

# FOR NEPA SYNOD ASSEMBLY 2025

## ADDENDUM TO THE REPORT OF SYNOD COUNCIL

The Synod Council would like to share the following statement. The Synod Council has heard and received concerns voiced by members of the synod regarding two issues: a personnel concern and concerns about the Strategic Intent. The Synod Council has met, and while we cannot resolve all concerns immediately, we are committed to working together to move our synod forward. We recognize and value the responsibility of hearing all voices in the synod.

The Synod Council is considering the following recommendations for synod personnel moving forward in order to ensure transparency, accountability, and justice:

- The Synod Council shall form a personnel committee and appoint members. Guidelines for the role and structure of the personnel committee will be established by the synod Council, beginning with the June 28, 2025 Synod Council meeting.
- The Synod Council will develop guidelines for the personnel committee as well as recommendations for the bishop's interactions involving staffing matters, including the recommendation that at least one additional person should be present when discussing personnel matters with any synod staff.
- In accordance with S11.04. of our synod's constitution, the Synod Council Executive Committee shall ensure that a Mutual Ministry Committee be formed to support the bishop in their work.
- All synod staff are reminded that Synod Council is also available to listen to concerns and cares.

Regarding the second concern, the Synod Council adopted the following resolution:

Resolved, That the Strategic Intent developed by Bishop Christopher deForest be received with appreciation for the important issues, concepts, and directions it recommends, but that implementation of this Strategic Intent be delayed until after the 2026 synod assembly at which an election for bishop will be held that could strongly influence how long the staff positions called for in the Strategic Intent will be maintained by the synod.

Our intention in tabling the Strategic Intent is to continue Synod Council and synod-wide discernment of the future of the synod's structure. The council will lead a year of collaborative planning to provide opportunities to hear further input, and have further discussions about the synod's strategic intent, to ensure that we have the resources and time to create and implement a successful plan. We thank the bishop for his leadership in this work, and we will continue to work with the bishop moving forward. The bishop wrote and continuously revised the Strategic Intent with input from Associates, Deans, Synod Council, and the Executive Committee as well as feedback received from "chew and chats" and other engagements with members of the synod at large. The Synod Restructuring Committee that was created by Synod Council two years ago will continue to work with the council and bishop to form a long-range plan for our synod structure.

The Executive Committee is working with the bishop to ensure that the duties of the executive associate to the bishop are covered in the short term while our structural work continues.

At this time, we ask that you continue to keep the Synod Council and all synod leadership in your prayers, and that we work together toward advancing our future work as church. We are reminded of the words of Romans 14:19: "Let us therefore pursue what makes for peace and mutual upbuilding."

The Rev. Kenneth Melber Jr.

Secretary, Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the ELCA

