross and Georgia Suranofsky work together to coordinate the ministry. Charlotte focuses on the East Berks, Lehigh and Northern Lehigh Mission Districts. Georgia is providing support for the other districts. Presentations suitable during sermon time are also provided during pastoral vacancies or vacations. Presentations are also available to congregational councils and stewardship committees to show them ways to use a storyteller in their congregation to support their commitments to mission support.

The synod website has been updated to reflect the name change and a library housing stories for congregations to use in their communications. A story is shared each month in the Synod News from the synod ministries or ELCA ministries. We also share stories from grants that were given from the Witness and Service Team Ministry. These stories are then archived on the website library under “Stories of Faith in Action”.

The 5G Network (Mission Support Table) provides guidance for the Storytelling Ministry. The 5 G’s stand for **Growing Grateful Generous Givers Group**. Both Charlotte and Georgia are members of the network.

Our annual “thank you” note to congregations for their mission support giving including an invitation for a storyteller visit, contained 2 amazing stories about a Growing Young Workshop- A Sow Session: called “Empathy Today” and tuition assistance for a pastor to the seminary. Debbie Skinner, Mission Support Coordinator for the Synod works with us to prepare the records to send this communication and is a member of the 5G Network.

We meet virtually with the ELCA Mission Support Team to share ideas and learn more about the ministries we support and continue with storytelling engagement.

Submitted by:

Georgia Suranofsky georgiasuranofsky@hotmail.com
Charlotte Gross charlotte.gross312@gmail.com

God’s Work, Our Hands Storytelling Ministry Coordinators

A-TEAM

The "A Team" mission is to "...encourage and assist congregations of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod to open their hearts, minds, and doors to all of God's people by removing barriers of architecture, communication, and attitude that exclude any person from full and active participation in the life of Christ's Church." The Team typically meets several times throughout the year. We look forward to expanding our team.

The A-Team continues to work on redesigning its web page in the Synod website: www.godslove.org. "Accessibility Basics" is a resource on 'different Abilities' inclusion and ministry available for congregational leaders. The team is apprised of churchwide Disability Ministry and its work with Grant Proposals, Faith Formation and Localized Active Ministries committees.

The A-Team members are: Rev. Allen Forsman, Rev. David Kistler (Secretary), and Jean Sandberg (Convener). We recognize Barbara and Richard Hartman, Members Emeritus. We remember with gratitude Rev. William Horn, Ms. Mary Smith and Ms. Carolyn Volk. We give thanks to God for their insight, leadership and years of service to disability ministry in the Synod. The team is seeking new members who have a passion for inclusive ministry.

A-Team members are available as a resource to provide support and to offer presentations and discussions for various age groups. Contact Jean Sandberg via e-mail at jdsandberg@hotmail.com with inquiries or for interest in volunteering on the A-Team.

Jean Sandberg, Convener

GREEN TEAM

The synod's Green Team has continued its work to help pastors, congregations, and individuals within the synod care for God's creation as an outgrowth of our faith. We meet every couple of months over Zoom and anyone is welcome to participate in our meetings.

We have continued publication of our quarterly e-newsletter. It generally includes environmental tips, creation-focused prayers, an introduction to a local natural site, book reviews, and inspirational stories from within the synod. All past issues are available on the synod's website at <https://nepasynod.org/green-team/>.

Possible future projects for the Green Team may include the planting of a native garden on the grounds of the Lutheran Center, a presence at educational events and other synod gatherings, and assistance with energy audits and grant requests for congregations. If you would be interested in becoming part of the synod team or would like help with creation care efforts in your congregation, please feel free to attend one of our Zoom meetings (advertised in the synod's weekly e-news), or contact us through the website, above. Thanks to all those who have participated in the last year!

Submitted by Paul Metzloff

RACIAL JUSTICE MINISTRY TEAM

Background: In May 2021, a group of concerned NEPA Synod leaders organized *Trouble the Water*, an on-line event designed to help educate people to recognize the racism inherent in our culture and synod, and to inspire us all to take further steps to work towards a more just and society. As a result of that event, the Synod Racial Justice Team (RJT) was formed. Deaconess Deborah Matern Graf and Pastor Suzanne Trump agreed to be co-conveners.

Visioning for our work together, the RJT discerned that the focus of this group would be

- to offer education, resources, and support for leaders and congregations
- to serve as a catalyst to help the NEPA Synod work towards racial justice
- to amplify the voices, images, and work of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color

Update: At the 2023 Synod Assembly, a resolution was put forth by the Racial Justice Team (RJT) advocating for the Adoption of an Official Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod Land Acknowledgement Statement. This was put forth with the additional provision that the RJT will continue to study and learn about issues related to indigenous people, as well as to follow the work being done by the ELCA Truth and Healing Movement. This resolution was passed unanimously.

Following up on the resolution passed in 2022 (the establishment of a requirement for Racial Justice/Anti-Racism training for Rostered Ministers and Synod Authorized Lay Ministers at least every three years), two additional in-person Racial Justice/Anti-Racism Training workshops were offered. These took place October 17 at the Synod office, and October 21 at Trinity Lutheran Church, Reading.

November 4, members of the RJT attended the “We Love” event at the Synod office. This year’s program, sponsored by the LGBTQIA+ Ministry Team, had a focus on how a congregation could go through the process to become RIC (Reconciling in Christ). The RJT also gave input to the LGBTQIA+ team on the formulation of a new RIC statement for the Synod, to be discussed at the June 2024 Synod Assembly.

In April 2024, members of the Racial Justice Team gathered for a viewing and discussion of the film “Killers of the Flower Moon.” Set at a point in time when the Osage were considered the richest people per capita in the world following the discovery of oil reserves under their land, the film follows a white businessman as he marries an Osage woman and then conspires with his uncle to kill her family and a number of other Osage in order to cash in on their oil headrights and life insurance policies.

On April 27, members represented the RJT at the “Created to be a Synod” Youth Gathering pre-event. They read and gave background on the Synod Land Acknowledgement, and staffed a resource information table together with other Synod ministry teams.

Currently, the team is in the process of planning another “Trouble the Water” event, to be held in February 2025. We are also continuing to evaluate resources for the Synod website.

If this is a ministry team that interests you, or if you have any questions about available resources, please contact any of the members: Brian Beissel, Kaitlyn Blend, Colleen Cox, Samantha Drennan (co-convenor), Deborah Graf (co-convenor), Brandon Heavner, Jennifer Hall, Mike Bennethum, or Kat Tigerman (staff liaison).

NEPA SYNOD CANDIDACY COMMITTEE

Greetings and blessings to you from the NEPA Candidacy Committee of the ELCA. My name is Pastor Jennifer Heavner—I'm honored to serve as the chairperson of your Candidacy Team alongside Pastor Rachael Dietz, the Executive Associate to the Bishop for Leadership.

The Candidacy Team is a group of lay leaders, deacons, and pastors from throughout our Synod territory charged with the task of shepherding candidates for the rosters of Word and Service and Word and Sacrament through the candidacy process. This process begins with a person feeling a sense that God just might be calling them to serve Jesus' Church as a deacon or pastor. From discernment conversations, initial interviews, and lots of paperwork, to selecting and entrance into seminary...to the excitement of chaplaincy rotations, internship, and final approval, our team is committed to accompanying and supporting our candidates through the joys and rigors of their journey to answer God's call to rostered leadership in the ELCA. Our Synod currently has fifteen candidates for both rosters at varying stages of the candidacy, including inquirers. Two candidates were approved for ordination and ordained as pastors in our Synod (Stephanie Roth and Dillon Epler). We ask that you and your worshipping communities to hold candidates and newly ordained in your prayers.

Over the last year we welcomed new lay members: Dr. Heidi Ramsbottom and Dan Raudenbush. We also held a candidacy team retreat in January 2024 rooting us in our Christian vocation. We are also discerning ways we can increase candidacy visibility and partnership with the LLM program and 6261.

As always, the NEPS Candidacy Team invites each of you raise up new leaders who just might have the gifts for leadership as a deacon or pastor. Do you know someone in whom you see the gifts for ordained leadership? Well, tell them and invite them into a conversation with your church pastor or deacon about it. Have you felt the pull of the Spirit at some point in your own life saying "you know, I feel (or have felt) called to ordained ministry." If so, no matter where you are in life's journey, your candidacy team stands ready to talk with you about the possibilities and different avenues towards answering that call.

Pastor Rachael and I would be delighted to speak with and pray alongside any of you who feel they may be discerning a call to the holy work of ordained leadership. We'd be honored to discern with you.

Your Candidacy Team is excited to assure you that God is indeed doing new and exciting things through the dynamic future rostered leaders in NEPA Synod, ELCA.

Rev. Jennifer Heavner, Chair

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNANCE **(FORMERLY CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE)**

Once upon a time—but not very long ago—there was a synod committee called the Constitution Committee. Because this committee dealt with more than just the synod's constitution, during the last year the Synod Council agreed to change the committee's name to the Committee on Governance. This committee considers how the synod's rules—the constitution, bylaws, continuing resolutions, and other resolutions of ongoing impact—define how the synod is supposed to function. In some instances that means that the committee needs to make sure that those rules are being followed; in other instances, it means changing the rules to reflect or facilitate improvement in the synod's functioning.

The Committee on Governance has no power to do anything by itself; it cannot impose rules on anyone. What this committee can do is recommend certain actions to the Synod Council or to the highest synod legislative authority, the annual assembly.

For example, coming before this 2024 assembly for approval (or rejection!) will be several actions that originated in the Committee on Governance: (a) a proposed change to the constitution in order to give Licensed Lay Ministers voice and vote at synod assemblies, (b) another proposed change to the constitution to make the synod's secretary and treasurer members of our churchwide assemblies, and (c) a proposed new bylaw, BLS11.06.01., concerning the Archives Committee and related positions. In these instances, the Synod Council approved the Committee on Governance's recommendations; and, therefore, these matters will come before the 2024 Synod Assembly as part of the council's report.

The Committee on Governance has been reviewing the synod's Continuing Resolutions and Other Resolutions of Ongoing Impact. Our synod's rules (III.1.) say that this comprehensive review should take place annually in order to ensure that these resolutions are still relevant in their intent while also being precise and contemporary in their wording. For the 2025 assembly we plan to have a report by which that assembly can act upon these updated rules, though in the meantime the Synod Council will be able to review and act upon the proposed changes.

The current membership of the committee consists of our current (Nancy Reichelt) and former (Kristen Edelman-Weiner) vice presidents, Pastors Brandon Heavner and Kenneth Melber Jr., staff member Pastor Rachael Dietz, and myself as the chairperson. For the beginning part of this last year Pastor Michael Bennethum also served on the committee. Thanks to all of these dedicated, detail-oriented persons, who at times have met weekly to accomplish the committee's tasks!

Carl D. Shankweiler, Chairperson

LGBTQIA+ TASK FORCE

In response to our baptismal covenant "to strive for justice and peace in all the earth" (ELW p. 236); and given that one of our ministry team's goals is to publicly advocate for LGBTQIA+ people in this church; and also one of our goals is to offer educational resources on the Reconciling In Christ (RIC) process for congregations as well as provide basic educational resources about LGBTQIA+ people and their spirituality; given that the NEPA Synod of the ELCA is an RIC synod; and because the church in the past has not been supportive of LGBTQIA+ people and this has left an enduring cultural stigma; and given that one of the ways the church can participate in the Spirit's call to healing and reconciliation is to be a public presence and stand with LGBTQIA+ people in events such as Pride festivals; the LGBTQIA+ Ministry Team represented the NEPA Synod at Pride Festivals on the geographic territory of this synod this past year and will endeavor to be a presence at Pride Festivals on the geographic territory of this synod this coming year. The NEPA Synod LGBTQIA+ Taskforce acquired and distributed educational and promotional resources for free at these pride festivals. Festivals we were present at in 2023 include Northeast PA Pride (Wilkes Barre), Berks Pride (Reading), and Lehigh Valley Pride (Allentown/Bethlehem). In 2024 we intend to be present at these three festivals again, as well as be present at Pocono Pride (Stroudsburg). Special thanks to Deacon Deborah Graf (Trinity, Reading), Stacey Burke (synod staff), and Eric Gombert (synod staff) for coordinating various details and logistics.

Additionally, the NEPA Synod LGBTQIA+ Taskforce hosted an educational event called "We Love" which occurred Saturday, November 5th at The Lutheran Center. The day began with worship led by Neil Hong (Nativity, Allentown), Rev. Thomas D. Busteed (Zion's, Old Zionsville), Rev. Emily Ewing (Del. Maryland Synod), and Phoenix Davis (St. Paul's, Mountaintop). Keynote Presentation was by Rev. Carla Christopher (Lower Susquehanna Synod), was this year's keynote speaker and presented on the Reconciling In Christ (RIC) Process in addition to Reconciling Works's initiative to include a commitment to racial justice in all RIC communities. Other presenters included Sr. Davia Baldauf Evans (Lower Susquehanna Synod), Rev. Lauren Applegate (NEPA Synod), and Dr. Helen Davis (St. Paul's, Mountaintop). Artistic expression was given to our time together through a collaborative craft project led by Katherine Walsh (St. John's, Bath). Additionally Stacey Burke (Hope, Cherryville), synod staff liaison, coordinated many food and logistical details for the event.

The NEPA Synod LGBTQIA+ Taskforce was also present at Emmanuel's in Emmansville (Bath) for the pre-youth gathering event that highlighted NEPA synod ministry teams.

Lastly, the NEPA Synod LGBTQIA+ Taskforce committed to updating the language of our synod RIC Welcoming/Affirmation statement to include a commitment to racial justice. This updated statement has been submitted to the Reference and Counsel Committee as a resolution to be considered at the 2024 Synod Assembly.

Many thanks to all who participate and pray for this ministry of healing and reconciliation between the church and the LGBTQIA+ community. Please reach out to a current member of the taskforce or one of the taskforce co-conveners if you feel especially called to participate in this ministry. Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Thomas D. Busteed (Zion's, Old Zionsville)

Dr. Helen Davis (St. Paul's, Mountaintop)

NEPA Synod LGBTQIA+ Taskforce Co-Conveners

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT MINISTRY TEAM

The Leadership Development Ministry Team centers on the following priorities: to identify candidates for lay and rostered leaders in the church, to develop and grow their gifts for ministry and to support them as siblings in Christ. The team maintains and reviews the salary and compensation guidelines found in the bulletin of reports.

The Leadership Development Team provides the home for First Call Theological Education, an intentional ELCA effort to support, engage, and empower rostered leaders in their first three years of ministry. Currently, our NEPA Synod is the beneficiary of six (6) First Call Leaders and their gifts.

In October 2023, our first call retreat focused on Moses—his call, his saga, his never-boring relationship with the Israelites, and his resilience.

The 2025 Compensation Guidelines build of the strong work of last year's Synod Assembly, moving toward greater equity between the roster and updated sabbatical guidelines. Have you been in your current call at least four years? Begin planning your sabbatical renewal today.

The intent and impact of these initiatives is to make the Northeastern Pennsylvania a great and faithful place to serve in ministry!

Consider joining our team as we grow stronger together.

Submitted by the Rev. Rachael Dietz,
Executive Associate of the Bishop for Leadership

2025 MINIMUM COMPENSATION GUIDELINES

ROSTERED PASTORS 2025 Minimum Salary Guidelines

These guidelines represent a 3% increase over 2024.

Resolved that:

1) The 2025 *minimum base salary* for Ministers of Word and Sacrament (Pastors) in the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the ELCA be in agreement with the following guidelines:

Years completed Service in ordained Ministry	2025 Recommended Salary Range (including housing allowance)		2025 Recommended Salary Range (parsonage provided)	
	Low	High	Low	High
0-1	\$62,631	\$68,917	\$43,529	\$47,883
2-3	\$64,017	\$69,890	\$44,915	\$49,415
4-7	\$65,405	\$71,946	\$46,309	\$50,936
8-10	\$68,142	\$74,997	\$49,092	\$53,991
11-15	\$70,264	\$84,316	\$51,163	\$56,278
16-20	\$73,733	\$88,478	\$53,562	\$64,275
21+	\$77,203	\$100,364	\$58,103	\$75,534

**** This is base compensation; total compensation includes benefits.****

2) It is the responsibility of each congregation to provide housing for its pastor(s). This may be accomplished in either of two ways:

a) Housing Allowance. A portion of the pastor's salary may be designated as a housing allowance. This amount will vary, depending upon location and the needs of the pastor. Congregations and pastors should check current tax laws in establishing this figure. This amount should be established before the beginning of each year by a resolution of the Congregation Council or the listing of an amount in the congregation's budget.

b) Parsonage. This is free use of a church-owned house, including utilities. A portion of the pastor's base salary may be set aside for furnishings and other housing expenses according to the IRS code. An annual equity allowance of a minimum of 3%-5% of salary is recommended for all parsonage situations.

3) Congregations should remember that the figures in the grid are *minimums*. Congregations are encouraged to exceed these minimum guidelines. Additional compensation should be provided based on criteria such as work experience prior to entering rostered ministry, continuing education, special skills, responsibilities, merit, and local conditions.

4) Each congregation shall establish a Mutual Ministry Committee to facilitate the discussion by which these criteria are evaluated (as well as for carrying out the other functions of mutual ministry).

5) A congregation that fails to meet the synodical guidelines shall submit a report to the bishop on a form to be provided, detailing the reasons why these minimums are not being met and the steps that will be taken to establish these minimums as soon as possible.

The following minimum benefits need to be provided in addition to salary:

1) A **Social Security Allowance** equal to one half of the pastor's social security liability. This allowance is taxable for income tax purposes. For 2025, the Social Security liability is expected to be equal to 15.3% of the combined base salary and housing provision. (Parsonages are subject to this tax at their fair rental value.)

2) An **Automobile Allowance** equal to IRS guidelines per mile for business travel. Pastors reimbursed for auto expense on a per mile basis do not have to report this allowance as income if they submit written mileage reports to the calling institution.

3) **Continuing Education** provisions including a congregation/agency providing at least \$600 for tuition, books, etc., and two weeks of time with Sundays (not vacation), and the pastor providing at least \$300. Programs that include Sundays need to be negotiated with the congregation council. It is encouraged that congregations/agencies and pastors work towards a partnership goal of \$1,200.

4) Four full weeks of **vacation** time annually.

5) On the occasion of birth or adoption, congregations shall provide 6-12 weeks of **parental leave** depending on the needs of the parent and family with full pay and benefits.

6) One to two **days off** per week, and, at least once a month, two consecutive days off.

7) **Health and pension benefits** according to the guidelines of the ELCA, including a 12% pension provision **shall be provided for by the congregation or calling agency.** The Leadership Development Team of the NEPA Synod supports the recommendation of ELCA Church Council, and urges all synod congregations to offer the Gold + option (or its equivalent) for rostered ministers and church workers each year, unless the Silver+ option provides more savings **for the member.**

8) For the purposes of **Worker's Compensation**, pastors are considered to be employees of the congregation; therefore, they are to be included in Worker's Compensation insurance.

9) Congregations may also reimburse the pastor(s) for **professional expenses** such as dues, entertainment, supplies, and malpractice insurance.

10) Congregations are encouraged to engage in a **sabbatical** practice, in accordance with the Synod's sabbatical guidelines. These times of rest are for the building up of the rostered minister and the strengthening of congregational leadership. The rostered minister is expected to remain at the place of call at least a year following a sabbatical.

PASTORS WITH PART TIME CALLS

Pastors with part time calls should be compensated on a prorated basis in line with the above guidelines, in consultation with the Office of the Bishop. Vacation and continuing education provisions should be prorated as well. Take Note: Pension and health benefits are according to the guidelines of the ELCA, including a 12% pension provision.

ROSTERED DEACONS 2025 Minimum Salary Guidelines

Since 2017, all deacons entering the candidacy process for the Word and Service roster are required to earn at least one Master's level theological degree. They also need to complete Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) as well as an 1,000 hour internship.

These guidelines represent a 3% increase over 2024.

Resolved that:

1) The 2025 *minimum* salary for Rostered Ministers of Word and Service (Deacons) in the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the ELCA be in agreement with the following guidelines:

Years completed Service in ordained ministry	2025 Recommended Salary Range With Bachelor's Degree		2025 Recommended Salary Range With Master's Degree	
	Low	High	Low	High
0-1	\$46,385	\$51,077	\$54,004	\$59,415
2-3	\$48,133	\$52,858	\$56,129	\$61,477
4-7	\$49,609	\$54,569	\$57,569	\$63,326
8-10	\$52,556	\$57,818	\$60,431	\$66,495
11-15	\$54,777	\$65,732	\$62,614	\$75,135
16-20	\$58,468	\$69,715	\$66,216	\$79,457
21+	\$62,161	\$80,811	\$69,819	\$90,765

**** This is base compensation; total compensation includes benefits.****

2) Congregations should remember that the figures in the grid are *minimums*. Congregations are encouraged to exceed these minimum guidelines. Additional compensation should be provided based on criteria such as work experience prior to entering rostered ministry, continuing education, special skills, responsibilities, merit, and local conditions.

3) Each congregation shall establish a Mutual Ministry Committee to facilitate the discussion by which these criteria are evaluated (as well as for carrying out the other functions of mutual ministry).

4) A congregation that fails to meet the synodical guidelines shall submit a report to the bishop on a form to be provided, detailing the reasons why these minimums are not being met and the steps that will be taken to establish these minimums as soon as possible.

The following *minimum* benefits need to be provided in addition to salary:

1) An *Automobile Allowance* equal to IRS guidelines per mile for business travel. Rostered ministers reimbursed for auto expense on a per mile basis do not have to report this allowance as income if they submit written mileage to the calling institution.

2) *Continuing Education* provisions including a congregation/agency providing at least \$600 for tuition, books, etc., and two weeks of time with Sundays (not vacation), and the deacon providing at least \$300. Programs that include Sundays need to be negotiated with the congregation council/board. It is encouraged that congregations/agencies and pastors work towards a partnership goal of \$1,200.

3) Four full weeks of *vacation* time annually.

- 4) On the occasion of birth or adoption, congregations shall provide 6-12 weeks of **parental leave** depending on the needs of the parent and family with full pay and benefits.
- 5) One to two **days off** per week, and, at least once a month, two consecutive days off.
- 6) **Health and pension benefits** according to the guidelines of the ELCA, including a 12% pension provision **shall be provided for by the congregation or calling agency.** The Leadership Development Team of the NEPA Synod supports the recommendation of ELCA Church Council, and urges all synod congregations to offer the Gold + option (or its equivalent) for rostered ministers and church workers each year, unless the Silver+ option provides more savings **for the member.**
- 7) For the purposes of **Worker's Compensation**, deacons are considered to be employees of the congregation; therefore, they are to be included in Worker's Compensation insurance.
- 8) Congregations may also reimburse the deacon(s) for **professional expenses** such as dues, entertainment, supplies, and malpractice insurance.
- 9) Congregations are encouraged to engage in a **sabbatical** practice, in accordance with the Synod's sabbatical guidelines. These times of rest are for the building up of the rostered minister and the strengthening of congregational leadership. The rostered minister is expected to remain at the place of call at least a year following a sabbatical.

DEACONS WITH PART TIME CALLS

Deacons with part time calls should be compensated on a prorated basis in line with the above guidelines, in consultation with the Office of the Bishop. Vacation and continuing education provisions should be prorated as well. Take Note: Pension and health benefits are according to the guidelines of the ELCA, including a 12% pension provision.

SABBATICAL RESOURCE PAPER

Approved by the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly—June 3, 2023

History—In 1990, the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod ELCA enacted sabbatical guidelines of 12 weeks paid leave for the rostered minister (deacon or pastor) after 7 years of service in a particular call. While admirable in nature and consistent with the Lutheran theological tradition, in the 33 years since adoption, those guidelines have become a document of aspiration rather than reality. The average call for a rostered minister is now between 5 and 7 years, so few qualify before they change positions. Three months away may also be a difficult obstacle, whether in the logistics of finding supply ministers or convincing leadership of a sabbatical's mutual renewal. This new reimagining aims to lower the barriers, thereby equipping the saints for ministry and building up the Body of Christ (*see Ephesians 4:12*).

Theology—Sabbath time, a time of rest, is crucial to being faithful servants of God. God commanded the Israelites to remember the Sabbath, and keep it holy (Exodus 20:8-11). God calls to us through the Psalmist, saying, “Be still, and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10). When Jesus saw his disciples weary and tired, he called them to “come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while” (Mark 6:31). Indeed, Jesus called all God's children to rest in him, saying, “come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). We are told that rest is so important that at the time of creation, God rested on the seventh day (Genesis 2:2).

It can be difficult for many in our age to honor this blessing, indeed this command, to rest. Our culture encourages us to work harder and harder, to be available 24/7. Yet we know that constant work does not lead to good emotional, physical, or spiritual health (nor does it even yield the most productive work). The church is called to speak against this cultural trend, to boldly proclaim that God calls us to a healthy balance of work and rest, of busyness and sabbath.

Rostered ministers (deacons and pastors) in the church are not exempt from the challenge. Burnout is common. As deans, we see the struggles our colleagues face. The various needs of congregations and ministry sites, coupled with a sense of isolation, easily lead clergy to refrain from taking time off. It is crucial, though, that rostered ministers work to practice a regular Sabbath routine, for at least three reasons:

First, it is crucial for their own sake. Rostered ministers are first and foremost children of God, and God promises to take care of them and carry their burdens. As God's people, rostered ministers need wholeness and healing.

Second, it is crucial for the sake of their ministry. A burned-out leader accomplishes less. The most effective leadership and ministry is done by leaders who are healthy, who work toward balanced self-care.

Third, it is crucial because rostered ministers are role models in the faith. By modeling self-care, leaders show and tell congregations that God desires a balanced life for all, a life which includes Sabbath and self-care. Many people need to hear that message, and rostered ministers can offer it through their choices and behaviors.

Therefore, we urge rostered ministers to nurture a healthy Sabbath lifestyle, to take full advantage of the opportunities available to them, and to set and keep appropriate

boundaries. We also urge congregations and organizations who call rostered ministers to provide appropriate opportunities for Sabbath time, and to hold their leaders accountable to taking advantage of these opportunities.

In the church, we understand time as a rhythm, a series of concentric circles of days, weeks, seasons, and years. As such, we suggest that Sabbath time be rhythmic as well, with varying levels of rest. Some specific recommendations follow.

- **DAILY:** We encourage rostered ministers to make time for rest in each day, through daily prayer, devotion, and play.
- **WEEKLY:** The current “Compensation Guidelines for Rostered Ministers,” approved by the Northeastern PA Synod Assembly, encourages congregations to provide “One to two days off per week, and at least once a month, two consecutive days off.” We urge rostered ministers to take these days off, and not simply for sermon writing.
- **YEARLY:** “Compensation Guidelines for Rostered Ministers” encourages congregations to provide “four full weeks of vacation annually.” We urge rostered ministers to take these four weeks, including four Sundays.
- **LONG-TERM:** We encourage rostered ministers and congregations to seriously consider taking on a model of *Sabbatical*. This model suggests that when a leader has served in a particular place for a certain amount of time, that leader takes a substantial amount of time off for spiritual growth, reflection, and recuperation. This document outlines such a model for congregational consideration.

We commend these recommendations to all rostered ministers, Mutual Ministry committees, congregations and calling institutions throughout our synod.

Technology as Tool—Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, congregations embraced technologies that gave permission to experiment with worship. The use of Zoom, FaceBook, YouTube, and other online technologies enabled ministry sites and rostered ministers to continue worshiping throughout the pandemic successfully. An added bonus is that many congregations are reaching members and non-members who would normally not be able to participate in worship— those who have gone south for the winter, those who are homebound, far-flung family members, etc. – all of whom can now attend and participate in worship. This very same technology can now be deployed to provide Sunday worship coverage for congregations during a rostered minister’s sabbatical leave. While we anticipate technology to change and adapt over time, here are a few possibilities as of February 2023:

First, congregations whose pastor or deacon is on vacation could be linked in remotely with another local congregation each Sunday morning of a sabbatical. Projections of a worship service could serve any number of congregations locally or even at a distance.

Second, for those congregations that wish to use lay leadership for the worship service, but who might be struggling to provide meaningful sermon material, there are options. The Synod already has manuscript sermons available. Additionally, some pastors preach a sermon series at different times of the year. Some pastors may have developed a sermon series on the Ten Commandments or on the Articles of the Creed or on the petitions of the Lord’s Prayer. Perhaps another pastor has developed a sermon series on discipleship highlighting a different disciple each week. We could also invite someone to develop a digital bank of downloadable sermons.

We encourage congregations to seek out other arrangements that work for them, such as:

- Temporary yoking with a local sister congregation for live worship; temporary pastoral sharing
- Highlight a different ministry partner each week (Bear Creek, seminary, Muhlenberg College, local Social Service agency)
- Inviting a Mission Interpreter (Synod Storyteller) to come preach
- Arrangements for pastoral care from a local pastoral colleague.

The world needs adaptive, nimble, curious, resilient, and courageous rostered ministers, along with the ministries they serve. Proclaiming the Good News of God in Christ through the Spirit in word and deed is life-changing, transforming, and saving work. The Lutheran emphasis on grace provides a powerful antidote to our status driven culture. We aim to make sabbatical leave possible, attainable, and beneficial for everyone, in every setting, no matter the size or configuration!

Your co-workers in the Gospel,
The Committee of Deans
February 2023

SABBATICAL PROVISIONS FOR ROSTERED MINISTERS (Deacons and Pastors)

Definition

A sabbatical *is* an intentional time for enrichment and renewal—whereby a rostered minister may focus on praying, studying, resting, reflecting, exploring, researching, writing, and preparing for future ministry; and, whereby the congregation or ministry site(s) may focus on gifts, leadership development, and holy imagination.

A sabbatical in the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod *is not*:
solely a vacation;
time for routine work;
time for searching for a new call or a new career;
retirement planning;
or, for the rostered minister alone.

Sabbaticals encourage longer pastorates and calls, spur creativity and curiosity, contribute to the continued spiritual growth of faith leaders, allow ministry to be refreshed and refocused, help prevent vocational burnout, and strengthen a congregation's/ministry site's identity apart from the rostered minister.

Policy Details

Every four (4) years of a rostered minister's call, four (4) weeks are earned toward a rostered minister's sabbatical time. No more than twelve weeks of sabbatical time over the course of twelve years may be accrued. The rostered minister is expected to

remain in the same call at least one year beyond any sabbatical time taken. The rostered minister may take their earned sabbatical time at any point after four years of service in conversation with the congregation's Council.

Year Four of Service in a Call = 4 Weeks Earned

Year Eight of Service in a Call = 4 Weeks Earned (8 Weeks accrued if a sabbatical was not taken earlier)

Year Twelve of Service in a Call = 4 Weeks Earned (12 Weeks accrued if a sabbatical was not taken earlier)

- * The sabbatical's focus will be developed in consort with the congregation council or calling institution (ministry site).
- * The congregation is expected to enter into a time of study and renewal concurrent with and possibly complementary of the rostered minister's sabbatical. Resources are available from the Synod for congregational use.
- * Sabbatical time is in addition to vacation and continuing education.
- * An appropriate amount of notification should be provided to the ministry site when scheduling the sabbatical.
- * Full salary, health, and benefits (normal compensation) will be paid during the rostered minister's sabbatical by the ministry site.
- * Arrangement of pastoral coverage during the sabbatical will be the responsibility of the congregation council (whether a supply pastor is invited, a lay minister is available, a local pastor is shared, or a resource supplied by the Synod is utilized).
- * Costs of the sabbatical (costs of courses, travel, and/or other sabbatical needs) will be paid by the rostered minister, or may be a shared expense in negotiation with the ministry site.
- * The rostered minister and the ministry site will notify the Synod when a sabbatical has been agreed upon.
- * Upon a sabbatical's completion, the rostered minister will provide an account to the congregation's Council/calling institution and to the Synod. This summary should address these questions:
 1. What was the nature of your sabbatical?
 2. What expectations did you fulfill during the sabbatical (including skills and knowledge acquired if applicable)?
 3. How is what you have gained during your sabbatical going to impact your ministry?
 4. What suggestions do you have for those who will take a sabbatical in the future?



GROWING YOUNG

godslove.org/growingyoung

Growing Young Overview:

Equip leaders in congregations for the work of youth, young adults, and family ministry for all ages by finding resources, making connections, and providing administration that coordinates efforts across the synod, the ELCA and ecumenical, interfaith, and secular partners. As a synod and Growing Young Coordinator, we accompany congregations and ministry teams to identify their context, highlight strengths and unearth opportunities for growth within our Jesus-Centered Communities.

The past year has been exciting and busy with the introduction of SowSessions workshops and visiting congregations to facilitate Growing Young presentations. The interest in Growing Young within congregations really sparked during the 2023 synod assembly where Rev. Brian Riedy (Holy Trinity, Catasauqua) and Josh Gulotta (Christ, Hellertown) presented on how their congregations are incorporating the Growing Young concept within and outside of their church buildings.

In 2023, the first SowSession was held in May at the Lutheran Center providing a basic overview of Growing Young. The half day retreat was open to all congregations as a time to come together to discover, learn and ask questions about the six core commitments of the Growing Young wheel and how to involve them within their home congregations and communities. The expectations of SowSessions are for congregations and individuals to learn about a specific core commitment on the Growing Young wheel and explore ways to take the information back to share with others. A reminder of the commitments is as follows: Keychain Leadership, Empathy Today, Taking Jesus' Message Seriously, Warm Relationships, Prioritizing Youth, Young Adults and Families Everywhere, and Being the Best Neighbors.

The next SowSession was brought to me by Jaime Taylor and Rev. Jennifer Hall from St John, Nazareth with an idea in hosting an Empathy Today workshop. In September, individuals from across the synod gathered at St Johns and was given a presentation on "3 Big Questions Youth are Facing Today" by Fuller Youth Institutes, Jen Bradbury. It was extremely well received with interest in hosting another or similar workshop in the future.

As I take on the role of Communications and Growing Young Coordinator, I look forward to the people and places that God will bring into my path. Over the past year, I've had the opportunity of connecting with individuals full of enthusiasm and dedication to their ministry work. My goal is to inspire and empower both congregations and their members to collaborate and support each other within and beyond their church walls on the shared journey we envision.

Submitted by Stacey Burke (she/her), Growing Young Coordinator

Faith Formation Resource Ministry Team

Another year in the post-Covid world and we are still trying to find our footing and discover how we move forward in it. This has proved to be a harder job than we thought it was going to be.

After the success of 2023's Learning Ministry Day, we were looking forward to a banner day. Instead, we were forced to cancel the event because only a handful of people signed up. We would not have even made enough to pay expenses. The entire team was very disappointed, especially since we had such high hopes after 2023. The team will be going back to the drawing board to try and find out what we can change in the future. Learning Ministry Day 2025 is scheduled for Jordan, Orefield, so please mark your calendars now.

It has become obvious that people are no longer willing to spend a long period of time at church events. In light of that, the Faith Formation Team is exploring possible different times and events that we could use to present different aspects of faith formation. Possibilities include mission district assemblies, synod assemblies or youth meetings. And, of course, we are always willing to visit congregations for any reason your leadership might wish.

Work on the Resource Center continues, and at this point, about three-quarters of the shelves have been organized and catalogued. We have been finding treasures on a weekly basis, along with other items that are not quite treasures. We have also found multiple copies of items that we are looking to pass on to someone else. If you happen to be at the synod office, check out the bench as you come in. It is full of resources that need a new home, so help yourself.

The Faith Formation Team is trying to discern our way forward in a time of declining Sunday School and Adult Bible Study participation. Growing in faith is a lifetime occupation, but making people believe that and feel the need for it, has never been harder. We are searching for answers and welcome ideas from others. Please feel free to join us in the discussion.

Cheryl Statham
Convener

FAITH COMMUNITY NURSE NETWORK REPORT

In 2022, Reverend Mary K. Owens, R.N. established a Parish Nursing Taskforce, comprised of nine registered nurses, working within their congregations as Faith Community Nurses, in health and wellness endeavors, or interested in becoming Faith Community Nurses. The goal of the task force was to create a network of faith community nurses serving within local congregations as volunteers or in paid positions. In 2023, the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod Faith Community Nurse Network became a reality.

Our Faith Community Nursing Network continues to grow. We have joined with the Lutheran Faith Community Nurse Association, (LFCNA), a national group of Lutheran nurses, from different denominations, who share in the goals to support the spiritual growth and development of Faith Community Nurses, expand their ministry into more congregations, and strengthen the parish nurse presence within the Synods. As part of this endeavor, our Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod Registered Nurses meet monthly with other Region 7 and 8 Registered Nurses, for spiritual and professional support, and to share best practice tips for Faith Community Nurses ministering within congregations. In addition to the benefits of joining the LFCNA, other benefits include opportunities to participate in free or low-cost continuing education, as well as for grants to individual nurses to develop or strengthen faith community nursing practices in their congregations. An example of the course offerings include “Trauma Informed Care and Mental Health: Help and Hope,” “Navigating the Compassionate Crossroads: Palliative Care vs Hospice”, and “Caring Alongside: The Essence of Parish Nursing and Congregational Health Ministries” and more.

Enid Rank, R.N. FCN at Christ Church in Hellertown represents Region 7 Registered Nurses on the Lutheran Faith Community Nurse Association Board of Directors.

For more information about the Lutheran Faith Community visit www.lutheranfcna.org or contact lutheranfcna@gmail.com.

For more information about membership in the NEPA Synod Faith Community Nurse Network, and information about becoming a Faith Community Nurse, or starting a Faith Community Nurse program in a congregation, please contact Reverend Mary Owens at maryowens903@yahoo.com.



37th Northeastern PA Synod Assembly

HUNGRY FOR LIFE **TOGETHER IN CHRIST**

Section IV

Partners in Ministry

GOOD SHEPHERD REHABILITATION

Good Shepherd Rehabilitation is a broadly recognized, not-for-profit rehabilitation leader committed to transforming lives through expertise, innovation and compassion. Good Shepherd provides an exceptional patient experience for people of all ages and stages by developing leading-edge solutions, often for complex medical situations; serving as a test site for the newest rehabilitation technologies; and inspiring hope in all we do.

Headquartered in Allentown, Pennsylvania, Good Shepherd traces its pioneering spirit for innovation and compassionate care to its founding family, The Rev. John “Papa” Raker and D. Estella “Mama” Raker. In 1908, the Rakers opened the Good Shepherd Home to care for children with disabilities and senior citizens, filling an unmet community need — and setting the stage for Good Shepherd’s continued growth as a rehabilitation groundbreaker.

Good Shepherd also partners with Penn Medicine to provide rehabilitation and specialty services in the greater Philadelphia area and New Jersey through a joint venture called Good Shepherd Penn Partners (GSPP).

Significant accomplishments over the last year included:

Good Shepherd opened its state-of-the-art, 76-bed inpatient rehabilitation hospital in Center Valley, Pennsylvania, in July 2023. The brand-new destination for rehabilitation provides leading-edge treatment and recovery options for people with complex medical conditions, such as stroke, spinal cord injury, brain injury and other serious injuries or illnesses. Nationally, only a handful of new rehabilitation hospitals are built each year. The new hospital features Empower+, a first-of-its-kind space that gives people with disabilities and other mobility challenges an environment to explore the latest advancements in 3D printing, robotics, wearables, artificial intelligence and smart home and personal assistance devices to live life undefined by diagnosis, disease or injury.

Good Shepherd Home – Raker Center partnered with Moravian Academy’s Story class to restart its community story collaboration with our long-term care residents. The year-long project featured high school students producing and presenting a creative artifact for their Story Buddy at Raker Center that reflects who they are, their stories and the time they spent together.

Good Shepherd Home – Bethlehem celebrated a seven-year streak of deficiency-free Department of Health surveys, an outstanding accomplishment by the long-term care team.

Good Shepherd hosted a Disability Inclusion Day event at Da Vinci Science Center in Allentown, drawing more than 100 of our Pediatrics patients and families for an afternoon of activities and exploration in an inclusive environment.

Your continued support allows Good Shepherd Rehabilitation to further our mission of compassion and recovery and to honor the legacy of our founders, the Raker family. On behalf of every Good Shepherd Trustee and Associate, thank you.

LUTHERAN ARCHIVES CENTER **AT PHILADELPHIA**

The Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod carries out its responsibility to maintain its own records (*S8.32.c.) and those of its congregations that close (*S14.21.) though participating in the regional archives center housed at 7301 Germantown Avenue, Philadelphia. (Yes, that is the same address as the United Lutheran Seminary campus in Philadelphia.) By being part of this regional system, formally begun in 1979, the synod is free from the need to house and maintain its records by itself. Our partners include the Southeastern Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Upstate New York, Metropolitan New York, and New England Synods.

The Lutheran Archives Center at Philadelphia has a small but professional staff headed by Lisa Minardi, the Executive Director. The staff is augmented by trained volunteers.

When a congregation closes, either the congregation's members or I take their records to Philadelphia, where they are sorted, culled of unnecessary materials, stored in archival-safe folders and boxes, and entered into the center's database. Currently, the fee for the "perpetual care" of these records and the initial processing is \$5,000, once and done, with part of the fee covering the cost of the processing and with another part being invested for the ongoing housing and care of the records. I anticipate that this fee, which has not been raised for years, will be increased soon to \$6,000. (Of course, congregations may give more than this amount; and donations from congregations and individuals are always gladly received.)

When the archives center in Philadelphia was started, the records were kept in the seminary library. When the seminary's Brossman Center was built, the archives center moved in 2005 into a good portion of the basement of that building. This move allowed for much more space to hold the records of synods and congregations. It seemed like heaven! However, the number of closing congregations has increased dramatically; and so the available space, which once seemed vast, has been largely filled.

Another problem that has emerged is water. The archives are located in the basement of Brossman, which might seem like a good place in that accumulated records are very heavy and they are best stored in the dark. Unfortunately, in recent years there have been several leaks from water lines running above the space used for holding records. As a result of these leaks and the related water damage, the archives board and staff would love to have an above-ground facility that has modern light, heat, and humidity controls and adequate space for the flood of materials--not water--coming into the archives center.

I am our synod's archivist and affiliated director (the synod's official representative) and the vice president of the board. Other persons from our synod who are involved in the archives board are Pastor Virginia Biniek, the secretary, and Pastors Richard Baumann and Nelson Quinones.

You are welcome to visit the archives, though do call ahead to make certain that the office is staffed the day you want to arrive (215-248-6383). You may also call the archives center to make arrangements to have your records digitized, which would make them available through Ancestry.com and provide a back-up system in the sad event that your records would become lost or destroyed. Feel free to visit the archives' website (lutheranarchives.org) and request a copy of the archives' newsletter, *Archives Advocate*.

If you want someone to meet with your council or other group to talk about what your congregation should save for the archives, please call me (Carl Shankweiler, 570-682-9834).

Finally, here is part of a recent article by Executive Director Minardi about current realities and upcoming events:

"The Lutheran Archives Center is a hive of activity these days! So many exciting projects are underway, in particular the digitization partnership with Ancestry.com to scan many of the records in our vault. We have opened this project up to active congregations as well. Please contact us at info@lutheranarchives.org right away if you are interested in participating. We will be happy to answer any questions and provide more information.

"Looking ahead to the celebration of the U.S. Semiquincentennial or "America 250" in 2026, we continue to prioritize work on the records of historic Philadelphia congregations including St. Michael's Germantown, St. John's English, and St. Michael's and Zion. Our goal is to have these records fully processed, rehoused in suitable archival containers, digitized, and with detailed finding aids available online.

"We are also in dialogue with other Philadelphia-based projects for the America 250, such as the Revolutionary City portal, to explore how we can share these records far and wide.

"Meanwhile we continue to receive records from newly closed congregations, upwards to twenty per year. This influx—some 300 or more banker's boxes of records per year—is rapidly filling up the remaining space in our vault. Our staff and volunteers are continually working on processing these records, which helps to consolidate them, but we know that eventually we will run out of room and must prepare for that reality."

Thank you for your support of the Lutheran Archives Center at Philadelphia!

Carl D. Shankweiler, Archivist

LUTHERAN CONGREGATIONAL SERVICES

LUTHERAN CONGREGATIONAL SERVICES 2024

Lutheran Congregational Services (LCS) creatively walks with congregations as they live out their missions of faith and service. As we partner with communities of many kinds throughout eastern Pennsylvania, we continue to be encouraged by how God calls people together to support those who are hurting and most vulnerable.

As part of the Liberty Lutheran family of services, our programs include disaster response, Lay Eucharistic Visitor Training, bereavement support programs, and related educational programs like adult forums.

Lutheran Disaster Response - Eastern Pennsylvania. LCS serves as the ELCA Lutheran Disaster Response affiliate in the 19 counties of eastern PA.

- **Summer Storms 2023.** Pennsylvania is getting hotter and wetter, and storms are getting more erratic. Summer 2023 was evidence of that. LDR-Eastern PA is currently leading efforts for long term recovery in Berks, Northampton and Lackawanna Counties following severe rain events on July 9 and 16, and September 10, 2023. We are proud that Pastor Paulette Obrecht is serving as one of the disaster case managers. Paulette is assisting PEMA (Pennsylvania Emergency Management) in getting survivors connected with a new tool offered in Pennsylvania called DRAP (Disaster Recovery Assistance Program). PEMA officials have noted how vital our work in partnership with them has been to the success of this program, which can provide up to \$10,000 to disaster survivors.
- **Gods Work Our Hands 2024 at the Northeastern Penn Synod Office.** Lutheran Disaster Response – Eastern PA is inviting anyone who would like to participate to join us on Sept. 8, 2024. We'll be assembling and collecting flood buckets and hygiene kits. Please visit our website or contact Heidi Shilanskas of St. Mark's Lutheran, for more information, at hshilanskas@gmail.com. This might be a great time to put those Thrivent Action Team funds to good use!
- **Hurricane Ida.** Long term recovery from Hurricane Ida in September 2021, continues. Lutheran Disaster Response – Eastern PA is leading efforts in Pennsylvania to help families meet long term Ida needs, a process that will continue for at least another year. Julia Frank also leads the Pennsylvania VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster) Unmet Needs Roundtable and through that process we have assisted over 150 survivors in meeting recovery needs related to rental assistance, heating and electrical replacement, storage costs and more. Our case managers provide survivors with steady guidance in navigating exceptionally complex recovery applications.

Want to help? Volunteers and funding for unmet needs for materials are needed. We are also happy to give you ideas of how to use Thrivent Action Team funds! (lunch for volunteers, purchasing tee-shirts, fund for on site supplies, and more!)

Lay Eucharistic Visitor Training (LEVT)

- Pastor Brandon Heavner and Pastor Sandra Brown serve as our trainers. This program continues to grow in popularity. Four sessions are regularly offered each year. Please visit our website to register. Additional sessions can be added upon request and availability of our trainers!

Bereavement Ministries

- Our Bereavement program is led by Sylvia Havlish, certified grief counselor. “Journeys Through Grief,” a closed Facebook group for those who want a more informal setting or who wish to stay connected to others after the traditional 5 week session concludes, is also available.
- Please do not hesitate to reach out to Sylvia Havlish directly about individual counseling sessions.

Church consultation

- The LCS network of providers is available for Adult Forums, discussions with church groups, Temple Talks, workshops and more to inspire dialogue around topics related to church preparedness, personal and community resiliency, church security, disaster and climate change, and more.

LCS is led by Director of Community Outreach, Julia Frank (previously Menzo). Programs are administered by a network of contracted employees, part time staff, the LCS Advisory Committee, volunteers, the public relations and advancement departments at Liberty Lutheran, and through a vast network of congregational and community partners across eastern PA.

LCS is a ministry of the Liberty Lutheran family of services. The entire family of Liberty communities—Artman, Paul’s Run, The Hearth at Drexel, The Village at Penn State, and The Manor at York Town—continue to be devoted to an approach of care and service that focuses on each resident’s unique preferences and activities. Liberty services, including Lutheran Congregational Services, The Becoming Center, LCFS-West Philadelphia Senior Community Center, Liberty Lutheran Foundation, and Liberty at Home, continue to foster relationships and collaboration with partners to enrich the lives of those we serve.

We welcome conversations with pastors and congregational members. Find information about LCS on our website at www.libertylutheran/lcs, and on the Northeastern Penn Synod website. Follow us on Facebook @LCSMission.

Respectfully submitted,
Julia Frank
Director of Community Outreach
Lutheran Congregational Services
jfrank@libertylutheran.org
267-464-7740



MUHLENBERG COLLEGE

Greetings to the Members of Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod,

I share below a list of activities and events of Muhlenberg College, one of the 26 ELCA affiliated colleges and a partner in ministry with the NEPA Synod. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me at janelle Neubauer@muhlenberg.edu with any questions or hopes for collaboration.

Grace and peace,

Rev. Janelle Neubauer, Chaplain and Director of Religious & Spiritual Life

Report of Activities from March 2023-March 2024

- In April 2023, Muhlenberg College celebrated 175 years of preparing generations of students for lives of meaning and impact through a rigorous education grounded in the liberal arts. Read more about the weekend of celebrations [here](#) and watch the recap video [here](#). During this celebration, we officially dedicated our newest academic building on campus, [Fahy Commons for Public Engagement and Innovation](#). Not only is Fahy Commons a home to offices and departments focusing on community engagement, innovation and entrepreneurship, but it also stands as an architectural accomplishment as one of the most sustainable buildings in the world.
- We had a successful weekend of celebrations for our graduating class, including a student-focused Baccalaureate service led by the Religious & Spiritual Life team and an in-person commencement ceremony held at the PPL Center in Allentown. Watch the 2023 Commencement highlights [here](#).
- Over the summer, Varsity Field was renovated to a turf field leading up to the fall season for Men's and Women's Soccer. Varsity Field is also home to Women's Lacrosse in the spring.
- As part of continued efforts to support students' mental and emotional well-being, Muhlenberg is in its fourth and final year of its partnership with the Jed Foundation (JED) and its JED Campus Initiative. This strategic collaboration has increased our focus on accessibility and opportunity for students to access resources to support their mental and emotional health needs. As part of our work this year, we have continued to offer to our community members access to an innovative online training which helps us to recognize when our colleagues and/or students who may be struggling with mental health concerns to more confidently guide them to resources and support. The modules train people on how to have conversations in those difficult moments, how to link them to appropriate support resources, etc. To date, approximately 60% of our student/staff/faculty members have been trained. In addition, we are now offering a substance free housing option to our students. Within this housing option, students

will not only keep their areas free of substances and substance usage, but also provide educational opportunities about substance misuse. Increasing efforts have also been made to promote social connectedness amongst our students. Some of these areas include a commuter lounge and the Living Room Project. Finally, the second iteration of The Healthy Minds survey was conducted in October. The data from this survey will be presented to the college in the summer 20224. This data will assist in our programming efforts for the 2024-2025 school year. Lastly, The JED working group has joined efforts with the Health and Wellness Advisory board. This partnership will allow both groups to maintain their robust efforts to support students' health and wellness on campus.

- In the wake of October 7th, students, faculty, and staff were invited to participate in a practice known as Listening Circles in order to process the challenges of the attack on Israel and the ongoing war in Gaza. These circles continued in various forms throughout the Fall semester within affinity spaces, and students, faculty, and staff continued to organize events to offer support to communities impacted by the violence. In the spring semester, President Kathleen Harring initiated an Ad Hoc Committee on Education and Dialogue. Convened by Provost Laura Furge and Vice President for College Life and Dean of Students Allison Williams and led by the director of the Institute for Religious and Cultural Understanding (IRCU), this ad hoc committee was charged to create a structure for the development and communication of programs to promote further learning and dialogue. Upcoming programs include Campus Living Room Project listening and dialogue circles as well as presentations of the IRCU.

- Six members of the faculty were recently awarded tenure and promoted to associate professor by the Board of Trustees on the recommendation of President Harring and Provost Furge. You can find more information about each promoted faculty [here](#).

- The Boundless Campaign continues to secure funding for a comprehensive, carefully interconnected group of strategic priorities that will shape students' academic and residential experience for decades to come. Over the course of the last year, the goal was increased from \$111 million to \$125 million. To date \$106 million has been raised. The campaign is scheduled to conclude in Spring 2025.

- At this point in time, we are working towards Honors Convocation as well as commencement weekend programming including a student focused Baccalaureate service, a family day on campus, and commencement ceremony at the PPL Center in Allentown.

- Over the summer months, Seegers Student Union will enter into a phase of renovation and expansion.

UNITED LUTHERAN SEMINARY

Dear Partners in Ministry,

Grace and Peace be with you in your synod assembly. I pray that your work bears fruit that will give praise to God and service to neighbor in the broad context of ministries that you share.

United Lutheran Seminary continues to walk with you in this journey, asking for your prayers and support as we focus on four areas of accompaniment:

- Providing a relevant education for students studying to be deacons and pastors through our recently revamped curriculum, which increases emphasis on the practice of ministry.
- Seeking ways to decrease the costs of a seminary education so that our graduates will not be burdened with debt loads, and at the same time trying to bring as many students as possible into our classrooms.
- Increasing the quantity and quality of continuing education options through initiatives like the Kindling Faith program so as to offer a lifelong community of learning for rostered and lay people. We also hope to be out among you in the synods more often than we have been since the pandemic.
- Seeking your support to strengthen and sustain our relationship with your synod and the whole ELCA that responds to the needs of the church now and in the future.

I am happy to share that our enrollment numbers continue to be strong with just over 350 students across our degree programs: 116 studying to become deacons or pastors, 89 in the Doctor of Ministry program, and the remainder in other master's level or certificate programs. This fall we will be enrolling a new cohort of PhD students for the first time since before the consolidation of our predecessor schools. In addition, the Asian Theological Institute, Kindling Faith, and the Urban Theological Institute have received \$3 million in grants, collectively, to benefit their continued work.

We also welcome Rev. Dr. Nelson Rivera and Dr. Andre Price to our faculty and the new CFO, Brandee Carrigan, to senior administration. We are grateful for those of you who serve on our Board of Trustees for the wisdom you bring to the table. Our Seminary Ridge Museum excels at sharing the complex narrative of the pivotal moment in the Civil War that continues to inform our theological discussion in these times of polarization and strife. Our Kindling Faith program is always expanding its programming and providing opportunities that are culturally relevant and spiritually fulfilling both online and in-person, and on both our physical campuses (type "Kindling Faith" in the search bar to learn more).

This being my fourth year as President of ULS, I can report with gratitude that the prospects for the seminary are very good as we approach the 200th anniversary of our founding. We hope you'll be able to celebrate with us at one of the many 2026 events we are planning to mark the occasion. Lastly, I wish you the peace that passes all understanding in the journey ahead—a journey we make together.

Rev. Dr. R. Guy Erwin

DIAKON



We sincerely appreciate and celebrate our partnership with the Northeast Pennsylvania Synod and its congregations. United in purpose and guided by compassion, Diakon extends its services to individuals of all ages, particularly those facing financial difficulties, with the collective effort of many hands guided by one heart. In 2023, Diakon programs and senior living communities served nearly 69,000 people, almost 21,000, from within this synod.

Diakon Senior Living communities, The Lutheran Home at Topton and Luther Crest in Allentown served almost 1,500 people through independent-living homes, personal care accommodations and skilled nursing and rehabilitative care, both short- and longer-term. Both senior living campuses maintained an emphasis on specialized programming in memory support, including for family members caring for a loved one with Alzheimer's disease or similar cognitive impairments.

Our senior living communities provide benevolent care to residents who have exhausted their financial resources to no fault of their own. We are proud to facilitate a benevolent care program that keeps residents in our care and is partially supported by our generous donors, including residents of the communities. In the aggregate, The Lutheran Home at Topton and Luther Crest provided more than \$1.8 million of benevolent care to residents in need of financial assistance in 2023.

Diakon operates two affordable housing facilities in Topton, which have 100 apartments. During 2023, over 100 seniors were served at the two apartment buildings, where residents can receive federal rent subsidies to create more affordable housing arrangements.

Diakon Adoption & Foster Care served almost 4,000 children, youth and families within the synod, continuing virtual methods for holding information and training sessions. The program maintained an emphasis on child-specific recruitment/family-finding programs, foster care for medically fragile children and kinship care. Our Topton office also provides pregnancy services.

Separately, Diakon manages Pennsylvania's Statewide Adoption & Permanency Network, or SWAN, meaning the Diakon organization plays a role in all public adoptions across the Commonwealth. In 2023, that work impacted the lives of over 4,000 children, youth and family members within the NEPA Synod region.

Diakon Family Preservation & Reunification Services programs are designed to prevent children from being referred for an out-of-home placement or to assist families in the midst of reunification with children and youths returning from a placement. Originally offered in Bucks County, the service has expanded to other counties, including Lehigh and Northampton. In 2023, the local programs aided over 300 children and families in the NEPA synod.

Based at the Diakon Wilderness Center near Boiling Springs, Diakon Youth Services' Weekend Alternative Program served several adjudicated youths from Berks County by providing weekend-based supervision and challenge-related activities during a time they might otherwise be affected by peer pressure.

Diakon Community Services continued to offer a range of services—health-related programs, health-insurance counseling, community-based senior centers, Diakon Living & Learning, volunteer programs and Meals on Wheels—to people in Schuylkill County and, through expanded PA Medi contracts, in Pike, Luzerne and Wyoming counties and, through AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP programs, in Berks, Pike and Wayne counties. These programs helped more than 11,000 seniors in the NEPA synod last year.

We thank God for the gifts of staff, volunteers, congregations, donors and board members who, together, enabled us to touch the lives of thousands of people last year.

Scott D. Habecker, CPA, CGMA
President/CEO

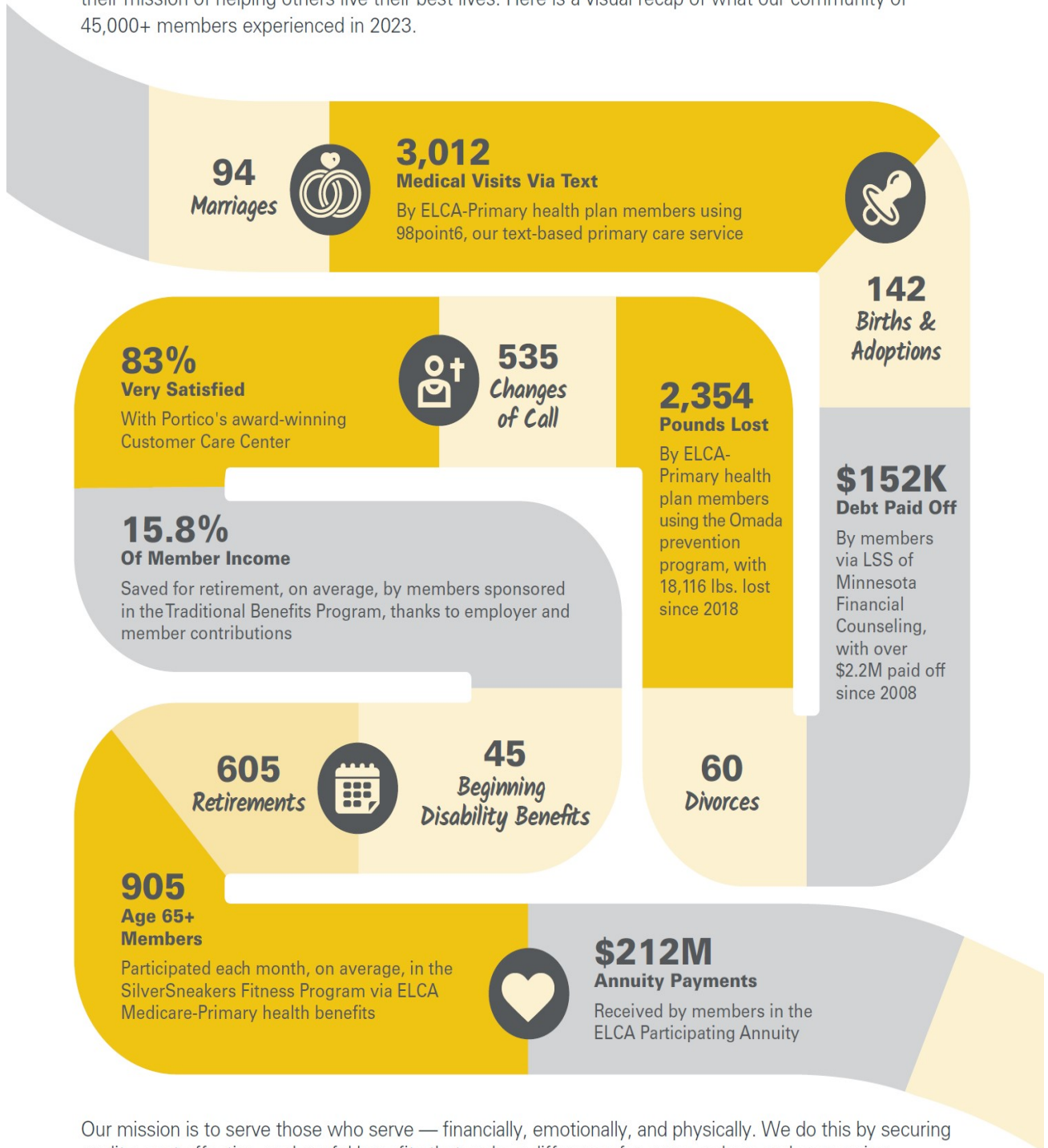
PORTICO BENEFIT SERVICES



Benefit Services | A Ministry of the ELCA

Benefits Making a Difference

At Portico we strive to offer benefits that make our plan members' lives better, so that they can fulfill their mission of helping others live their best lives. Here is a visual recap of what our community of 45,000+ members experienced in 2023.



Our mission is to serve those who serve — financially, emotionally, and physically. We do this by securing quality, cost-effective, and useful benefits that make a difference for our members and sponsoring organizations. With each new year we continue to grow our pool and affirm the value and importance of church together.

Note: Unless a specific benefit program is mentioned, these numbers and percentages were drawn from across Portico's benefit programs.

60-302 (02/24)

BEAR CREEK CAMP



BEAR CREEK CAMP

Greetings from Bear Creek Camp, the Lutheran Outdoor Ministry for the Northeastern and Southeastern Pennsylvania Synods of the ELCA. Thank you Northeastern PA Synod and congregations for your ongoing support of the ministry at Bear Creek Camp. We are grateful to work in partnership with each of you and to be an extension of your ministries.

In 2023, the Bear Creek Camp Board of Directors engaged in a process of strategic planning to listen to our community and discern ways we can continue to strengthen our organization to serve faithfully for generations to come. The outcomes of that process included a refresh of our mission, vision, and core values and identifying five key ministry result areas: intentional inclusive practices, facilities, fundraising & marketing, programming & creation care, and strengthening resource relationships. Ahead of us lies the work of prioritizing resources to accomplish goals within each of these areas. Exciting progress has already been made in adopting a welcome statement, engaging in intentional fundraising work, adding to our nature-based programming for Summer 2024, and moving forward with facilities projects including expansions to our high ropes course, enhancements at our lake, and an exploration of increased sustainability in year-round staff housing.

The Bear Creek Camp experience focuses on the value of small group programming, empowering our young adult summer staff as facilitators and mentors, and intentionally welcoming and affirming all as we do the important work of building positive community at camp and equipping our campers to do likewise when they return to their homes. This past summer, we welcomed 795 youth and family campers with over 30% of those campers experiencing camp for the first time. We continue to serve our local community through our Nature Day Camp with 211 participants throughout the summer. 41 young adult leaders followed the call to serve as camp staff and experienced creating intentional Christian community.

Throughout the year, we host groups and events including youth and confirmation retreats, men's and women's retreats, work groups, school field trips, family reunions, and more. With over 2600 individuals attending events and retreats outside of our summer camp programs, the amount of lives that are positively impacted through Bear Creek Camp is overwhelming!

Your financial and prayerful support of Bear Creek Camp as a synod and as individual congregations is vital to our success. Your investment is just that – an investment. Research shows that youth who attend camp, experience measurable change in their commitment to personal faith, their desire to participate in faith practices in their home, and their sense that being a part of a faith community like a church is important to their life. We are building up young people and leaders to be

active members of our synod's congregations to strengthen the church and the world. Thank you for joining us in this mission.

In 2024, we celebrate 50 summers at Bear Creek Camp and look forward to honoring our past, making an impact in the present, and building together for our future. Please continue to pray for Bear Creek Camp as together we invite all people to explore, celebrate, and grow in relationship with God, nature, and community.

Respectfully submitted,
Collin Grooms - Executive Director
www.bearcreekcamp.org

LAMPa

LUTHERAN ADVOCACY MINISTRY IN PENNSYLVANIA *Church Together in Pennsylvania for the Sake of the World God Loves*

LAMPa Report to Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod

In response to God's love in Jesus Christ, we advocate for wise and just public policies in Pennsylvania that promote the common good.

Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Pennsylvania is a shared ministry of seven Pennsylvania synods, ELCA Service and Justice, and Pennsylvania ELCA agencies and institutions. Through LAMPa, Lutherans called to be part of God's healing and reconciling mission in the world are supported to voice their faith convictions in the public square with and on behalf of our most vulnerable neighbors and the world we share, while seeking to create a more just Commonwealth.

In 2024, LAMPa celebrates 45 years of advocacy ministry with gratitude for a legacy of community building and justice seeking while looking forward in hope for a more just world. Last year, our work supported and deepened your congregational efforts to address hunger, poverty, health care, civic engagement, housing and homelessness, care for creation, criminal justice reform, civil rights and safe communities. Our decades of advocacy on these issues have enabled us to lift up the needs of your ministries and communities to increase anti-hunger funding that supports the purchase of food in many of our community and congregational pantries and incentivizes innovation in delivery of nutritious food to our state's seniors. Years of Lutheran engagement on child nutrition helped make permanent universal free school breakfast to give all students a healthy start to their day. In addition, our advocacy helped advance legislation to expand programs to alleviate the housing crisis and prevent homelessness, offer relief from burdensome medical debt, prevent and redress hate crimes, reduce gun-related violence and trauma, and stop discrimination in housing, employment and public accommodations.

In the past year, LAMPa was pleased to welcome the Rev. Erin Jones as our communications and advocacy engagement manager and Quentin Bernhard as our 2023-24 Hunger Advocacy Fellow, which enabled us to launch four statewide service and justice networks to deepen the connection among ministries in every synod. LAMPa continues to educate faithful advocates through our new website and e-news and connects them to the public witness of the wider church. We look forward to growing opportunities to support congregations adding advocacy to their service on "God's work. Our hands." Sunday. I continue to serve in consultation to the ELCA task force developing the social statement on Civic Life and Faith, and urge all to devote time to the newly released draft and to offer feedback.

I give thanks to God for you and for the support of our Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod Policy Council representatives, The Rev. D. Michael Bennethum and the Rev. Dillon Epler.

With deep gratitude for all the ways in which you support LAMPa's ministry,

Tracey DePasquale, *Director*

REGION 7 & 8 CANDIDACY

Now there are varieties of gifts but the same Spirit, and there are varieties of services but the same Lord, and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. 1 Corinthians 12:4-6, NRSV

Friends in Christ, grace to you and peace as you gather in assembly.

When I talk with folks, I am sometimes asked what I do for my job. When I was a parish pastor, it was relatively easy to describe. Every day in parish ministry is different, but most people, even folks who are not church folks or who actively practice a different faith, have some understanding of worshiping communities and the people who lead those communities. It is not quite as easy to describe this ministry to community members or new candidacy partners. I usually say something like, “I work with people who want to become pastors or deacons. And, I work with the people *who interview the people* who want to be pastors or deacons in our church.”

The follow-up question might be: How do people *actually become* a deacon or pastor in the ELCA?

We trust that the Holy Spirit nudges candidates and guides discernment. A candidate will engage in education, practical experiences, and the candidacy process in their home synod. A synod candidacy committee meets confidentially to engage with candidates to interview, have discernment conversation, accompany, and assess readiness for ordination. The committee works with partners throughout the church—seminaries, synod and churchwide staff, home congregations, and candidates to accomplish this task on behalf of the whole church.

Committees listen to a sense of internal call that the candidate brings; are attentive for signs of an external sense of call; vote to grant, postpone, or deny candidates at 3 main decision points; and wait to see if after a candidate is approved they will be extended a letter of call and the gift of ordination. You can read more about candidacy and this process at www.elca.org/Resources/Candidacy

Since my last report to you in 2023, Candidacy Committee partners were invited to participate in an online Candidacy Summit, “Called to Accompany and Called to Discern” across the ELCA. In 2024, there will be an opportunity for candidacy leaders from regions 7 & 8 to meet at United Lutheran Seminary for training and collaboration days.

Since 2022, the Candidacy Leadership Development Working Group (CLDWG) has been re-envisioning the entire candidacy process. The CLDWG has started to share possible candidacy changes with candidacy partners and is welcoming feedback. The hope is a new process will be voted on at the Churchwide Assembly in 2025. Please hold all partners in prayer as there becomes more clarity on the future of candidacy. You can learn more at: www.elca.org/Our-Work/Leadership/Candidacy-Leadership-Development

Thank you for your synod’s participation in this shared ministry and for the privilege to serve among you.

In Christ,

The Rev. A. Rebecca Resch (she/her)

Dear Partners in Ministry,

Grace and peace to you this synod assembly season. As you may know, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service has embraced a new name: Global Refugee. Grounded in Psalm 46:1, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble,” we hope to enter our next 85 years with openness, building a bigger table to meet a growing need. Global Refugee was forged in faith. Our Lutheran heritage has always shaped our work of welcome and will continue to do so in years to come.

With the support of partners and Lutheran communities like yours, in 2023 we were able to...

- Help 17,000+ children reunify with their families or find loving foster homes
- Welcome 11,200+ refugees from countries across the world
- Assist 11,700+ people seeking safety from Central America and beyond

In a political season rife with anti-immigrant rhetoric and messages that villainize newcomers, we have a unique opportunity to change this narrative and refocus on all the gifts newcomers bring to community. We invite you to join us in this work!

- Share about Global Refugee in your church or [invite our team](#) to join you.
- Include Global Refugee [bulletin inserts](#) about our work in your bulletin.
- Start a [Circle of Welcome](#) to support newcomers in your community.
- Pack [Fresh Change](#) bags, a partnership with Border Servant Corps, to welcome our neighbors at the border with care and dignity.
- Sign up for our monthly e-newsletters for faith leaders and explore a [webpage specifically for congregations](#) which has the latest faith community resources.

Thank you for your continued support. The many ways Lutheran communities embody Jesus’ ministry through the work of welcome is truly inspiring.

Go in peace. Welcome the stranger.



Deacon Sarah Kretschmann | Congregational Engagement Specialist
outreach@globalrefuge.org



The Mission Investment Fund: Your financial partner

The Mission Investment Fund, a financial services ministry of the ELCA, provides a strong, stable, faith-based way for individuals, congregations and ministries to achieve their financial goals. MIF offers a range of investments for individuals, congregations and ministries. We put those investments to work to fund building and renovation loans for congregations and partner ministries, including outdoor camps, senior housing and social service agencies.



The result? Impact investments, with a transformative impact on our communities: Expanded worship spaces ... new space for education and youth ministry ... much-needed day care centers for working families ... industrial-grade kitchens and fellowship halls for community meals.

Why is MIF the right choice?

- **MIF has demonstrated expertise** in church and ministry financing. With longstanding experience in congregation and ministry building projects, we're unique among lending institutions.
- **We consistently offer competitive rates and terms.**
- **We offer a full suite of financial services.** MIF offers congregations, ministries and individuals a host of investment options. We work in deep partnership with the ELCA Federal Credit Union to offer a wide range of financial products and services.
- **The faithful stewardship of Lutheran congregations and their members funds our loans.** The money invested in MIF finances hundreds of capital projects across the church.

MIF has a longstanding tradition of strength and stability. At year-end 2023, MIF had 811 loans outstanding, totaling \$578.3 million. Investment obligations totaled \$547.7 million. With total assets of \$774.4 million and net assets of \$208.2 million at year-end 2023, MIF maintains a capital ratio of 26.88 percent—positioning MIF in the top tier of well-capitalized church extension funds.

Our steadfast support continues for the members, congregations and ministries of the ELCA and the many ways you minister to a world in need. We are honored to walk alongside you as a trusted partner.

MIF at work in the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod (as of December 31, 2023):

- 5 Mission Investment Fund loans, with a balance of \$1,613,977
- \$10,374,402 in Mission Investment Fund investment obligations

For more information about MIF capabilities, please visit our website, mif.elca.org or contact your Regional Manager Rev. the Kent Peterson: 276-698-7970 kent.peterson@elca.org

Mission Investment Fund | 8765 West Higgins Road | Chicago, Illinois 60631 | Tel: 877-886-3522 | Web: mif.elca.org



37th Northeastern PA Synod Assembly

HUNGRY FOR LIFE **TOGETHER IN CHRIST**

Section IV

Minutes of the 2023 Synod Assembly

2023 SYNOD ASSEMBLY MINUTES

**36th Annual Synod Assembly
Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA
June 1-3, 2023
Kalahari Resort and Conference Center**

2023 Synod Assembly Minutes

PLENARY SESSION ONE

Thursday, June 1, 2023, 6:15 p.m.

ASSEMBLY OPENING. Bishop Christopher deForest called the first plenary session of the 2023 Synod Assembly of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) to order at 6:15 p.m. on Thursday, June 1, 2023. The assembly was held at the Kalahari Resort and Convention Center, Pocono Manor, Pennsylvania. Prior to the opening there was an assembly dinner and gathering music, “Wait On the Lord” and “Beautiful One I Love,” provided by Bobby Siegfried and his group, Chasing Daylight.

Bishop deForest stated the assembly theme, “Going Beyond Death to Life.” He began by paying tribute to Kristen Edelman-Weiner, who had resigned in April as the synod’s vice president, and to the Rev. Carl Shankweiler, whose successor in the office of synod secretary would be elected by the assembly. He spoke about Ms. Edelman-Weiner as being missed at this assembly because of her past assembly messages, her having encouraged the laity in their roles in all three expressions of the church (congregation, synod, churchwide), and her desire to see that all voices are heard. She was also a national leader in working with the ELCA’s other vice presidents. He thanked her for her many contributions, including the lasting legacy that she leaves.

Bishop deForest affirmed the presence of a quorum and led the assembly in the Order for the Opening of an Assembly, declaring the assembly to be in session. He acknowledged that the assembly “is being physically convened and livestreamed in locations of the ancestral and ongoing homelands of the Lenni-Lenape peoples” and offered thanks “for their presence here since time immemorial.” He added that “we also wish to recognize and honor all our Indigenous siblings who have and continue to call this land their home,” doing so “by working to fulfill our commitments stated in *A Declaration of the ELCA to American Indian and Alaska Native People*.”

ASSEMBLY PROGRAM, 2022 MINUTES, RESOLUTIONS. Bishop deForest explained where the proposed agenda for the assembly and the entire Bulletin of Reports could be found online and how the assembly members could vote using the red-green-yellow card system. On behalf of the Synod Council, Pastor Shankweiler then presented the following resolution: *Resolved*, That the 2023 Assembly program as printed in the Bulletin of Reports be adopted. The motion was adopted.

Secretary Shankweiler reported that copies of the 2022 Assembly Minutes have been certified by the bishop and secretary and prepared for deposit in the archives, with the 2022 assembly minutes included in the 2023 Bulletin of Reports. Bishop deForest explained the deadline for submitting any additional resolutions for the Committee on Reference and Counsel’s consideration; three had already been submitted.

THANK-YOUS AND INTRODUCTIONS. Bishop deForest expressed the synod’s thanks to the various persons who planned and were presenting the assembly. They included the Rev. Rachael Dietz, Executive Associate of the Bishop; the Rev. Kenneth T. Melber Jr., parliamentarian and Chairperson of the Elections Committee; Pastor Shankweiler, secretary; and Dr. Donald Boyer, treasurer. He thanked the Synod Planning Team and the special guests they assembled: Iain Chester, ELCA Executive Director for Innovation, representing the ELCA; Joe Davis, poet and speaker; Dave Scherer, rapping and storytelling star known as AGAPE; Bishop Patricia Davenport of the neighboring Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod; Bishop Michael Girlinghouse of the Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod; and Bobby Siegfried and his group, Chasing Daylight.

ASSEMBLY THEME: GOING BEYOND DEATH TO LIFE. Pastor Dietz then introduced the theme of the assembly, Going Beyond Death to Life. She asserted that this is a “thrilling and exciting time to be a Lutheran Christian as we discover anew what it means to be missionaries and evangelists.” She said that when she is asked, she explains that she is the synod’s “CDO,” the “Chief Disappointment Officer” in that she often delivers a picture of church life that disappoints people. Perhaps, for example, the last time a congregation went through a vacancy process there were multiple candidates for them to consider, but not today. She reported that there are only 17 people in the candidacy process, and she gave other such statistics and observations. In “adaptive leadership” you sometimes “need to disappoint people at a rate they can handle.” But if you “disappoint people too little,” they see no need to change. She spoke of Louise Johnson’s view that “adaptive leadership is the practice of mobilizing people to tackle tough challenges and thrive.” She asked, “What is the end goal?” Rising, growing into the people of God that God wants us to be. She quoted John 14. Jesus will soon disappoint his followers by going to the cross, but to thrive is to be tied to Jesus as the “way, the truth, the life.” “God is calling us into something new,” and she spoke of the need for “nimble” leaders to work in the church and about proposals coming to the assembly to assist in their support. She encouraged assembly attenders to be open to something new and “not let your hearts be troubled.”

FLOOR NOMINATIONS. Pastor Melber spoke about the positions for which elections would be held: (1) vice president, (2) secretary, (3) Synod Council: lay female, (4) Synod Council, male youth, and (5) Synod Council, female youth. He also pointed to the Rev. Brandon Heavner as a person who would assist with the election process for officers and explained the need for biographical information for anyone nominated from the floor.

Bishop deForest began with the office of synod vice president, for which three nominations had been received prior to the opening of the assembly. No additional nominations were made from the floor, and the bishop declared floor nominations closed for the position of vice president.

For the office of secretary there was one nomination received prior to the opening of the assembly. No additional nominations were made from the floor, and the bishop declared floor nominations closed for the position of secretary.

For positions on the Synod Council, nominees were sought for the following: (a) lay female, (b) male youth, and (c) female youth. No nominations were made from the floor, and bishop declared in turn floor nominations closed for these three positions. He spoke of the role of the Synod Council in filling positions until the next assembly for any positions for which no nominations at all were made before or during the assembly.

LUTHERAN IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE SERVICE. The Rev. Ruth Doty spoke on behalf of Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS), which Bishop deForest called one of the synod’s “essential ministry partners.” Pastor Doty explained that LIRS was founded in 1939 and is the “largest non-profit that works with the US government to resettle and integrate refugees.” She gave statistics related to what LIRS accomplished during the last year and told the stories of specific people, one family from Syria and a woman from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. She encouraged the assembly to “boldly and passionately affirm, support, and welcome our new neighbors and learn to walk together. . . .”

RACIAL JUSTICE TASK FORCE. The Rev. Brian Beissel, accompanied by several other members of the synod’s Racial Justice Task Force, spoke on behalf of that team. He spoke of the team’s work to understand what it means to be on land that was once inhabited by Indigenous Americans and pointed the assembly to resources about this issue on the ELCA’s website. He talked about the required training for rostered leaders regarding racism, reading comments by participants of past events that were led by the Rev. Carla Christopher Wilson; and he highlighted two upcoming sessions (October 17 and October 21) for which persons could register.

COMMUNITY ART PROJECT. The Rev. Lauren Applegate spoke about a weaving project taking place in the assembly’s chapel. It involved “weaving strips of fabric that have reached the end of their intended life” and making something new out of them as a way to symbolize the assembly’s theme. She also introduced Joe Davis and David Scherer.

DAVIS-SCHERER PRESENTATION. Joe Davis and David Scherer then gave their first presentation. They began with the question of who should take the first step on the journey from death to life, Joe as an African American or David as a white person. In the end, they said, “What if we took it together?” Taking several steps, they observed that it was good to get over the paralysis and begin on a journey described as a marathon, not a sprint. They then spoke about the need to see the richness of our stories, saying that we create labels rather than seeing each other as being in the image of God. They observed that they often see signs announcing that “all are welcome.” With Bobby Siegfried and others, they then sang a song, “Who Is Your Everyone?” The issue is where does “everyone” begin and end. They asked, “Do we see the image of God in everyone we see?” They then asked the members of the assembly to turn to each other so that everyone could tell another person about himself/herself. Then they asked people to report what they learned, encouraging people to say to one another, “Beloved child of God, you matter.”

ANNOUNCEMENTS. Pastor Shankweiler gave the closing announcements. Among the announcements he spoke of the Rev. Kurt Garbe, who served on the synod staff during the tenures of Bishops David Strobel and Samuel Zeiser but whose retirement during the pandemic precluded the opportunity to have a gathering to celebrate his ministry. He invited the members of the assembly to send Pastor Garbe greetings cards and to enclose \$1.25 so that Pastor Garbe could buy a sticky bun, as he had once served sticky buns to Pastor Shankweiler when they first met in 1988. Bishop deForest affirmed Pastor Garbe’s role in bringing him into the synod for his first call.

WORSHIP. After a brief pause, this first session was followed by a service of worship with Bishop Patricia A. Davenport of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod as the preacher. The service also included the installation of Deacon Kathleen Tigerman as the synod’s Director for Evangelical Mission.

Bishop Davenport based her remarks on the service’s readings (Ezekiel 37:1-14 and Mark 16:1-8) and the assembly’s theme (Going Beyond Death to Life). “Listen to the message of God” is how she summarized her message. She spoke of Ezekiel’s message to the ancient Israelites who suffered exile in Babylon; “forgiveness, comfort, and joy” is what they heard. She spoke about our own recent pandemic, which exiled us, and the “dry bones” that can be found “all around us.” “Prophecy!” she extolled. “[The message of God] helps us go beyond death to life.” “Jesus really is the answer for the world today.” In the Great Commission we are given “purpose and power.” When we respond to Jesus, we are not dead, but alive. She pointed to the Rev. Mary Wolfe and the ministry of Hope’s Table as an example, and to Emily Wolfe at Café Esperanza, and to Common Ground and the Rev. Thomas Scornavacchi. “Today we are the prophets. Within us lies the power to move beyond death to life.” “God speaks to and through each of us. Our words have power. . . . There is power in the words of God.” And God’s words lead to action. “One action is better than a thousand good intentions.” “We don’t only hear the word, we live the word out in our daily faith.” She quoted Langston Hughes, “I’d rather get my lessons by observing what you do.”

PLENARY SESSION TWO

Friday, June 2, 2023, 8:45 a.m.

WORSHIP. Following opening movement experiences and music led by Bobby Siegfried and Chasing Daylight, Bishop deForest called the assembly to order at 8:45 a.m. The first order of business was worship, which had been planned by the Worship Team and led by the Rev. Thomas Busteed and Bobby Siegfried’s Chasing Daylight. Pastor Busteed used A Liturgy to Begin a Purposeful Gathering by Douglas McKelvey.

WOMEN OF THE ELCA. Bishop deForest introduced the report of the Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America by calling this “one of our leading ministries.” Synodical board member Sandra Wagaman then spoke on behalf of President Kathy Walter. She read the Women of the ELCA’s mission statement, spoke about the events sponsored by the synodical board, explained grants given during the pandemic to local food banks and to women preparing for church careers by studying in seminaries, said that their periodical (*The Flame*) has resumed being published, and explained that all women are welcome to their events. There are synodical, cluster (i.e., mission district), and congregational units. She highlighted Katie’s Fund, an endowment fund, from which one-thousand-dollar grants were given to every synod in 2022 for various ministries such as global connections. The Women of the ELCA are looking to add one million dollars to Katie’s Fund. She concluded by asking that the Women of the ELCA be supported in their work.

GOING BEYOND DEATH TO LIFE: DEACON WOODFIELD. Deacon Travis Woodfield, the synod's Director for Congregational Legacy and Purpose, spoke about the assembly's theme, "Going Beyond Death to Life." In his talk, he spoke of the church as being a two-dimensional church in that it is often in a survival mode. Based on Paul's letter to the Romans in which Paul assures us that "nothing will separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus," Deacon Woodfield encouraged the church to be "three-dimensional," that is, open to seeing ministry opportunities and looking beyond mere survival.

He spoke about data points that are useful in giving a common set of knowledge.

In the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod there were 294 worshipping communities in 2000, 293 in 2006, 254 in 2019, and 245 in 2021.

The average in-person attendance was 125 in 2000, 116 in 2006, 76 in 2019 before the pandemic, and 46 in 2021.

On-line attendance is difficult to determine but this number has gone up and shows the existence of ministry opportunities.

In this synod south of Interstate 78 there are about 70 other Lutheran churches within 15 miles of nearly every church building. The ELCA's website can show the neighbors for any specific congregation.

As an example from another part of the United States, within the Indiana-Kentucky Synod where Deacon Woodfield previously served, the city of Indianapolis with 2.1 million people has fewer than 20 ELCA congregations.

The synod's budget over the years has been drastically cut, leaving not enough money to have a staff able to do what is needed.

For a congregation to be sustainable, it should have at least 130 persons in attendance on a Sunday.

Deacon Woodfield encouraged people to see how their congregations fit in the three synod lanes of (a) Growing Young, (b) Gaining Strength, and (c) Going Beyond Death to Life. He spoke of the need for cooperation with other congregations and other relevant agencies. He reminded the assembly of Pastor Dietz's talk about how the synod has fewer candidates for rostered ministry and spoke of the need to balance the past with the future. He said that for the synod to have 130 persons in worship in every congregation, we would need 33,000 more people, so the speed of change is real. He encouraged congregations not to look at other nearby congregations as competitors. In conclusion he said that we are not institutionally immortal and that death should not be seen as failure. Death and resurrection are at the core of the Christian message. "Death is the consequence of the incredible, holy, beautiful gift of life." He affirmed that Jesus has saved us and calls us to a deeper relationship with each other, God, and the communities of which we are a part. We are to work together and see what Christ's death means for us. "It is blessed work, and we are not alone."

CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE. Pastor Shankweiler presented the report of the Constitution Committee, which report, among other points, (a) informed the assembly about changes to continuing resolutions adopted by the Synod Council and (b) included several recommendations for assembly action to amend the synod's constitution and bylaws.

The first item recommended for action was a proposed bylaw change dealing with the election of Synod Council members who are nominated by mission districts. Coming from the committee, the recommendation was immediately before the house and was adopted as follows:

Resolved, That BLS10.07 be amended to include the words "one person from each Mission District who has been nominated by the Mission District assembly" in replacement of the current wording, "one person by each Mission District."

The non-required recommendations from the ELCA that the Constitution Committee agreed should be adopted were then before the assembly. Rather than vote on each item separately, Pastor Shankweiler offered a resolution to consider them *en bloc*. This motion was seconded by the Rev. Zachary Labagh and was adopted:

Resolved, That the nine optional constitutional changes proposed by the 2022 ELCA Assembly and recommended by the synod's Constitution Committee for adoption by the 2023 Assembly of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod be adopted *en bloc*.

In this way all of the proposed amendments were approved. They had the effect of changing the synod's constitution so that the following wording now applies:

S7.21.01. Voting members shall begin serving with the opening of a regular Synod Assembly and shall continue serving until voting members are seated at the opening of the next regular Synod Assembly.

S7.24. Ministers under call on the rosters of this synod shall remain as members of the Synod Assembly so long as they remain under call and so long as their names appear on the rosters of this synod. Lay members of the Synod Assembly representing congregations shall continue as such until the opening of the next regular Synod Assembly, or unless replaced by the election of new members for a special Synod Assembly, or until they have been disqualified by termination of congregation membership.

S7.26. This synod may establish processes through the Synod Council that permit lay representatives of authorized worshipping communities of the synod, which have been authorized under ELCA bylaw 10.01.04., to serve as voting members of the Synod Assembly, consistent with †S7.21.

S8.42. The treasurer shall provide and be accountable for:

[...]

c. Receipt and acknowledgment of offerings, contributions, and bequests made to this synod, collecting interest and income from its invested funds, and paying regular appropriations and orders on the several accounts as approved and directed by the Synod Council. The treasurer shall transmit each month to the treasurer of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America the funds received by this synod for the general work of this church as well as any funds to support restricted programs of this church.

[...]

f. *Deleted.*

S11.10. *Deleted.*

S14.13. The pastor (a) shall keep accurate records of all baptisms, confirmations, marriages, burials, communicants, members received, members dismissed, or members excluded from the congregation, (b) shall submit a summary of such statistics annually to this synod, and (c) shall become a member of the congregation upon receipt and acceptance of the letter of call. In a parish of multiple congregations, the pastor shall hold membership in one of the congregations.

S14.15. Each minister of Word and Sacrament on the roster of this synod shall submit a report of their ministry to the bishop of the synod at least 90 days prior to each regular meeting of the Synod Assembly.

S14.34. Each minister of Word and Service on the roster of this synod shall submit a report of their ministry to the bishop of the synod at least 90 days prior to each regular meeting of the Synod Assembly.

FIRST REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON REFERENCE AND COUNSEL. Pastor Heavner presented the First Report of the Committee on Reference and Counsel. He began by introducing the other members of the committee: Deacon Michael Krentz, Pastor Dietz, and the Rev. Deborah Staniszewski. He informed the assembly that no additional resolutions beyond the initial three had been received, and those three all arrived in time before the assembly to be given automatic consideration.

A RESOLUTION CONCERNING RESPONSIBLE MONEY MANAGEMENT IN CONGREGATIONS

The following resolution was submitted on April 23, 2023, by The Rev. Carl D. Shankweiler, Pastor, Zion Lutheran Church, Frackville, and Trinity Chapel, Buck Run; Dr. Donald Boyer, Treasurer, Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod; Louise McCloughan, Chairperson, Synod Council Finance Committee.

“Whereas, in the last eighteen months in only one of the synod’s mission districts (a) two office workers were found to be embezzling funds, (b) two congregations did not properly report and/or pay withheld employee taxes, and (c) one congregation experienced conflict over whether to disclose the congregation’s assets to its members; and

“Whereas, the ELCA provides free resources that can be downloaded easily to assist in congregational financial management such as ‘Financial Best Practices for Congregations,’ ‘Congregational Audit Guide,’ ‘Internal Control Best Practices,’ and ‘Congregational Treasurers’ and Bookkeepers’ Financial and Accounting Guide’; and

“Whereas, most of the synod’s congregations are thorough and complete in their financial reporting, careful in the way their assets are managed, and in full compliance of tax laws and, therefore, should not run the risk of receiving bad reputations though the misdeeds of others; therefore, be it

“Resolved, That the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod in assembly recommends to all of its congregations that

1. There be a complete disclosure to the members of those congregations the assets and liabilities of the congregations so that there is transparency concerning what the congregations own and what the congregations owe;
2. There be safeguards in the way money is handled in the congregations so that, for one example, at least two unrelated persons count all incoming money;
3. There be safeguards in the way money is spent, such as requiring two signatures on every check with those signatures being added after the checks have been prepared;
4. All accounts be audited annually by persons who were not also involved in managing the accounts (that is, never audit your own work);
5. The congregations adopt annual budgets as called for in their constitutions as the correct way to grant permission for the expenditure of all funds consistent with whatever constitutional latitude is granted to the congregation council for limited, special expenditures;
6. Honest and conscientious volunteers and staff who handle funds be protected from unwarranted accusations though the employment of good practices in accountable money management;
7. Congregation councils pay special attention to the collecting and remittance of withheld taxes from congregational employees, including any persons working in related agencies such as child care programs.”

Pastor Heavner read the committee’s recommendation: “The Committee of Reference and Counsel recommends ‘A Resolution Concerning Responsible Money Management in Congregations’ for adoption by this assembly.”

With the committee’s recommendation before the assembly, the chair opened the floor for discussion. Pastor Shankweiler spoke in favor of the resolution, giving two examples of financial malpractice in congregations. He pointed out that the synod cannot force congregations to act in certain ways but can make recommendations. A congregational treasurer asked if it is really necessary to require two signatures in that banks do not look at the signatures; an audit should cover this need. The Rev. June Bair spoke of her congregation’s strife in these matters and urged that training be offered by the synod for treasurers and church leaders. Mark Hammond spoke, quoting a statistic that nine percent of the congregations across the country have financial fraud. Effective audits are needed as the only way to find out what is taking place. We need to be realistic about this and effectively make sure that the finances are done correctly in our congregations and that good practices are important for the protection of congregational leaders. Russell Diesinger spoke of his experience on boards and the problems that happened statewide with PTOs; requiring two signatures on every check was recommended as a safety measure. Joan Martins spoke in favor of two signatures as a practical step to watch for unintended errors and to be certain that payments are appropriate.

The Rev. Terrence Walsh, seconded by Deacon Deborah Graf, moved the previous question, which was adopted. The vote on the recommendation was then taken, and the recommendation was approved.

“GROWING YOUNG” SEGMENT. Bishop deForest spoke of the synod’s three vital sign goals, which are called “lanes” and which are interconnected “roads to God’s future.” He introduced Stacey Burke in her capacity as the synod’s Growing Young Coordinator. Ms. Burke talked about the six core commitments in Growing Young, which focuses largely on retaining people of all ages but especially those age 15 to 29. She displayed the Growing Young wheel, which has a “Jesus-centered community” at its center. Around this center are shown the six Growing Young commitments, which make a continuous circle. She asserted that change is hard and can seem to be “a mini-death.” She spoke about those mini-deaths that might occur in our congregations but which can lead to new life, such as leadership transitions, combining worship services, and ending programs that are no longer effective or making changes in them as compared to how they were traditionally carried out. “Not every change is going to be a transformation, but every change can be an opportunity for grace.” With death comes new life.

She then introduced two individuals who spoke about their congregations’ journeys: the Rev. Brian Riedy and Josh Gulotta.

Pastor Riedy spoke of the need to define your ideal self, your vision. At Holy Trinity, Catasauqua, they try to live “as a child” and hold onto life eternal, living life now and using the mantra not to fear but “just breathe.” They formed multiple partnerships, doing things away from the church building and talking about their church only when asked. They engage in afterschool and summer programs for children. “There are plenty of kids in the world” and so we take our love out to them. “People give to vision and people give to action.” “We choose to grow younger.”

Josh Gulotta spoke of the community garden at Christ, Hellertown. Most beds are harvested with the produce going to local food banks and pantries. Volunteer gardeners did the work, but they were too few in number. Therefore, the child care center started a “gardening recess,” noting each work session what is new in the garden and what needs to be done. He found that kids love to pull weeds. This does come with risks, but sharing the keys to the garden allowed the adult volunteers to say to the kids that they are allowed to make mistakes, to learn here, and “to find joy here,” just like we do. When we go there, we sing a song and have a conversation about why the people who work and those who benefit from their efforts can be different people.

Ms. Burke asserted that every congregation’s story will be different and that you can enter into Growing Young at any point on the wheel as you develop a Growing Young mindset. She spoke about the upcoming Growing Young Sow Session.

BISHOP’S REPORT. Bishop deForest began his verbal report by directing the assembly to his detailed written report. He acknowledged the dual problem of having not enough pastors and too many churches; he affirmed the many good ministries in the synod but noted that there are fewer people in them. In this context we are challenged by Ephesians to “speak the truth in love,” though asking if we “can handle the truth.” A key issue is that “our ideal of having one full-time pastor for every one congregation . . . is struggling, is dying away.” He noted that within the next few years a majority of our congregations will no longer be able to afford a full-time pastor, though a majority of our pastors cannot afford to serve part time. There are not enough retired pastors now to fill the gaps; in fact, “we have a supply pastor crisis.” He acknowledged that while some persons have advocated the closing of more congregation, he does not have that authority and that would not be the only right and faithful answer. What is needed is to listen to Jesus, who prayed that “they may all be one.” The synod needs a new, sustainable ideal that (1) is sustainable in enabling worship and service to occur “everyplace God needs it,” (2) pools congregational strengths and resources, (3) provides congregations a safety net of support when a pastor retires or leaves, (4) enables congregations to close without their members feeling abandoned, (5) provides a sustainable salary for rostered leaders, (6) recruits lay leaders and helps them discern how they should serve, (7) reduces isolation and “siloeing,” (8) sets up the church for future growth, and (9) builds on great ideas for the future.

He then put forth a vision for the synod to discuss: 6261, that is, six congregations would work together with a staff of two pastors, six lay ministers, and one deacon. (At Kalahari he found the room numbered 6261 and took a picture of himself standing next to that door.) He said that this model could be customized and that the congregations taking part could vary, perhaps including congregations from our ecumenical partners or even congregations in other synods. What these congregations need is a willingness to share, the capacity to lift up local leaders, a focus on common goals, and an openness to share a common life. He answered the possible question of whether this means the merging of congregations by saying that some congregations may chose this option, but that would happen only if merging grows out of the relatedness of the congregations. He answered another possible question of whether this image is a parish, which is a model that has existed in the synod for hundreds of years; he explained that what is different is the emphasis being put on this model now that having one pastor serve one congregation can no longer be the synod's predominant model. He asserted that God is inviting the synod to embrace this vision, that the 11 pastors in the first Gaining Strength cohort gave thought to this model, and that the neighboring Upper Susquehanna Synod is giving consideration to a similar approach. He reported that he, the new vice president, and Deacon Tigerman will be going out into the synod to listen to ideas and concerns about this proposed model. He said that this approach will work only if it is done together and if we trust in the dying and rising One.

BREAK. The assembly took a 15-minute break.

UNITED LUTHERAN SEMINARY. Lisa Dubai, Director of Advancement Operations and Research for the United Lutheran Seminary, presented the seminary's report. She spoke of the seminary's history, which in three years will cover two hundred years. She explained how the seminary has adjusted to changes in the world, such as the pandemic. Now geographic limitations have been overcome, and the seminary can deal with students in other countries. She spoke of the seminary's ability to offer degree programs at little or no cost. She said that work is being done on the seminary's strategic plan. She highlighted Kindling Faith, which is an emphasis on life-long learning that has been in existence for one year and has already offered 60 opportunities for both Zoom events and in-person events. She concluded her remarks by thanking the synod for "walking with" the seminary.

REPORT OF THE TREASURER. Dr. Boyer, treasurer, assisted by Louise McCloughan, Chairperson of the Finance Committee, presented the Report of the Treasurer and gave a thorough explanation of the synod's finances. He began by saying that he wanted to deal with "facts." He acknowledged that although we are nearing the end of COVID, there are two other facts to consider: (a) inflation and (b) the closing of banks. The second of those issues, which might seem of low significance, was a problem for the synod in that the bank used to pay the synod's employees was suddenly closed, which meant the temporary manual generating of payroll checks. He said that he wanted to thank the synod's congregations for their generous donations to Mission Support. For fiscal year 2022 the synod received \$49,133 more in Mission Support than anticipated. He thanked the synod staff who deal with finances: Deborah Skinner for dealing with Mission Support contributions, Stacey Burke for her help in recording the previous year's financial presentation, and Eric Gombert for being both a good bookkeeper and technologically talented. Some new ventures in dealing with the synod's finances were possible because of Mr. Gombert.

Dr. Boyer showed the list of members of the synod's Finance Committee. He explained that the committee learned about the need of ministry teams and institutions through two days of hearings held to inform the development of the 2024 Spending Plan. For the first time in his work on the Finance Committee, the committee met with agency representatives including the United Lutheran Seminary, Bear Creek Camp, Hope's Table, and Common Ground. He mentioned that in the age of Growing Young, Bear Creek is unique in the synod's work by dealing with 800 children each summer.

One innovation that he explained was the use of QuickBooks Online. He said that many invoices come to the synod electronically, and the synod can pay them electronically thanks to a new approval process whereby two officers of the synod can approve a bill, which occurs prior to the check's being written.

Dr. Boyer thanked Kristen Edelman-Weiner for being an active member of the Finance Committee, attending almost every meeting and pushing the committee to look at the synod's investments with an eye to making greater gains in interest earned. He pointed to Bishop deForest as also attending meetings, such as the two full-day hearings, for which Bishop deForest himself scheduled the agencies that attended.

Dr. Boyer displayed a chart showing revenues as compared to expenditures for the period 2016 to 2022. He pointed out that for the first two years the synod's expenditures exceeded the revenue; then an increase in revenue occurred and the revenues continued from that point on to exceed expenditures as the synod's expenditures continued to be cut. Dr. Boyer spoke of the synod's attempt to find the most efficient use of the money given to it by its member congregations.

He explained how 2022 is the last complete fiscal year of record with a fiscal year for the synod beginning on February 1 and continuing to the end of January of the following year, which he asserted makes sense when you consider how much money the congregations can remit in January because of December's income.

He encouraged the assembly members to see the Bulletin of Reports for details about 2022's results and 2024's proposed Spending Plan. He said that it is good to compare a proposed budget to a previous year's actual results.

Next, he showed the assembly a pie chart concerning synod revenue with Mission Support being the largest source of income at 87.2 percent. The next largest item was Deferred Revenue, 7.3 percent, which is money generated in prior years as a surplus. He explained that the synod may use up to 15 percent of the Deferred Revenue to balance a particular year's budget. He also explained that during the last two years no Deferred Revenue needed to be used even though some was budgeted. For 2023, with \$100,000 of Deferred Revenue budgeted, he expected that some of that money will be used because of the amount of money being lost on the 2023 assembly. For example, almost \$30,000 is being used to provide a meal subsidy so that costs can be kept down for congregations. He explained as well how the contract with Kalahari was developed prior to the pandemic, when the state called for an end to large gatherings. Therefore, to avoid the \$93,000 cancellation fee, it was decided to use Kalahari at a later date; but the number of rooms needed in this post-pandemic age is not as large as were called for in the pre-pandemic contract, resulting in a fee.

For the 2022 Spending Plan, Mission Support was budgeted at \$1,800,000, but the actual receipts were \$49,133 higher. Total revenue, budgeted at \$2,098,250, was lower than expected, coming in at \$1,926,513 actual. Why? Dr. Boyer explained that when the 2022 plan was developed, the synod understood that the ELCA would be giving to the synod the funds needed to pay for the Director for Evangelical Mission (DEM); in the past this was a position paid by the churchwide expression of the ELCA; but then the plan was changed back to the previous approach and the synod did not receive this payment (and also did not need to pay the DEM as a synod employee, making this matter, in reality, a wash). The auditors also found an error in that \$15,000 in earned income was erroneously applied to the General Fund. Finally, the cost for the 2022 assembly was over estimated because it was anticipated to be an in-person assembly, not a less expensive Zoom assembly.

The next slide shown to the assembly dealt with expenditures. Forty-one percent of the expenditures goes to the ELCA, Dr. Boyer explained. He said that an additional seven percent goes to various institutions. Together, those grants account for almost half of the Mission Support income. Of the total, 32.8 percent goes for synod staff and 7.4 percent goes for building and office expenses. From the slide that showed revenue and expenditures, the assembly could see that fiscal year 2022 generated a surplus of \$56,758. As Dr. Boyer explained, that kind of surplus (income higher than expenditures) is what creates Deferred Revenue.

Another chart giving four-year averages, 2003 to 2023, showed how at the beginning of that period 53 percent of the synod's Mission Support went to the ELCA with 47 percent being kept within the synod, but by the end of that range of dates the percentages were reversed. The synod's giving less to the ELCA is part of the reason that the synod has avoided deficits.

The next chart showed current revenue as compared to those amounts adjusted to constant dollars with 2016 as the base year. This chart showed a big difference in spending power at the end of the period as compared to the base year. Total revenue declined by \$738,816, which became an even greater loss of an additional \$402,993 when factoring in inflation. Dr. Boyer called that "a profound loss of income and purchasing power." The challenge is trying to keep the same services provided by the synod but with less money, both actual and inflated.

To this point Dr. Boyer's remarks concerned the General Fund. He explained that the synod has other money as well that cannot be used towards General Fund expenses. He said that the Synod Council can control two of these funds. First, the Church Loan Fund of \$1,372,291 in principal can be used to give loans at 3 percent interest to congregations with a maximum pay-back period of seven years. He said that there is only one loan now pending and that this money is available to synod congregations; the committee is looking into the question of whether loans for technology upgrades are appropriate to this fund. Second, the Mission Development Fund for new ministries and synod projects has \$692,538 in principal. This fund, for example, is paying for the work being done to revise the SALM program (Synodically Authorized Lay Ministers). One way this fund grows is through the sale of closed churches; but Dr. Boyer explained that it is not easy to sell churches and that the synod will be taking a significant loss on one church for which the sale price of \$11,000 will not cover the expense to clean out the church and parsonage.

Dr. Boyer then addressed the issue of where the synod keeps its money and how it is invested. He pointed to two ELCA funds: (1) the Growth Fund (previously called Fund A), which is where the Church Loan Fund money is held and which can lose value as well as gain in value; (2) Mission Investment Fund certificates of deposit. There are other investments as well, such as a certificate with Truist Bank. The main financial institution for the synod's banking is M & T Bank, where two Sweep accounts were recently established whereby the bank invests designated balances in U.S. Treasury notes as a way of generating interest while protecting the principal. Approximately two million dollars are in the Sweep accounts, which have the potential at current rates of generating about \$82,000 a year. None of that interest income has been budgeted and, therefore, provides a cushion to help cover losses such as the current assembly.

Following that report, Ms. McCloughan presented the proposed 2024 Spending Plan (found in the Bulletin of Reports). As income, the proposed 2024 Spending Plan anticipates \$150,000 in Deferred Revenue, \$1,800,000 in Mission Support, \$10,000 in DEM Support, \$65,000 in Event Income, and \$39,100 Other Income, making a total of \$2,064,100. The expenses, also shown to the assembly in the Bulletin of Reports, came to the same total.

Bishop deForest invited discussion from the floor. Scott Hall asked why the amount related to the DEM position was down to \$10,000. Dr. Boyer explained that this position will remain with the ELCA; Deacon Tigerman, the DEM, added the point that this \$10,000 is not for her salary but a grant for the synod to use for mission information. Dr. Boyer also explained that the synod provides a better level of healthcare insurance than the ELCA to our DEM.

Lloyd Wertz expressed his opinion that Dr. Boyer's explanation of the synod's finances was "wonderful." Doug Daniel questioned why there was proposed a significant increase in the Executive Staff and Travel portion of the budget. Was it a matter of an increased number of persons in that category? What percentage was used for salary increases? Dr. Boyer explained that there was some change in the way people were categorized (Eric Gombert moving from Support Staff to Executive Staff) and that increases in the 2.5 percent to 3 percent range were built in (though to be final, these increases need to be approved by the Synod Council). Mr. Daniel observed that the increase was greater than those factors could explain, and Dr. Boyer added the point that cuts to the Support Staff during Bishop Samuel Zeiser's time were partly undone recently by the Synod Council. He offered to get more detailed information for Mr. Daniel; and Pastor Shankweiler added that the actions to approve staff changes and compensation can be found in the Report of the Synod Council as found in the Bulletin of Reports.

Andy Metz asked about the payments to the ELCA. Dr. Boyer responded that the Synod Council has to recommend a percentage to be forwarded to the ELCA; this is done one-and-one-half years in advance so that the ELCA can plan its budget.

Ms. McCloughan then read the following resolution, which was adopted:

Resolved, That the 2024 spending proposal (February 1, 2024, to January 31, 2025) be adopted. The Synod Council is hereby authorized to establish the 2024 spending proposal no later than its January 2024 meeting, making any necessary adjustment to the proposal in light of both realistic anticipation of receipts and synod priorities (in consultation with the ELCA Treasurer with respect to the ELCA portion thereof).

ADJUSTMENT TO THE AGENDA. Bishop deForest noted that the presentation and action concerning the synod's finances had taken more time than planned. Therefore, he asked the permission of the house to move agenda items Mission Interpretation through the Report of the Director for Evangelical Mission to the evening. An objection was made in that Charlotte Gross, speaking for the Mission Interpreters, needed to keep to the time as originally assigned; and so it was agreed that she would speak next.

MISSION INTERPRETERS. Charlotte Gross, one of the two co-coordinators of the Mission Interpreters Ministry, spoke on behalf of that ministry, stating that the interpreters are willing to visit congregations. She told a story of visiting a congregation in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, that was intended primarily for homeless people. Called The Dwelling, this congregation is open to anyone and has over 200 persons attending every Sunday. One goal is to help the members with their self-esteem, and so the cook is called the Minister of Meals. Ms. Gross asked, "How do we look at homeless people?"

AGENDA. Bishop deForest returned to the issue of the agenda, proposing that Joe Davis and David Scherer would have a brief segment, the rest of the morning time would be given to the keynote speaker, and all other business would be moved to the evening. The Rev. Sonja Ware asked if the assembly could at least meet Deacon Kathleen Tigerman, the synod's new Director for Evangelical Mission, so that members could spend time with her in the afternoon. Bishop deForest explained that Deacon Tigerman's talk of ten minutes would be difficult to accommodate. Deacon Tigerman herself then explained that she would be available to meet people at the Vitality Café in the afternoon. The adjustment to the agenda was then approved by vote, after which Joe Davis and David Scherer led the assembly in a brief experience of "rhythmic movement" based on a song that said, "Sprinkle sunshine on each other; you might get a drop on you."

KEYNOTE SPEAKER, BISHOP MICHAEL GIRLINGHOUSE. Bishop deForest introduced Bishop Michael Girlinghouse, who gave his first talk as the assembly's keynote speaker. Bishop Girlinghouse is the author of the book *Embracing God's Future Without Forgetting the Past* and is concluding his time as bishop of the ELCA's Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod, which he described as a synod of 45 congregations spread over three states with most of the congregations being small and urban.

He explained that he has been dealing with loss and grief in congregational systems. How do we work through feelings of loss as we go through this time of change? In his own background he served as a campus pastor for many years before becoming a bishop; he also taught in the field of thanatology. But he affirmed his role as a pastor and in death education, not as a therapist. He explained that he wrote his book because he had experience with people who were dealing with grief and he noticed that congregations were behaving like people stuck in their grief. Not much has been written about grief in systems beyond families and schools. How can we work through grief so as to take up life again? Also, there is the issue of grief as congregations face closure.

Bishop Girlinghouse asserted that "loss always results in grief." It can be a small loss, but even a small loss leads to grief, and that grief is not unrelated to the grief that comes with a major loss. "Change always results in loss." For example, graduating from high school means that you are leaving many friends behind. He also used the example of a congregation that grows rapidly; the loss of being a small, intimate group can lead people to withdraw, resulting again in a smaller congregation.

Bishop Girlinghouse pointed to a 2015 study by David Roozen, who spoke of this as a time of "profound social and cultural change" and who quoted Ann Swindler, who called these kinds of times "unsettled." This is a time when traditional ways no longer work and new ways for action need to be tried without having guarantees that they will work.

We can learn from loss, he asserted; and loss can be a motivation. He said that loss
is a universal human experience,
is always experienced as deprivation,
always elicits a response, and
teaches us how to cope with future losses (smaller losses can prepare us for larger losses).

He spoke of two kinds of loss: (1) physical losses; (2) symbolic losses. Symbolic losses are psychosocial losses such as roles, social status, position, or identity. For example, someone who is no longer a community leader is experiencing a symbolic loss. People resist change because they do not know how they will fit in after the change occurs.

He explained that physical losses often result in symbolic losses, which are often grieved longer than physical losses. Symbolic losses get into who we are. Symbolic losses often have ramifications that are more far reaching than physical losses, which often makes them more difficult to deal with.

Concerning losses in congregational systems, Bishop Girlinghouse shared this outline:

- Faith communities are complex emotional systems.
 - They are a system of systems. Individual members from different cultural backgrounds may have different ways of dealing with grief.
 - Fluidity of membership and participation.
- Faith communities have a culture of loss.
 - Cohesion, enmeshed, flexible, disengaged.
 - Communication—expressiveness.
 - Structure, roles, relationships in that community.
 - Help-seeking behaviors.
 - Conflict.
 - Loss history—What is the congregation’s story of loss?
- What is the local culture of loss? The loss history of that place has an impact, e.g., the loss of a major industry.
 - Community experiences and history.
 - Local demographics.

He said that when customary patterns are disturbed, we suffer “culture shock.”

ANNOUNCEMENTS. Secretary Shankweiler made the closing announcements. The assembly’s afternoon would be spent at the Ministry Share Fare and the Vitality Café. The next plenary session would be in the evening. Answering a request from the floor, Bishop deForest concluded the session with prayer before lunch.

PLENARY SESSION THREE

Friday, June 2, 2023, 7:00 p.m.

SESSION OPENING. Following gathering music, Bishop deForest reported that because of an illness in her family, Deacon Tigerman’s presentation would be moved to Saturday.

WORLD HUNGER. After dealing with the agenda, Bishop deForest introduced the Rev. Eileen Smith LeVan and the World Hunger report by referring to the synod’s “three vital signs for now”: Healing the Hurt, Loving the Land, and Engaging the Stranger. He said that ELCA World Hunger does all three. The Rev. Eileen Smith LeVan spoke about world hunger, tying Jesus’ statement about “when I was hungry” to our baptismal calling and noting that while 89 percent of the world’s people have adequate food, the 11 percent who do not constitute 820,000,000 people. She spoke of the ELCA World Hunger’s effort as working with many partners to reach more places than we could do alone. She spoke as well about advocacy as a way to try to change the system of hunger. She asserted that “because of your faithful service, people have food,” and she encouraged the assembly to be generous. She explained other ways in which people can learn more and be involved.

JOE DAVIS AND DAVID SCHERER. Joe Davis and David Scherer gave a major presentation that began with a skit dealing with the awkwardness that people can feel when talking about race with members of another race. One point was that you don’t want to be ashamed about who you are, but not too proud, either. They also dealt with being authentic versus inauthentic. They observed that when it comes to race, we can be frozen in fear, or we may not even recognize the differences that do exist. Even how we read the Bible is shaped by our cultural backgrounds.

They sang a song: What Does It Take to be a “Real Lutheran”? During the song, images were shown of diverse persons and groups that are all part of the Lutheran Church. Asking, Are we saved by race? By place? They asserted that this is God’s movement and God chose you first.

They referred to the Racialized Stress Response insights by Rachel Martin. Our bodies are always asking, Are we safe? We have mobilizing defenses and immobilizing defenses that kick in. However, once you know what can happen to you and others, you can decide to react differently. “Take a breath and hold that response.”

They both told their personal stories about race. David spoke of growing up in a world where he usually dealt with “people who looked like me.” They were the doctors, teachers, leaders of business and government, and so forth. Even the educational materials in church showed biblical characters, including Jesus, as looking like European white people. Through it all, he was told that he was important.

Joe told a very different story including experiences in which he was treated badly because of his race, such as when a teacher gave him a poor grade because “a student like me couldn’t possibly have written” the paper that he wrote. He never had a Black teacher and was frequently interrogated by police. After he told his story of race, he was told “beloved child of God, you matter.”

The presenters then asked the audience how they felt from hearing those stories, “activated” or “immobilized”? Where did they feel it? Joe and Dave showed a list of possible reactions, VIMBAS, by Resmaa Manakem: vibrations, images, meaning, breathing/behavior, affect, and sensations.

Affirming that “bodies matter” and that Jesus did not say, “This is my theological concept given for you,” but, “This is my body given for you,” Joe and Dave solicited reactions from members of the assembly, who spoke of feeling anger, sadness, headache.

The presentation ended with the challenge to think about what could happen if we gave congregations tools to deal with the trauma experienced by people. Joe and Dave asserted that if we do not heal our own trauma, we will take it out on others. They asked the assembly members to turn to another person, place a hand near that person as allowed, and say a “body blessing”: “May your mind be filled with God’s wisdom, may your ears hear the cries of God’s children, may your eyes see the face of Christ in all that you see, may your mouth speak hope to the nation, may your feet bring good news to the world, may your hands serve the living God, may your heart be filled with the compassion of Christ, this day and always.”

LUTHERAN ADVOCACY MINISTRY. Introducing her as a “tireless champion of Christ’s love and justice for all,” Bishop deForest invited Tracey DePasquale, Director of Lutheran Advocacy Ministry of Pennsylvania (LAMPa), to explain the work of that agency. She began by thanking the synod for more than four decades of partnership. Referring to Bishop Davenport’s sermon the night before, Ms. DePasquale spoke of the need to listen to the Word of God and be present, serving, praying, and speaking. She told the story of a time her daughter went along to highlight at the state capitol a food drive and to share the story of a family in need with a legislative leader for hunger. Ms. DePasquale said that this is a time “for the church to be deeply real, to be deeply present.” We can bear witness to what is happening in the world. She reported that when she asks policy makers what LAMPa can do, they tell her more and more to “help depolarize, to help bridge the divide.” She said that 2023’s Lutheran Day in the Capitol had a record turnout and that on May 9, 2024, there will be a celebration of LAMPa’s forty-fifth anniversary.

ELCA REPRESENTATIVE. Pastor Dietz introduced Iain Chester, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's Churchwide Representative to the 2023 assembly. He is the ELCA Executive Director for Innovation. His presentation began with a video of Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton as she was visiting a congregation that is now primarily Hispanic, showing that churches can change and offer an experience of God's grace. She spoke of congregations as agencies of service, asserting that it is a "joy to invite others into the mission we share." Mr. Chester then brought greetings from the ELCA churchwide organization. He spoke about how our work together goes out into the world. He thanked the synod for \$869,092 in Mission Support given to the ELCA churchwide organization in 2022. He pointed to 160+ federal chaplains and 450+ chaplains in healthcare and other calls. He spoke about 311 new-start ministries with "33 approved in 2022." The ELCA Fund for Leaders enables more students to go to seminary and emerge with less debt; over \$3,000,000 in support was given last year to over 375 students, with 10 here in this synod receiving these funds and attending ELCA seminaries. In 2022 we supported 131 missionary households in 54 countries around the world. He listed the companion synods to which the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod relates. He spoke about his own work in innovation, whereby people can bring new ideas and work in partnership, such as the Salam Radio Station, the first Arabic Christian ecumenical radio station in the United States. He spoke about the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church, which would be meeting for the first time in July. He thanked Deacon Tigerman for the role that she and other DEMs play in the life of the church. He thanked the other staff people of the synod, too. He mentioned Lutheran Disaster Response (raised \$23,349,632 in 2022, in part because of the war in Ukraine) and the World Hunger appeal (raised \$19,194,022 in 2022). In both cases he gave specific examples of projects. He spoke of AMMPARO, an ELCA effort to deal with migrant and refugee needs and issues. In conclusion he thanked the synod for his being with the synod for this assembly, and he invited further discussion.

SECOND REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON REFERENCE AND COUNSEL. Pastor Heavner presented the Second Report of the Committee on Reference and Counsel. He began with the second of the resolution submitted for consideration.

A RESOLUTION CONCERNING CHAPLAINCY AT DIAKON RETIREMENT FACILITIES

The following resolution was submitted on April 24, 2023, by Mrs. Mary Ann Spengler, Resident at Luther Crest and a member of St. Paul's, Breiningsville; and the Rev. David Kistler, Resident at The Topton Lutheran Home and a member of St. John's, Hamburg (also an associate member of Grace, Topton).

"Whereas, Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries has eliminated the position of Vice President for Church Relations and Ministry Partnerships, a position of ministry with the chaplains of Diakon homes, and has recently reduced the chaplaincy position at The Topton Lutheran Home to half-time; and

"Whereas, Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries is an ELCA social ministry agency, and two of their continuing care retirement centers, Luther Crest and The Topton Lutheran Home, are both on the territory of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod; and

"Whereas, these two facilities have the full range of care from independent living, personal care, and skilled nursing, and as continuing care facilities commit to care for residents until death; and

Whereas, our Lutheran tradition maintains and upholds that the Gospel brings healing and hope at all stages of life, it is important that there be full time clinically trained chaplains in each facility; and

"Whereas, financial pressures are serious challenges, administration of these facilities must regard full-time chaplaincy as important and necessary care, and support the chaplain with adequate compensation and benefits to assure that full-time chaplaincy can be provided; therefore, be it

"Resolved, That the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod in Assembly urge that Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries Agency of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America commit to providing full time chaplaincy in its senior living and housing facilities."

Pastor Heavner presented the committee's recommendation as follows: "The Committee of Reference and Counsel recommends the following amendment to this resolution for adoption:

"Resolved, That the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod in Assembly urge that Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries Agency of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America commit to providing accessible, comprehensive, and holistic spiritual care through chaplaincy services for staff and residents in its senior living and housing facilities."

The committee presented this written rationale for their proposal: "The Committee of Reference and Counsel recommends this amendment because it is the discernment of the community issuing a call to determine staffing. We can encourage increased spiritual care support for staff and residents, but not the way that occurs. This amendment seeks to strengthen the resolution by encompassing all people, including staff, in its scope."

The floor was then opened for discussion. The Rev. David Kistler spoke in favor of the original wording and shared as well a statement from his co-sponsor, Mrs. Mary Ann Spengler. He then moved to substitute the original wording that he and Mrs. Spengler presented for the committee's proposal. His motion was seconded by Kay Hagenberger.

The Rev. Bruce Osterhout spoke in favor of the substitute, asserting that "Diakon is too corporate and forgot its Lutheran roots." The Rev. Daniel Brettell spoke about chaplaincy as not being "a part-time position" and that since Diakon is sponsored by the ELCA and synod it needs to see that chaplaincy is provided. The Rev. Mark Wimmer, Diakon's last Vice President for Church Relations, a position which ended in early 2021, spoke in favor of the resolution but also urged the synod to seek out roles on the boards of agencies like Diakon ("there is more than can be done"). Pastor Walsh made a point of order that there was someone wanting to speak in opposition to the resolution, and so the chair recognized Deacon Woodfield, who spoke against the substitute on the basis that the chaplain's specific work may be part time but that the agency as a whole provides full-time care.

Pastor Walsh moved the previous question, which was seconded by the Rev. Katie Lyon. The motion passed. Before the vote could be taken, however, Ronald Mordosky expressed confusion as to what would be voted upon. Pastor Heavner re-read the original proposal, which would be restored to assembly consideration through adoption of the motion to substitute. The vote to substitute was taken, and the original Kistler-Spengler wording was substituted for the committee's recommendation.

The discussion proceeded on the wording as originally proposed. The Rev. Thomas Irwin asked if the intent of the original was that each Diakon facility would have a full-time chaplain or if one full-time chaplain could cover more than one facility. Pastor Kistler was asked to respond to that question, and he said that Diakon has a job description for the position of chaplain and that it is extensive enough that one person could not serve several different facilities. Pastor Irwin suggested that saying "in each of its facilities" would be helpful, and the Rev. Sonja Ware then moved that the resolution be amended to say just that, adding the words "in each of its" before the words "senior living." Pastor Kistler seconded her motion.

Pastor Labagh asked if this could be considered a "friendly amendment" and not require a vote, but Pastor Melber as parliamentarian responded that the motion was already the property of the assembly. A vote was then taken, and the words "in each of its" were added to the proposal.

Greg Colahan then asked how many facilities are in question. Pastor Kistler replied that there are four. Mr. Colahan asked whether they are all of the same size. Pastor Kistler replied that the Topton campus has roughly 200 residents in skilled care and about 200 more in other living arrangements but that he did not have easy access to the total populations of the other facilities. Mr. Colahan questioned whether this proposal would place an undue burden on Diakon, to which Pastor Kistler replied that all of the other three facilities do have full-time chaplains and that only the position at Topton has been reduced. Laure Pride (Easton) spoke in favor of the resolution, noting that it calls for Diakon to “commit” to providing this care; how to do it can be figured out later.

Pastor Brettell then moved the previous question, which was seconded by Pastor Lyon. The motion on the previous question was adopted. The vote on the main motion as amended was then taken, and the motion was adopted. As adopted, the resolution read as follows:

“Resolved, That the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod in Assembly urge that Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries Agency of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America commit to providing full time chaplaincy in each of its senior living and housing facilities.”

BEAR CREEK CAMP. Collin Grooms presented a video report on the work of Bear Creek Camp. He spoke of the camp’s work as providing a Christ-centered, radically accepting community in creation. The camp has been engaged in strategic planning and wants to have a secure footing as it moves into the future. Mr. Grooms spoke of the camp’s role in preparing leaders for the church and world. In 2023 there would be seven weeks of camping with the theme being “In the Midst.” He encouraged assembly members to visit the camp’s new website. “Bear Creek exists only because we want it to exist.”

ELECTION OF VICE PRESIDENT. Pastor Dietz invited the three nominees for the position of vice president to address the assembly. They had been invited to answer two questions: (1) How do you feel called by God to fulfill this office? (2) What experience, skills, or gifts do you bring to this office? Daniel Raudenbush was out of state and gave his remarks by recorded video. The other two nominees, Nancy Reichelt and Jean Sandberg, spoke in person. Following those self-introductions, Pastor Busted led the assembly in prayer concerning the elections. Then the assembly members cast their ballots, which listed the three candidates for vice president.

ELECTIONS TO SYNOD COUNCIL. Pastor Dietz then moved that the individuals nominated by their mission districts be elected to the Synod Council; she received a second from Pastor Lyon. The persons listed were

Pattie Corcoran (Bethlehem-Easton, lay female)

Joshua Fink (Lehigh, lay male)

The Rev. Dana Heckman-Beil (Schuylkill, completion of the term vacated by the resignation of the Rev. Brian Beissel when he was elected the district’s dean)

The Rev. Gene Zaiser (East Berks, clergy)

The assembly voted and these four persons were elected *en bloc*. Pastor Dietz declared them elected to the Synod Council.

END OF SESSION ANNOUNCEMENTS. Secretary Shankweiler made the closing announcements, including a report that the offering for the ELCA World Hunger Appeal the previous evening was \$2,806.25. He also reported that Pastor Garbe had sent him a note and a sticky bun. Should the bun be eaten or should it be deposited in the archives because it was presented during an official assembly? Pastor Beissel spoke in favor of the archives to see what would happen to the bun “after a year.” However, the vote was in favor of eating! The session ended at 9:00 p.m.

PLENARY SESSION FOUR

Saturday, June 4, 2023, 8:45 a.m.

SESSION OPENING AND WORSHIP. Before the session began, Bobby Siegfried led the assembly in wake-up exercises, introduced the members of Chasing Daylight, and led the singing of “All Who Gather . . . Bless the Lord.”

The first item on the agenda beginning at 8:45 a.m. was a service of worship at which Bishop deForest was the preacher. Romans 6:1-14 was his text. He began by saying that in this text Paul uses words like *live* seven times, but *death*, 14 times. He called Paul “gutsy” and asserted that the synod is gutsy, too, for having *death* in its theme. But, Bishop deForest asserted, from the beginning God has been bringing us from death to life. The cross “isn’t a plus sign,” it is a declaration: “our God died for us, our God died with us,” so we can be one in Christ Jesus, so that we can walk in “newness of life.” Although we are “enslaved to sin,” we must consider ourselves dead to sin. We are to choose. There is “sin that is wrapped up closely in our fear of death”; we are all too close to failure and death, from which we are all running. “My only hope, my only strength, my only courage comes from Christ by the faith we share.” In our baptism we have already died, “so we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.” “United like that. How or what or who would ever dare to divide us? We have already been brought from death to life, so let us now and forevermore present ourselves . . . everywhere Christ calls us to go. . . .”

An offering was received for the Bishop’s Discretionary Fund through which the bishop can assist rostered leaders in difficult times.

LGBTQIA+ TASK FORCE. Bishop deForest explained the pins he was wearing. One says “ReconcilingWork.org,” an organization we work with to be welcoming to LGBTQIA+ persons; we are a Reconciling in Christ synod. The other pin says “God’s love is transforming,” and he pointed to his son as a transgendered person. He said that two persons who stand up for these causes are the co-conveners of the synod’s LGBTQIA+ Task Force, Pastor Busteed and Dr. Helen Davis. They noted that it was Pride Month, and they spoke about the work of their task force, which is being reconstituted and revitalized. This task force can provide educational, worship, and support materials and are “safe people” to ask questions of. Dr. Davis said that they offer Reconciling in Christ support to congregations. They present a visible presence for the synod at Pride events, intending to be at three such events this year and offering to come to others. They solicited volunteers for this work. Dr. Davis invited congregations to share brochures and materials, host events, and become Reconciling in Christ congregations. Pastor Busteed listed some upcoming sessions for involvement.

ELECTION RESULTS. Pastor Melber presented the report of the previous evening’s elections. He thanked those who assisted in the balloting process.

He began with two persons who ran unopposed:
Daniel Tobey, Synod Council (youth, male)
The Rev. Kenneth Melber Jr., Secretary
Bishop deForest declared both of them elected.

Pastor Melber said that for the office of vice president, there were 273 ballots cast, all valid. Needed for election: 137. The results were as follows:

Daniel Raudenbush, 41
Jean Sandberg, 81
Nancy Reichelt, 151

Bishop deForest declared Nancy Reichelt elected vice president.

THIRD REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON REFERENCE AND COUNSEL. Pastor Heavner continued the report of the Committee on Reference and Counsel, presenting the third resolution that was submitted.

**A RESOLUTION CONCERNING
ADOPTION OF AN OFFICIAL NORTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD
LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT STATEMENT**

The following resolution was submitted on May 11, 2023, by the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod's Racial Justice Team:

Pastor Brian Beissel, St. Peter's, Pine Grove
Pastor D. Michael Bennethum (Retired), Friedens, Oley
Kaitlyn Olson Blend, Bear Creek Camp
Pastor Colleen Cox, Grace, Shillington
Pastor Samantha Drennan, Grace, Macungie
Deaconess Deborah Graf, Trinity, Reading
Pastor Jennifer Hall, St. John's, Nazareth
Pastor Brandon Heavner, Weisenberg, New Tripoli
Deacon Kathleen Tigerman, Director for Evangelical Mission, NEPA Synod

“Whereas, in September 2021, the ELCA Church Council issued the Declaration of the ELCA to American Indian and Alaska Native People, a continuation of the 2016 ELCA statement which repudiated the Doctrine of Discovery; and

“Whereas, the Declaration confesses ‘we have not listened to the stories of Indigenous people and have not taken the time to understand history. We have devalued Indigenous religions and lifeways and have not challenged the invisibility of Indigenous people in American society. We have treated American Indians and Alaska Natives as a “minority group” rather than as sovereign nations. We have not taken seriously the importance of land and how complicit we are in accepting the benefits of stolen land’; and

“Whereas, the Declaration also confesses ‘we are complicit in the annihilation of Native peoples and [their] cultures, languages, and religions, and that we have refused to truly recognize the harm that we have caused our Native siblings. We confess that we must continue to learn more about our complicity and the roles our church played in dehumanizing Indigenous peoples, especially as it relates to the forced assimilation, abuse, and death in Indian boarding schools, adoption, and foster care; the ecological damages in Indian Country and beyond due to climate change; the breaking of sacred treaties meant to govern the relationships between Native sovereign nations and the U.S. federal government; and missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and relatives’; and

“Whereas, the Synod Racial Justice Team has consulted with local and national Indigenous leaders on the subject of Land Acknowledgement; and

“Whereas, a Land Acknowledgement Statement is a meaningful and crucial first action toward raising awareness of truths that have been ignored by most for hundreds of years, truths which will work to bring healing reconciliation for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people; therefore, be it

“*Resolved*, That the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the ELCA formally adopt a Land Acknowledgement Statement as follows:

The Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the ELCA acknowledges and honors the Lenni-Lenape, Munsee-Lenape, and Susquehannock Peoples who were forcibly removed from this area, and upon whose ancestral homelands we gather. With gratitude to God, we honor the land itself, as well as all our Indigenous siblings who have and who continue to care for this land and call it their home.

and be it further

“*Resolved*, That this statement be placed on display in a prominent location at the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod office, on the synod website, and in appropriate synod publications, as well as read at the beginning of synod-wide gatherings; and be it further

“Resolved, That all congregations, camps, institutes of learning, and other partner organizations affiliated with the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod be encouraged to likewise adopt and use this or a similar statement; and be it further

“Resolved, That this assembly commits itself and strongly advises all those within this church body to become aware of and involved with the ELCA Truth and Healing Movement, and to use these opportunities to learn the true history and ongoing realities of Indigenous people.”

Pastor Heavner presented as well the recommendation of his committee: “The Committee of Reference and Counsel recommends ‘A Resolution Concerning Adoption of an Official Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod Land Acknowledgment Statement’ for adoption by this assembly.”

No one spoke to the resolution. The resolution was then adopted.

KEYNOTE: SEGMENT TWO. Bishop Girlinghouse made his second presentation. He reported that we began by looking at loss and how loss impacts our congregations. Loss always results in some level of grief. We have experienced loss; churches have been in decline since the mid-1960s. The only way through grief is to grieve. The problem is that we live in a death-defying culture; and when death occurs, we take it as a failure rather than as a natural part of life. Our chances of death are 100 percent. We tend now to have “celebrations of life” rather than funerals. But the only way we can get through grief is to grieve. What does that mean?

- Grief is a process that focuses on tasks, not “stages.” Even Elizabeth Kuebler-Ross said they are “common experiences,” not stages. They are tasks that do not come in any particular order.
- Grief is a complex experience that includes emotional, physical, social, and spiritual components. It takes a lot to work through all that.
- Because grief is relational, all grief experiences are unique. Your relationship to the loss will change the way you grieve, so we need to honor the perspectives of others.
- The purpose of grief is not to sever emotional bonds with the deceased but to redefine our relationships with the deceased. Freud said the purpose of grief is to sever emotional bonds and transfer those bonds to another, but Freud was wrong. You find a place in your heart for those you have lost and draw strength from them.

Grief is not a nice straight line but a squiggly line.

We need to consider the difference between yearning and nostalgia. We hear the saying that our congregations need to get over the past and move on. That is horrid. Yearning is a common grief response that is characterized by a desire to reclaim or recreate the remembered past, which can trap us in the past if it is not resolved. It can keep us from taking up life again. Nostalgia, on the other hand, is a common human coping mechanism that draws strength from the memory of past experiences to help us adapt to the present and give us hope for the future.

The problem of trying to recreate the past is that the world has changed. Also, the remembered past never really existed because we have altered our memories. There is a diagnostic code for “prolonged grief disorder,” which can apply to congregations that are trapped in the past. It can result from experiences of complicated grief. This disorder could be involved if these symptoms are persistent: (a) preoccupation with the past, (b) emotional numbness, (c) intense sorrow and emotional pain, (d) bitterness or anger, (e) difficulty accepting the loss, (f) maladaptive appraisals about oneself, (g) difficulty trusting others, (h) feeling alone or detached, (i) feeling that life is empty or meaningless, (j) confusion about one’s role or diminished sense of identity, (k) difficulty with positive reminiscence, (l) difficulty or reluctance to pursue interests or to plan for the future.

How do we get unstuck? The only way through grief is to grieve. (a) Grief is best processed through narrative. We tell stories about the person who has died. (b) Acknowledge the pain, sadness, and lament. Talk to people about what the closing of their church means to them. (c) Promote social engagement where people can come together and share their lament. (d) Build motivation for change. (e) Identify new aspirations for making meaning. Find meaning in who you are now. (f) Alternate the focus on loss and restoration, but you don’t forget the past.

Nostalgia has been written about by Clay Routledge in *Nostalgia: A Psychological Resource*. Nostalgic memories are normal and help to build social connectedness. As we talk about how God has been with us in the past, that is healthy nostalgia work. Nostalgic memories build self-awareness and self-esteem (“if we did it once, we can do it again”). We need to know our stories and how we have gotten here. This task can help us find meaning and significance. At the heart of who and what we are as a church is the story of Jesus; how does the telling of that story give life and a sense of vitality? Seeing what God is doing now gives vitality.

Nostalgia (strength from the past) contributes to a sense of belonging, raises optimism, evokes inspiration—tap into the memories of creativity, such as when the congregation began—and boosts creativity. Even if your congregation closes, it continues in you in the next community of faith you join. Saul Bellow wrote, “Nostalgic memories keep the wolf of insignificance from the door.” They remind us that God continues to walk with us.

As we embrace God’s future, we hold in tension continuity, new life, innovation, and loss/grief. You can’t only be in the present or future; you need to draw on the past.

DEACON KATHLEEN TIGERMAN REPORT. Deacon Tigerman, the new Director for Evangelical Mission (DEM), then spoke. She acknowledged the Rev. D. Michael Bennethum, her predecessor, for his help. She said that she hopes to serve as a partner in ministry with the members of the synod. She said that she works with the Witness and Service Ministry Team and the other teams that relate to it. She said that DEMs normally work with new and specialized ministries such as Synodically Authorized Worshipping Communities (Common Ground and Hope’s Table in this synod) and Lay Authorized Ministers (LAMs) and Synodically Authorized Lay Ministers (SALMs). Although her work deals with all three lanes, her primary role is in the middle lane, Gaining Strength. She said that she wants to visit all of the synod’s ministry sites within the next year. She quoted Psalm 23 and its reference to “the darkest valley,” but she asserted that God is leading us. How are we using our tools for ministry? Perhaps the 6261 model is how God is setting a table for us. “We need each other.” This assembly is about going beyond the valley, but we can’t go beyond it until we have gone into it. “God goes before you, beside you, within you. And we—everyone here, not just your synod staff—are your partners in ministry and join you on this path.” “Who might God be inviting you to partner with?”

Following this report, a break was taken from 10:25 a.m. to 10:45 a.m.

GOOD SHEPHERD REHABILITATION HOSPITAL. Carry Gerber, Vice President for Advancement and Marketing, reported about the 115 years of ministry carried out by what today is called Good Shepherd Rehabilitation Services. She talked about Good Shepherd’s founding in 1908 by the Rev. John and Estella Raker, how Good Shepherd has grown greatly in size and scope, how they now work out of 60+ locations, and how they are building a new 76-room hospital in Center Valley, which expects to serve its first patient on July 30, 2023. Good Shepherd deals with persons of all ages with issues such as strokes, brain injuries, pulmonary issues, and more. The new facility in Center Valley will have space for teaching technology to persons from the community who can benefit from often simple technological developments as they deal with disabilities, injuries, and illnesses.

PORTICO BENEFIT SERVICES. The Rev. Tara Lynn, the Regional Representative for Portico Benefit Services, next addressed the assembly. Prior to her speaking, Bishop deForest showed the assembly the colorful socks he was wearing; during her presentation a drawing was held whereby three other persons won socks that are meant to represent the Portico Wholeness Wheel, which symbolizes the interrelationships between the various dimensions of well-being. Pastor Lynn spoke about Portico as a non-profit agency that prioritizes the well-being of its members. She reported that the greatest current need seems to be dealing with high levels of burnout and the need for mental health assistance so that professional church leaders are in good shape to help create vital ministries.

CLERGY ANNIVERSARIES AND OTHER INTRODUCTIONS. Pastor Dietz said that there will be an event in October to recognize significant anniversaries of ordination. She introduced various categories of rostered leaders. First, she spoke of those preparing for rostered service:

MaryAnn Farnsworth, preparing for Word and Service
Heidi Shilanskas, preparing for Word and Service
Brynn Anderson, [preparing for Word and Sacrament](#)
Roger Berger, preparing for Word and Sacrament
David Corrado, preparing for Word and Sacrament
Madison DeLuca, preparing for Word and Sacrament
Dillon Epler, preparing for Word and Sacrament
Josh Labadie-Gulotta, preparing for Word and Sacrament
Jayne Leh, preparing for Word and Sacrament
Ty Rankin, preparing for Word and Sacrament
Stephanie Roth, preparing for Word and Sacrament
Ashley Teter, preparing for Word and Sacrament

She introduced the new pastor who was ordained since the 2022 assembly:

The Rev. Jamie Edelman, serving United Fellowship Lutheran Church, Easton

She listed the rostered leaders who came to serve in this synod since the 2022 assembly:

Deacon Kathleen Tigerman
The Rev. Justin Tigerman

She acknowledged those who retired since the 2022 assembly:

Deacon Patrice Kidd
Deacon Kathleen Schaeffer
Deacon Janet Stump
The Rev. Jeff Butz
The Rev. Richard Elliott
The Rev. Wayne Lupole
The Rev. William Maxon
The Rev. Werner Koch
The Rev. Mark Christy
The Rev. Thomas Irwin Jr.
The Rev. Suzanne Trump

She again noted that a special event in October will celebrate the service of rostered leaders marking significant anniversaries and highlighted those who are having their fiftieth anniversaries this year:

The Rev. Harry S. Bohn Jr.
The Rev. Allen L. Forsman
The Rev. Wayne A. Heintzelman
The Rev. David L. Hess
The Rev. Robert F. Hoenich
The Rev. David P. Kidd
The Rev. Larry D. Laine
The Rev. Lyn L. Langkamer
The Rev. Carl D. Shankweiler

COMPENSATION GUIDELINES FOR 2024. Pastor Dietz, speaking on behalf of the Leadership Development Ministry Team, presented the compensation guidelines for deacons and pastors as distributed in the Bulletin of Reports. She explained that the proposed salaries for deacon were increased more substantially in order to deal with past underpayment and to recognize that the educational requirements to become a deacon have increased. She introduced the sabbatical document by pointing to its wholistic understanding of sabbath and sabbath rest and the mutual responsibility between rostered ministers and their people. The new proposal for a sabbatical encourages cooperation across congregations and is more attainable. Every congregation is encouraged to do this.

Pastor Irwin was recognized; he encouraged the synod to keep the compensation charts going beyond the top 21+ years as currently shown, observing that there are people like himself who have been in service much longer.

Bishop deForest then called for the vote on the guidelines that apply to pastors, which he declared adopted following the vote: *Resolved*, That the 2024 Compensation Guidelines for Rostered Pastors be approved.

Next, he called for the vote on the guidelines that apply to deacons, which he declared adopted after the vote: *Resolved*, That the 2024 Compensation for Rostered Deacons be approved.

There was a third resolution because of work that had been done to revise the synod's recommendation concerning sabbatical leave for rostered leaders. The resolution as shown here was explained by Pastor Dietz, voted upon, and declared adopted by the bishop: *Resolved*, That the position paper "Sabbatical Provisions for Rostered Ministers (Deacons and Pastors)" written by the Committee of Deans and endorsed by the Synod Council be approved by this assembly as a recommendation to accompany the "2024 Compensation Guidelines for Rostered Pastors and Deacons."

HOPE'S TABLE. After Bishop deForest spoke of her as "walking straight into the footsteps of Christ," the Rev. Mary Wolfe explained the ministry known as Hope's Table based in Hope Lutheran Church, Reading. She began by thanking the synod for support. She described it as a "new start" that began about ten years ago. It is a "eucharistic hospitality ministry" in which an informal worship service follows a good meal. She described her neighborhood as "the poorest neighborhood in one of the poorest cities in the country." The experience of working there has opened her eyes to the "ways Jesus is present in the world around us even when the church doesn't recognize it." She told a story in which a young man said, "Only when you are really poor do you really realize that you can totally rely on God." Thank you for the support from the synod and ELCA that make this ministry possible.

JOE DAVIS AND DAVID SCHERER. Joe Davis and David Scherer gave a presentation about racism. Dave said that a friend once said to him that he can go into any church he wanted to and be comfortable because other people "shrink themselves" so that he (as a white male) can take up as much space as he wishes. So, he said, I needed to find ways to give up power.

They performed a skit in which they talked about talking about race. How do you do both justice and kindness? Jesus gives us an example of compassionate justice. They used the image of a stool with three legs. There is interpersonal racism—the first leg. The second is structural racism, which is built into practices, policies, and procedures. (Are the people who will be impacted the most included in the decision-making process?) The third is symbolic racism, which is found in cultural stories, images, signs, and flags. "If we say we have not participated in oppressive systems that are harming others, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us."

They dealt with the issue of what is heard versus what is meant. They gave examples of possible ways to correct someone without shaming that person as well as possible approaches for disrupting microaggression. They concluded with a rap song, "Questions for a Black Man."

END OF SESSION ANNOUNCEMENTS. Secretary Shankweiler gave the announcements, reporting that the offering for the Bishop's Fund was \$2,475.72. He gave a tribute to the service given by Kristen Edelman-Weiner in her role as vice president. He also explained the practical reason for his not standing for reelection in that the support staff had been cut and he lost the essential assistance once available for the production of the annual Minutes Book and the Bulletin of Reports; the Synod Council has since restored that assistance.

PLENARY SESSION FIVE

Saturday, June 4, 2023, 1:30 p.m.

SESSION OPENING; DAVIS AND SCHERER. Before the session began, there was gathering music, “You Are Good,” provided by Bobby Siegfried and his group, Chasing Daylight. The first agenda item beginning at 1:30 p.m. was the final presentation by Joe Davis and David Scherer. Pastor Applegate began the segment by showing the assembly the weaving that was made during the assembly and which now becomes a loom of memories and remembrances. The points that Joe and David made included “we are beloved children of the most high God,” “keep showing up . . . bring your full self,” “be fed and feed others,” and “Go! The spirit of this place go with you.” They listed nine sources of power: Holy Spirit, authority/legitimacy, human resources, material resources, skills and knowledge, psychological factors, sanctions, privilege, and “narrative power.” This power can be used in the “three feet around you”: community, friends, family, school, faith community, institutions, co-workers, professional networks, shared spaces. They talked about opposition and the ability to move people in a plus-one direction along the continuum consisting of active opposition, passive opposition, neutral, passive allies, to active allies. They observed that God has already shown up, and now we get to show up and rise up with God. They closed with the song “Rise Up”: “Rise up, O God, with blessings on your people. Rise up together. Your love’s gonna break the chains. Rise up, O God, with blessings on your people. RISE!”

KEYNOTE 3: BISHOP GIRLINGHOUSE. Bishop Girlinghouse gave his third presentation. He asked, “How do we remember forward?” Based on William J. Worden’s book *Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy*, Bishop Girlinghouse made three points: (a) recognize changed circumstances at head, heart, and spiritual levels; (b) revise our “representational models,” such as by recognizing that the church continues to change so that we can most effectively communicate the Gospel, and (c) continue to reevaluate our goals. Who are we now and how can we adapt to the new reality, including loss? He spoke of the need to learn how to be a smaller faith community, asserting that (a) small congregations can do a lot of ministry, (b) “there is nothing wrong with being small,” and (c) we can find advantages in being small.

He spoke about adapting to loss and putting nostalgia to work. His outline as presented was as follows:

- External Adjustments.
 - How the loss affects one’s everyday functioning.
 - Things you don’t miss until they are gone.
 - New roles and skills.
 - Learning how to be a smaller faith community.
 - Redefining the loss.
 - Finding benefit in the loss.
 - Making meaning after a loss.
- Internal Adjustments.
 - Rebuilding identity.
 - How the loss affects one’s sense of self.
 - Self-definition.
 - Self-esteem.
 - Self-efficacy vs. self-actualization.

Keep asking yourself, “Who are we now? And, more importantly, who is God calling us to be?”

Bishop Girlinghouse quoted Clay Routledge’s *Nostalgia: A Psychological Resource*: “Psychological growth requires exploration, the pursuit of new experiences and ideas and the willingness to be open to alternate ways of thinking. A number of studies demonstrate that nostalgia promotes growth, in part, by inspiring exploration.”

He shared another outline:

Adapting to Loss—Putting Nostalgia to Work

- Spiritual Adjustments.

- Perceptions of Meaning.
- How the loss affects one's beliefs, values, and assumptions about the world.
 - What is God calling us to do and to be?
 - Redefining direction and purpose of ministry.
 - Reappraising relationship with the past.
- Reconsidering assumptions about ministry.
 - Faith community's place in society.
 - How the world around us considers our faith tradition.
 - Whether the world around us thinks "organized religion" is worthwhile.
 - How our assumptions about our faith tradition are validated or challenged.
 - Other assumptions.

How do we do ministry from the margins of society? We need to go to them. He referred to the book that he wrote: *Embracing God's Future without Forgetting the Past: A Conversation about Loss, Grief, and Nostalgia in Congregational Life*. We need to see the past as a resource to mine for strengths and learn from the past. We need to become a learning community that studies what it means to be church together. We need to see where God is already at work in the world. As we become excited through learning, we will find renewed energy for ministry. As we become involved, we will become fired up and the "growth thing" will take care of itself. "We need to be ready to be surprised" by what the Holy Spirit does. Build on strengths instead of focusing on deficits and then talk about what should be. Try something new for a time and then evaluate it.

Another outline was as follows:

Why Building on Strengths Works

Building on Strength...

- ...creates a context in which people are free to be known in relationship.
- ...makes space in which people are free to be heard.
- ...opens the opportunity for people to be free to dream in community.
- ...establishes an environment where people are free to choose to contribute.
- ...provides the context for people to be free to act with support.
- ...opens the way for people to be free to be positive.

In conclusion he said that all faith communities have two choices: (a) to die, wallowing in grief and loss, yearning for the past; or (b) to die, putting trust in God who brings us "beyond death into life," who will do a new thing with us.

After these presentations, Bishop deForest presented gifts to Bishop Girlinghouse, Joe Davis, David Scherer, and Ian Chester, thanking them all for their roles in the assembly—and also mentioning Bishop Davenport who needed to leave earlier. Sandra Wolfe of Grace, Macungie, spoke from the floor in appreciation of Pastor Dietz and thanked her, too.

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY. Pastor Shankweiler gave his report as synod secretary, highlighting the cumulative ten-year difference between ordinations and retirements by Ministers of Word and Sacrament, that is, 79 fewer ordinands than retired pastors. He spoke of the change in the synod from the time of his ordination in 1973 to the present time as being one of (1973) encouraging congregations to each have its own pastor to (2023) the present need to have congregations share pastors. He quoted Philippians 2:4, "Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others." At the end of his talk he spoke about the future: his own earthly future will not extend another fifty years (making that point by showing a video of himself in a coffin), but the synod and its congregations can have a future "that requires cooperating and keeping in mind the needs of others." Following the Report of the Secretary, Bishop deForest led the assembly in recognizing Pastor Shankweiler for his service as secretary, presenting him with several gifts representative of his service as synod secretary.

LUTHERAN DISASTER RESPONSE. Pastor Heavner spoke on behalf of Lutheran Congregational Services (LCS) and Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR) in that LCS's Director, Julia Menzo, was not available to give her report. Pastor Heavner mentioned the other members with him on the Lutheran Congregational Services Advisory Board. He thanked Ms. Menzo for her work and explained the ministries of LCS and LDR, such as work to assist persons whose homes were damaged in disasters. He invited donations to help provide disaster and hygiene kits. Recent fires in Easton left several families displaced; Pastor Heavner spoke of those needs, including long-term assistance and how designated donations could be made. He thanked the synod for its support of LCS and LDR.

INSTALLATIONS. Newly elected deans—the Rev. Brian Beissel of the Schuylkill Mission District and the Rev. Cindy White of the Hazleton-Lehigh Mission District—were then installed by Bishop deForest, assisted by Pastor Dietz. New Synod Council members, both newly elected and those reelected to a second term, were also installed: Patricia Corcoran, Joshua Fink, Daniel Tobey, the Rev. Dana Heckman-Beil, and the Rev. Gene Zaiser. The persons elected to be vice president (Nancy Reichelt) and secretary (Pastor Melber) were installed.

ADJOURNMENT. There was no unfinished business. Bishop deForest thanked the people by name who worked on the audiovisual system for the assembly and also named all of the people who served in planning the assembly or who worked on specific components of the assembly. The assembly approved a motion by Pastor Melber, seconded by the Rev. Rashion Santiago, that it stand adjourned. The Order for the Closing of an Assembly was then used, and Bishop deForest declared the assembly closed at 3:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carl D. Shankweiler, Secretary

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