

# 2025 BULLETIN OF REPORTS

ASSEMBLY

May 30—31, 2025

CHRIST HAMILTON UNITED LUTHERAN CHURCH  
STROUDSBURG, PENNSYLVANIA



NORTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD  
of the  
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

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*"We have known and believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them." —1 John 4:16*

April 2025

Dear friends in Christ,

Thank you for your dedication and faithfulness, as together we continue to share God's love throughout the world.

During the past year and a half, I had the privilege to gather with many of you at our God's Love Made Real regional conversations. Connecting with you during these events was extremely inspiring as we heard about the many ways God's love is being made real in communities across this church.

Among the stories that were shared, we heard about a congregation's "bold" decision to reconstruct a food pantry to help increase the capacity to serve more people, a Christmas in July celebration for a single mom and her five children experiencing homelessness, a Queer youth poetry open mic event described by one pastor as a tangible experience of God's Love Made Real, a partially gutted parsonage that was renovated to provide long-term housing for survivors of human trafficking, and an ecumenical ministry group that developed a community center that feeds people with meals and spiritual connections.

Our vision of a world experiencing the difference God's grace and love in Christ make for all people and creation is being made manifest in these ministries, but these are only a few examples of what's happening throughout our church. I know this is work your congregations do every day, and I thank you for helping people know the way of Jesus to discover community, justice and love.

The world around us is changing, and our church will also experience change with the election of a new presiding bishop and a new secretary at the 2025 Churchwide Assembly this summer. Many of you will be electing a new synod bishop and other leaders.

Amid these changes, our call remains the same: to love and serve others as Jesus taught. Our church will continue our work to proclaim the gospel and to serve all of God's people.

It has been a privilege to serve as your presiding bishop. May God continue to hold us and guide us into the future.

In Christ,

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton  
Presiding Bishop  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America





*"Y nosotros hemos llegado a saber y creer que Dios nos ama. Dios es amor.  
El que permanece en amor, en Dios permanece y Dios en él" – 1 Juan 4:16*

Abril de 2025

Estimados amigos en Cristo:

Gracias por su dedicación y fidelidad, en tanto que juntos seguimos compartiendo el amor de Dios en todo el mundo.

Durante el pasado año y medio tuve el privilegio de reunirme con muchos de ustedes en nuestras conversaciones regionales de El Amor de Dios Hecho Realidad. El habernos conectado con ustedes durante estos eventos fue sumamente inspirador, ya que oímos de las muchas formas en que el amor de Dios se está haciendo realidad en las comunidades de esta iglesia.

Entre las historias que se compartieron, escuchamos sobre la decisión "audaz" que tomó una congregación de reconstruir una despensa de alimentos para ayudar a aumentar la capacidad de servir a más personas, una celebración de Navidad en julio para una madre soltera sin hogar y sus cinco hijos, un evento de micrófono abierto de poesía juvenil queer que un pastor describió como una experiencia tangible de El Amor de Dios Hecho Realidad, una casa parroquial parcialmente destruida que fue renovada para proporcionar vivienda a largo plazo a sobrevivientes de la trata de personas, y un grupo ministerial ecuménico que desarrolló un centro comunitario que alimenta a las personas con comidas y conexiones espirituales.

Nuestra visión de un mundo que experimenta la diferencia marcada por la gracia y el amor de Dios en Cristo en todas las personas y la creación está siendo manifestada en estos ministerios, pero estos son solo algunos ejemplos de lo que está sucediendo en toda nuestra iglesia.

Sé que este es el trabajo que sus congregaciones hacen todos los días, y les doy gracias por ayudar a las personas a conocer el camino de Jesús para que descubran la comunidad, la justicia y el amor.

El mundo a nuestro alrededor está cambiando, y nuestra iglesia también experimentará cambios con la elección de un nuevo obispo presidente y un nuevo secretario en la Asamblea Nacional de 2025 este próximo verano. Muchos de ustedes elegirán a un nuevo obispo sinodal y a otros líderes.

En medio de estos cambios, nuestro llamado sigue siendo el mismo: amar y servir a los demás como Jesús enseñó. Nuestra iglesia continuará su obra para proclamar el Evangelio y servir a todo el pueblo de Dios.

Ha sido un privilegio haber servido como su Obispa Presidente. Que Dios nos siga sosteniendo y guiando hacia el futuro.

En Cristo,

La Rvda. Elizabeth A. Eaton  
Obispa Presidente  
Iglesia Evangélica Luterana en América





## 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Synod Assembly

Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA  
Friday, May 30 – Saturday, May 31 (4/12)

### Friday, May 30, 2025

**12:30 PM - 2:00 PM** On-site Registration  
Connection Place open

**2:00 PM - 5:00 PM** Plenary Session One

Adoption of the Program, Welcome, Introductions  
Global Connections, Greeting from Bp Tobias Bilz, Saxony  
Review of Nominations/Floor Nominations  
Jen Bradbury Presentation Part 1  
Reference and Counsel - First Report  
Report of the Bishop  
Report of the Redesign Special Committee  
Announcements

**5:00 PM - 6:30 PM** Dinner; Connection Place open

**7:00 PM - 8:30 PM** Worship with Deacon Ordination (reception to follow)

### Saturday, May 31, 2025

**9:00 AM - 12:00 PM** Plenary Session Two

Music & Contemplative Action with Doug Hill  
Report of the Vice President and Synod Council

Elections - First Ballot

Reference and Counsel - Second Report

Elections - Report of the First Ballot; Second Ballot

Report of the Treasurer

Presentation of the 2026 Budget

Presentation of Compensation Guidelines for 2026

Jen Bradbury Presentation Part 2

Announcements

**12:00 PM**

Lunch; Connection Place open

**1:30 PM - 4:00 PM**

Plenary Session Three

Tom Scornavacchi Presentation

Report of the Secretary

Reference and Counsel Third Report

ELCA Representative: Tim Brown, Sr. Dir. for Stewardship

Elections - Report of the Second Ballot; Third Ballot

Unfinished Business

Sending Worship and Installations, Closing of Assembly



# Section I

## Executive Reports



# **REPORT OF THE BISHOP**

## **Report of Bishop Christopher deForest Summary of 2025 Strategic Intent (written May 5, 2025)**

***“Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.” (Romans 12:2)***

***“We make the road by walking” – Brian McLaren<sup>1</sup>***

For this 38<sup>th</sup> Synod Assembly, we come together as a synod – 237 congregations, three synod-authorized worshipping communities, and one synod authorized outreach ministry – in a time of steady change, high anxiety, multiple perils, and real challenges. At the same time, we also find great opportunities in our midst.

**We are being transformed**, as St. Paul writes in his epistle to the Romans. In fact, Chapter 12 of that amazing letter has been our guide, not just for this upcoming Synod Assembly, but also for the past year of being church together. As the Holy Spirit does this work of transformation on us – our church, our communities, our very selves – we recognize more than ever our need to live and work together; in fact, to become more connected than ever before. Not just to survive, but to thrive – and to share the living gospel of the crucified and risen Christ, so that we, along with all our neighbors and all creation “...may have life, and have it abundantly.” (John 10:10)

To this end, in this past year we have been guided by this statement of purpose – ***Connecting congregations for life-giving mission and ministry: so they can love like Jesus, heal like Jesus, and engage like Jesus – growing young, gaining strength, and going beyond death to life.***

We call the first set of three, our common VALUES: to love like Jesus, heal like Jesus, and engage like Jesus. We call the second set, our three LANES: growing young, gaining strength, and going beyond death to life. Together, we face a number of realities, which also offer us opportunities – including:

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<sup>1</sup> Bryan D. McLaren, *We Make the Road By Walking*, Jericho Books, 2014.

1. **We now have a Spirit-led roadmap for our teams and leaders.** Our three Values and three Lanes are proving to be a helpful framing for us as a synod to reexamine and redefine our ministries, teams, task forces, committees and other governance structures. For example, the effectiveness of mission district structure and the amount of leadership and support needed to maintain it, needs to be considered. We have a Synod-Council-appointed group, called the “Redesign Team” – tasked to research, reflect and propose a new and better structure for our synod governance and life together across our congregations. They plan to have an initial report to offer at our 2025 Synod Assembly.
2. **LLM and 6261: congregations and leaders need more support.** Licensed Lay Ministry<sup>2</sup> and 6261 Ministry Communities<sup>3</sup> are two initiatives that our synod is deeply embracing as a plan of action and a source of life and hope. Over 50 persons are currently in or moving into the training process for LLM. The first 6261 “bundle” has officially begun in Reading as of February 1, 2025; at least three more are moving towards launching in the next year; and at least 11 areas are discerning –that’s 15 bundles, involving more than 100 congregations (out of 237). All these congregations and their leaders are requesting appropriate guidance and support from synod leadership and the bishop’s staff – especially from our Director for Evangelical Mission, Deacon Kat Tigerman, whose workload for 6261 alone is rapidly growing to full-time. The success of both these initiatives particularly reveal our need for staffing. We don’t currently have enough staff to support our folks pursuing 6261 and LLM, especially in this critical early stage of the next 3-5 years.
3. **We want to engage and empower more lay leaders.** Related to the previous point: we have the opportunity to rethink, re-align and sharpen some of the previous notions of bishop’s staff support and roles that don’t match our current realities and opportunities. In the past, the bishop had a larger staff with more full-time roles and responsibilities. Today, many may not realize that the majority of the bishop’s staff are less than full time – and most of those are working full-time-plus in their own congregations. The goals for staffing going forward need to be focused on supporting congregations and ministries that are guided by the work of our common Lanes and Values; and are led and engaged by lay leaders working with rostered ministers – with a smaller but highly focused bishop’s staff providing support.

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<sup>2</sup> To learn more about Licensed Lay Ministry, go to our synod website at: <https://nepasynod.org/llm/>.

<sup>3</sup> Our synod website also have more info on 6261; go here: <https://nepasynod.org/6261mc/>. In short: 6261 means 6 independent congregations, sharing 2 pastors, with 6 licensed lay ministers, and 1 deacon, connected to live and work together in mission and ministry. “Bundle” is another word used for 6261.



4. **We now have new approaches to engaging youth and families.** In meeting with congregations and leaders across our synod, one message has been clear and consistent: we want to engage more younger people and families, but we are struggling to reach them. And yet there are places and initiatives, congregations and individuals all across this synod who are finding new ways that work. Our 3 Lanes and 3 Values are also connecting with younger folks. In this next year, we can seize an opportunity to show our deep commitment and our willingness to invest in what matters most to younger people today. And this can be done, without ignoring the needs and passions of our majority older members; in fact, God is calling us to deploy all our wisdom and resources to Growing Younger at every age.
5. **People will commit as God bears the fruit.** Mission support giving to carry out the work of God through us as a synod has been going down consistently for years. While there are multiple reasons for this, one key factor may be that congregations need to understand not just what “the Synod” is doing, but how we are all working together towards common goals, vision, and values. If they can see how the bishop's staff is focusing its work; and they participate in that focusing, on efforts they believe in and can see bearing fruit – the people of our synod will not only be more committed to regular mission support; but may feel more than ever the call to contribute their time, talents, and treasures to specific aspects of that work, such as 6261 or LLM. This opportunity calls for a bishop's staff who is more focused on tracking, listening, communicating, thanking, and inviting to give and participate.

### **10 Strategic Goals to Support Mission and Ministry**

Led by the gospel of crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ and his command to love one another: together as congregations and leaders; as bishop's staff; and as synod leadership; with support from our ELCA churchwide organization, ecumenical and global companions, and ministry partners: we are working towards these broad goals for the next three to five years. From these, we will develop sub-goals and metrics for tracking and showing our progress.

1. Ensure and encourage that every congregation can be in partnership with other congregations of their choice, centered around mission and ministry in their communities for the sake of the gospel of Jesus Christ and grounded in our Lutheran tradition, commonly expressed in our three Values and Lanes.
2. Empower and encourage the roles of all believers in this NEPA Synod, especially lay persons and with particular focus on younger people, to live



- out their baptism callings and to love and serve God together in this church and their communities.
3. Make it possible for every congregation in this synod to have a pastor, a deacon, and a licensed lay minister.
  4. Strengthen and secure the opportunities for rostered ministers and licensed lay ministers to serve congregations in this synod – faithfully, healthfully, and safely.
  5. Reduce the need for congregations to close.
  6. Engage and encourage all people – especially those who have been marginalized, harmed, or under-represented – to live and serve and lead well in this synod.
  7. Train, inform, onboard, communicate, track and evaluate better, to better achieve these goals.
  8. Evaluate and revise our governing documents, structures, and policies to better achieve these goals.
  9. Align the roles, responsibilities, goals and evaluation of the bishop and bishop's staff to better achieve these goals and create a more efficient and satisfactory working environment.
  10. Engage and encourage individuals, congregations, and partners to deepen their support of these goals – through the sharing of their time, talents, and treasure.

### **Bishop's Staff Roles and Alignment**

The bishop's staff and synod leadership<sup>4</sup> exist to serve God's mission primarily through congregations. The metaphor we use is C.A.R. – which means that the bishop's staff and synod leadership serve and assist congregations and their members and communities to connect, to administer, and to resource. We are like a pace car or service vehicle, running alongside congregations as they travel the lanes of this road: the way of Jesus Christ.

Just as congregations are called to work closer together, we need a bishop's staff structure that works in concert: with clear responsibilities, but also with blurred lines between roles for mutual collaboration and support. Responsibilities for key staff leaders will align in two ways: by *missional lane* and by *service area*. Four of the key staff leaders will also bear the description “Lead Servant For...” to show our commitment and intention to serve and support our congregations, their ministries, and their lay and rostered leaders who in turn understand themselves as servant leaders – disciples in the name and the way of Jesus Christ.

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<sup>4</sup> “Synod leadership” includes the Synod Assembly, Synod Council, Mission District Councils and Deans, along with Synod Ministry Teams listed in our governing documents, and special committees and task forces created and/or approved by the bishop, the bishop's staff, or synod leadership itself. “Bishop's staff” includes the bishop and those appointed by the bishop who serve at the request and approval of the bishop and by the consent of the Synod Council.

### Alignment by Lanes

Staff structure will be guided by our vision for missional development across the synod territory in terms of the three lanes: **Growing Young, Gaining Strength**, and **Going Beyond Death to Life**. Each lane will have at least one Lead Servant assigned to focus on that lane, while communicating and collaborating with their colleagues, and with all leaders and congregations.

### Alignment by Service Areas

Along with the three lanes – the roles and responsibilities of each Lead Servant will also be shaped by the following categories or constituents needing service and support:

**Lead Servant for Leader Support:** This service area includes support for rostered ministers (pastors and deacons), active and retired; licensed lay ministers (LLMs); candidates discerning calls to lay or rostered ministry; and leaders serving roles as officers and council members in congregations. We will be conducting a search for this role starting May 16.

**Lead Servant for Congregation Support:** This service area includes support for our current congregations, especially those in transition (in search of a new rostered leader). We will also conduct a search for this Lead Servant; however, the roles will be transitioned with care over time, as we work with our current seven Associates of the Bishop and our Committee of nine Mission District Deans to maintain strong and ongoing support. We will be conducting a search for this role starting May 16.

**Lead Servant for Growing Young and Emerging Ministries:** This service area includes support for ministries to youth, young adults and families; and the existing and new special ministry communities designated as "Synod Authorized Worshipping Communities" (SAWCs) and "Synod Authorized Outreach Communities" (SAOMs). The Lead Servant will help us take our "Growing Young" initiatives into new ministries and new directions. We will also be conducting a search for this role starting May 16.

**Lead Servant for Gaining Strength and 6261:** This service area includes support for our rostered minister development groups known as "Gaining Strength Cohorts"; and our 6261 Ministry Communities. **This Lead Servant role will be filled by our current Director for Evangelical Mission, Deacon Kat Tigerman.**

Each of these Lead Servants will be the "go-to" person on staff for each service area. They will work alongside:

**Director of Operations:** With support from administrative staff, this role is responsible for human resources, onboarding new staff, evaluation processes, calendar, facility needs, staff meetings, and inner-staff communication. This will include the creation of an electronic planning



platform and “dashboard” system for keeping track of key goals and metrics. **Eric Gombert will continue in this role.**

**Director of Communications:** Reporting to the Director of Operations, this position will continue to coordinate all our internal and external communications. **Stacey Burke is continuing in this role.**

**Administrative Coordinators and Contract Support:** Reporting to the Director of Operations, our two Administrative Coordinator positions will continue: **Laurie Christman** as Leadership Support Coordinator; and **Debbie Skinner** as Mission Support Coordinator. **Pastor Jira Albers** will continue as our part-time LLM Coordinator. We will be adding a third, part-time administrative support for 6261 and LLM. And we will continue to work with as-needed support from Pastor Doug Hill for our Gaining Strength Cohorts; and Pastor Dave DeRemer as a 6261 Coach.

Following the full implementation of this new staff structure, the support work currently carried out through the roles of the seven Associates and one Executive Associate for Leadership would move to:

- **Two full-time Lead Servants** – one supporting the leaders, and one supporting congregations.
- **The current nine pastors serving as the elected Committee of Deans** – with some additional training but without need to expand their current workload.
- **The current “Gaining Strength Cohort” groupings**, which builds-in support and pastoral care for pastors and deacons – now and more so as time goes on.
- **The current rostered minister mentors** providing support and care for LLMs
- And, to be developed: leaders trained and deployed as **“transition coaches”** who can work with congregations in transition (similar to the UCC process).
- Working as well with the **bishop and admin support staff.**

### **Giving Thanks for Our Associates of the Bishop**

For over 20 years, we have greatly benefited from a staff structure that included multiple Associates of the Bishop who serve in Mission Districts, especially in accompanying congregations in transition. Early on, these were full-time positions with one per Mission District. In the past four years, we have reduced that number to seven – doing this work part time, along with their full-time work as pastors in congregations. However, several challenges have made this structure less effective, including:



- Less consistency of process and messaging across mission districts – seven different methods have developed, sometimes leading to confusion for staff, rostered minister candidates, and congregations in transition.
- Some mission districts have a lot of work for Associates to do, others less so.
- The full-time pastors in this role cannot be in other congregations on Sundays; yet Sunday mornings are the prime time to best interact with the whole congregation.
- They are also very busy with their own congregations; and some are bearing additional responsibilities beyond their congregations.
- It is increasingly difficult for them to find the time to meet regularly as a group.

Most of these challenges could be more efficiently addressed if this work were shared differently – moving towards a staff with fewer people who have more time to commit to these tasks.

I want to make it very clear that the seven rostered ministers currently in this role, and the others who preceded them, have done and are doing an outstanding job. They have worked with hundreds of congregations and rostered ministers to find fulfilling and well-placed calls, while maintaining full-time leadership roles in their own congregations. They have put in countless hours, driven thousands of miles, made many phone calls and visits, poured over documents, faithfully created and followed processes and prayerfully devised creative new solutions that have led to Spirit-led outcomes across this synod and the whole church. They have served and led through colossal changes and a global pandemic, with many leaders and congregations deeply grateful for their work.

This transitional period will take time – months most likely. There will need to be sufficient overlap between the current and future structure to minimize the disruption for congregations, staff, and all involved, including the Associates themselves. I also look forward to working with each current Associate to discern ways to pursue ministries, ideas, and initiatives that they feel called to and passionate about – including 6261, LLM mentorship, and other missional plans and areas of expertise. This is also an opportunity to lift up appropriate authority to and partnership with our nine Mission District Deans. These Rostered Ministers have been elected by their Mission Districts and already serve as valued leaders in terms of pastoral care and mission district governance.

Please join me in giving thanks to God for the dedicated work of these Associates of the Bishop:

**Pastor Samantha Drennan**, serving the **Northern Lehigh Valley Mission District**  
**Pastor Charles Grube**, serving the **Scranton and Wilkes-Barre Mission District**

**Pastor Jean Huber**, serving the **Lehigh Mission District** and the **Bethlehem Easton Mission District**

**Pastor Zach Labagh**, serving the **Schuylkill Mission District**

**Pastor Drew Neidig**, serving the **East Berks Mission District** and the **West Berks Mission District**

**Pastor Niels Nielsen**, serving the **Pocono Mission District**

**Pastor Carl Shankweiler**, serving the **Hazleton/Lehighon Mission District**

### **Giving Thanks for Executive Associate – Pastor Rachael Dietz**

Pastor Rachael Dietz will be leaving her position as Executive Associate of the Bishop for Leadership. Her last day in the office will be June 30, 2025. She has served well and faithfully in a role that has included the candidacy process and the mobility process for current rostered leaders; management of both roster of pastors and deacons; stewardship; constitution and governance; and she was the Associate relating to both the East and West Berks Mission Districts. She has been a mentor and guide for many people considering ordained ministry, or discerning where they might be called to next. She has encouraged and empowered leaders and congregations through many moments and momentous occasions. With her faithful guide dog, Chipotle, she has traversed the length, breadth and height of this synod, bringing the good news of Jesus Christ and the sometimes tougher news of how to face and weather closure and conflict, good times and sad times, from mundane minutiae to the mysteries of faith and life in the Spirit. She has a mastery of asking the kinds of questions that get right to the center of things, the crux of the matter and the heart of people's hopes and concerns.

Whether it has been over the past four years in this role on synod staff, or the 19 years of ordained ministry and leadership, Pastor Dietz has, with great faith and calm, good humor and grace, kept us on the God-given assignment that you will find in the signature of every email Rachael sends. It is a quote from the great Bible scholar, NT Wright: “[**Our task**] **involves nothing short of that hardest conversion of all, the conversion of the imagination.**”

In God's Love,



Rev. Christopher deForest

Bishop, Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA

## **REPORT OF THE VICE PRESIDENT**

This year I've continued to attend committee on governance meetings, finance committee meetings, executive committee meetings, the synod assembly planning meetings, and I have participated in the restructuring committee. I spent some time this summer visiting other congregations in our synod for worship. These worship services enabled me to get a real feel of how some congregations are working. I can say that I was very happy and, in some cases, surprised by the welcome and ministries I found in our congregations. We are a remarkable and diverse group and they all have gifts that they are eager to share.

On Oct. 9, we held the first cabinet meeting in a very long time. I believe that this group meeting was very beneficial and a great start to improving communications. The first meeting was basically a review of what each group does as well as the plans they have coming up.

I would also like to thank the synod council for approving a the trip to Abiding Hope. Our time there was an opportunity to learn how they have grown their congregation as well as changed their culture to be all inclusive and welcoming. We had a great time meeting with various staff members, as well as time with some of their young people. In addition to two days of meetings with them, we attended the installation of Bishop Meghan Johnston Aelabouni, two worship services at Abiding Hope, one Bishops chat at Abiding Hope and a staff meeting there. The days were full, hectic, and inspirational! We have come away with many ideas, great resources for us to use, and a stronger relationship with our community in Colorado. I am struggling to find the words to put what is in my heart in to this report. There are many opportunities for joint work together, we have connections to reach out to and we have provided them with contacts to reach here. The entire staff of Abiding Hope is eager to work with us. There genuine welcome and care and excitement is a true blessing. I will be happy to share stories anytime anyone would like to hear more about the visit. Thank you again.

I hosted the initial meeting of the voting members of the church wide assembly. It was an opportunity to gather needed personal information, and learn about each other. I have received very good comments from that gathering. As of this report – I plan on having two more meetings. The next one will be April 26 with Deacon Kat Tigerman presenting “how to talk about 6261” as well as registration information and help.

I also attended the leadership retreat for the synod council, restructure committee, and cabinet.



After completing the synod tours last year, this year we changed the format to “chat & chews”, we have already done all nine mission districts. I am always amazed by the great diversity, and unique gifts we learn about as we travel about. It is interesting to me that of the of the nine meetings we have had different topics at most of them. When asked what was on their minds – they all had different things they wanted to talk about.

I still feel honored and greatly humbled to serve as your VP. I feel strongly that we are making a difference in our own culture as well as helping the Gospel of Jesus spread. Thank you for allowing me to do this job.

Yours In Christ,  
Nancy Reichelt  
Vice President  
NEPA Synod

## **REPORT OF THE SECRETARY**

*This report covers the period between May 1, 2024 and March 31, 2025.*

*A cross + indicates a Minister of Word and Sacrament*

*An asterisk \* indicates a Minister of Word and Service*

<b><u>RECEIVED FROM OTHER SYNODS</u></b>		
<b>Name</b>	<b>Transferred From</b>	<b>Date of Transfer</b>
*Carpenter, Amanda	Northwestern Ohio Synod	January 6, 2025
+Carpenter, Matthew	Northwestern Ohio Synod	January 6, 2025
+Duminy, Shari	Nebraska Synod	August 1, 2024
+Kleist, John	New Jersey Synod	August 2, 2024
*Starego, Reylene	New Jersey Synod	January 1, 2025

<b><u>ROSTER CHANGES</u></b>			
<b>Name</b>	<b>From</b>	<b>To</b>	<b>Effective Date</b>
+Decker, Aaron		On Leave from Call	July 1, 2024
*Pelletier, Diana		On Leave from Call	December 1, 2024
*Woodfield, Travis		Resigned from the Roster	March 24, 2025
*Schroeder, Lynnette		Retired	July 1, 2024
*Zawaski, Linda	St. Peter, Beckers	Retired	August 1, 2024
+Kehler, Carol		Retired	September 1, 2024
+Searing, David	St. Peter, Scranton	Retired	September 1, 2024
+Hammond, James	St. Paul, Coopersburg	Retired	November 1, 2024
+Aurand, John		Deceased	January 8, 2025
+Dean, Marjorie		Deceased	December 21, 2024
+Foerster, Frederick		Deceased	December 31, 2024
+Goos, Harry		Deceased	June 17, 2024
+Holst, E.		Deceased	November 3, 2024
+Muhr, F. Peter		Deceased	June 20, 2024

<b><u>ROSTER CHANGES (cont.)</u></b>			
<b>Name</b>	<b>From</b>	<b>To</b>	<b>Effective Date</b>
+Neifert, Jody		Deceased	October 28, 2024
+Newhart, David		Deceased	August 1, 2024
+Olson, Royal		Deceased	September 26, 2024
+Seip, Durrell		Deceased	November 4, 2024
*Stump, Janet		Deceased	August 25, 2024
+Wagner, Walter		Deceased	January 17, 2025
+Zimmermann, William		Deceased	February 18, 2025
+Applegate, Lauren	On Leave from Call	Free to Be (SAOM)	May 8, 2024
+Beissel, Brian	St. Peter's, Pine Grove	Christ's United, Ashland	November 1, 2024
+Camp, Cindy	Holy Spirit, Emmaus (Interim)	Holy Spirit, Emmaus	November 1, 2024
*Carpenter, Amanda	<i>New to Synod</i>	Jerusalem, Schuylkill Haven	January 6, 2025
+Carpenter, Matthew	<i>New to Synod</i>	Jerusalem, Schuylkill Haven	January 6, 2025
+Cronin, Paul (UCC Roster)		Salem-Hetzel's, Pine Grove (Transitional Pastor)	January 1, 2025
+Duminy, Shari	<i>New to Synod</i>	Holy Spirit, Emmaus	August 1, 2024
+Fruchtl, Kevin (UCC Roster)		Salem Belleman's	October 6, 2024
+Garman, Timothy		St. John, Coplay (Interim)	May 12, 2024
+Heintzelman, Wayne		Zion, Womelsdorf (Interim)	June 16, 2024
+Melber Jr., Kenneth	St. John's, Towamensing & Jerusalem, Trachsville	St. John's, Towamensing	January 1, 2025
+Neidig, Drew		Pretzel City Community (Interim)	February 1, 2025

<b><u>ROSTER CHANGES (cont.)</u></b>			
<b>Name</b>	<b>From</b>	<b>To</b>	<b>Effective Date</b>
+Obrecht, Paulette		Christ, Allentown (Interim)	February 1, 2025
+Tigerman, Justin		St. Peter, Scranton & St. Peter, Hughestown & St. Matthew United, Scranton (Transitional Pastor)	September 1, 2024

<b><u>CONGREGATIONAL CHANGES</u></b>			
<b>Name</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>To</b>	<b>Effective Date</b>
(Bethany, West Reading; Christ, Reading; Hope, Reading; Hope's Table, Reading; Nativity, Reading; St. Paul's, Reading; Zion Spies, Reading)	6261 Covenant Formed	Pretzel City Community	February 1, 2025
Free to Be	New Synod Authorized Outreach Ministry (SAOM)		May 6, 2024
Friedens, Kempton	Withdrawn		April 21, 2024
St. James, Pitman	Withdrawn		April 12, 2025

Respectfully Submitted,

The Rev. Kenneth Todd Melber, Jr.  
Synod Secretary

## **MEMORIALS**

### **The Rev. John M. Aurand (11/3/25-1/8/25)**



Pastor Aurand was born in Wheeling, West Virginia, to Charles G. and Maude N. (Fahs) Aurand.

Pastor Aurand graduated from Gettysburg College, (1946), and Lutheran Theological Seminary, Gettysburg - now ULS - (1949). Following his ordination in May, 1949, by the West Virginia Synod of the United Lutheran Church in America, he served in the following calls: Sharpsburg Parish, Maryland (1949 – 1955); Pen Mar Parish, Quincy, Pa. (1955 – 1958); Loysville Parish, Pa. (1958 – 1962); St. James, Columbia (1962 – 1970); Holy Trinity, Wenonah, NJ (1970 – 1972); Maidencreek, Blandon (1972 - 1991); Following his retirement, Pastor Aurand served several congregations as interim and supply pastor.

### **The Rev. Marjorie A. Dean (10/5/40 - 12/21/24)**

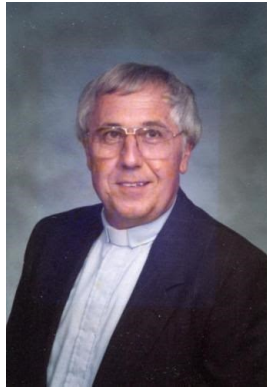


Pastor Dean was born in Meadowlands, Minnesota, to The Rev. David and Helen (Goossen) Wiens.

Pastor Dean graduated from Wheaton College, Wheaton IL (1963), and The Lutheran Theological Seminary, Philadelphia - now ULS - (2007). Following her ordination on February 22, 2009, Pastor Dean served The Lutheran Church of the Holy Spirit, Emmaus (2009 – 2013). Following her retirement Pastor Dean served several congregations in Southeastern Pennsylvania.



**The Rev. Fred S. Foerster (4/19/36 - 12/31/24)**



Pastor Foerster was born in Calicoon, NY., to Fred C. and Elsa (Severin) Foerster. He married Mary E. (Bray) on October 27, 1962.

Pastor Foerster graduated from Gettysburg College, (1957) and The Lutheran Theological Seminary, Philadelphia - now ULS - (1961). Following his ordination on May 21, 1961, by the Ministerium of Pa., he served in the following calls: St. John, Hatboro (1961 - 1963); St. Mark, Reading (1963 - 1970); and, until his retirement, St. John, Emmaus (1970 - 2001).

**The Rev. Harry J. Goos (8/3/39 - 6/17/24)**



Pastor Goos was born in Philadelphia, to Frederick H. and Janet (Snook) Goos. He married Ruth (Hassler) on May 27, 1967.

Pastor Goos graduated from Temple University, Philadelphia (1962) and Philadelphia Seminary (now ULS) (1964). Following his ordination on June 29, 1964, by the Eastern PA Synod, Pastor Goos served in the following calls: Alleghenyville-Grill Parish (1964 - 1970), St. Mark, Allentown (1970 - 1978), Holy Trinity, Northampton (1978 - 1991), and Friedens, Bernville (1991 - 2004). Following his retirement in 2004 he served as interim pastor at Christ Yocom's as well as providing Sunday supply pastor services to several congregations.

**The Rev. E. Frederick Holst (3/18/34 - 11/3/24)**



Pastor Holst was born in Brooklyn, New York, to Ernst J. and Anna Kathryn (Meyer) Holst. He married Barbara (Christman) on September 7, 1957.

Pastor Holst graduated from Wagner College, (1955) and The Lutheran Theological Seminary, Philadelphia - now ULS - (1958). Following his ordination on June 4, 1958, by the United Lutheran Church in America, he served in the following calls: Redeemer, Orangeburg, NY (1958 - 1961); Our Savior, Schenectady, NY (1961 - 1964); Zion, Cobleskill, NY (1964 - 1969); Prince of Peace, Brentwood, NY (1969 - 1973); Augustana, Buffalo, NY (1973 - 1979); St. Lukes, Ithaca, NY (1978 - 1987); Gloria Dei, Lakewood, NY (1987 - 1996); Hope, Bowers, (1996 - 1999). Following his retirement in 1999, Pastor Holst continued supply preaching in various congregations throughout Northeastern PA Synod and Southeastern PA Synod.

**The Rev. Jody L. Neifert (12/27/57 - 10/28/24)**



Pastor Neifert was born in Hazleton, to Irvin L. and Dorothy M. (Christman) Neifert. He married Kim (Horvath) on June 6, 1981.

Pastor Neifert graduated from Pennsylvania State University, (1979) and The Lutheran Theological Seminary, Philadelphia - now ULS - (1983). Following his ordination on June 19, 1983, by the Lutheran Church in America, he served St. John, Towamensing (1983 - 2020), until his retirement January 1, 2021.

**The Rev. Royal L. Olson (5/30/32 - 9/26/24)**



Pastor Olson was born in Staten Island, New York, to Hjalmar Ferdinand and Ilene (Josephson) Olson. He married Grace (Dudley) on July 14, 1962.

Pastor Olson graduated from Wagner College, (1955) and The Lutheran Theological Seminary, Philadelphia - now ULS - (1962). Following his ordination on June 6, 1962, by the United Lutheran Synod of New York and New England, he served in the following calls: St. John, Overbrook (1962 - 1963), Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, Brooklyn, New York (1963 – 1991).

**The Rev. Durrell J. Seip (11/23/32 - 11/4/24)**

Pastor Seip was born in Northampton, Pa., to George V. and Alice C. (Snyder) Seip. He married Lois (Fritz) on August 21, 1954. Lois passed away June 3, 2022.

Pastor Seip graduated from Muhlenberg College, (1954) and The Lutheran Theological Seminary, Philadelphia - now ULS - (1957). Following his ordination on May 26, 1957, by the Ministerium of Pa., he served in the following calls: Quakake Parish, Quakake Parish (1957 - 1960); St. Paul, White Haven (1960 - 1966); Holy Trinity, Kingston (1966 - 1974); The Lutheran Home of Hazleton (1974 – 1975); Lutheran Welfare Service (1975 - 1988); Zion, Frackville (1988 - 1998). Following his retirement in 1998, Pastor Seip served as interim pastor in several congregations throughout Northeastern PA Synod.



**Sister Janet Stump (11/19/54 - 8/25/24)**



Born in Pottsville, she was the daughter of Ira and Pearl (Zimmerman) Stump. She graduated from West Chester State College in 1976 and in 1987 she entered the deaconess program receiving a M.A.R. from Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia (now United Lutheran Seminar). On December 8, 1995, Sister Janet was consecrated as a deaconess.

She served at three congregations: St. Peter, Pine Gove (1988-2003); St. John, Saint Johns (2003-2012); and St. Timothy, Allentown (2017 – 2023). She also served as Directing Deaconess of the Deaconess Community of the ELCA (2012-2016).

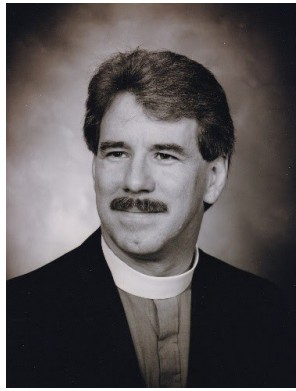
**The Rev. Walter H. Wagner (11/21/35 - 1/17/25)**



Pastor Wagner was born in Frankfurt, Germany, to Ludwig A. and Karolina W. (Hain) Wagner. He was the husband of the late Deborah (Kus) who he married on August 24, 1958.

Pastor Wagner graduated from Gettysburg College, (1957), Lutheran Theological Seminary, Philadelphia - now ULS - (1960), and Drew University (Ph.D. 1968). Following his ordination on June 25, 1960, by the New Jersey Synod of the United Lutheran Church in America, he served in the following calls: Calvary, Cranford, NJ (1960 - 1963); California Lutheran College (1963 - 1965); Upsala College (1965 – 1973), Epiphany, Warren, NJ, (1973 – 1977); Director for Theological Education for the LCA (1977 – 1984); Muhlenberg College (1984 – 1993); and Christ, Allentown (1993 – 2001). Following his retirement, Pastor Wagner served several congregations as interim and supply pastor.

**The Rev. William E. Zimmermann (7/17/51 - 2/18/25)**



Pastor Zimmermann was born in Rahway, New Jersey, to William H. and Hazel May. (Hutchison) Zimmermann. He married Cindy L. (Berger) on April 21, 1985.

Pastor Zimmermann graduated from East Stroudsburg College, (1980), and Lutheran Theological Seminary, Gettysburg - now ULS - (1983). Following his ordination on January 22, 1984, by the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Lutheran Church in America, he served in the following calls: Nuremberg-Zion Gove Parish (1984 – 1991); Zion United, Brodheadsville (1991 – 2003); Advent, West Lawn (2003 – 2008); and Faith, Hillsborough, NJ (2008 – 2019). Following his retirement, Pastor Zimmermann served congregations in the synod as supply pastor.

# **REPORT OF THE SYNOD COUNCIL**

The Synod Council of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod held five regular meetings since the 2024 Synod Assembly: August 3, 2024; October 12, 2024; December 7, 2024; February 22, 2025; April 12, 2025.

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 2025 would list the year, April as the 4<sup>th</sup> month, and the first resolution (2025.04.01). The next resolution at that meeting would be subsequently numbered (2025.04.02).

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**

(2024.08.03) That the Bishop's Report to the 2024 Synod Assembly be held as an informational session over Zoom.

(2024.12.06) That the location of the 2025 Synod Assembly, May 30-31, 2025, be held at Christ Hamilton United Lutheran Church, Stroudsburg, PA.

(2025.02.04) That the Agenda for the 2025 Synod Assembly be approved and that the registration cost of \$200 be approved.

(2025.04.03) That the proposed 2026 Compensation Guidelines be endorsed and affirmed by the Synod Council and recommended for adoption to the 2025 Assembly of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod.

(2025.04.05) That the following resolution concerning the 2025 assembly program be recommended to the 2025 Synod Assembly:

Resolved, that the 2025 Assembly program (as printed in the Bulletin of Reports) be adopted.

## **Roster Maintenance**

(2024.08.09) 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 Travis Woodfield

08/01/2024

(2024.08.10) 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”:

The Rev. David Searing

09/01/2024



(2024.10.14) 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”:

The Rev. Carol Kehler	09/01/2024
The Rev. James Hammond	11/01/2024
The Rev. Keith Rohrbach	11/01/2024

(2024.12.09) 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:

Rev. Aaron Decker (first year study)	07/01/2024
Deacon Diana Pelletier (first year)	12/01/2024
Rev. Kim Truebenbach (third year)	02/01/2025

(2025.04.11) 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”:

Rev. Dana Schroeder	01/01/2025
Rev. Carey Miller	05/15/2025
Rev. Michael Frost	06/30/2025

## **Finance**

(2024.08.05) That the NEPA Synod Council Executive Committee may approve the selection of the 2025 Portico benefit program options for NEPA sponsored employees, including options related to the Synod buy up for our DEM.

(2024.08.06) That the Executive Committee be encouraged to choose the plan that best addresses the needs and retention of employees of the Synod and that if a lower plan than Gold+ is chosen, the difference in cost be placed in the employee’s HSA account.

(2024.08.07) That the NEPA Synod Treasurer be established as designated Online Administrator for MIF Online Services Electronic Agreement.

(2024.10.02) That a price for replacing the pews in the sanctuary of the Lutheran Center with chairs be explored.

(2024.10.03) That following the recommendation of the Finance Committee, the Synod Council hereby eliminates the Audio Visual, Computer Maintenance, Mission Partners, Property Maintenance, and Communication Project Funds with the balances added to the General Fund.

(2024.10.04) That the amounts designated below as housing allowances shall apply to the 2025 calendar year and all future years unless otherwise provided by this Synod Council:

The Rev. Christopher deForest, \$25,000

The Rev. Rachael Dietz, \$30,000

(2024.10.05) That Synod employees be granted a 3% salary increase in 2025.

(2024.12.01) To approve a loan from the Church Loan Fund, not to exceed \$160,000 to Allegheny Lutheran Church.

(2024.12.02) That the following provision be adopted as a continuing resolution of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod:

*One proper use of the Mission Development Fund is to make loans to functioning 6261 ministry communities in order to help initiate major projects of community outreach and service. The synod's annual budget shall define the total amount of money available for this purpose. These loans may be made at any time within the first three years of a 6261 bundle's functioning; be for a maximum of \$15,000 per bundle; cover materials, staff costs, and other direct expenses; and be granted upon application to the Synod Council by way of the synod team or committee designated by the council to process these applications provided that the designated processing entity be composed of approximately fifty percent lay members and fifty percent clergy members. Every application shall specify the goals and methods of the project being proposed and the intended use of the loan in achieving those goals. Upon its evaluation of the project and certification that the loan was used appropriately within a period of no more than three years, the Synod Council may convert the loan into a grant that does not need to be repaid. If the loan is not converted and remains a loan, then the loan needs to be repaid within seven years of the date of its issuance at an interest rate of three percent per year from the date of its issuance.*

(2024.12.04) That the 2025 Synod Budget be amended to account for a new budget line, "6261 Loans/Grants" for \$45,000, in the category of Executive Committee, with the (a) total proposed expenditures and (b) total income minus total expenditures thereby being adjusted to account for this increase in spending.

(2024.12.08) That for the Fiscal Year beginning February 1, 2025, Executive, Coordinating, and Contracted Staff compensation be set in accordance with the amounts put forth in *NEPA Synod 2025 Staff Compensation*.

(2025.02.02) That the Authorized Payment Schedule, dated February 2025, be approved.

(2025.04.02) That spending policies for synod funds for fiscal year 2026 be established as follows:

8% of the Mission Development Fund (\$127,183)

10% of the Student Education Fund (\$16,395)

8% of the Social Ministry Fund (\$41,388)

The spending cap for the Leadership Development Fund, which is currently suspended to assist in supporting the Licensed Lay Ministry program, should continue to be suspended for 2026 and 2027.

(2025.04.04) That the following resolution concerning the 2026 budget be recommended to the 2025 Synod Assembly:

Resolved, That the 2026 budget (February 1, 2026 to January 31, 2027) be adopted. The Synod Council is hereby authorized to establish the 2026 budget no later than its January 2026 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.)

(2025.04.06) That the application from Jerusalem, Schuylkill Haven from the Church Loan Fund be approved in the amount of \$80,000, pending proof of a congregational vote to assume the debt. The terms of the loan shall be 7 years at 3% interest.

(2025.04.07) That the application from Zion, Tamaqua from the Church Loan Fund be approved in the amount of \$100,000, pending proof of a congregational vote to assume the debt. The terms of the loan shall be 7 years at 3% interest.

## **Synod Organization and Policies**

(2024.08.01) That the resignation of Deacon Travis Woodfield be accepted with gratitude for his service to the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod and with the commitment of the Synod Council to continue, perhaps in other ways, the ministries he carried out regarding legacy and purpose.

(2024.08.04) That the next regular meeting of the Synod Council be held on October 12.

(2024.10.01) That in accordance with BLS10.03.f., The Rev. Spencer Steele be appointed to Synod Council as an "at large clergy member" until the 2025 Synod Assembly.

(2024.10.11) That in compliance with the synod's bylaw concerning the Archives Committee (BLS11.06.01.) and upon nomination by the bishop, the Rev. Carl D. Shankweiler be appointed synod archivist for a four-year term, June 8, 2024, through June 7, 2028.

(2024.12.03) That the Executive Committee of the Synod Council serve as the designated committee to process 6261 ministry support applications for 2025 and 2026.

(2025.02.01) That the 2025 Strategic Intent be received with gratitude and that the document be appended to the minutes.

(2025.02.03) That the NEPA Synod Council direct the Bishop and appropriate staff to research and write up a plan and policy for moving this synod to a new supply process; that plan to include action steps and a timeline for implementation; and

That the Bishop and appropriate staff also develop a communication plan to inform current congregations in vacancy in particular, and also the synod in general, of these changes; and

That these plans will be drawn up in time for Synod Council review, deliberation and approval at its meeting on Saturday, April 12, 2025.

(2025.02.05) That Dr. Donald Boyer be nominated by the Synod Council for the office of Treasurer.

(2025.04.10) That the Position Paper on Cemeteries as listed in the Report of the Governance Committee, April 12, 2025, be approved by the Synod Council and reported to the 2025 Assembly of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod.



## **Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions**

(2025.04.08) That the proposed changes to the synod's Continuing Resolutions and Other Resolutions of Ongoing Impact as listed in the Report of the Governance Committee, April 12, 2025, be approved by the Synod Council and reported to the 2025 Assembly of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, it being understood that the assembly can take action, if desired, to eliminate or revise further any of these resolutions.

(2025.04.09) That the proposed changes and additions to synod bylaws BLS7.21.c., BLS13.03., and BLS12.01.g. as listed in the Report of the Governance Committee, April 12, 2025, be approved by the Synod Council and recommended for adoption to the 2025 Assembly of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod as follows:

BLS7.21.c. A congregation having fewer than 1,000 persons who are on the roll of baptized members shall be entitled to two lay voting members without regard to gender. A congregation having more than 1,000 persons who are on the roll of baptized members shall be entitled to an additional lay voting member for each additional 1,000 such members, or major fraction thereof.

BLS13.03. In accordance with \*C8.02.e. of the ELCA Model Constitution for Congregations, seasonal member voting is permitted in the congregations of this synod.

BLS12.01.g. The primary responsibilities of the dean shall be as follows:

- 1) The dean shall serve as an advisor to the bishop and assist the bishop as requested in representing the synod and the Mission District at events in congregations and communities.
- 2) The dean shall preside at all meetings of the Mission District Assembly and report to each assembly.
- 3) When schedules permit, the dean shall conduct exit interviews for rostered ministers leaving their calls.
- 4) The dean shall work with congregations and rostered ministers regarding issues of conflict.
- 5) The dean shall encourage congregations and rostered ministers to submit forms and reports as requested by synod and churchwide officers and councils.
- 6) The dean shall attend Mission District Council meetings and report to each meeting of the council.
- 7) As time permits, the dean shall attend district-wide gatherings of rostered leaders.

8) The dean shall encourage cooperation among the congregations and agencies within the district and openly support cooperation by those congregations and agencies with the congregations and judicatories of the ELCA's full communion partners operating within the district.

9) In assistance to the bishop, the dean shall provide direct pastoral care for rostered ministers actively serving in mission district congregations when requested by the rostered minister or the bishop's staff, it being understood that the pastoral care of retired rostered ministers and those on leave from call falls to the pastors of the congregations of which they are members.

10) The dean shall assist the bishop in other ways as requested.

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

(2024.08.02) That in light of the recent review of Hope's Table, Reading, the Synod Council affirms Hope's Table's important ministry and encourages the Bishop and other interested parties to find ways to assist Hope's Table administratively and to strength this synodically authorized ministry to people who are often poor and marginalized.

(2024.10.06) That the Bylaws for "Free to Be," the Synod Authorized Outreach Ministry, be approved pending approval of Blake Marles and approved with alterations provided by attorney Blake Marles.

(2024.10.07) That the Bylaws for "Free to Be," be amended to include a provision that the Bishop of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod be authorized to appoint a liaison on the board of directors.

(2024.10.08) That bylaw 3.2.2. for "Free to Be," be amended to include all sub directors shall be eligible to serve three consecutive terms.

(2024.10.09) That the Synod Council authorize a representative of "Free to Be" to file the Articles of Incorporation with the Department of State in the Commonwealth of PA and the \$125 filing fee from the Free to Be budget.

(2024.10.12) That Common Ground Recovery Community—Downtown Reading Campus, meeting at Trinity Lutheran Church, 527 Washington Street, Reading, PA 19601, be reauthorized as a Synod Authorized Worshipping Community (SAWC) of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod for Fiscal Year 2025 (February 1, 2025-January 31, 2026).

(2024.10.13) That Common Ground Recovery Community—Wyomissing Campus, meeting at Atonement Lutheran Church, 5 Wyomissing Boulevard, Wyomissing, PA, 19610, be reauthorized as a Synod Authorized Worshipping Community (SAWC) of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod for Fiscal Year 2025 (February 1, 2025-January 31, 2026).

(2024.12.05) That the Rev. Lauren Applegate, Mission Developer of the “Free to Be” Synod Authorized Outreach Ministry (SAOM), receive the following designated amounts in 2025:

Defined Compensation: \$72,000/year  
Housing Allowance designation: \$36,000/year  
Health Insurance Allowance: \$10,000/year

(2024.12.07) That “Hope’s Table,” a Northeastern Pennsylvania (NEPA) Synod Authorized Worshipping Community (SAWC), be reauthorized as a NEPA SAWC for another year, from January 1, 2025 to December 31, 2025, under these conditions:

That the NEPS Director for Evangelical Mission be authorized to work with the Council of Hope Lutheran Church, Reading; with constituents and staff of the current Hope’s Table SAWC; with representatives of the West Berks Mission District; with representatives of the “Pretzel City” 6261 Ministry Community; with representatives of the ELCA Churchwide office; and with representatives of other interested parties, including “Common Ground” NEPA SAWC, and “Café Esperanza” Ministry; to attend to safety recommendations made by advisory groups; to determine the needs of the community; the capacity for a vital and sustainable ministry; and the category under which such ministry would be designated (for example, “SAWC,” “SAOM,” “COM,” etc.);

That special consideration be given by the “Pretzel City” 6261 Ministry Community to include “Hope’s Table” as part of their “Primary Ministry Project” for their six-congregation bundle, to share the costs and the work of this re-envisioned and renewed ministry;

That funding from the NEPA Synod be suspended as of this council meeting, until the above conditions are met, and/or a plan addressing those conditions and requesting appropriate funding, is presented and approved by Synod Council.

(2025.04.01) That in accordance with section \*C6.05. of the ELCA Model Constitution for Congregations— with two duly called congregational meetings, October 13, 2024, and January 12, 2025, and no outstanding financial obligations to the ELCA or predecessor bodies— that the decision of St. James Lutheran Church, Pittman, 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 April 12, 2025.

### **Miscellaneous**

(2024.12.10) That pending approval from the ELCA Conference of Bishops in 2025 and in accordance with section 7.41.04 of the ELCA Constitution, the Rev. Justin Tigerman be issued a call to non-stipendiary service as Pastor of St. Peter, Hughestown, St. Matthew, Scranton, and St. Peter, Scranton.

(2024.08.08) That Lori Gustave and Elsbeth Haymon be re-elected to three-year terms on the Board of Trustees of the Good Shepherd Rehabilitation Network, 2024-2027.

(2024.10.10) That in response to the situation of insurance companies' exponentially increasing rates and/or cancelling congregational/synod policies, the NEPA Synod Council encourages LAMPa to advocate on our behalf in order to ensure access to property and liability insurance at reasonable cost.

Respectfully Submitted,

The Rev. Kenneth Todd 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. Jennifer Heavner and Rev. Barry Spatz.

Join me in thanking Rev. Nelson Quinones and Rev. Dody Siegfried for their years of service to the Lehigh and Northern Lehigh Valley Mission Districts, respectively!

In October 2024, 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.

The deans worked on best practices for deacons/pastors and their congregations/ministry sites when they depart a call. Together, the deans developed a job description for deans. 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**

2025 marks the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of service for:

Deacon Carol Koch  
Rev. Aaron Decker  
Rev. Donna House  
Rev. Barry Spatz

The following ordained ministers are celebrating 25 years of service:

Rev. Rebecca Knox  
Rev. E. Ann Melot  
Rev. Elna Stratton

Observing their 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of service are:

Deacon Ethel May Cloughen  
Rev. Oliver Brown  
Rev. Lesley Hand  
Rev. Melinda Heppe  
Rev. Franklin Stinner  
Rev. Manuel Stivers, Jr.

Celebrating their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ordained service are:

Rev. Gerald Arndt  
Rev. Norman Dresher  
Rev. Kenneth Gould  
Rev. Guy Grube  
Rev. John Harding  
Rev. Bruce Potteiger  
Rev. Thomas Richards, Jr.  
Rev. John Richter  
Rev. David Roper  
Rev. Rodney Saylor  
Rev. Gregory Stoddard

Marking 55 years of rostered ministry are:

Deacon Beverly Schlecht  
Rev. Fred Crawford III  
Rev. David Werley  
Rev. Grant Wickert

Celebrating his 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ordination is:

Rev. Stanley Trout

Celebrating their 65 years of ordained service are:

Rev. Hartland Gifford  
Rev. James Henderschedt

**THE REV. GERALD CARL ARNDT**, son of Carl Harvey Arndt and Frances Anna Reich, was born on September 6, 1949, in Palmerton, PA. He attended Lehigh Area High School and graduated with an A.B. in Sociology from Muhlenberg College in 1971. He earned a M.Div. from The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia (now United Lutheran Seminary-Philadelphia Campus) in 1975.

He was ordained by the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Lutheran Church in America on May 18, 1975, at Christ Lutheran Church, Hazleton, PA. Pastor Arndt served the following calls: Pastor, St. Paul Lutheran Church, Hawley, PA (1975-1981); and, Pastor, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Reading, PA (1981-2015).

Pastor Arndt married Ruth Naomi (Rehrig) on June 3, 1973. They are the parents of Michael Gerald and Kristin Ruth.

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**THE REV. NORMAN E. DRESHER**, son of Norman Dresher and Bettinia Jane (Brubaker) was born on October 17, 1949, in Reading, PA. He graduated with a B.A. in Religion from Gettysburg College in 1971 and a M.Div. from Hama School of Theology (Trinity Lutheran Seminary at Capital University) in 1975.

He was ordained by the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Lutheran Church in America on May 18, 1975, at Christ Lutheran, Hazleton, PA. Following ordination, Pastor Dresher served the following calls: Pastor, St. James Lutheran Church, Reading, PA (1975-1981); Pastor, Zion Lutheran Church, Perry Township, PA (1981-2004); Interim Pastor, Hope Lutheran Church, Bowers, PA (2004-2005); Interim Pastor, St. John Lutheran, Tamaqua, PA (2005-2006); Interim Pastor, Friedens Lutheran Church, Stony Run, PA (2006-2008); Interim Pastor, Trinity Lutheran Church, Topton, PA (2008-2012); and, Interim Pastor, Zion Spies Lutheran Church, Reading, PA (2012-2013). In retirement, he also serves as a frequent supply pastor.

Pastor Dresher was married to Nancy Jean (Schmehl) on August 8, 1970, and they had three daughters, Nicole Elizabeth, Amy Rebecca, and Rachel Marlane.

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**THE REV. KENNETH ALMONT GOULD**, son of Norman C. Gould and Florence M. Gould was born on December 17, 1949, in Hazleton, PA. He attended Lehigh Area High School and graduated with an A.B. in Sociology from Muhlenberg College in 1971. He earned a M.Div. from The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia (now United Lutheran Seminary-Philadelphia Campus) in 1975.

He was ordained by the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Lutheran Church in America on May 18, 1975, at Christ Lutheran, Hazleton, PA. Following his ordination, he served the following calls: Pastor, Incarnation Lutheran Church, Reading, PA (1975-1979); Pastor, St. John the Evangelist Slovak Lutheran Church, Lansford, PA (1979-1996); Pastor, Christ United Lutheran Church, Ashland, PA (1996-2000); Pastor, Nativity Lutheran Church, Reading, PA (2000-2005); and, Pastor, St. Mark Lutheran Church, Birdsboro, PA (2006-2014).

Pastor Gould married Ruth Troutman on May 29, 1976. On October 17, 2003, he married Carol Ann (Welsher).

**THE REV. GUY RAYMOND GRUBE**, son of Carl W. and Clara I. (Knoll) Grube, was born on May 22, 1939, in New Ringgold, PA. He graduated from Bangor Theological Seminary, Bangor, ME, in 1975. He later earned a B.A. in Humanities from Thomas Edison College in 1980 and a M.Div. from Bangor Theological Seminary in 1981.

He was ordained by the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Lutheran Church in America on May 18, 1975, at Christ Lutheran, Hazleton, PA. Following his ordination, he served the following calls: Pastor, Trinity Lutheran Church, Valley View, PA (1975-1984); Trinity Lutheran Church, Lehighton, PA (1984-1996); Mt. Zion Lutheran Church, Krumsville, PA (1996-2001). Following retirement, he served as interim pastor in a number of congregations.

Pastor Grube married Norma Rae (Fidler) on September 27, 1958. They are the parents of Charles Harold, Bruce Brian, Kevin Darryell, Timothy Guy, and Sheila Mardi.

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**THE REV. JOHN WARREN HARDING**, son of Warren S. Harding and Ruth M. (Long), was born on February 25, 1948, in Allentown, PA. He graduated from Muhlenberg College in 1970 with a B.A. in History and The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia (now United Lutheran Seminary-Philadelphia Campus) in 1975 with a M.Div. He also obtained a teacher certification from Cedar Crest College, Allentown, PA.

He earned a D. Min. from Trinity Theological Seminary in Newburgh, IN, in 2012.

He was ordained on June 22, 1975, by the New Jersey Synod of the Lutheran Church in America at St. Paul Lutheran Church, Jersey City, NJ. Pastor Harding served the following calls: Pastor, St. Paul Lutheran Church, Jersey City, NJ (1975-1979); Pastor, Our Savior Lutheran Church, Boston, MA (1979-1980); Pastor, Redeemer Lutheran Church, Trenton, NJ (1980-1987); Pastor, St. Matthew Lutheran Church, North Weissport, PA (1990-1998); Interim Pastor, Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Johnsonville, PA (1998-1999); Interim Pastor, St. Joseph Lutheran Church, Allentown, PA (1999-2001); and, St. Paul Lutheran Church, East Stroudsburg (Craig's Meadow/Smithfield), PA (2002-2017). After retiring, Pastor Harding also served a part-time interim at Jerusalem Lutheran Church, Trachsville, PA (2020-2021).

He married Deborah K. Scheffey on July 11, 1987, and they had three children, Whitney, Alison, and Christian.

**THE REV. BRUCE WEHR POTTEIGER**, son of Earl Rentschler and Mae Marie (Wehr) Potteiger, was born on March 31, 1949, in West Reading PA. He graduated with a B.A. in Liberal Arts from Kutztown State College (now University) in 1971 and a M.Div. from The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia (now United Lutheran Seminary-Philadelphia Campus) in 1975.

He was ordained on July 20, 1975, by the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Lutheran Church in America at St. John Lutheran Church, Sinking Spring, PA. Pastor Potteiger served the following calls: Pastor, Jacksonville Parish (Jacob's, St. Peter, and St. Paul), Jacksonville, PA (1975-1984); Pastor, Christ Mertz Lutheran Church, Dryville, PA (1984-2003); and, Pastor, Salem Belleman's Church (Shared Ministry), Mohrsville, PA (2003-2015).

Pastor Potteiger married Linda Lou (Miller) on September 8, 1973, and they had two sons, Andrew Mark and Joshua Earl. He married Anna Jane (Miller) Potteiger on May 9, 2003.

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**THE REV. THOMAS EDWARD RICHARDS JR.**, son of Thomas Richards, Sr. and Vera (Ollivelli) was born on October 28, 1948, in Montclair, NJ. He graduated with a B.A. in Psychology from Upsala College and a M.Div. from The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia (now United Lutheran Seminary-Philadelphia Campus) in 1975; he also earned a D.Min. from there in 2000.

He was ordained by the New Jersey Synod of the Lutheran Church in America on February 9, 1975, at St. Paul Lutheran Church, Linden, NJ.

Following his ordination, Pastor Richards served the following calls: Pastor, Community Lutheran Church, Winslow Township, NJ (1975-1980); and, Pastor, St. Paul Lutheran Church, Tannersville, PA (1980-2016). In retirement, he serves St. John Lutheran Church, Effort, PA, as a stated supply pastor.

Pastor Richards married Sandra Kay (Stephenson) on June 15, 1974, and they have two children, Thomas Edward III and Colleen Danielle.



**THE REV. JOHN CHARLES RICHTER**, son of Carl J. Richter and Kathleen (Long) was born on September 29, 1949, in Brooklyn, NY. He graduated with a B.A. in Journalism and Politics from New York University in 1971 and a M.Div. from Union Theological Seminary, New York City, in 1974.

He earned a D.Min. from Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia (United Lutheran Seminary-Philadelphia Campus) in 1998.

Pastor Richter was ordained by the Metropolitan New York Synod of the Lutheran Church in America on July 27, 1975, at St. John-St. Matthew-Emanuel Lutheran Church, Brooklyn, NY. He served the following calls: Pastor, Redeemer-St. John's Lutheran Church, Brooklyn, NY (1975-1980); Pastor, Ascension Lutheran Church, Franklin Square, NY (1980-1993); Senior Pastor, Atonement Lutheran Church (1993-2005); Vice President for Church Relations, Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries (2005-2014). In retirement, he also served as Associate of the Bishop for the West Berks Mission District (2014-2020).

Pastor Richter married Patricia (Johnson) on August 26, 1972, and they are the parents of Kirsten Beth, Meredith Hope, and Courtney Faith.

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**THE REV. DAVID LEE ROPER**, son of M. Lawrence Roper and Catherine E. (Schlouch), was born on July 30, 1949, in Reading, PA. He graduated with a B.A. in Sociology from Hartwick College, Oneonta, NY, in 1971 and a M.Div. from The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg (now United Lutheran Seminary-Gettysburg Campus) in 1975.

He was ordained on October 26, 1975, at Grace Lutheran Church, Shillington, PA, by the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Lutheran Church in America. Pastor Roper served the following calls: Pastor, Ebenezer Lutheran Church, New Tripoli, PA (1975-1984); Pastor, Trinity Lutheran Church, Kutztown, PA (1984-2002); Pastor, Bern Lutheran Church, Leesport, PA (2002-2015)

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**THE REV. RODNEY HARVEY SAYLOR**, son of Harvey R. and Barbara (Seyfried) Saylor, was born on January 19, 1950, in Northampton, PA. He graduated with a B.A. in Religion from Moravian College (now University) in 1971 and a M.Div. from The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia (now United Lutheran Seminary-Philadelphia Campus) in 1975.

He was ordained by the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Lutheran Church in America on May 18, 1975, at Christ Lutheran Church, Hazleton, PA. Following his ordination, Pastor Saylor served the following calls: Pastor, Trinity Lutheran Church, West Hazleton, PA (1975- 1980), Pastor, St. John Lutheran Church, Sayre, PA (1980-2010).

Pastor Saylor married Donna Lee (Fiorini) on August 19, 1972, and they have three children, Adam, Elizabeth, and Katherine.

THE REV. GREGORY ALAN STODDARD, son of Alan Stoddard and Beatrice (Johnsrud) was born on May 11, 1949, in Decorah, IA. He graduated with a B.A. in Art and Education from the University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire, in 1971. He earned a M.Div from Hamma School of Theology (Trinity Lutheran Seminary at Capital University) in 1975. He also earned a D. Min. in Counseling and Clinical Studies from Andover-Newton Theological Seminary, Newton, MA, in 1983. He is also a Certified Educator through ACPE.

He was ordained by the Wisconsin-Upper Michigan Synod of the Lutheran Church in America on June 8, 1975. Following his ordination, Pastor Stoddard served the following calls: Associate Pastor, Messiah Lutheran Church, Marquette, MI (1975-1980); Associate Pastor, Emanuel Lutheran Church, Worcester, MA (1981-1983); Director of Pastoral Care, Charles Hogan Center, Hathorne, MA (1983-1986); Assistant Director of Pastoral Care and Director of CPE, Mount Carmel Medical Center, Columbus, OH (1986-1990); Director of Chaplaincy Services, Reading Medical Center (now Tower Health System), Reading, PA (1990-2012).

Pastor Stoddard married Teri Lynn (Willer) on February 9, 1974, and they have three children, Nathan Gregory, Joel Gregory, and Elisabeth Lynn.

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

## **REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR FOR EVANGELICAL MISSION**

Dear friends in Christ,

What an exciting year it has been since we last joined together! The Spirit is alive and spouting forth in all sorts of new ways throughout our NEPA Synod. As the Director for Evangelical Mission (DEM) focuses in the Gaining Strength lane, it is my delight to share with you the ways our Synod continues to gain strength through collaboration and sharing our God-given gifts together.

In February, the first official 6261 Ministry Community – Pretzel City (in Reading) launched and hosted a joint potluck, hymn sing, and celebration worship. It was a joy to be with them and all who came to share in celebrating the new thing God is doing among them. We have over 12 other areas throughout the Synod in various stages of discernment about forming or joining a 6261 Ministry Community – with the potential to form 15 to 20 Bundles over the next few years. We continue to update and create resources to support our congregations doing this discernment work so check the website periodically for these new features!

The local diocese of the Episcopal Church is equally excited about 6261 and working alongside us in collaborative partnerships, including some ELCA-Episcopal 6261 Ministry Communities. We are developing similar pathways with our United Church of Christ (UCC) friends and Moravian Church friends, and hope to further collaborate with our Presbyterian (PCUSA) and United Methodist friends by the end of 2025. Our neighboring Synods also continue to partner with us in multi-Synod 6261 Ministry Communities, especially along the “borders” of our Synod lines. God is reminding us in our individual lives, congregational communities, and Synod judicatories of the call to be one in Christ and work together for the sake of sharing the amazing, freeing good news of God’s love, grace, and forgiveness. *Free to Be* is approaching one year of ministry as our Synod’s first and only SAOM (Synod-Authorized Outreach Ministry)! Connect with Rev. Lauren Applegate for more details about how *Free to Be* is connecting with moms and families in the Bethlehem area.

In Scranton, I look forward to continuing to accompany a re-emerging Indonesian Lutheran worshipping community as they pursue becoming an ELCA congregation. Hopefully, they will be with us at next year’s Synod Assembly! Each of our SAWCs (Synod-Authorized Worshipping Communities) completed a Ministry Review this year, some for the first time. It was a blessing to share these ministries with the other members of the Review Teams and to celebrate God’s presence within these communities. The Ministry Reviews also provided an opportunity to share observations and glimpse strategically where these ministries are headed. You can connect with Rev. Tom Scornavacchi to hear more about either Common Ground site (Wyomissing and Reading) or with Rev. Drew Neidig to hear more about Hope’s Table (Reading).

We are also blessed to have 31 pastors and 4 deacons who have participated in one of our Gaining Strength Cohorts. These Cohorts are facilitated by Rev. Doug Hill over an 18-month period and bring rostered ministers from around the NEPA Synod together for shared learning, contemplative action, and mutual support. Cohort 2 will have its final retreat this May (2025) and Cohort 3 will have its final retreat this October (2025). Two new cohorts will begin soon: Cohort 4 in October 2025 and Cohort 5 April 2026. We are grateful to the ELCA for an Anchor Church grant for each of our 2024 cohorts.

Last October (2024), we held a condensed Gaining Strength retreat for an initial group of retired rostered ministers still involved in active public ministry, which included 8 pastors and 1 deacon. We hope to offer this opportunity again this fall (2025).

We also launched our first 6261 Gaining Strength Cohort the end of March (2025) to support our Pretzel City bundle along with 4 other 6261 areas in discernment and working on forming a 6261 Ministry Community. This first Cohort included 8 ELCA pastors, 2 Episcopal priests, and 1 ELCA deacon, along with a UCC pastor who will provide coaching as they embark on their new and unique partnerships. We anticipate launching a second 6261 Gaining Strength Cohort in September (2025).

The DEM position serves both the Synod and our ELCA Churchwide (national) office. In this way, I've been able to connect with DEMs from around the country, access ELCA grants, lead the onboarding of new DEMs, and gather wisdom and trainings from this community, including initiatives like "Fresh Expressions" to support and accompany our ministries on the margins, emerging ministries, and ministries outside the church walls. I was also invited as a panelist for the February ELCA Fireside Chat to talk about the collaborative nature of 6261 Ministry Communities. It is a privilege to work and bridge both worlds. If you have questions about Churchwide, I would be happy to have a conversation.

It was good to see so many of you at the Chat & Chew Meetings in each Mission District this past year – and I hope to see you again over the coming year. I look forward to witnessing the Spirit-spouted growth as we seek to love, heal, and engage like Jesus.

Grace upon grace,  
Deacon Kat Tigerman

## **REPORT OF THE TREASURER**

The former Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the 76<sup>th</sup> United States Attorney General Richard Thornburgh once told his budget staff "you must learn to do more with less." The Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod's 2024 fiscal year was a year when we did more with less. The Mission Support received was \$173,646 less than the budgeted amount. By controlling expenditures and increased interest earnings the fiscal year ended with a \$20,997 surplus.

I would like to thank the congregations of Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod for their financial support received during the 2024 fiscal year. Our fiscal year begins on February 1 and ends on January 31 of the following year. In the 2024 fiscal year the synod received \$173,646 less in mission support than we budgeted. This loss was \$99,030 more than the average loss of \$74,616 per year since fiscal year 2015.

The total revenue budgeted for the 2024 fiscal year was \$1,914,100. The actual revenue received was \$1,874,876 resulting in a decrease of \$39,224. The actual expenditure of \$1,853,879 was \$210,221 less than the budgeted expenditure of \$2,064,100. The 2024 fiscal year ended with a surplus of \$20,997.

S15.14 of the Constitution of The Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod provides for the use of Deferred Revenue to balance a budget. The 2024 Budget contained \$150,000 of Deferred Revenue. None of this revenue was used to balance the 2024 Budget.

What were the sources of the Synod's Revenue?

REVENUE SOURCES	
Mission Support	86.47%
Synod Assembly	02.49%
Interest Earnings	06.07%
Building Rental	00.58%
DEM Grant (ELCA)	00.54%
Event Income	00.09%
Transfers	02.75%
Other	01.01%
Total Revenue Sources	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
1/31/2016	\$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)
1/31/2025	\$1,626,355	(\$103,043)

Mission Support Dollars received in Fiscal Year 2024 were \$671,548 less than received in fiscal Year 2015. The average loss in Mission Support in the years shown in the above table was (\$74,616).

How did the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod spend its money?

EXPENDITURES	
ELCA Support	40.72%
Administration	00.26%
Synod Staff	39.26%
Building & Office	08.21%
Institution & Agency Support	06.93%
Executive Committee	00.64%
Ministry Teams	00.71%
Synod Assembly	01.75%
SWAC & SAOM	01.46%
Other	00.06%

Total Expenditures 100%

## Where are the NEPA Synod Funds invested?

### 1. ELCA Mission Investment Fund

CD#...82120                      Social Ministry Fund  
Matures 8/26/2027  
Fixed Rate APR 4.426  
Current Balance \$78,131.95  
YTD Interest \$862.02

CD#....82104              Mission Development Fund  
Matures 8/26/2027  
Fixed Rate APR 4.426  
Current Balance \$114,250.53  
YTD Interest \$1,260.51

CD#...82112              Church Loan Development Fund  
Matures 8/26/2027  
Fixed Rate APR 4.426  
Current Balance \$108,356.05  
YTD Interest \$1,195.47

CD#...5819              General Fund  
Matures 10/04/202  
Fixed Rate APR 4.861  
Current Balance \$342,433.84  
YTD Interest \$4,144.85                      \$310,012

### 2. TRUIST Bank

CD#...81475 General Fund  
Matures 10/07/2024  
Fixed Rate APR 4.45  
Current Balance \$110,223 (now in money market fund)

### 3. ELCA Endowment Fund Polled Trust

#### BALANCE

SYNOD FUND	1/01/2024	12/31/2024
Student Education	\$149,978	\$160,879
Disaster Response	\$ 101,995	\$ 113,615
Church Loan	\$1,491,109	\$1,660,990
Social Ministry	\$ 443,240	\$ 475,456
Global Mission	\$ 418,905	\$ 466,631
Mission Devt.	\$ 752,500	\$ 838,232
Leadership Devt.	\$ 113,136	\$ 126,026
Bishop Discretion	\$ 175,475	\$ 195,467
Clyde Kelchner I	\$ 457,272	\$ 509,369
Clyde Kelchner II	\$ 756,383	\$ 740,018
Kerschmar Memorial	\$ 283,820	\$ 304,450

### 4. M & T Bank

#### Sweep Accounts

M & T Checking	
Minimum Balance	\$50,000
Beginning Date 1/01/2024	
Earnings as of 1/01/2025	\$18,797

Large Sweep Account	
Minimum Balance	\$10,000
Beginning Date 1/01/2024	
Earnings as of 1/01/2025	\$93,820

Several Synod Funds may be used to provide grants and/or loans to congregations. The funds that gave grants and/or loans for the fiscal year beginning 2/01/2024 and ending 1/31/2025 are as follows:

#### Church Loan Development Fund

Loan	Start Year	Rate	Amount	Balance
Café Esperanza	2020	0%	\$20,000	\$1,333
Bear Creek Camp	2020	0%	\$195,000	\$95,178
Hope, Reading	2021	2%	\$15,000	\$8,600
St John, Mahoning	2021	2%	\$30,000	\$16,947
Reformation, Reiffton	2024	3%	\$95,000	\$87,822

The directions for applying for a Church Loan Development Fund loan can be found on the NEPA Synod Web Site. The following conditions will apply to loans granted during the 2025 fiscal year: maximum loan amount is \$180,00, the interest rate is 3%, and the maximum loan period is seven (7) years.

#### Witness and Service Team Grants

##### Fiscal Year 2024

	REQUEST	GRANT
Hope's Table Gas Stove	\$5,000	\$5,000
Mifflin Community Food Ministry Food	\$5,000	\$5,000
Prince of Peace POPs Treasures	\$2,000	\$2,000
LGBTQIA+ Team	\$5,000	\$5,000
St Marks, Birdsboro – ODB Mobile Food	\$5,000	\$5,000
Schwarzwald, Lutheran- B.F. Café	\$2,000	\$1,300
Christ Glenside & Zion Spies- Day Camp	\$5,000	\$5,000
NEPS Walk for Hunger	\$500	\$500
Christ Lutheran, Allentown/		
Allentown Collaborative, NBHD House	\$5,000	\$5,000
Ziegels Union Church – room upgrade	\$5,000	\$5,000

Directions for applying for Witness and Service Team Grants may be found on the NEPA Synod Web Site.

What is new in the 2026 Budget?

Revenue will include:

1. Mission Support \$200,00 less than 2025
2. Interest earnings higher than 2025
3. More Transfers than 2025
4. Estate Donations & Grants

Expenses will include:

1. Three-day synod assembly
2. Increase insurance cost
3. New MDF projects
4. Restructured Synod Staff
5. No Budgetary Reserve

It has been a pleasure serving as Synod Treasurer and working with Bishop deForest, Eric Gombert, the Rev. Carl Shankweiler, the Synod Staff, and the Finance Committee in doing God's work in the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod.

Yours in Christ,

Donald E Boyer, Treasurer





## Section II

## Financial

# PROPOSED FY 2026 BUDGET

Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod  
FY beginning 2/1/2026 Proposed Budget-approved by Synod Council 4/12/2025

Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod  
FY beginning 2/1/2026

## BUDGET

Account Description	2024 Approved Budget	2024 Unaudited Actual	2025 Approved Budget	2026 Proposed Budget
Deferred Revenue Available for Appropriations	150,000	0	150,000	150,000
REVENUE				
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>1,914,100</b>	<b>1,874,876</b>	<b>2,152,402</b>	<b>2,132,917</b>
Mission Support	1,800,000	1,626,355	1,700,000	1,500,000
Synod Assembly	35,000	46,730	50,000	100,000
Events Income	30,000	1,861	30,000	35,000
DEM Support Grant	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000
Transfers	31,700	51,486	208,389	297,576 *Table A
Fund management fees			62,013	65,841 *Table B
Interest Earnings		113,922	75,000	82,500
Rental Income	2,400	11,000	12,000	12,000
Miscellaneous Income	5,000	13,522	5,000	5,000
Estate Donations & Grants				25,000
<b>Total Funds Available for Appropriations</b>	<b>2,064,100</b>	<b>1,874,876</b>	<b>2,302,402</b>	<b>2,282,917</b>

## EXPENDITURES

<b>ELCA MISSION SUPPORT</b>	<b>846,000</b>	<b>754,987</b>	<b>799,000</b>	47%	<b>705,000</b>
<b>INSTITUTION &amp; AGENCY SUPPORT</b>	<b>144,000</b>	<b>128,508</b>	<b>130,900</b>	7.7%	<b>115,500</b>
<b>INSTITUTION SUPPORT</b>	<b>16,200</b>	<b>14,457</b>	<b>10,200</b>	0.6%	<b>9,000</b>
Diakon	5,400	4,819		0.0%	0
Lutheran Congregational Services	5,400	4,819	5,100	0.3%	4,500
Good Shepherd	5,400	4,819	5,100	0.3%	4,500
<b>AGENCY SUPPORT</b>	<b>127,800</b>	<b>114,051</b>	<b>120,700</b>	7.1%	<b>106,500</b>
United Seminary	90,000	80,318	85,000	5.0%	75,000
Bear Creek Camp	25,200	22,489	23,800	1.4%	21,000
Muhlenberg College	5,400	4,819	5,100	0.3%	4,500
PA Conference of Churches	3,600	3,213	3,400	0.2%	3,000
LAMPA	3,600	3,213	3,400	0.2%	3,000
<b>EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE TOTAL</b>	<b>73,200</b>	<b>44,318</b>	<b>128,894</b>		<b>181,183</b>
Synod Assembly Expenses	50,000	32,400	50,000		100,000
Candidacy	15,000	4,987	16,243		15,000
Archives	6,000	6,000	6,000		6,000
Synod Council Expenses	200	931	1,000		1,000
Reconciling Works					500
Legal Services	2,000		4,000		4,000
6261			25,000		25,000
LLM					
Additional MDF projects			26,651		29,683

Account Description	2024		2025	2026
	Approved Budget	Unaudited Actual	Approved Budget	Proposed Budget
<b>SAWCs &amp; SAOMs</b>	<b>29,000</b>	<b>27,000</b>	<b>75,000</b>	<b>55,000</b>
Common Ground (SAWC)	17,000	17,000	25,000	25,000
Hope's Table (SAWC)	12,000	10,000	15,000	
Free to Be (SAOM)			35,000	30,000
<b>WORKSHOPS-boundary/anti-racism/1st call</b>	<b>10,500</b>		<b>13,500</b>	<b>13,500</b>
<b>TOTAL TEAMS</b>	<b>70,900</b>	<b>14,105</b>	<b>93,300</b>	<b>85,900</b>
WORSHIP TEAM	400	0	400	400
FAITH FORMATION RESOURCE TEAM	3,500	2,790	3,500	4,000
GROWING YOUNG	4,000	3,054	14,000	7,800
RESOURCE CENTER OPERATIONS	2,500	376	2,500	1,000
GWOH STORYTELLERS	1,000	235	500	500
FIRST CALL AND COACHING GRANTS	5,500		5,500	5,500
WITNESS & SERVICE TEAM	54,000	7,650	66,900	66,700
Witness Service Operations	200		300	2,100
LGBTQ+ task force	100		9,600	9,600
Accessibility Team	100			
World Hunger Advocates	100			
Green Team	100		250	1,000
Witness & Service Grants	9,150	7,650	45,000	35,000
Support Intern & Other Leaders	5,500		5,000	5,000
New Initiatives	17,000			
Campus Ministry	20,000			
Leisure Ministry	1,500			750
Café Esperanza			5,000	5,000
Hmong Community			1,500	1,500
Indonesian Lutheran Church				5,000
Gather Lehigh Valley				1,500
Global Mission	250		250	250
<b>ADMINISTRATION TOTAL</b>	<b>870,700</b>	<b>884,961</b>	<b>955,900</b>	<b>1,126,834</b>
<b>BISHOP'S OFFICE</b>	<b>35,400</b>	<b>4,943</b>	<b>33,100</b>	<b>37,600</b>
Bishops Discretionary Fund	1,500	126	1,500	1,500
Consultations-Cong/Professional Ldrs.	2,000		2,000	2,000
Interim Ministry	500	552	500	500
Anniversary Celebration	2,500	2,744	3,000	3,000
Bishop Conference	23,000	-82	23,000	27,500
Ecumenism	100		100	100
Stewardship	2,800			
Chrism Mass	1,500	656	1,500	1,500
Miscellaneous Expenses	1,500	946	1,500	1,500
<b>SYNOD STAFF</b>	<b>679,000</b>	<b>727,871</b>	<b>766,500</b>	<b>913,134</b>
Staff Expense	646,500	687,650	732,500	870,634
Staff Travel Expense	30,000	38,926	31,500	40,000
Staff Events/Bonus	2,500	1,295	2,500	2,500
<b>BUILDING AND OFFICE</b>	<b>156,300</b>	<b>152,147</b>	<b>156,300</b>	<b>176,100</b>
Building Expenses/Occupancy	81,300	78,094	90,700	85,000
Office Expenses	40,000	37,736	30,600	35,000
Communications				8,700
Visitor/Hospitality Meals	3,000	397	3,000	3,000
HVAC Loan Payments				11,100
Computer Expenses	6,500	12,509	6,500	7,800
Auditors	25,000	23,000	25,000	25,000
Miscellaneous Expenses	500	411	500	500
<b>BUDGETARY RESERVE</b>	<b>19,800</b>		<b>19,800</b>	
<b>TOTAL PROPOSED EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>2,064,100</b>	<b>1,853,879</b>	<b>2,216,294</b>	<b>2,282,917</b>
<b>TOTAL INCOME MINUS TOTAL EXPENSE</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>20,997</b>	<b>86,108</b>	<b>0</b>

**Table A-TRANSFERS WORKSHEET**

FY beginning 2/1/2026

Mission Development Fund	\$	127,183.00
Student Education Fund	\$	16,395.00
Social Ministry Fund	\$	41,388.00
Flach Fund	\$	112,610.00
<b>TOTAL TRANSFERS</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>297,576.00</b>

**Table B-FUND MANAGEMENT FEES WORKSHEET**

FY beginning 2/1/2026 Propo January 31, 2025

*unaudited fund balances*

	Beginning Balance <u>1/31/25</u>	<u>1% of balance</u>
Student Education	\$164,905.30	\$1,649.05
Church Loan/Development	\$1,808,256.74	\$18,082.57
Disaster Response	\$116,447.47	\$1,164.47
Social Ministry	\$487,177.00	\$4,871.77
Global Mission	\$478,262.87	\$4,782.63
Mission Development	\$1,606,724.59	\$16,067.25
Leadership Development	\$129,167.49	\$1,291.67
Bishop Discretion	\$200,339.70	\$2,003.40
Clyde Kelchner I	\$522,065.95	\$5,220.66
Clyde Kelchner II	\$758,709.29	\$7,587.09
Kerschmar Memorial	\$312,066.92	\$3,120.67
Potteiger		<i>*under review</i>
Flach		<i>*under review</i>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$6,584,123</b>	<b>\$65,841</b>



NEPA Synod of the ELCA

Special Fund Distribution Calculation -for FY 2026

<u>Fund</u>	as of <u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023</u>	<u>2024</u>	<u>Average</u> <u>Five Year</u>	<u>5%</u>	<u>6%</u>	<u>7%</u>	<u>8%</u>	<u>9%</u>	<u>10%</u>
Mission Development Fund	<b>1,571,955</b>	<b>1,637,840</b>	1,516,322	1,616,101	1,606,725	1,589,789	79,489	95,387	111,285	<b>127,183</b>	143,081	158,979
Leadership Development Fund	<b>109,003</b>	<b>117,802</b>	104,578	113,438	129,167	114,798	5,740	<b>6,888</b>	8,036	9,184	10,332	11,480
Student Education Fund	<b>173,541</b>	<b>186,579</b>	144,328	150,378	164,904	163,946	8,197	9,837	11,476	13,116	14,755	<b>16,395</b>
Social Ministry Fund	<b>529,877</b>	<b>549,300</b>	499,681	520,741	487,177	517,355	25,868	31,041	36,215	<b>41,388</b>	46,562	51,736
	2,384,376	2,491,521	2,264,908	2,400,658	2,387,974	<b>2,385,887</b>						



# TREASURER'S ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## Bethlehem-Easton

Location, Congregation	World	Homes &	Other	2024	2024	2025
	Hunger	Agencies	ELCA	Commit	Response	Commit
BETHLEHEM, ROSEMONT-2005	INACTIVE A/O JANUARY 25, 2024					
BETHLEHEM, ST. MARK-2008	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3,000.00	3,000.00
BETHLEHEM, ST. PAUL-2010	449.00	0.00	0.00	2,400.00	2,400.00	2,400.00
BETHLEHEM, ST. STEPHEN-2012	1,233.00	0.00	0.00	5,400.00	5,400.00	6,000.00
EASTON, ARNDTS (FORKS TWP)-2015	0.00	0.00	0.00	3,000.00	3,000.00	3,000.00
EASTON, ST. ANDREW-2018	328.00	0.00	1,500.00	25,027.00	0.00	0.00
EASTON, ST. JOHN-2019	235.00	0.00	325.00	0.00	15,000.00	15,000.00
EASTON, ST. PAUL THIRD-2021	0.00	0.00	0.00	4,000.00	4,000.00	0.00
HELLERTOWN, CHRIST-2025	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	17,500.00	17,500.00
WILLIAMS TOWNSHIP, ST. JOHN-2028	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,500.00	1,483.62	1,500.00
SAUCON VALLEY, NEW JERUSALEM-2030	300.00	0.00	0.00	4,000.00	4,000.00	4,000.00
TATAMY, HOPE-2031	3,791.00	1,200.00	400.00	8,100.00	5,947.00	5,300.00
BETHLEHEM, STAR OF BETHLEHEM-2034	750.00	2,250.00	0.00	9,000.00	9,000.00	0.00
EASTON, UNITED FELLOWSHIP-2035	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	8,307.06	8,000.00
BETHLEHEM, BLESSED TRINITY-2036	INACTIVE A/O JANUARY 25, 2024					
BETH.BLESSED TRINITY AT ROSEMONT-2037	0.00	0.00	0.00	800.00	0.00	1,000.00
BETHLEHEM-EASTON DIST. MISC.	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
DISTRICT TOTALS	7,086.00	3,450.00	2,225.00	63,227.00	79,037.68	66,700.00

Total churches responding

15

15

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

# TREASURER'S ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## East Berks

Location, Congregation	World	Homes &	Other	2024	2024	2025
	Hunger	Agencies	ELCA	Commit	Response	Commit
	2024	2024	2024			
BECHTELSVILLE, TRINITY-3001	2,592.00	0.00	85.00	6,000.00	10,063.00	6,000.00
BLANDON, MAIDENCREEK-3002	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	6,300.00	0.00
BOWERS, HOPE-3003	0.00	0.00	0.00	600.00	600.00	600.00
BOYERTOWN, ST. JOHN-3004	933.00	343.00	10,965.00	0.00	34,919.00	0.00
MOHRSVILLE, (SALEM) BELLEMAN'S-3005	0.00	0.00	0.00	3,000.00	4,015.25	3,000.00
DOUGLASSVILLE, ST. PAUL-3007	2,782.42	0.00	865.00	46,200.00	42,282.58	0.00
DRYVILLE, CHRIST-3008	305.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	21,000.00	0.00
FLEETWOOD, ST. PAUL-3009	5,042.05	0.00	0.00	0.00	13,200.00	0.00
HAMBURG, ST. JOHN.-3010	0.00	0.00	0.00	15,000.00	15,526.75	15,500.00
HAMBURG, ST. PAUL-3012	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,400.00	200.00	600.00
BOYERTOWN, ST. JOSEPH (HILL) - 3013	1,168.00	0.00	21.00	10,000.00	10,008.00	10,000.00
ALBURTIS, HUFFS, - 3014	15.00	0.00	352.00	0.00	10,000.00	0.00
FLEETWOOD, NEW JERUSALEM-3015	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,000.00	2,241.00	0.00
KEMPTON, NEW BETHEL-3017	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	750.00	0.00
STONY RUN, FRIEDENS-3018	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
KRUMSVILLE, MT. ZION-3019	310.00	0.00	1,617.58	2,000.00	600.00	2,400.00
KUTZTOWN, ST. JOHN-3020	107.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	7,500.00	0.00
KUTZTOWN, TRINITY-3021	1,700.00	0.00	565.00	0.00	25,380.00	26,013.00
OLEY, ST. PAUL (LOBACHSVILLE)-3023	200.00	0.00	2,230.00	1,200.00	0.00	0.00
FLEETWOOD, SALEM.(SHALTERS)-3024	839.00	0.00	772.00	3,000.00	4,316.00	0.00
MAXATAWNY, ZION-3025	0.00	0.00	0.00	10,000.00	11,236.03	10,000.00
MERTZTOWN, ST. PAUL-3026	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,600.00	300.00	2,600.00
KUTZTOWN, ZION MOSELEM-3027	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	50.00	0.00
FLEETWOOD, ST. PETER (BECKERS)-3028	0.00	0.00	1,400.00	2,000.00	2,000.00	3,000.00
OLEY, FRIEDENS-3029	1,868.25	0.00	75.00	19,000.00	17,656.00	18,000.00
PERRY TOWNSHIP, ZION -3030	4,376.61	0.00	891.00	11,000.00	11,000.00	11,000.00
SHOEMAKERSVILLE, ST. LUKE-3031	0.00	0.00	0.00	500.00	500.00	0.00
LEESPORT, ST. JOHN. (GERNANTS)-3032	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,000.00	2,000.00	2,000.00
OLEY, CHRIST (SPANGSVILLE)-3033	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,800.00	0.00
READING, ZION SPIES-3034	941.00	0.00	0.00	7,000.00	7,036.00	7,000.00
TOPTON, TRINITY-3035	0.00	0.00	212.84	0.00	7,000.00	0.00
TOPTON HOME, GRACE-3036	0.00	0.00	0.00	4,000.00	4,000.00	0.00
LEESPORT, HOLY TRINITY-3037	653.00	0.00	3,500.00	3,000.00	3,000.00	3,000.00
SHARTLESVILLE, FRIEDENS-3038	0.00	0.00	0.00	6,800.00	7,025.41	6,000.00
EAST BERKS DISTRICT MISC.	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
DISTRICT TOTALS	23,832.33	343.00	23,551.42	159,300.00	283,505.02	126,713.00

Total churches responding

35

35

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

## Hazleton-Lehigh

Location, Congregation	World	Homes &	Other	2024	2024	2025
	Hunger	Agencies	ELCA	Commit	Response	Commit
	2024	2024	2024			
ASHFIELD, DINKEY MEMORIAL-4001	1,265.00	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	0.00	0.00
AUDENRIED, SALEM-4003	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,000.00	1,093.00	1,000.00
BEAVER MEADOWS, ST. PAUL-4004	115.00	0.00	0.00	3,150.00	3,641.00	0.00
BOWMANSTOWN, TRINITY-4005	0.00	0.00	0.00	795.00	500.00	0.00
PENN FOREST. TWP, CHRIST-4006	0.00	0.00	0.00	3,500.00	1,750.00	3,500.00
CONYNGBAM, CHRIST-4007	12,196.74	0.00	16950.00	52,000.00	54,571.00	52,000.00
MAHONING, ST. JOHN-4008	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	10,843.00	0.00
FREELAND, ST. LUKE-4009	0.00	0.00	0.00	500.00	0.00	0.00
HAZLETON, CHRIST-4011	0.00	0.00	0.00	15,500.00	12,262.00	0.00
HAZLETON, TRINITY-4012	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,123.00	0.00
JIM THORPE EAST, ST. JOHN-4013	278.10	0.00	25.00	5,000.00	4,241.00	6,000.00
JIM THORPE HGHTS, ST. JOHN-4014	0.00	0.00	750.00	7,608.00	7,608.00	7,608.00
LANSFORD, TRINITY-4015	10,160.00	0.00	5000.00	5,000.00	6,887.00	6,000.00
LEHIGHTON, TRINITY-4016	4,315.00	0.00	1,515.00	10,000.00	11,659.70	10,000.00
PACKERTON, ZION-4018	0.00	0.00	0.00	3,200.00	3,757.00	3,200.00
MAHANOEY CITY, CHRIST-4019	294.00	160.00	0.00	10,000.00	1,176.50	10,000.00
NEW RINGGOLD, FRIEDENS-4022	615.00	0.00	770.00	0.00	635.00	750.00
N WEISSPORT, ST. MATTHEW-4023	809.00	833.00	370.00	4,000.00	4,103.00	0.00
NUREMBERG, EMMANUEL-4024	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	6,000.00	0.00
ZION GROVE, MT ZION-4025	0.00	0.00	0.00	5,000.00	4,980.00	5,000.00
PALMERTON, HOLY TRINITY-4026	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,400.00	2,400.00	0.00
BARNESVILLE, CHRIST-4028	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
RINGTOWN, ST. JOHN-4029	1,567.00	0.00	255.00	9,200.00	9,300.00	9,200.00
BRANDONVILLE, ST. JOHN-4030	0.00	0.00	0.00	5,800.00	5,800.00	5,800.00
SAINT JOHNS, ST. JOHN-4031	3,372.00	0.00	0.00	3,500.00	3,500.00	3,500.00
SUMMIT HILL, ST. PAUL-4033	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
TAMAQUA, ST. JOHN-4035	0.00	0.00	956.00	5,000.00	5,178.00	0.00
TAMAQUA, ZION-4036	2,470.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	6,237.00	6,000.00
TOWAMENSING, ST. JOHN-4037	0.00	0.00	0.00	5,000.00	5,000.00	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	150.00	0.00	0.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
WEATHERLY, ZION-4040	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
WEST HAZLETON, TRINITY-4042	138.31	0.00	0.00	4,500.00	4,500.00	0.00
MANTZVILLE, ST. PETER-4043	0.00	219.00	0.00	0.00	5,531.75	0.00
WEST PENN, ZION STONE-4044	250.00	250.00	250.00	0.00	1,250.00	0.00
WHITE HAVEN, ST. PAUL-4045	0.00	0.00	0.00	5,500.00	5,500.00	5,500.00
HAZLETON-LEHIGHTON MISC	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
DISTRICT TOTALS	37,995.15	1,462.00	26,841.00	173,953.00	198,826.95	146,858.00

Total churches responding

38

38

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

## Lehigh

Location, Congregation	World	Homes &	Other	2024	2024	2025
	Hunger	Agencies	ELCA	Commit	Response	Commit
	2024	2024	2024			
ALBURTIS, ZION LEHIGH-1001	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
ALLENTOWN, CHRIST-1002	410.00	0.00	1,235.00	25,000.00	30,000.00	0.00
ALLENTOWN, REDEEMER-1005	2,873.57	410.00	2,050.00	0.00	6,000.00	10,000.00
ALLENTOWN, ST. JOHN-1007	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	18,000.00	0.00
ALLENTOWN, ST. LUKE-1009	300.00	500.00	0.00	500.00	881.00	0.00
ALLENTOWN, ST. MARK-1010	110.00	300.00	150.00	1,890.00	1,890.00	1,950.00
ALLENTOWN, ST. PETER/HANOVER-1014	0.00	0.00	520.00	1,600.00	1,600.00	0.00
ALLENTOWN, ST. TIMOTHY-1017	8,557.00	0.00	1,730.00	9,000.00	13,600.00	12,000.00
ALLENTOWN, TRINITY MEMORIAL-1018	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	500.00	0.00
CETRONIA, CEDAR-1019	237.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	8,239.45	0.00
COOPERSBURG, ST. JAMES-1020	449.00	1,044.00	0.00	23,000.00	23,004.00	23,004.00
COOPERSBURG, ST. PAUL-1021	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
EMMAUS, HOLY SPIRIT-1022	4,464.85	0.00	2,489.85	33,000.00	34,320.00	34,320.00
EMMAUS, ST. JOHN-1023	1,783.00	0.00	500.00	12,800.00	9,026.00	0.00
FOGELSVILLE, ST. JOHN-1024	383.00	1,646.11	100.00	5,119.00	5,153.04	5,119.00
FRIEDENSVILLE, FRIEDENS-1025	805.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,760.00	1,760.00
MACUNGIE, GRACE-1027	510.00	250.00	200.00	10,000.00	10,000.00	10,000.00
OLD ZIONSVILLE, ZION-1028	60.00	0.00	401.00	13,000.00	14,842.39	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	750.00	825.50	750.00
BREINIGSVILLE, ST. PAUL-1032	0.00	2,040.00	0.00	21,100.00	20,100.00	20,100.00
MACUNGIE R. D., ST. PETER-1033	10.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
WEST SALISBURY, JERUSALEM-1034	1,000.00	600.00	1,700.00	6,000.00	6,000.00	6,000.00
ALLENTOWN, ST. MICHAEL/NATIVITY-1037	3,576.72	0.00	890.00	37,253.00	38,762.15	0.00
LEHIGH DISTRICT, MISC.	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
DISTRICT TOTALS	25,529.14	6,790.11	11,965.85	200,512.00	246,003.53	139,503.00

Total churches responding

25

25

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

## Northern Lehigh

Location, Congregation	World	Homes &	Other	2024	2024	2025
	Hunger	Agencies	ELCA	Commit	Response	Commit
	2024	2024	2024			
BATH, ST. JOHN-5001	0.00	0.00	50.00	4,000.00	4,943.74	4,000.00
CATASAUQUA, HOLY TRINITY-5002	280.00	555.00	25.00	10,800.00	17,495.00	10,800.00
CHERRYVILLE, HOPE-5004	863.07	0.00	173.19	41,240.00	41,240.00	41,240.00
COPLAY, ST. JOHN-5005	375.00	1,166.65	0.00	12,000.00	5,000.00	
EMANUELSVILLE, EMMANUEL-5006	2,246.00	0.00	595.00	0.00	29,000.00	28,000.00
HEIDELBERG, HEIDELBERG-5007	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,000.00	2,000.00	
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	4,170.00	0.00
LOWHILL TWNSP, MORGENLAND-5011	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
NAZARETH, ST. JOHN-5013	0.00	0.00	0.00	20,000.00	20,000.00	20,000.00
SCHNECKSVILLE, UNION-5014	665.54	0.00	90.00	0.00	8,000.00	0.00
NEW TRIPOLI, NEW LIFE-5015	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
NORTHAMPTON, HOLY TRINITY-5016	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
NORTHAMPTON, ZION-5017	4,010.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	8,400.00	8,400.00
NORTHAMP HOLY TRINITY SLOVAK-5018	270.00	0.00	0.00	1,200.00	1,200.00	1,200.00
SLATINGTON, ST. JOHN-5019	25.00	0.00	0.00	2,500.00	3,003.00	0.00
OREFIELD, JORDAN-5020	2,030.00	249.96	1,000.00	20,000.00	20,000.04	20,000.00
WEISENBERG TWP, WEISENBERG-5021	5,175.00	4,737.00	1,905.00	0.00	20,453.25	20,450.00
WEISENBERG TWP, ZIEGELS-5022	495.00	2,400.00	0.00	0.00	5,333.28	0.00
WHITEHALL, FAITH-5023	1,073.00	2,460.00	0.00	0.00	18,000.00	0.00
WHITEHALL, SHEPHERD OF THE HILLS-5024	4,545.00	0.00	808.81	18,439.00	9,220.00	0.00
BELFAST, GRACE-5026	1,240.00	600.00	548.00	4,000.00	4,000.00	2,500.00
WHITEHALL, ST. JOHN-5027	400.00	150.00	0.00	7,693.00	8,196.47	7,770.00
HECKTOWN, TRINITY-5028	0.00	500.00	0.00	0.00	17,500.00	0.00
KEMPTON, JERUSALEM-5029	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,500.00	1,500.00	0.00
NORTHERN LEHIGH VALLEY MISC.-5099	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
DISTRICT TOTALS	23,692.61	13,018.61	5,195.00	147,872.00	251,154.78	166,860.00

Total churches responding

26

24

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

## Pocono

Location, Congregation	World	Homes &	Other	2024	2024	2025
	Hunger	Agencies	ELCA	Commit	Response	Commit
	2024	2024	2024			
ALBRIGHTSVILLE, ST. PAUL-6001	55.00	900.00	0.00	0.00	1,999.80	2,000.00
APPENZELL, ST. MARK-6002	0.00	0.00	0.00	3,000.00	3,000.00	0.00
BANGOR, TRINITY-6003	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,375.00	2,000.00
BLAKESLEE, FAITH-6005	0.00	0.00	1,945.00	5,400.00	5,400.00	6,000.00
BRODHEADSVILLE, ZION UNITED-6006	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4,500.00
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	3,500.00	4,000.00	4,800.00
EFFORT, ST. JOHN-6010	30.00	0.00	0.00	1,700.00	1,700.00	2,000.00
GOULDSBORO, GRACE-6011	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,900.00	2,900.00	3,000.00
GREELEY, ST. LUKE-6012	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,200.00	0.00
HAMILTON SQUARE, CHRIST-6013	2,846.00	0.00	1,835.00	0.00	372.00	0.00
HAWLEY, ST. PAUL-6014	460.00	0.00	0.00	1,200.00	1,200.00	1,200.00
HONESDALE, ST. JOHN-6015	50.77	3,000.00	0.00	4,500.00	7,510.00	4,600.00
JOHNSONVILLE/PRINCE OF PEACE-6016	2,380.00	506.00	2,500.00	13,309.00	13,338.94	13,871.00
KRESGEVILLE, SALEM-ST. PAUL-6017	177.00	0.00	109.00	6,000.00	4,373.00	5,000.00
MINISINK HILLS, ST. MARK-6019	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,300.00
PEN ARGYL, ST. JOHN-6020	0.00	0.00	0.00	600.00	600.00	600.00
PLAINFIELD, ST. PETER-6021	30.00	0.00	1,825.00	16,000.00	16,291.96	16,000.00
SCOTRUN, ST. JOHN-6023	836.71	0.00	0.00	2,600.00	2,600.00	2,600.00
SHOHOLA, ST. JACOBI-6024	0.00	0.00	0.00	600.00	340.00	0.00
STONE CHURCH, CHRIST-6025	50.00	50.00	260.00	2,000.00	2,000.00	2,500.00
STROUDSBURG, ST. JOHN-6026	1,105.00	1,000.00	2,000.00	0.00	8,000.00	8,000.00
TANNERSVILLE, ST. PAUL-6027	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,700.00	0.00
POCONO DISTRICT	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
DISTRICT TOTALS	8,020.48	5,456.00	10,474.00	63,309.00	87,900.70	79,971.00

Total churches responding

24

24

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

## Schuylkill

Location, Congregation	World	Homes &	Other	2024	2024	2025
	Hunger	Agencies	ELCA	Commit	Response	Commit
	2024	2024	2024			
ASHLAND, GOOD SHEPHERD-7001	0.00	0.00	0.00	3,500.00	1,398.00	0.00
AUBURN, ST. JOHN-7002	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,370.00	1,000.00
FRACKVILLE, ZION-7003	221.00	250.00	0.00	5,300.00	5,300.00	5,500.00
FRIEDENSBURG, ST. JOHN-7004	20.00	0.00	456.00	0.00	2,241.00	0.00
ASHLAND, CHRIST. UNITED-7005	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	13,617.53	0.00
HEGINS, FRIEDENS-7006	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,800.00	0.00
PITMAN, ST. JAMES-7007	750.00	0.00	0.00	8,000.00	2,056.71	0.00
LLEWELLYN, FRIEDENS-7009	0.00	0.00	0.00	200.00	0.00	0.00
MINERSVILLE, ZION-7010	910.73	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,165.00	0.00
BUCK RUN, TRINITY-7012	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,500.00	2,650.00	2,750.00
ORWIGSBURG, ST. PAUL-7013	0.00	0.00	0.00	9,000.00	9,000.00	8,000.00
ORWIGSBURG RD, ZION-7014	0.00	0.00	0.00	500.00	250.00	250.00
PINE GROVE, ST. JOHN-7015	900.00	0.00	0.00	1,000.00	1,305.00	0.00
PINE GROVE, ST. PETER-7016	2,462.00	0.00	1,539.00	0.00	1,465.00	3,000.00
PINE GROVE RD 1, JACOBS-7017	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
PINE GROVE RD 1, OUTWOOD-7018	0.00	0.00	150.00	1,815.00	1,815.00	1,850.00
PINE GROVE, SALEM-HETZELS-7019	616.00	0.00	0.00	4,000.00	6,000.00	4,000.00
PORT CARBON, ST. PAUL-7020	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,000.00	800.00	1,000.00
MIDDLEPORT, ST. PAUL-7021	0.00	0.00	0.00	480.00	480.00	480.00
POTTSVILLE, TRINITY-7022	585.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	6,101.11	0.00
RAVINE, ST. MATTHEW-7023	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
REINERTON, ST. PETER-7024	500.00	0.00	0.00	1,200.00	1,465.00	0.00
SUMMER HILL, ST. PAUL-7027	1,000.00	0.00	1,000.00	0.00	2,653.07	0.00
TOWER CITY, ST. PAUL-7028	545.00	0.00	0.00	500.00	500.00	0.00
TREMONT, ST. JOHN-7029	250.00	0.00	0.00	300.00	300.00	300.00
VALLEY VIEW, TRINITY-7030	25.00	0.00	130.00	0.00	3,069.00	0.00
SCHUYLKILL HAVEN, JERUSALEM-7033	1,305.00	0.00	300.00	10,000.00	9,701.76	10,000.00
SCHUYLKILL DISTRICT MISC.	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
DISTRICT TOTALS	10,089.73	250.00	3,575.00	49,295.00	76,503.18	38,130.00

Total churches responding

28

28

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



## Scranton-Wilkes Barre

Location, Congregation	World	Homes &	Other	2024	2024	2025
	Hunger	Agencies	ELCA	Commit	Response	Commit
	2024	2024	2024			
ARCHBALD, ST. LUKE-8001	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
DUSHORE, SHEPHERD OF HILLS-8003	977.00	132.00	423.00	4,758.00	4,758.00	0.00
HOBBIE, ST. JAMES-8004	815.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,869.00	0.00
POND HILL, ST. MARK-8005	0.00	0.00	0.00	500.00	3,650.04	3,500.00
KINGSTON, HOLY TRINITY-8006	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,000.00	2,000.00	0.00
MOUNTAINTOP, ST. PAUL-8007	636.33	0.00	200.00	0.00	6,500.01	0.00
NANTICOKE, ST. JOHN-8008	<b>INACTIVE A/O 4/25/2024</b>					
ZENITH, ST. JAMES-8011	0.00	0.00	115.00	0.00	493.00	0.00
HUGHESTOWN, ST. PETER-8012	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,000.00	1,443.00	0.00
SAYRE, ST. JOHN-8013	1,158.00	0.00	400.00	0.00	3,508.00	0.00
NESCOPECK, FAITH UNITED-8016	710.00	0.00	0.00	5,000.00	5,442.00	5,000.00
SCRANTON, ST. PETER-8017	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
DALLAS, ST. PAUL-8018	441.07	250.00	1,929.94	11,489.00	6,800.00	11,194.00
TOWANDA, TRINITY-8019	0.00	0.00	0.00	4,075.00	2,650.00	4,075.00
WILKES-BARRE, GOOD SHEPHERD-8020	0.00	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	5,000.00	0.00
SCRANTON/WILKES-BARRE MISC.	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
DISTRICT TOTALS	4,737.40	382.00	3,067.94	28,822.00	51,113.05	23,769.00

Total churches responding

16

17

Note: Amounts above do not include benevo-

### West Berks

Location, Congregation	World	Homes &	Other	2024	2024	2025
	Hunger	Agencies	ELCA	Commit	Response	Commit
	2024	2024	2024			
KNAUERS, ALLEGHENY-9001	0.00	0.00	0.00	16,250.00	16,248.00	0.00
BERN TOWNSHIP, BERN-9002	1,500.00	0.00	1,306.50	3,000.00	3,000.00	3,000.00
BERNVILLE, FRIEDENS-9003	1,057.00	0.00	0.00	1,200.00	1,200.00	1,200.00
BIRDSBORO, ST. MARK-9004	1,623.00	0.00	0.00	6,000.00	4,104.00	5,500.00
GEIGERTOWN, ST. JAMES-9005	3,147.50	0.00	750.00	5,000.00	1,435.50	5,000.00
GOUGLERSVILLE, TRINITY-9007	0.00	0.00	0.00	600.00	600.00	0.00
GRILL, CHRIST-9008	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,100.00	1,100.00	0.00
JACKSONWALD, SCHWARZWALD-9009	316.00	0.00	0.00	12,000.00	12,000.00	12,000.00
LAURELDALE, CALVARY-9010	321.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	594.00	0.00
MOHNTON, ST. JOHN-9011	0.00	0.00	0.00	9,000.00	3,000.00	9,000.00
MT PENN, FAITH-9012	61.00	0.00	0.00	5,040.00	5,400.00	5,400.00
PLOWVILLE, ROBESON-9013	2,360.00	0.00	34.49	3,000.00	3,000.00	3,000.00
READING, CHRIST-9015	914.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5,100.00	5,200.00
READING, GOOD SHEPHERD-9016	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4,800.00	0.00
READING, HOPE-9019	1,615.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,081.00	0.00
READING, INCARNATION-9020	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,000.00	0.00
READING, NATIVITY-9021	330.00	0.00	1,746.00	3,500.00	3,212.00	3,500.00
READING, RENEWED SPIRIT-9024	1,829.00	0.00	0.00	45,000.00	45,000.00	45,000.00
READING, ST. MARK-9026	982.50	0.00	0.00	3,500.00	3,110.00	3,500.00
READING, ST. PAUL-9027	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,715.00	2,715.00	0.00
READING, TRINITY-9028	0.00	0.00	0.00	33,000.00	33,000.00	0.00
BETHEL, SALEM-9030	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
REIFFTON, REFORMATION-9031	3,965.00	0.00	200.00	22,742.00	22,189.53	0.00
ROBESONIA, ST. DANIEL-9032	1,882.79	0.00	1,202.00	0.00	3,225.00	0.00
ROBESONIA, TRINITY-9033	1,055.00	0.00	3,000.00	27,000.00	27,000.00	0.00
SHILLINGTON, GRACE-9035	546.00	0.00	0.00	8,000.00	8,000.00	8,000.00
SINKING SPRING, ST. JOHN-9036	0.00	0.00	0.00	6,523.50	6,460.97	0.00
STONY CREEK MILLS, BETHANY-9037	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,200.00	1,085.00	1,200.00
STOUCHSBURG, CHRIST-9038	1,548.00	0.00	812.00	0.00	400.00	0.00
WERNERSVILLE, TRINITY-9042	1,591.39	0.00	0.00	17,100.00	17,100.00	18,000.00
WEST LAWN, ADVENT-9043	95.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	18,621.88	18,000.00
WEST READING, BETHANY-9044	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
WOMELSDORF, ZION-9045	100.00	0.00	0.00	3,000.00	3,000.00	3,500.00
WYOMISSING, ATONEMENT-9046	1,550.55	0.00	0.00	62,000.00	62,000.04	50,000.00
WYOMISSING, COMMON GROUND MINISTRIES-9047	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	750.00
READING, HOPE'S TABLE - 9050	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
READING. COMMON GROUND RECOVERY MIN-	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	500.00
READING, HMONG COMMUNITY - 9052	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
WEST. BERKS MISC	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
TOTAL WEST. BERKS	28,389.73	0.00	9,050.99	297,470.50	321,781.92	201,250.00

Total churches responding

39

39

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



## **Section III**

# **Synod Committees and Ministry Teams**

## **WITNESS AND SERVICE MINISTRY TEAM**

One aspect of the Witness and Service Ministry Team is overseeing the NEPA Synod's Witness and Service Ministry Grants. For the fiscal year of 2024 (Feb 2024-Jan 2025), the Grants Team received \$50,500 worth of grant requests - which was more than the Team had to give! \$44,300 was awarded between 12 grant recipients. Grants always go to ministries of or connected to NEPA Synod congregations and ministry sites.

Many of the grants for 2024 supported various types of hunger ministries as we celebrated 50 Years of ELCA World Hunger such as : a collaborative community food ministry, a mobile food truck to deliver meals to the hungry and homeless, a congregational café, and a collaborative ministry providing warming space and meals to those living on the streets. Other grants supported summer youth outreach programs to kids in low economic neighborhoods, a resale boutique which provides affordable clothing and other items for those in need and which donates its proceeds to community organizations, and congregational initiatives to make more welcoming and accessible spaces.

The Team has already received several grant applications and is excited to see what other ministries will apply for a grant this year. To learn more, or to apply for a Witness and Service Ministry Grant or to apply for a Synod Loan from the Church Loan Development Fund, please visit the Synod's website at: <https://nepasynod.org/witness-service/>.

The Grants Team additionally serves as the 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 Ministry Team. In a world where we are often isolated and ministry can feel overwhelming, it is a gift that these Synod Ministry Teams share with one another – connecting the work each contributes to the larger Body of Christ and by being Synod together. This past year there have also been a few Cabinet meetings of all the ministry teams and groups of the Synod which has further encouraged support and communication amongst them as together we practice loving, healing, and engaging like Jesus through our various ministry focus. 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](http://www.nepasynod.org)) under "Ministry Teams" at the top.

Respectfully submitted,  
Deacon Kat Tigerman

## **RESTRUCTURING COMMITTEE**

While the current structure of Synod organization into Mission Districts has been in place for nearly 60 years, most if not all of us would agree that in numerous ways we are not the church of 60 years ago. What, then, do we need to do to set up the church of today to prepare for the church of 60 years into tomorrow, in keeping with the purpose of a Synod?

In many ways, we can liken answering this question – the mission of this group - to walking a tightrope. Picture a rope stretching from our current organizational structure to a new structure just beyond vision. How do we cross this expanse successfully?

In committee, we have been stepping cautiously forward in conversations, seeking to find a balance with the historical with the contemporary, the ideal with the practical, the expectations with the reality, pushes with pulls, and all of the above with the budget sheet.

The good news is that we are not walking this tightrope blindfolded. The committee is populated with diverse perspectives, deep knowledge, not a single person entirely certain they have all the right answers, and everyone in agreement that not all the current voices around the table even come close to providing the representation and feedback necessary to accomplish this task adequately. As the committee moves forward, it will begin to seek more voices through the Synod to give input on those next possible steps of reorganization, testing the line forward.

We will seek those voices because, as a committee, we recognize that walking tightropes requires not just balance, but some agility. We are determined that our movement be one of conviction of Synodical purpose, not just movement for movement's sake. However, there's a real risk – and we know it – of stalling in the middle of indecision. It will take focus, nimbleness, and a dose of courage to cross from one way of being organized to another. We will gather that courage together through gathering more broadly and continuing forward-thinking conversations together over the upcoming months. In that way, expect to hear more from the committee in upcoming months as we move beyond the table toward those conversations.

Respectfully submitted,  
Kristen Edelman-Weiner

## **GOD'S WORK, OUR HANDS STORYTELLERS**

"God's Work, Our Hands Storytellers" 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. You can find us on the synod website at <https://nepasynod.org/gwohstorytellers/>

Charlotte Gross and Georgia Suranofsky work together to coordinate the ministry. Charlotte focuses on the East Berks, Easton/ Bethlehem, 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, coordinating with Debbie Skinner. 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.

In addition to in person visits, we offer a variety of ways for congregations to have stories available to share. Synod News contains a monthly story ready for sharing in a variety of communication formats. Weekly e-news provides current information about where to find Mission Support Resources and Faith In Action Stories. The resources are available on the website under Resources section and the Faith in Action Stories at <https://nepasynod.org/faithinaction/> . Many of the stories that are shared are from grants that were given from the Witness and Service Team Ministry, supported by congregational mission support giving.

Our annual "thank you" note to congregations for their mission support giving including an invitation for a storyteller visit, contains 2 amazing stories and a message from the Bishop. 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.

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.

Submitted by:

Georgia Suranofsky [georgiasuranofsky@hotmail.com](mailto:georgiasuranofsky@hotmail.com)  
Charlotte Gross [charlotte.gross312@gmail.com](mailto:charlotte.gross312@gmail.com)

God's Work, Our Hands Storytelling Ministry Coordinators

## **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 an 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 working with companion synods, camping during synod assemblies, and assistance to congregations with energy audits, solar installations, and grant requests. 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



## **A-TEAM**

A-Team (different Ability Resource Team) ANNUAL REPORT, 2025 Synod Assembly  
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](http://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), Dcn Dawn Talley 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](mailto:jdsandberg@hotmail.com) with inquiries or for interest in volunteering on the A-Team.

Jean Sandberg, Convener

## **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

### **Updates since the last Bulletin of Reports:**

March 2024

The Racial Justice Team was asked to give input on the Reconciling In Christ Affirmation Statement being drafted by the LGBTQIA+ Task Force. Comments were discussed and submitted. The resolution was subsequently submitted to Reference and Counsel, and passed at the 2024 Synod Assembly.

April 2024

ELCA Youth Gathering Pre-Event at Emmanuel's in Bath: Co-convenor Samantha Drennan read the Synod Land Acknowledgement statement to the gathering, and gave background on its history and purpose. She and Jennifer Hall staffed an information table on the work of the Racial Justice Team, and provided youth with questions to provoke conversation.

October 2024

A racial justice training event was scheduled for February 2025, and planning commenced (it takes 3-4 months of work behind the scenes in order to coordinate such an event).

November 2024

Vance Blackfox, Indigenous Theologian and ELCA Director of Indigenous Ministries and Tribal Relations, presented a talk at Muhlenberg College. Brian Beissel and Samantha Drennan attended the talk and Q&A afterward. Samantha met with Vance the next day to further discuss ways in which we can be allies as part of the ELCA Truth and Healing Movement.

December 2024

Brandon Heavner wrote an article for the Synod Newsletter about the important work of racial justice.

Team members began to plan a first ever MLK Day of Prayer and Service in conjunction with Metropolitan Community Church of the Lehigh Valley. Jennifer Hall reported to the team about a Lenten resource from the ELCA called "Dismantle: An Anti White Supremacy Lenten Devotional."

#### January 2025

In collaboration with the Metropolitan Community Church of the Lehigh Valley (MCCLV) and the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod's Racial Justice Team & LGBTQ+ Taskforce, participants came together for the first annual MLK Day of Prayer and Service. MCCLV led a deeply moving and spiritual worship service, which included a Choral Reading of Letter from a Birmingham Jail with participants from the Synod (including Bishop Chris deForest) and from MCCLV. Although some service projects had to be dropped due to snow and ice that day, others went forward. Volunteers organized and sorted donations for Asa Packer Elementary School and the Allentown Rescue Mission. Helen Davis led a meditation activity, asking participants to think about how they are going to positively impact their congregations and/or communities as racial justice change agents.

#### February 2025

Thank you to the Rev. Carla Christopher for leading another meaningful and enlightening day of Racial Justice Training on February 8 at the Synod office. Deborah Graf, Jennifer Hall, Samantha Drennan, and Brian Beissel wrote articles about the struggle for racial justice as part of Black History Month. These were shared on the Synod website and on social media. These may be found at [nepasynod.org/racial-justice-team](https://nepasynod.org/racial-justice-team)

#### March 2025

The RJT decided to become a partner/member of the Association of White Lutherans for Racial Justice. This organization brings together people of white European descent, white-identifying members of the ELCA, and partners of other ethnicities to be a visible and active anti-racist witness for a multicultural church. The Association of White Lutherans for Racial Justice works within the wider church and in our own communities to advance racial justice. More details on the group can be found at [www.whitelutheransforracialjustice.org/](http://www.whitelutheransforracialjustice.org/).

As of this writing, the team is making plans for a presence at the "Connection Place" at the 2025 Synod Assembly.

Current Racial Justice Team members are Rev. Brian Beissel, Rev. Michelle Beissel, Rev. Colleen Cox, Rev. Samantha Drennan (co-convenor), Deacon Deborah Graf (co-convenor), Rev. Brandon Heavner, Rev. Jennifer Hall, Rev. Janelle Neubauer, Deacon Kat Tigerman.

A special thanks to Stacey Burke for an outstanding job of updating the RJT website and providing regular social media posts.

If working for justice is important to you, we would love to have you join us in this vital work!

## **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.

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 seventeen candidates for both rosters at various stages of the candidacy, including inquirers. We ask that you and your worshipping communities hold candidates and newly ordained in your prayers.

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.

Respectfully submitted,  
Rev. Jennifer Heavner

## **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 for 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 resources for free at these pride festivals. Festivals we were present at in 2024 include Northeast PA Pride (Wilkes Barre), Pocono Pride (Stroudsburg), and Lehigh Valley Pride (Allentown/Bethlehem). In 2025 we intend to be present at these three festivals again, as well as assist congregations participating in Berks Pride (Reading). Special thanks to Stacey Burke (synod staff), and Eric Gombert (synod staff) for coordinating various details and logistics.

Additionally, the NEPA Synod LGBTQIA+ Taskforce hosts an educational event called "We Love" which is expected to occur in early 2026. In the meantime, we are promoting a similar event that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod is hosting called "In God's Image" which is a learning day to help congregations explore how to fully welcome LGBTQIA+ persons. The next In God's Image will be held on Saturday, October 4, 2025 9 a.m. – 2 p.m., at Trinity Lutheran Church in Lansdale, featuring a performance by Flamy Grant! Registration will open in September. <https://ministrylink.org/inclusive-communities/>

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 one of the taskforce co-conveners or a current member of the taskforce if you'd like to be involved and 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 LGBTQ+ 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. This year, the LLM Formation and Advisory Team provided input and guidance in the compensation guidelines.

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 four First Call Leaders and their gifts. I encourage first call leaders to join Gaining Strength cohorts.

The 2026 Compensation Guidelines continue the move moving toward greater equity between the rosters. *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! Growing Young, Gaining Strength, and Going Beyond Death to Life so we can love, heal, and engage like Jesus.

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

## 2026 MINIMUM COMPENSATION GUIDELINES

### ROSTERED PASTORS 2026 Minimum Salary Guidelines

These guidelines represent a 2% increase over 2025.

Resolved that:

1) The 2026 *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	2026 Recommended Salary Range (including housing allowance)		2026 Recommended Salary Range (parsonage provided)	
	Low	High	Low	High
0-1	\$63,884	\$70,295	\$44,400	\$48,841
2-3	\$65,297	\$71,288	\$45,813	\$50,403
4-7	\$66,713	\$73,385	\$47,235	\$51,955
8-10	\$69,505	\$76,497	\$50,074	\$55,071
11-15	\$71,669	\$86,002	\$52,186	\$57,404
16-20	\$75,208	\$90,248	\$54,633	\$65,561
21+	\$78,747	\$102,371	\$59,265	\$77,045

**\*\* 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 2026, 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 ELCA Church Council endorses a balance of cost-sharing between congregations and plan members, reflected in all the ELCA-Primary health benefit options offered by Portico, effective Jan. 1, 2026. Each fall, congregations should engage in conversation with their sponsored plan member(s) to determine the option that best fits their needs and then make their selection during Portico's annual enrollment.
- 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 2026 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. The only difference between the preparation of pastors and deacons is the length of an internship.

These guidelines represent another step towards pay equity between the rosters.

**Resolved that:**

**1) The 2026 *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	2026 Recommended Salary Range With Master's Degree		2026 Recommended Salary Range With Bachelor's Degree	
	Low	High	Low	High
0-1	\$58,944	\$64,855	\$47,313	\$52,099
2-3	\$60,713	\$66,382	\$49,096	\$53,915
4-7	\$62,141	\$68,355	\$50,601	\$55,660
8-10	\$64,968	\$71,496	\$53,607	\$58,974
11-15	\$67,142	\$80,569	\$55,873	\$67,047
16-20	\$70,712	\$84,852	\$59,637	\$71,109
21+	\$74,283	\$96,568	\$63,404	\$82,427

**\*\* 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 ELCA Church Council endorses a balance of cost-sharing between congregations and plan members, reflected in all the ELCA-Primary health benefit options offered by Portico, effective Jan. 1, 2026. Each fall, congregations should engage in conversation with their sponsored plan member(s) to determine the option that best fits their needs and then make their selection during Portico's annual enrollment.

7) Deacons are considered to be employees of the congregation; therefore, they are to be included in Worker's Compensation insurance. The congregation is also responsible for half of the deacon's social security liability.

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.

**LICENSED LAY MINISTERS**  
**2026 Minimum Salary Guidelines**

The recommended compensation range for Licensed Lay Ministers is between **\$22.50- \$30.00** per hour, negotiated between the LLM and congregation(s). This includes time for hospital visits, meetings, and other ministry functions during the week.

LLM's are also to be paid the appropriate supply rate for preparing and leading worship on Sundays. The latest supply minister guidelines are at <https://nepasynod.org/supply/>.

LLM's are reimbursed according to IRS guidelines per mile for business travel.

An example:

Maria is a new LLM. In the course of the month, she drove 100 miles for the congregation, spent 10 hours per week on ministry (40 hours total), and led worship on 2 different Sundays.

Her **minimum** compensation for the month would be: \$70 (for mileage) + \$900 (40 hours\* \$22.50/hr.) + \$350 for 2 Sundays (\$175 \*2)). The total is: \$1,320.

## **Faith Formation Resource Ministry Team**

This has been an exciting year for our team, and we are excited about the changes that are to come. The year began with a successful in-person Learning Ministries Day at Jordan, Orefield. This year we had a four-person panel, instead of one keynote speaker, all discussing the question – how to be a Christian in a world hostile to our faith? The panelists were from different areas of society, each bringing their own perspective to the discussion. The panelists were Dr. Martin Otto-Zimmann from United Seminary, Rev. Erin Jones from LAMPa, Lehigh County Detective Michael Sorrentino and Rev. Daniel Brettell, pastor and Chaplain at St. Luke's. These four people gave all of the people attending the event different perspectives on living out the faith we all share. It was an extremely successful event. The team has already started planning for a new version of Learning Ministries Day in 2026. We plan on having four mini-events scattered throughout the synod instead of one big event. Stay tuned for more information. Remember also, that members of the team are available to visit with congregational councils or committees to help with many congregational issues. Finally, please check out the on-line catalogue of the synod Resource Center. There are more than 25,000 items for you to check out on any church issue.

Cheryl Statham  
Convenor

# **COMMITTEE ON GOVERNANCE**

## **1. CHANGES TO THE CONTINUING RESOLUTIONS and OTHER RESOLUTIONS OF ONGOING IMPACT.**

Over the last two years, the Committee on Governance reviewed all of the synod's Continuing Resolutions and Other Resolutions of Ongoing Impact. This kind of review is called for in the resolutions themselves (III.1.). The committee's recommendations for updates and other changes to the Synod Council on April 12, 2025. The council approved these changes, which are shown here. The other resolutions which were not changed can be found on the synod's website. The members of the assembly are welcome to challenge any of these changes, or seek other revisions, through motions made from the assembly floor.

### **CONTINUING RESOLUTIONS**

<b>CURRENT PROVISION</b>	<b>RECOMMENDED PROVISION</b>	<b>RATIONALE</b>
S9.01.A08.d. All background checks for nominees and newly elected officers will entail a criminal background check. A financial background check will be completed for nominees for treasurer. The Executive Committee shall decide whether additional types of background checks are appropriate for each officer position.	S9.01.A08.d. All background checks for nominees and newly elected officers will entail a criminal background check and a child abuse background check. A financial background check will be completed for nominees for treasurer. The Executive Committee shall decide whether additional types of background checks are appropriate for each officer position.	It is important to add a child abuse background check.

S11.01.A13. There shall be seven Ministry Teams: 1) Worship, 2) Spirituality, 3) Witness and Service, 4) Youth, Young Adult, and Family, 5) Faith Formation, 6) Connection Building, and 7) Leadership Development.	S11.01.A25. The Synod Council shall establish additional Ministry Teams as may be beneficial from time to time to carry out the fundamental ministries of the synod.	Recent changes by which some Ministry Teams are functioning, being added, or not functioning make having more flexibility desirable.
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## OTHER RESOLUTIONS OF ONGOING IMPACT

### CHAPTER I – Synod Policy, Officers, Elections, Leadership

CURRENT PROVISION	RECOMMENDED PROVISION	RATIONALE
3. The responses of the ELCA Churchwide Assembly or of the Church Council of the ELCA to memorials initiated in this synod shall be reported to the next Synod Assembly through the report of the Synod Council.	Delete.	This information is available from the ELCA.
4. In keeping with Chapter 6 of its constitution, this synod is committed to encountering and sharing God's word of love given in Jesus Christ and to encouraging all people to engage in lives of service. To accomplish these goals, the synod's strategic directions are as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deepen the spiritual lives of people to help them see God at work and help others see that too.</li> <li>• Build a network that uses our gifts, skills, and resources to maximize</li> </ul>	Delete.	The Synod Council approved the current strategic directions proposed in January 2021 by Bishop deForest.



<p>what we can do together and strengthen congregations in their ministry.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop leaders, both lay and ordained, who are equipped and engaged in God's mission in daily life.</li> <li>• Enhance lives of service to deal with social needs and issues that arise in local communities or across the synod.</li> <li>• Strengthen the work being done with children, youth, and families to support ministries as they engage their communities.</li> </ul>		
<p>5. Those who serve on the bishop's executive staff shall be required to complete the Child Abuse History Check and the PA State Police Criminal Record Check every 36 months, as required by law; and the Criminal Record Check shall be required of support staff as well, with the synod paying the cost.</p>	<p>Those who serve on the synod's staff shall be required to complete the Child Abuse History Check, the Pennsylvania State Police Criminal Record Check, and the FBI Criminal Background Check every 60 months, as required by law.</p>	<p>The revision requires these checks of all synod staff, not only what was traditionally called the "executive staff."</p>
<p>8. At least one youth below the age of 21 shall be included in each of the lay male and lay female categories on the ballot for voting members of the ELCA churchwide assemblies.</p>	<p>Delete.</p>	<p>This provision is not needed because the ELCA defines these categories.</p>
<p>9. Voting members, congregations, mission districts, and ministry teams presenting issues to the Committee of</p>	<p>Voting members, congregations, mission districts, and ministry teams presenting issues to</p>	<p>The Committee of Reference and Counsel may receive resolutions later than</p>

Reference and Counsel shall be urged to submit these issues in writing at least 45 days prior to the assembly. The Committee of Reference and Counsel is urged to mail a report of its recommended actions on those issues to voting members at least 30 days prior to the assembly.	the Committee of Reference and Counsel shall be urged to submit these issues in writing at least 45 days prior to the assembly.	the current mailing recommendation.
10. Resolutions received by the Committee of Reference and Counsel fewer than fourteen days before the opening of the Synod Assembly will not be considered at that assembly. For such resolutions to be considered, a motion needs (a) to be presented from the floor to suspend the rules (an action that is not debatable) and (b) to be affirmed by a two-thirds vote.	Resolutions received by the Committee of Reference and Counsel fewer than twenty-one days before the opening of the Synod Assembly will not be considered at that assembly. For such resolutions to be considered, a motion needs (a) to be presented from the floor to suspend the rules (an action that is not debatable) and (b) to be affirmed by a two-thirds vote.	This change will assist the Committee of Reference and Counsel by providing more time to deal with the resolutions that are presented.
11. A missionary serving under a call from the Global Missions Program Unit who is unable to attend assemblies of the synod shall be regarded by the Committee on Registration and Excuse as excused.	A missionary serving under a call from the ELCA program unit dealing with global missions who is unable to attend assemblies of the synod shall be regarded by the Committee on Registration and Excuse as excused.	The terminology for the ELCA's global mission unit has changed.
12. It is the policy of this synod that display space and forum time at synod	12. It is the policy of this synod that display space and forum time at synod	The name 1517 Media has been changed.

<p>assemblies are available only to congregations, mission districts, ministry teams, committees, task forces and teams of the synod; those agencies and institutions which are a direct outreach ministry of the ELCA and/or the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA educational institutions or those of our full communion partners, and the Pennsylvania Council of Churches; Lutheran fraternal benefit societies; and 1517 Media, which is the only group with permission to sell goods or services. Other church-related groups and individuals may apply to the Synod Council for a onetime exception to the policy on displays or forums at an assembly. The decision of the council is final.</p>	<p>assemblies are available only to congregations, mission districts, ministry teams, committees, task forces and teams of the synod; those agencies and institutions which are a direct outreach ministry of the ELCA and/or the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA educational institutions or those of our full communion partners, and the Pennsylvania Council of Churches; Lutheran fraternal benefit societies; and Augsburg Fortress, which is the only group with permission to sell goods or services. Other church-related groups and individuals may apply to the Synod Council for a onetime exception to the policy on displays or forums at an assembly. The decision of the council is final</p>	
<p>14. The synod calls upon each member of the synod to exercise his or her own political responsibility, as his or her own faith and conscience demand, including learning how to be involved in the</p>	<p>The synod calls upon each member of the synod to exercise political responsibility as the member's own faith and conscience demand, including learning how to be involved in the</p>	<p>This is an attempted improvement in the wording without changing the meaning.</p>

political decision-making process.	political decision-making process.	
15. The synodical bishop may, at his or her discretion, provide legal assistance and/or bail for pastors and members of congregations who, for reason of Christian concern for human rights and eschewing violence, are subject to arrest and/or incarceration.	Delete.	The bishop has control of a discretionary fund and can use that fund for this purpose if desired.
<p>21. Resolved, That the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the ELCA establish a requirement for Racial Justice/Anti-Racism training for rostered ministers, Synodically Authorized Lay Ministers, and full communion partners serving ELCA congregations in the NEPA Synod at least every three years; and be it further</p> <p>Resolved, That the Office of the Bishop of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, in partnership with the Racial Justice Team, will offer at least one racial justice/anti-racism training workshop every two to three years at the same cost or less to participants as Boundary Training; and be it further</p> <p>Resolved, That the Racial Justice Team, in partnership with Black and Indigenous People</p>	<p>Resolved, That the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the ELCA establish a requirement for Racial Justice/Anti-Racism training for rostered ministers, Licensed Lay Ministers, and full communion partners serving ELCA congregations in the NEPA Synod at least every three years; and be it further</p> <p>Resolved, That the Office of the Bishop of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, in partnership with the Racial Justice Team, will offer at least one racial justice/anti-racism training workshop every two to three years at the same cost or less to participants as Boundary Training; and be it further</p>	The current term, Licensed Lay Minister, should be used.

<p>of Color (BIPOC), will continue its own ongoing education in anti-racism being aware of updates in curricula in order to keep the training current, will commit to engaging BIPOC colleagues to bring an awareness of injustices, and will encourage and offer opportunities for the bishop's staff, the leadership of each congregation, including rostered and lay, to set aside a time each year to reflect on how racism, implicit bias, and privilege impact the church's life and mission. (July 23, 2022)</p>	<p>Resolved, That the Racial Justice Team, in partnership with Black and Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC), will continue its own ongoing education in anti-racism being aware of updates in curricula in order to keep the training current, will commit to engaging BIPOC colleagues to bring an awareness of injustices, and will encourage and offer opportunities for the bishop's staff, the leadership of each congregation, including rostered and lay, to set aside a time each year to reflect on how racism, implicit bias, and privilege impact the church's life and mission. (July 23, 2022)</p>	
<p>23. Resolved, That the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America reaffirms its commitment to welcoming and loving the whole body of Christ by adopting this updated affirmation statement: <i>The Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod welcomes all people to join us in celebrating God's love. We affirm that we are divinely and wonderfully made in</i></p>	<p>Resolved, That the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America reaffirms its commitment to welcoming and loving the whole body of Christ by adopting this updated affirmation statement: <i>The Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod welcomes all people to join us in</i></p>	<p>The second action called for was a once-and-done event, not something to be done on an ongoing basis.</p>

<p>God's image, and that we strengthen and enrich our whole church body when we are welcoming to everyone. We encourage and invite people of all sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, races and ethnicities, ages, socioeconomic statuses, abilities, citizenship and migration statuses to participate fully in the life and work of the church. We commit ourselves to supporting social and racial equity.</p> <p>And be it further Resolved, That the Assembly direct the Secretary of the Synod to forward a copy of this resolution to Reconciling Works to reaffirm our status and commitment to being recognized as a Reconciling in Christ Synod; and be it further Resolved, That the Northeastern PA Synod in assembly affirms that the NEPA Synod Council will ensure that an annual donation is made to Reconciling Works in keeping with our commitment to the program. (SA:2024)</p>	<p>celebrating God's love. We affirm that we are divinely and wonderfully made in God's image, and that we strengthen and enrich our whole church body when we are welcoming to everyone. We encourage and invite people of all sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, races and ethnicities, ages, socioeconomic statuses, abilities, citizenship and migration statuses to participate fully in the life and work of the church. We commit ourselves to supporting social and racial equity.</p> <p>and be it further Resolved, That the Northeastern PA Synod in assembly affirms that the NEPA Synod Council will ensure that an annual donation is made to Reconciling Works in keeping with our commitment to the program. (SA:2024)</p>	
<p>24. Resolved, That the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the ELCA establish a requirement for Racial Justice/Anti-Racism training for rostered ministers, Synodically</p>	<p>Resolved, That the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the ELCA establish a requirement for Racial Justice/Anti-Racism training for rostered ministers,</p>	<p>The proposal updates the terminology from Synodically Authorized Lay Ministers to Licensed Lay Ministers.</p>

<p>Authorized Lay Ministers, and full communion partners serving ELCA congregations in the NEPA Synod at least every three years; and be it further</p> <p>Resolved, That the Office of the Bishop of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, in partnership with the Racial Justice Team, will offer at least one racial justice/anti-racism training workshop every two to three years at the same cost or less to participants as Boundary Training; and be it further</p> <p>Resolved, That the Racial Justice Team, in partnership with Black and Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC), will continue its own ongoing education in anti-racism being aware of updates in curricula in order to keep the training current, will commit to engaging BIPOC colleagues to bring an awareness of injustices, and will encourage and offer opportunities for the bishop's staff, the leadership of each congregation, including rostered and lay, to set aside a time each year to reflect on how racism, implicit bias, and privilege impact the church's life and mission. (SC: 7-23-2022)</p>	<p>Licensed Lay Ministers, and full communion partners serving ELCA congregations in the NEPA Synod at least every three years; and be it further</p> <p>Resolved, That the Office of the Bishop of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, in partnership with the Racial Justice Team, will offer at least one racial justice/anti-racism training workshop every two to three years at the same cost or less to participants as Boundary Training; and be it further</p> <p>Resolved, That the Racial Justice Team, in partnership with Black and Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC), will continue its own ongoing education in anti-racism being aware of updates in curricula in order to keep the training current, will commit to engaging BIPOC colleagues to bring an awareness of injustices, and will encourage and offer opportunities for the bishop's staff, the leadership of each congregation, including rostered and lay, to set aside</p>	
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	a time each year to reflect on how racism, implicit bias, and privilege impact the church's life and mission. (SC: 7-23-2022)	
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## CHAPTER II – Financial Matters

CURRENT PROVISION	RECOMMENDED PROVISION	RATIONALE
1. The Synod Council shall seek at least two bids for any project costing more than \$5,000.	When prudent, the Synod Council shall seek at least two bids for any project costing more than \$5,000.	There could be circumstances when time does not allow the solicitation and evaluation of multiple bids.
2. The investment philosophy of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod shall be as follows: Investment in the ELCA Mission Investment Fund shall be continued. The amount of the commitment shall be reviewed annually by the Finance Committee of the Synod Council. Pennsylvania's Prudent Investor Rule shall apply. Exceptions may be authorized by the Synod Council. Investment decisions shall reflect the social concerns and policy statements of the synod and the ELCA.	The investment philosophy of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod shall be as follows: Investment in the ELCA Mission Investment Fund shall be considered. The amount of the commitment shall be reviewed annually by the Finance Committee of the Synod Council. Pennsylvania's Prudent Investor Rule shall apply. Exceptions may be authorized by the Synod Council. Investment decisions shall reflect the social concerns and policy statements of the synod and the ELCA.	The proposal adds more flexibility in point a. by changing "continued" to "considered."
3. The "Declaration of Trust" here following shall be the synod's <i>Church Loan</i>	All assets currently held in the Church Loan Fund, including income	The modest change at the beginning of the provision attempts to



<p><i>Development Fund.</i> All assets currently held in the Church Loan Development Fund, including income earned on these assets, will be used to provide loans to congregations and to assist in the purchase or improvement or capital repair of real estate and to assist mission congregations. A representative of the Synod's Witness and Service Ministry Team shall meet with the congregation to discuss their needs and appropriateness of a loan from these funds and to recommend terms to be reviewed and approved by the Finance Committee before submission to Synod Council for authorization. The amount of any loan should not exceed 15% of the assets of the fund, including principal balances on other outstanding loans, as determined at the time of the loan. The interest rate shall be zero for new mission congregations up to 1% below the Federal Reserve prime rate for all other loans. Each loan is to be secured by a judgment note or real estate mortgage maturing in not more than seven years.</p>	<p>earned on these assets, will be used to provide loans to congregations and to assist in the purchase or improvement or capital repair of real estate and to assist mission congregations. A representative of the Synod's Witness and Service Ministry Team shall meet with the congregation to discuss their needs and appropriateness of a loan from these funds and to recommend terms to be reviewed and approved by the Finance Committee before submission to Synod Council for authorization. The amount of any loan should not exceed 15% of the assets of the fund, including principal balances on other outstanding loans, as determined at the time of the loan. The interest rate shall be zero for new mission congregations up to 1% below the Federal Reserve prime rate for all other loans. Each loan is to be secured by a judgment note or real estate mortgage maturing in not more than seven years.</p>	<p>be more direct and reflect current wording.</p>
<p>5. Except where the donor specifies otherwise, a</p>	<p>Delete</p>	<p>Enough time has passed since the</p>

<p>bequest naming the Eastern Pennsylvania Synod or the Lutheran Ministerium of Pennsylvania shall be allocated to the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA, or the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA, according to the place of probate of the person's will, subject to these further rules:</p> <p>Should the decedent be a resident of neither synod, the allocation shall be made to the synod in which the person last resided.</p> <p>Should a case arise which is not covered by the foregoing rules or in which their literal application would frustrate the probable intent of the decedent, the officers of the two synods shall resolve the matter according to their best judgment of the probable intent.</p>		<p>Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod was formed in the late 1960s that this provision concerning bequests to the Ministerium of Pennsylvania and the Eastern Pennsylvania Synod should no longer be needed.</p>
<p>6. The treasurer shall be authorized to place earned income that has not otherwise been designated for spending into a common fund (currently the Mission Development Fund) to be used for special projects or for synod budget items as designated from time to time by the Synod Council. Should an emergency arise</p>	<p>The treasurer shall be authorized to place earned income that has not otherwise been designated for spending into the Mission Development Fund to be used for special projects or for synod budget items as designated from time to time by the Synod Council. Should an emergency arise between meetings of</p>	<p>The change attempts to make the provision more specific.</p>

between meetings of the Synod Council, the treasurer shall be authorized to expend up to \$5,000 from the fund upon unanimous consent of the other officers and the chairperson of the Finance Committee.	the Synod Council, the treasurer shall be authorized to expend up to \$5,000 from the fund upon unanimous consent of the other officers and the chairperson of the Finance Committee.	
8. The Synod Council shall set an annual spending policy for the Mission Development Fund, the Student Education Fund, the Leadership Development Fund, and the Social Ministry Fund based on the percentages of the funds' average asset values over the previous five-year period.	The Synod Council, advised by the Finance Committee, shall set an annual spending policy for the Mission Development Fund, the Student Education Fund, the Leadership Development Fund, and the Social Ministry Fund. This annual spending policy shall be based on a percentage of each fund's respective five-year rolling average of that fund's asset values.	The revision acknowledges the role of the Finance Committee and attempts to explain more clearly how the annual spending plan is determined.
9. All income and appreciation from the Clyde Kelchner II Fund (the corpus of which represents the original bequest) shall be deposited in the Clyde Kelchner I Fund. The Finance Committee shall establish a spending proposal each year based on a percentage of the three-year rolling average of the sum of the two funds. The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia	All income and appreciation from the Clyde Kelchner II Fund (the corpus of which represents the original bequest) shall be deposited in the Clyde Kelchner I Fund. The Synod Council, advised by the Finance Committee, shall establish a spending proposal each year based on a percentage of the three-year rolling average of the sum of	Then revision makes the Synod Council responsible for determining the amount to be spent, which is more appropriate than having the Finance Committee make that determination.

or its successor shall be advised each year after the audit what amount will be available for scholarships in the forthcoming year.	the two funds. The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia or its successor shall be advised each year after the audit what amount will be available for scholarships in the forthcoming year.	
10. To ensure the participation of the synod bishop in the annual ELCA Bishop's Academy, each year the bishop shall contribute up to \$500 from his or her continuing education funds toward the Academy expenses. Any expense above \$500 will be charged to the staff travel budget line in the synod's spending plan.	To facilitate the participation of the synod bishop in the annual ELCA Bishop's Academy, each year \$500 shall be contributed from the bishop's continuing education fund toward the Academy expenses. Any expense above \$500 will be charged to the staff travel budget line in the synod's budget.	It was deemed inappropriate to tell the bishop how to spend his/her education funds.
12. The Prosser, Pahse, Mission Fund shall be renamed the Mission Development Fund and, to the fullest extent possible, the annual reports of that fund shall indicate the contributions that have gone into that fund specifying (a) the donors, (b) the original amounts given, and (c) the calendar years in which those gifts were made.	To the fullest extent possible, the annual reports of the Mission Development Fund shall indicate the contributions that have gone into that fund specifying (a) the donors, (b) the original amounts given, and (c) the calendar years in which those gifts were made.	The name of the fund was changed and the fund has been operating under its new name for several years. The change has been completed.
14. Resolved, That the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve the following Corporate Resolution in regards to	Resolved, That the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve the following Corporate Resolution in regards to	The names in the original resolution include persons no longer holding office in the synod.

<p>the Florence Y. Flach Trust:</p> <p><i>Resolved</i>, That the following are Authorized Entity Representatives and a minimum of four of them is/are required in order to take such actions and execute such documents on behalf of the Corporation with respect to its agreement with Wells Fargo: Christopher deForest, Kristen Edelman-Weiner, Donald Boyer, and Carl Shankweiler.</p> <p><i>Resolved</i>, That Wells Fargo shall be fully protected by relying upon this Resolution and shall be indemnified and held harmless from any and all claims, demands, expenses, losses or damages, including reasonable attorney fees related to Wells Fargo's reliance on this Resolution.</p> <p><i>Resolved</i>, That this Resolution shall replace and supersede any prior Resolution on this subject in conflict herewith. (July 23, 2022)</p>	<p>the Florence Y. Flach Trust:</p> <p><i>Resolved</i>, That the following are Authorized Entity Representatives and a minimum of four of them are required in order to take such actions and execute such documents on behalf of the Corporation with respect to its agreement with Wells Fargo: the synod bishop, the synod vice president, the synod treasurer, and the synod secretary.</p> <p><i>Resolved</i>, That Wells Fargo shall be fully protected by relying upon this Resolution and shall be indemnified and held harmless from any and all claims, demands, expenses, losses or damages, including reasonable attorney fees related to Wells Fargo's reliance on this Resolution.</p> <p><i>Resolved</i>, That this Resolution shall replace and supersede any prior Resolution on this subject in conflict herewith. (July 23, 2022)</p>	
<p>16. <i>Resolved</i>, That the interest rate for loans from the Church Loan Fund be set at three percent beginning from the time of this resolution's adoption,</p>	<p>No change in wording, but move this provision to position number three in this section.</p>	<p>This resolution is important and should be prominent; it relates to other nearby provisions near the beginning of this section.</p>

other than for loans to new mission congregations for which the interest rate shall continue to be zero percent in keeping with Continuing Resolution II.3. (SC: 11-19-2022)		
17. Resolved, That, if given legal clearance, the synod charge a one percent management fee for administering the special funds under its control. (December 10, 2022)	Resolved, That the synod charge a one percent management fee for administering the special funds under its control. (December 10, 2022)	The fee is now established and is being charged.

### **CHAPTER III – ELCA/Synod Related Organizations, Committees, Ministry Teams**

<b>CURRENT PROVISION</b>	<b>RECOMMENDED PROVISION</b>	<b>RATIONALE</b>
1. The Constitution Committee shall review annually the Continuing Resolutions and Other Resolutions with Ongoing Impact and recommend to the Synod Assembly the repeal or replacement of any resolutions that the committee deems no longer applicable to the life of the synod.	The Governance Committee shall review annually the Continuing Resolutions and Other Resolutions with Ongoing Impact and recommend to the Synod Assembly the repeal or replacement of any resolutions that the committee deems no longer applicable to the life of the synod.	The name of this committee has been changed.
2. The Leadership Development Ministry	The Leadership Development	The change recognizes that the final

<p>Team shall annually determine and publish guidelines for minimum base salaries for clergy and other rostered leaders.</p>	<p>Ministry Team shall annually determine and publish compensation guidelines for rostered and licensed leaders for adoption at the synod assembly.</p>	<p>approval for these guidelines comes from the synod assembly, as should be the case,</p>
<p>5. The following expectations shall inform the synod's ongoing relationship with the ELCA's social ministry organizations on its territory:</p> <p>The synod shall provide moral and financial support to the ELCA agencies and institutions on its territory.</p> <p>The social ministry organizations shall seek to coordinate their programs and ministry with the total ministry of the church on this territory.</p> <p>The social ministry organizations shall report annually to the Synod Assembly.</p> <p>The social ministry organizations shall seek the approval of the synod prior to any financial appeals among the congregations of the synod.</p> <p>The social ministry organizations shall consult with the bishop</p>	<p>5. The following expectations shall inform the synod's ongoing relationship with the ELCA's social ministry organizations on its territory:</p> <p>a. The synod shall provide moral and financial support to the ELCA agencies and institutions on its territory.</p> <p>b. The synod shall seek to incorporate the social ministry organizations' programs and ministry with the total ministry of the church on this territory.</p> <p>c. The Synod Assembly shall receive an annual report from the social ministry organizations.</p> <p>d. The synod shall have prior approval to any financial appeals made by the social ministry organizations among the</p>	<p>We want to place the ownership of these resolutions on the synod rather than the social ministry organizations of the ELCA on our territory.</p>

of the synod concerning the employment of any rostered person whose call shall be issued by the Synod Council.	<p>congregations of the synod.</p> <p>e. The synod bishop shall consult with the social ministry organizations concerning the employment of any rostered person whose call shall be issued by the Synod Council.</p>	
8. The Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod recognizes the Good Shepherd Home Rehabilitation Network, Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries, and Lutheran Congregational Services as social ministry organizations affiliated with the ELCA. Further, the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod affirms the caring ministry of these agencies and institutions and calls upon its members to support that ministry through their prayers and gifts.	The Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod recognizes the Good Shepherd Rehabilitation Network, Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries, and Liberty Lutheran as social ministry organizations affiliated with the ELCA. Further, the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod affirms the caring ministry of these agencies and institutions and calls upon its members to support that ministry through their prayers and gifts.	The names of two of the agencies in this provision need to be updated.
10. Specialized ministries of the synod, the ELCA, or its partners that request to do so shall be given the opportunity to share their stories with the Synod Assembly in a brief manner.	Specialized ministries of the synod, the ELCA, or its partners that request to do so shall be given the opportunity to share their stories with the Synod Assembly in a brief manner by	This provision aims to allow flexibility in how the agencies present their information.



	video or in person as determined by the Assembly Planning Committee.	
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## CHAPTER V – Congregations, Mission Districts, Clusters

CURRENT PROVISION	RECOMMENDED PROVISION	RATIONALE
6. Each congregation council shall submit a report annually to the bishop regarding compensation of rostered leaders, paying particular attention to the section related to steps that will be taken to raise compensation to minimum levels if they are not currently being met. The bishop and his/her associates shall consult with congregation councils where minimums are not being met. Consultation will automatically occur after the filing of the annual "Report for Ordained Minister Under Call From A Congregation" or the "Report for Associate in Ministry Under Call From A Congregation." All consultation shall be handled through the Office of the Bishop. With the goal of developing a process to achieve just and equitable compensation, the bishop may appoint, or the congregation council or	Delete	The constitution requires rostered leaders to submit an annual report, listing compensation. This basic concern is also covered by the next provision, Number 7.

rostered leader may request, specially trained consultants to facilitate continuing discussion. The bishop or his/her designee shall remind congregation councils of the importance of the housing equity allowance as a benefit to pastors in parsonages.		
7. In accordance with S14.05. of the Synod Constitution, all rostered leaders shall complete the annual report for the bishop. This report lists compensation.	7. In accordance with S14.15. and 14.34. of the Synod Constitution, all rostered leaders shall complete the annual report for the bishop. This report lists compensation.	The reference to the constitution is updated.
11. Congregations of this synod considering a major capital expenditure are advised to consult with the bishop's designated representative before starting a major project involving capital expenditures.	11. Before starting a major project involving capital expenditures, congregations of the synod are encouraged to consult with the bishop's designated representative.	Reworded.
12. Congregational leaders are encouraged to educate members as to how Mission Support funds are used, employing print and media resources created by the synod and the ELCA.	12. Congregational leaders are encouraged to inform members as to how Mission Support funds are used.	Reworded for simplicity.
13. The bishop and his/her associates shall raise the issue of compensation publicly (at Synod Assemblies, mission district meetings, etc.) and give testimony to it as a matter of	13. The bishop and his/her associates shall publicly raise the issue of compensation for all church employees, rostered and lay, at	Reworded to make it clear that all church employees are to be considered.

economic justice for those who serve the church.	Synod Assemblies, mission district meetings, etc., and give testimony to it as a matter of economic justice for those who serve the church.	
15. In arriving at a salary and benefits package, additional consideration shall be given to (a) prior work experience, especially in the case of “second career” leaders; (b) size and complexity of the employing congregation; (c) cost of living in different areas of the synod; and (d) performance and achievement factors.	Delete	These issues are being raised in the compensation guidelines.
16. Congregations of the synod are urged to review annually the wages and benefits provided to lay employees, seeking to ensure that wages are commensurate with skills, expectations and responsibilities; the possibility of offering health benefits is explored when needed and possible; opportunities to gain new skills are provided; and a forum for addressing concerns or grievances is made available. Congregations are also urged to provide unemployment insurance for their lay employees.	16. Congregations of the synod are urged to review annually the wages and benefits provided to lay employees, seeking to ensure that wages are commensurate with skills, expectations and responsibilities; the possibility of offering health benefits is explored when needed; opportunities to gain new skills are provided; and a forum for addressing concerns or grievances is made available.	The words “and possible” make it too easy for congregations to say that this concern is beyond their ability to address.

	<p>Congregations are also urged to provide unemployment insurance for their lay employees.</p>	
<p>18. For a congregation in which the pastor(s) live in church-owned housing, the congregation council should review periodically the residential facilities to determine their safety and adequacy for the achievement of the purpose of the congregation in the community.</p>	<p>18. For a congregation in which a rostered leader lives in church-owned housing, the congregation council should review periodically the residential facilities to determine their safety and adequacy.</p>	<p>Reworded for the sake of clarity and to include deacons.</p>
<p>19. The synod encourages all congregations that enter a dissolution process to set aside an amount at least equal to the contribution requested by the Lutheran Archives Center at Philadelphia, the interest of which will be utilized to provide perpetual care for these records. If the assets of said congregations and agencies should come to the treasury of the synod without a grant to the Lutheran Archives Center having been made, the synod will forward the appropriate amount to the Lutheran Archives Center provided that the congregation's assets are sufficient to cover such a grant.</p>	<p>Congregations that anticipate closing should set aside the amount of money needed to pay the current fee charged by the Lutheran Archives Center at Philadelphia to process and provide perpetual care for their congregational records. If the assets of such congregations and agencies come to the treasury of the synod without a payment to the Lutheran Archives Center having been made, whenever possible the synod will forward the appropriate amount</p>	<p>Reworded.</p>

	to the Lutheran Archives Center from the remaining assets of the congregation.	
22. Functions and events of this synod, its mission districts, and congregations shall be planned in such a manner and conducted in such places that physically, mentally, and sensory challenged persons can be included.	See Number 27.	This provision's concern overlaps with Number 27, making it possible to combine the two.
23. Congregations of this synod shall be safe environments for all children and their families and caregivers by building Christ-centered, positive trusting relationships that nurture the healthy growth of children and strengthen families; using our resources to provide a sanctuary for children; creating a Gospel-centered, faith-based teaching and learning environment of hospitality that welcomes all children with their families and caregivers; developing programs and places that help children to flourish; collaborating with other faith communities, agencies, and service organizations that work for the well-being of children in our community; working with the government for more public measures that support the well-being of children; supporting the	23. Congregations of this synod shall be safe environments for all children and their families and caregivers by building Christ-centered, positive trusting relationships that nurture the healthy growth of children and strengthen families; using our resources to provide a sanctuary for children; creating a Gospel-centered, faith-based teaching and learning environment of hospitality that welcomes all children with their families and caregivers; developing programs and places that help children to flourish; collaborating with other faith	Two small wording changes.

<p>efforts of the ELCA to meet the basic needs of children through Lutheran social ministry organizations as they provide caring services for children, and through the ELCA World Hunger Program, which carries our concerns for children through the world; and encouraging all congregations to have adults working with children to undergo appropriate background checks.</p>	<p>communities, agencies, and service organizations that work for the well-being of children in our communities; working with the government for more public measures that support the well-being of children; supporting the efforts of the ELCA to meet the basic needs of children through Lutheran social ministry organizations as they provide caring services for children, and through the ELCA World Hunger Program, which carries our concerns for children throughout the world; and encouraging all congregations to have adults working with children to undergo appropriate background checks.</p>	
<p>24. Congregations of this synod are encouraged to engage in education and conversations to discern where God is leading them regarding the welcoming of and providing pastoral care for LGBT people and their families.</p>	<p>24. Congregations of this synod are encouraged to engage in education and conversations to discern where God is leading them regarding the welcoming of and</p>	<p>Updated wording.</p>

	providing pastoral care for LGBTQIA+ people and their families.	
26. <i>Resolved</i> , in accordance with *C8.02.e. of the ELCA Model Constitution for Congregations, that seasonal member voting be permitted in the congregations of this synod. (October 18, 2017)	Delete in this category and make into a bylaw.	The significance of this provision is such that it should be included in the Constitution and Bylaws of the synod.
27. <i>Resolved</i> , That the functions and events of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod and its mission districts and clusters be planned in such a manner and conducted in such places that persons with physical, mental, sensory, or other challenges are not excluded; and, be it further <i>Resolved</i> , That congregations whose facilities are not accessible might consider undertaking the necessary renovations so that they too can be added to the list of architecturally accessible facilities; and, be it further <i>Resolved</i> , That the second Sunday in October be declared Disability Awareness Sunday, emphasizing, through education and worship, sensitivity toward and inclusion of persons with disabilities and the mission which is mutually shared by all baptized persons,	<i>Resolved</i> , That the functions and events of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod—including its mission districts, clusters, and congregations—be planned in such a manner and conducted in such places that persons with physical, mental, sensory, or other challenges can be included; and, be it further <i>Resolved</i> , That congregations whose facilities are not accessible might consider undertaking the necessary renovations so that they too can be added to the list of architecturally accessible facilities; and, be it further	Two provisions, Number 27 and Number 22, are combined to eliminate duplication.

<p>regardless of their limitations. (January 18, 2020)</p>	<p><i>Resolved</i>, That the second Sunday in October be declared Disability Awareness Sunday, emphasizing, through education and worship, sensitivity toward and inclusion of persons with disabilities and the mission which is mutually shared by all baptized persons, regardless of their limitations.</p>	
<p>29. <i>Resolved</i>, That ELCA churchwide will continue to equip and encourage congregations, synods, and associated ministries to advocate that the United States of America reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50% by 2030, generate 100% of its power from clean renewable sources by 2035, and achieve net zero emissions by 2050; and be it further <i>Resolved</i>, That churchwide encourages congregations and synods to advocate for a just transition away from greenhouse gasses, with emphasis on supporting projects that directly benefit Indigenous, Black, People of Color, and communities impacted by poverty that bear a disproportionate cost of pollution and climate change already; and be it further</p>	<p>29. <i>Resolved</i>, That the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, its congregations, and its associated ministries advocate that the United States of America reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50% by 2030, generate 100% of its power from clean renewable sources by 2035, and achieve net zero emissions by 2050; and be it further <i>Resolved</i>, That congregations and this synod advocate for a just transition away from greenhouse gasses, with emphasis on supporting projects that directly benefit</p>	<p>The synod cannot direct the churchwide expression of the ELCA.</p>



<p><i>Resolved, That the ELCA Churchwide will support these actions through investments in staff, education, tools and resources that equip congregations and synods to accomplish this goal and leverage knowledge, skills, and experience across the church; and be it further</i></p> <p><i>Resolved, That congregants and rostered leaders be encouraged to further educate themselves to the urgency of the climate emergency both locally and globally as well as to the local and global opportunities a just transition will create; and be it further</i></p> <p><i>Resolved, That rostered leaders and bishops will be encouraged to lift up loving our neighbor in response to the climate emergency through their preaching, teaching, and congregational action as often as possible; and be it further</i></p> <p><i>Resolved, That the synod and ELCA churchwide will encourage and cooperate with Lutheran, ecumenical, faith-based, and secular organizations that share our commitment to the protection and restoration of the natural world while doing justice for all.</i> (December 10, 2022)</p>	<p>Indigenous, Black, People of Color, and communities impacted by poverty that bear a disproportionate cost of pollution and climate change already; and be it further</p> <p><i>Resolved, That congregants and rostered leaders be encouraged to further educate themselves to the urgency of the climate emergency both locally and globally as well as to the local and global opportunities a just transition will create; and be it further</i></p> <p><i>Resolved, That rostered leaders will be encouraged to lift up loving our neighbor in response to the climate emergency through their preaching, teaching, and congregational action as often as possible; and be it further</i></p> <p><i>Resolved, That the synod will encourage and cooperate with Lutheran, ecumenical, faith-based, and secular organizations that share our</i></p>	
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	commitment to the protection and restoration of the natural world while doing justice for all.	
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In addition to the above resolutions, the following policies approved by the Synod Assembly or Synod Council are in effect until revised, replaced, or withdrawn:

- Policy on Sexual Misconduct (Synod Council 2018.10.14, revised 2019.01.09)
- Procedure for Congregations Considering Withdrawal from the ELCA (Synod Council 2007.6.9)
- *Personnel Manual* including the changes *NEPS Personnel Policies* (March 14, 2020)
- *Call Process (PT03)*
- *Procedures for Congregations that are Closing or Merging*
- *Policy on Synodical Administration*
- *Sabbatical Policy for the Synod Bishop* (July 18, 2018)
- *Forward and Developing a Congregational Legacy Statement* (March 14, 2020)
- *The February 2023 resource paper and sabbatical policy for rostered ministers serving under call in the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod* (June 3, 2023)
- *The Policies Concerning Licensed Lay Ministry.*
- *Cemeteries (SC: April 12, 2025)*

## 2. PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE BYLAWS

The Committee on Governance recommended three changes to the synod's bylaws to the Synod Council on April 12, 2025. The council endorsed these proposals. As bylaws, these matters must be voted upon by the synod assembly with a "two-thirds vote of voting members of the assembly present and voting" (\*S18.21.) required for adoption.

### A. LAY REPRESENTATION AT SYNOD ASSEMBLIES.

\*S7.21. seems to allow an unlimited number of lay members because of the way it is worded: "A minimum of one lay member. . . ." No maximum is given. We cannot tamper with the wording of this provision because it is an ELCA-mandated provision. We could consider a bylaw to clarify what is intended.

**PROPOSAL:** BLS7.21.c. A congregation having fewer than 1,000 persons who are on the roll of baptized members shall be entitled to two lay voting members without regard to gender. A congregation having more than 1,000 persons who are on the roll of baptized members shall be entitled to an additional lay voting member for each additional 1,000 such members, or major fraction thereof.

### B. PERMITTING VOTING BY SEASONAL MEMBERS.

**PROPOSAL:** BLS13.03. In accordance with \*C8.02.e. of the ELCA Model Constitution for Congregations, seasonal member voting is permitted in the congregations of this synod.

### **C. ADDING DETAIL TO THE DESCRIPTION OF THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF DEANS IN THE BYLAWS.**

Replace BLS12.01.g. with a new BLS12.01.g., which is based on the existing bylaws and on the more detailed job description of deans.

**CURRENT:** BLS12.01.g.: The dean will serve as an advisor to the bishop, and will assist in representing this synod and the Mission District at important events in congregations and communities.

- 1) The dean shall preside at the meetings of the Mission District Assembly.
- 2) The dean will work in conjunction with the synod staff person assigned to the Mission District. The dean may be assigned further responsibilities by the bishop of this synod or by the Synod Council.
- 3) The dean will report annually to the Mission District Assembly.

**PROPOSAL:** BLS12.01.g. The primary responsibilities of the dean shall be as follows:

- 1) The dean shall serve as an advisor to the bishop and assist the bishop as requested in representing the synod and the Mission District at events in congregations and communities.
- 2) The dean shall preside at all meetings of the Mission District Assembly and report to each assembly.
- 3) When schedules permit, the dean shall conduct exit interviews for rostered ministers leaving their calls.
- 4) The dean shall work with congregations and rostered ministers regarding issues of conflict.
- 5) The dean shall encourage congregations and rostered ministers to submit forms and reports as requested by synod and churchwide officers and councils.
- 6) The dean shall attend Mission District Council meetings and report to each meeting of the council.
- 7) As time permits, the dean shall attend district-wide gatherings of rostered leaders.
- 8) The dean shall encourage cooperation among the congregations and agencies within the district and openly support cooperation by those congregations and agencies with the congregations and judicatories of the ELCA's full communion partners operating within the district.
- 9) In assistance to the bishop, the dean shall provide direct pastoral care for rostered ministers actively serving in mission district congregations when requested by the rostered minister or the bishop's staff, it being understood that the pastoral care of retired rostered leaders and those on leave from call falls to the pastors of the congregations of which they are members.
- 10) The dean shall assist the bishop in other ways as requested.

### **3. ADOPTION OF A POSITION PAPER ON CEMETERIES**

On April 12, 2025, the Synod Council adopted a position paper on church cemeteries that came from the Committee on Governance. The main issue here from the synod's point of view is that the synod organization does not want to "inherit" cemeteries from closing congregations and assume the responsibility and possible expense for managing cemeteries. This position paper is being shared with the assembly as an item of information and as a way of disseminating this paper to congregations.

#### **CEMETERIES**

Many congregations within the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod own cemeteries. For the most part, the people buried in these cemeteries were beloved individuals, important in the lives of their families and communities. The care of their graves is not something to take for granted. Therefore, one important question is this: Who will operate a congregation's cemetery if the congregation closes, as happens all too frequently these days?

For its part, the synod does not want to inherit cemeteries from closed congregations and be given the task of maintaining and administering those cemeteries. There are issues of financial cost, staff time, and competence (given the fact that cemeteries under synodical administration could be far from the synod staff members and/or committees responsible for their care).

Therefore, the synod encourages congregations that own cemeteries to have them separated from those congregations by establishing their own legal

entities and governing boards. Another option is to identify an existing local cemetery association or government unit that would be willing to accept responsibility for a cemetery. While congregations remain active, they may certainly enjoy close working relationships with their former cemeteries, such as through provisions regarding how cemetery trustees are identified. But cemeteries are "perpetual" and can outlast congregations. How can a cemetery continue if its founding congregation disbands?

One essential task in establishing an independent cemetery is to understand how that cemetery will be funded, especially if the current operations of the cemetery are paid for by a congregation's General Fund. Does the cemetery already have financial assets sufficient for its ongoing care? Are unused graves available for sale to provide additional income? Is the congregation able to provide some ongoing financial support, at least in the short term? Before cutting the tie between a congregation and its cemetery, have a realistic plan for the financial needs of the cemetery.

Next, prepare a constitution and bylaws for the future independent cemetery. An attorney can provide guidance. The constitution and bylaws of existing cemeteries can be a guide and at least raise the issues that need to be addressed (such as who will be the trustees/board, how those members will be selected, how the cemetery's income will be invested, and the like). One helpful example that can be found online is the Constitution and By-Laws of the Pine Hall Cemetery Association, State College, Pennsylvania ([https://pinehallcemetery.org/?page\\_id=10](https://pinehallcemetery.org/?page_id=10)).

You will want to review state regulations that relate to cemeteries. One helpful site is the Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission's information on cemeteries (<https://www.phmc.state.pa.us/portal/communities/cemetery-preservation/laws/pennsylvania-laws.html>). This is an example from that site that refers to church-related cemeteries:

*Burial Grounds Title 9 of November 15, 1972 (P.L. 1063, No. 271)*

*This Title states that a permanent lot care fund must be established for all new cemeteries or burial grounds. This fund should be used for the purpose of "care, maintenance, and preservation" of the cemetery or burial ground. However, this provision does not apply to "any bona fide church or religious congregation or any association created by any such bona fide church or religious congregation." Additionally, these new cemeteries (not administered by a church or religious organization, etc.) must have a valid registration certificate and an affidavit of compliance.*



Another helpful site from the state gives the actual text of laws related to cemeteries:

<https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/LI/consCheck.cfm?txtType=HTM&title=09>. Again, here is an example:

§ 304. *Registration and filing affidavit of compliance.*

(a) *Registration with State Real Estate Commission.--*

(1) *Except as provided in paragraph (2), every cemetery company shall have a current and valid registration certificate issued by the State Real Estate Commission pursuant to the act of February 19, 1980 (P.L.15, No.9), known as the "Real Estate Licensing Act," before disposing of any lot in its cemetery or before carrying on any other cemetery business. The biennial fee for the registration certificate shall be \$25.*

(2) *The provisions of paragraph (1) shall not apply to cemetery companies and cemeteries owned or controlled by any of the following:*

- (i) A bona fide church or religious congregation.*
- (ii) A fraternal organization.*
- (iii) An association created by a bona fide church, religious congregation or fraternal organization.*
- (iv) A municipality.*

These examples show that cemeteries created by religious organizations are sometimes in a category by themselves and not subject to the same requirements that a commercial company might face. In developing a constitution and bylaws, a church-related cemetery association needs guidance from a legal professional who recognizes these differences.

Once it becomes clear that a cemetery can be sustained as an independent entity, that organization needs to become incorporated, for which legal help will be essential. Incorporating is not a difficult process, and the state's fees are minimal. Ask in advance what your attorney's fees will be so that there are no unexpected surprises or misunderstandings.

An independent cemetery association will want to secure insurance in case someone is injured on the cemetery or the cemetery suffers major damage, such as from a storm or vandalism. For example, the person who wrote the original draft of this position paper is aware of a child in his wife's family who died when a tombstone fell over on him, which is proof of both the need for insurance and for the regular maintenance of all cemeteries with an eye to safety.

Another major task will be finding interested individuals to oversee the ongoing work related to a cemetery. Think not only of the people already involved in caring for the cemetery and members of the founding congregation.

Consider, also, persons who may (a) have ancestors buried in the cemetery or (b) are interested in local history and see cemeteries from that perspective.

There can be the issue of land ownership and the possible division of a parcel that currently includes both church and cemetery. This matter also needs to be addressed by an attorney who can review the current deed(s) that relate to the cemetery, arrange for surveying, obtain any necessary permissions from governmental entities for dividing the property, and prepare and record any new deed(s). If your congregation has a memorial garden for cremains directly adjacent to your church building, this division of property may be especially difficult; and you may need to explore ways to move the cremains legally to a different location.

Cemeteries are important and are here to stay. They need to be in good hands both now and for the indefinite future.

## **4. OTHER MATTERS**

It has fallen to this committee to review congregational constitutions as required in the ELCA's Model Constitution for Congregations. Unfortunately, ours is a small committee, and so the delays in performing these reviews can be lengthy. If you are planning to revise your constitution, it may be well to contact us in advance for guidance in this process. Updates are appropriate after every ELCA churchwide assembly in that those assemblies usually adopt changes to the ELCA's Model Constitution for Congregations, many provisions of which are required of all congregations in the ELCA.

One issue to consider is what your congregational constitution requires for a quorum at a congregational meeting. In some cases, a specific number of members is given. Is that number still realistic given the current size of your congregation? If not, you may want to revise that number by amending your constitution or your bylaws, depending on where the quorum is defined. In many cases, a percentage of the current voting membership is a better requirement than a set number of persons.

The members of the Committee on Governance are Pastors Brandon Heavner, Kenneth T. Melber Jr., and Carl Shankweiler; Kristen Edelman-Weiner; and with active involvement by Vice President Nancy Reichelt and by Pastor Rachael Dietz.

Carl D. Shankweiler





## Section IV

### Partners in Ministry

## **LUTHERAN ARCHIVES CENTER** **AT PHILADELPHIA**

One of the best possibilities to protect a congregation's most vital records is coming to an end. That is, by cooperating with the Lutheran Archives Center at Philadelphia, Ancestry.com has been making digital copies of the main records in the Archives Center and also of congregational records for those congregations that chose to take advantage of this service. You take your parish registers to the Archives Center, and Ancestry makes copies. This process makes your records of baptisms, confirmations, deaths, etc., more easily accessible for people doing research. It also helps to guarantee that your irreplaceable information will not be lost in case of a tragic fire at your church because there will be copies in other locations. If you want to take advantage of this service, contact Sheila Joy at the Archives Center immediately, 215-248-6383. The "last call" has already gone out!

But what is the Lutheran Archives Center at Philadelphia? Synods such as ours are tasked with maintaining their records, which includes the records of congregations that close. Rather than having its own repository and staff to organize, protect, and make available to the public these records, the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod cooperates with most of the other synods in the Northeastern United States to provide a regional archives center, which is located in Philadelphia. The exact location is 7301 Germantown Ave., which is the same address as the Philadelphia campus of United Lutheran Seminary.

If your congregation is considering closing, you should make provision to preserve the written legacy of your congregation and its ministries. Following ELCA guidelines, the materials that should be sent to the Archives Center are extensive--far beyond simply those parish registers that are of greatest interest to people doing genealogical research. Feel free to contact me or the Archives Center directly.

Consider, too, what you are doing with your church records while you are still functioning as a congregation. Are they stored well? Are they being kept up-to-date in a way that they will always be maintained? That is to say, if you have gone to electronic record keeping, how will people 100 years from now be able to access your records? Given past history, it is most likely that they will not be using the same kinds of electronic equipment that we have today. Paper records, though perhaps seeming old fashioned, will still be readable, just as we can read church records from 1950, 1850, and even 1750. But records that are kept only on a disk or drive that requires a by-then antique device to read them will perhaps be inaccessible. For example, the synod has many VHS, Beta, and other tapes from the past with no equipment to play them all (which is NOT a hint for the donation of old electronic devices!).

If you have questions about your congregation's records, please feel free to contact me. We are in the process of slowly creating a synod archives committee, about which more will be reported next year, God willing. By then there may be other people to contact as well.

Carl D. Shankweiler, Archivist  
570-682-9834

## **LUTHERAN CONGREGATIONAL SERVICES**

This year, Lutheran Congregational Services (LCS) is recognizing the work we have been doing together with congregations and community partners over the last 50 years! More than ever we are committed to helping congregations and individuals live out their baptismal promises.

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.

**July 9, 2023 Berks County Flooding.** LDR-Eastern PA is currently leading efforts for long term recovery in Berks County following severe flooding, especially in the Antietam Valley. Pastor Tom Irwin represents Berks County Lutherans on the Antietam Valley Long Term Recovery Group and Pastor Paulette Obrecht is still working with households with washed out bridges following other storms that same summer. Thank you Pastor Irwin and Pastor Obrecht! By July 2024, we identified 30 active homes still in need of major repairs. The average cost per home was about \$8,000. Thanks to our volunteers, who provide critical labor, we've been able to reduce that average cost to just \$4,400 per household.

One of the most significant contributions came from an AmeriCorps team, who spent three weeks rebuilding homes in Berks County this past March. On Tuesday April 15, 2025, LCS received word that to be in alignment with the Trump-Vance Administration priorities and Executive Order 14222, the AmeriCorps team deployed to Berks County and Philadelphia supporting our flood recovery efforts was to be demobilized immediately. While the team was to be with us for another week, they left for their home base on Wednesday morning, April 16.

We are saddened by the premature farewell to this team and the loss of the AmeriCorps program overall.

**Gods Work Our Hands 2025 at the Northeastern Penn Synod Office.** Lutheran Disaster Response – Eastern PA is inviting anyone who would like to participate to join us on Sept. 14, 2025. 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 continues. 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 private 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 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.

To help us celebrate 50+ years working together follow us on Facebook @LCSMission where we post fun LCS facts from the last 50 years every Friday!

Respectfully submitted,  
Julia Frank, Director of Community Outreach, Lutheran Congregational Services  
[jfrank@libertylutheran.org](mailto:jfrank@libertylutheran.org)  
267-464-7740

# UNITED LUTHERAN SEMINARY

## **Dear Partners in Ministry,**

Grace and peace be with you as you gather for your Synod Assembly. It is a joy to greet you on behalf of United Lutheran Seminary and to thank you for your ongoing partnership with ULS in forming the future leaders of Christ's Church.

At a time when many congregations are searching for pastors and deacons, ULS remains steadfast in our urgent mission: **to prepare, equip, and send out faithful, well-formed leaders who can serve the church and proclaim the Gospel in a changing world.**

This commitment guides our work in four ways:

1. **Raising new leaders**—Our recently revamped curriculum emphasizes hands-on pastoral formation so that students are fully prepared to serve congregations and ministries upon graduation. We continue to welcome students from across the country and beyond, forming them through rigorous theological education and practical ministry experiences.
2. **Making seminary accessible**—We are deeply committed to removing financial barriers that prevent people from answering the call to ministry. Through generous scholarships for qualified students and new pathways for theological education, we are working to ensure that students can pursue their vocation without the burden of debt.
3. **Equipping and sustaining leaders for the long haul**—Learning for ministry doesn't end at graduation. Through our Kindling Faith continuing education programs, we provide pastors, deacons, and lay leaders with ongoing formation, spiritual renewal, and leadership training for the challenges of today's church.
4. **Strengthening our partnership with you**—The church cannot raise up leaders alone, and neither can the seminary. We need your help in identifying, encouraging, and supporting those whom God is calling into ministry. Working together, we can raise Gospel-centered leaders for generations to come.

## **Signs of Hope**

ULS is thriving, with strong enrollment across our degree and certificate programs. We currently have more than 350 students, including over 100 future pastors and deacons. Our varied learning platforms include in person and hybrid classes as well as distance, or what we refer to as

“distributed learning.” Our faculty continue to develop new ways of preparing leaders for both traditional congregational ministry and emerging ministry contexts. This fall we are welcoming our second cohort of PhD students, ensuring that the church continues to have strong theological voices shaping its future.

Our mission is clear: **the church needs leaders, and we are here to prepare them.** We ask for your prayers, your support, and your encouragement of those who may be discerning a call to ministry. Who in your congregation or community might be called to serve? How can you walk alongside them on that journey?



## Looking Ahead

As we stand on the threshold of our 200th anniversary in 2026, we are not just celebrating the past—we are looking to the future. We invite you to celebrate with us, as we cross the threshold into a new century, recognizing the continuing need for strong, adaptable leaders in our challenging world. We invite you to join us in this journey, as we explore new ways to form leaders who will serve God's people for coming generations.

Thank you for your faithful support. Thank you for lifting up future leaders. And thank you for being partners with us in this vital mission. May God bless you, your bishop, and the congregations represented here in this Assembly, and strengthen and preserve you for the journey ahead.

**Rev. R. Guy Erwin, Ph.D.**

President, United Lutheran Seminary



## **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. In 2024, Diakon programs served close to 68,000 people.

With a continued focus on strengthening individuals and families, Diakon has transitioned away from senior living communities to further invest in its core mission—expanding behavioral health services, foster care and adoption, at-risk youth programs, and family preservation services. Additionally, Diakon remains committed to serving older adults through community-based senior services and affordable housing programs, ensuring aging individuals can live with dignity and receive the support they need. Diakon operates two affordable housing facilities in Topton, which have 100 apartments. During 2024, 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 2,500 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 2024, that work impacted the lives of nearly 6,000 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 2024, the local programs aided nearly 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 nearly 10,000 seniors in the NEPA synod last year. We thank God for the gifts of our staff, volunteers, congregations, donors, and board members, whose dedication and generosity enabled us to touch the lives of thousands of people last year.

Shari VanderGast, *President/CEO*

# PORTICO BENEFIT SERVICES

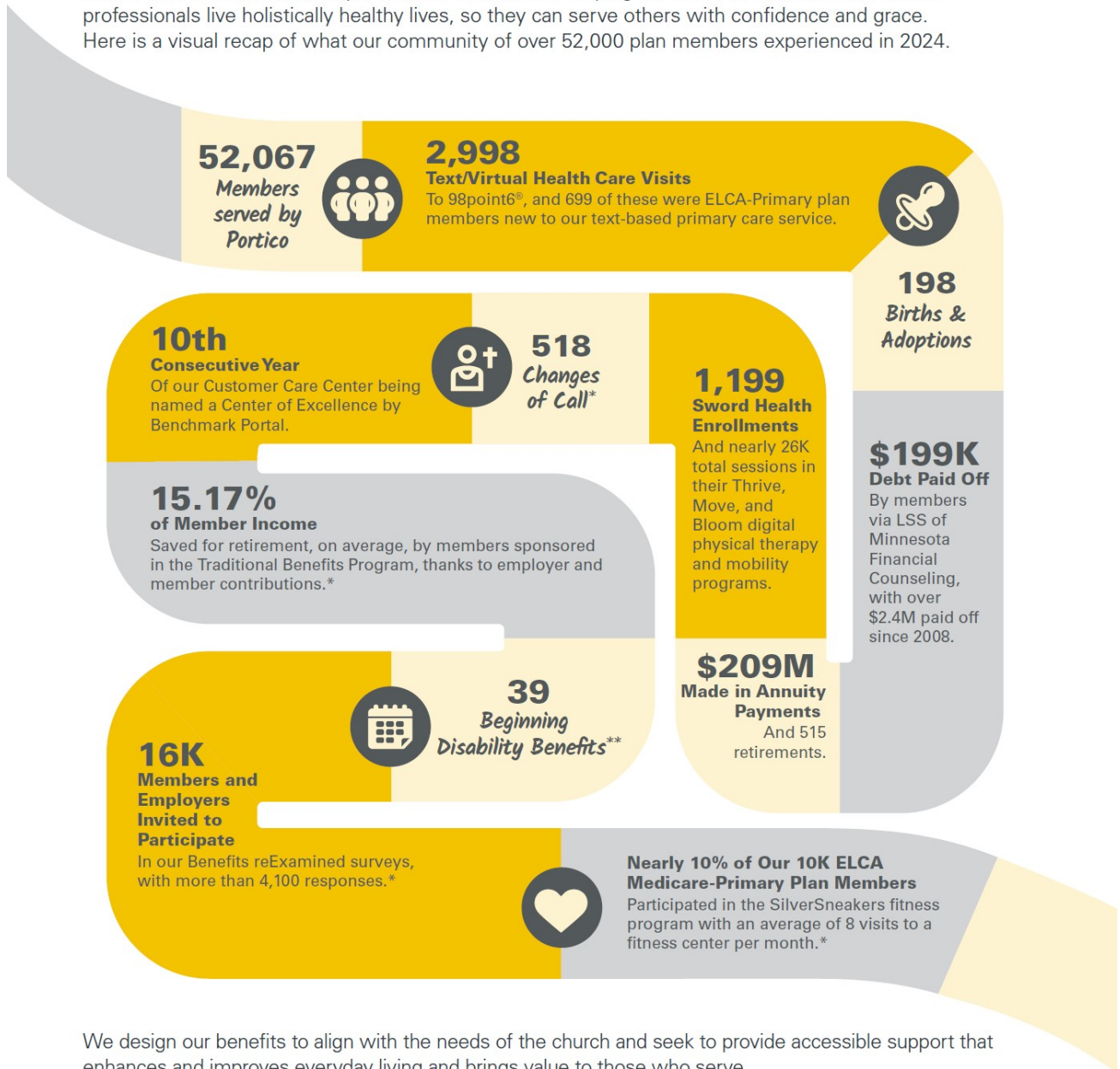


Benefit Services | A Ministry of the ELCA

## The Impact of Our Benefits

### Portico Benefit Services' Report to 2025 Synod Assemblies

As the ELCA's benefit ministry, Portico is dedicated to helping our rostered ministers and church professionals live holistically healthy lives, so they can serve others with confidence and grace. Here is a visual recap of what our community of over 52,000 plan members experienced in 2024.



We design our benefits to align with the needs of the church and seek to provide accessible support that enhances and improves everyday living and brings value to those who serve.

\*Source: Traditional Benefits Program. All other numbers and percentages are drawn from across Portico's benefit programs.

\*\*Total as of 2023; 2024 disability claims numbers have not been finalized.

60-302 (2/2025)

## **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 2024, we celebrated our 50<sup>th</sup> year of ministry at Bear Creek Camp – located on 3000 acres outside of Wilkes-Barre, PA. Across five weeks of overnight summer camp programming we welcomed 613 youth campers. We serve our local community through our Nature Day Camp program which had 205 participants this summer and through hosting field trips and environmental education experiences in which we welcomed 1036 students from around the region in the Spring and Fall. Bear Creek Camp staff-led retreats in 2024 included Winter Youth Camp, Summer Family Camp, Labor Day Family Camp, and Fall Women's Retreat. With the addition of our hosted guest groups, this past year 3263 people experienced the wonder of God's creation surrounded by positive community at BCC.

This past summer, 43 young adult leaders followed the call to serve as camp staff and experienced the highs, lows, and everything in between of living into intentional Christian community. These staff continue to be one of the best expressions of how we Ponder Anew. Each of them serve as role models to summer campers through modeling faith in action and providing caring support through a week of camp. We are equipping these emerging leaders with hard and soft skills to use in their future careers and in their lives. Through this community, we're also empowering the next generation of the Church as it exists within and beyond the walls of our congregations.

The Bear Creek Camp Board of Directors voted to becoming a Reconciling in Christ organization in December and we are thrilled to join our supporting synods and many of our partner congregations in boldly proclaiming our intentional welcome to all people. This designation is not the end of our work, but an important mile marker as we strive to further live into our core value of embracing the inclusion of all.

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.

In 2025, we celebrate 51 summers at Bear Creek Camp. Our summer theme “All Together” is about the connections that unite us at camp and beyond and that like intertwined roots, together we grow stronger through love and service, grace-filled faith, and belonging in community. 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](http://www.bearcreekcamp.org)**

# **LAMPA**

***Church together in Pennsylvania for the sake of the world God loves***

***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 and ELCA Service and Justice. 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 celebrated 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. We successfully worked together to pass state legislation addressing poverty, housing insecurity, climate change and massive inequity in education funding. We equipped people of faith to stand against hate, to bridge divides and work for peace. We trained and organized to prevent political violence and protect vulnerable neighbors.

As 2025 began, I completed my service to the ELCA task force developing the social statement on Faith and Civic Life, and pray that its work will strengthen our ministry together now and in the years, ahead. As marginalized communities are under attack and safeguards for human rights, religious liberty and human and environmental health are increasingly threatened, LAMPa is striving to connect and equip increasing numbers of disciples who are seeking to respond faithfully in their communities and with state and federal policymakers.

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 Eppler.

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

## **REGION 7 & 8 CANDIDACY**

*The church of Christ, in every age beset by change, but Spirit-led, must claim and test its heritage and keep on rising from the dead. [...] We have no mission but to serve in full obedience to our Lord; to care for all, without reserve, and spread his liberating word.* Green, Fred Pratt. "The Church of Christ, in Every Age." Evangelical Lutheran Worship, 2006, #729, vv.1 and 4

Friends in Christ, grace to you and peace as you meet in assembly. I write to you with greetings from my Candidacy Team Colleagues on Churchwide Staff and my home synod of New Jersey. Many of you are gathering to elect a bishop this year. Know that you are being held in prayer by the wider church as you gather, discern, and elect a new bishop.

In navigating times of change, the church needs leaders. We celebrate our lay leadership while we also look for people who sense a call and have gifts to be ordained as deacons or pastors. Have you ever thought about becoming a pastor? Are you curious about what a deacon does? Have a love for serving in the church and have wondered if that could become a job? Do you want to share the gospel and empower others to share the good news of Jesus?

Becoming a pastor or deacon is more than earning a degree for a job. It is also about having an internal and external sense of God's call that is affirmed by the wider church. The work of discerning the call and readiness for ordained ministry does not happen alone. It is guided by the Holy Spirit in a collaborative ministry of synod leaders, synod staff, seminary faculty, contextual education partners, and churchwide staff. This is the ministry of candidacy.

Your synod has a candidacy committee and I invite you to read about their work in a different report in this bulletin. They have met several times in the past year to have confidential interviews with possible future leaders to determine call and readiness. If you or someone you know is wondering about becoming a deacon or pastor, please contact your bishop or an Assistant to the Bishop.

Candidacy is a collaborative process with many partners so even if your bishop or synod staff changes, the candidacy ministry of your synod will continue. We are in this ministry together for the sake of the church and the world.

Since my last report to you in 2024, candidacy leaders from regions 7 and 8 met at United Lutheran Seminary for training and collaboration days. We look forward to meeting again in October 2025.

Beginning in 2022, the Candidacy Leadership Development Working Group (CLDWG) has been re-envisioning the candidacy process. The CLDWG has started to share possible candidacy changes. You can learn more at: [www.elca.org/Our-Work/Leadership/Candidacy-Leadership-Development](http://www.elca.org/Our-Work/Leadership/Candidacy-Leadership-Development)

I have the honor of being on holy ground with members of your synod as we listen to people discern their possible call, ask questions, and assess their readiness to be deacons or pastors in the church. 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)  
Candidacy and Leadership Manager, Regions 7 & 8  
[becky.resch@elca.org](mailto:becky.resch@elca.org)



# MISSION INVESTMENT FUND

## The Mission Investment Fund: Empowering communities with financial services



For more than 150 years, the Mission Investment Fund (MIF), a *financial services ministry of the ELCA*, has been a **steady and reliable financial partner** for congregations, ministries and individuals. Through times of growth and uncertainty alike, MIF has remained committed to strengthening ministries and communities through customer-centric support and flexible financial resources.

In 2024, MIF continued to support ministry growth across the ELCA. Your investments helped expand worship spaces, create new education and youth ministry areas, fund schools and programming for the next generation, start green projects and support accessibility remodeling for community spaces. These projects ensure that ELCA ministries remain welcoming, inclusive and equipped to serve their communities.

### By the Numbers:

- **Total Loans Outstanding:** \$610,534,000
- **Total Assets:** \$774,550,000
- **Total Investment Obligations:** \$547,491,000
- **Net Assets & Capital Ratio:** 27.5%

### Why Is MIF the Right Choice?

- **Proven Stability:** With over a century and a half of experience, MIF has weathered changing economic and political landscapes, maintaining financial strength for ELCA ministries.
- **Deep Expertise in Church and Ministry Financing:** We understand the unique needs of faith communities and have longstanding experience in congregation and ministry-building projects.
- **Competitive Rates and Terms:** Our financial offerings are structured to support ministries of all sizes.
- **A Full Suite of Financial Services:** In partnership with the ELCA Federal Credit Union, we provide a range of financial solutions for congregations, ministries, and individuals.
- **Faithful Stewardship:** Investments in MIF directly support loans that fund hundreds of capital projects across the church.

With 2025, MIF has entered a new era of modernization—enhancing our tools and financial services to better support ELCA ministries. While embracing innovation, we remain rooted in the trust and stability that have defined us for generations. Through every season, we stand with ELCA members, congregations, and ministries, walking together in faith and financial stewardship.

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### *MIF at work in the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod (as of December 31, 2024):*

- 4 Mission Investment Fund loans, with a balance of \$1,143,770
- \$11,615,949 in Mission Investment Fund investment obligations

For more information about MIF capabilities, please visit our website, [mif.elca.org](https://mif.elca.org)  
or contact your Regional Manager, Kent Peterson: 773-380-1731      [kent.peterson@elca.org](mailto:kent.peterson@elca.org)



## **GLOBAL REFUGE** **(FORMERLY LUTHERAN IMMIGRATION & REFUGEE SERVICE)**

Dear Partners in Ministry,

Grace and peace to you this synod assembly season. **At Global Refuge we remain committed to the work of welcome, no matter the challenges.** For 85 years, Global Refuge (formerly known as Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service) has championed the work of welcome by providing support to immigrants and refugees as they rebuild their lives in the United States. Founded by heartbroken Lutherans in the United States who felt called to provide a home for those fleeing violence of the World Wars, Global Refuge has continued this good work welcoming more than 800,000 newcomers since 1939.

Our mission states, "As a witness to God's love for all people, we stand with and advocate for migrants and refugees, transforming communities through ministries of service and justice." With help from Global Refuge, families are welcomed into their new homes with a hot meal, adults are enrolled in English language classes, children are enrolled in school, and Global Refuge partners guide newly-arrived refugee(s) in using public transportation and accessing community resources.

Unfortunately, on January 24, 2025, Global Refuge and the 9 other national resettlement agencies received a **stop-work order** from the U.S. Department of State as it relates to our funding for the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program, effectively cutting off vital support to families who have already lawfully resettled in the United States. The stop-work order directly affects thousands of refugees who rely on resettlement services for essential support such as housing, food, English classes, and job placement. While we were anticipating a pause of the refugee resettlement program and work with future clients, this stop-work order for clients in our care came as an unexpected blow. However, we are committed to carrying out our mission, through our hope in the promise of the resurrection, and remain steadfast in our holy work of welcome.

Despite the challenges, we are heartened by continued and growing support faith communities are providing for our work. **More people of faith are getting involved in our work each year to meet the ever-growing need.** In fact, 85 new faith communities became supporters of Global Refuge in 2024.

With the support of these new partners and Lutheran communities like yours, in 2024 we were able to...

- Welcome **18,622+ refugees** from countries across the world.



- Empower and support **116 clients** and **67 Businesses** through personal and business loans.
- Open **a new office in Mexico** to expand our Camino A Casa programming and serve **1017 clients** start again at home.
- Write and distribute **10,000 Hope for the Holidays cards** that provided messages of welcome and hope to newcomers.
- Attend the ELCA Youth Gathering in New Orleans where we engaged **20,000+** youth on the work of welcome and packed more than a **1000** welcome kits.

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!

- **Support Refugees with a gift** – If you or communities you’re connected with are willing to support financially, please use/share this link: [www.globalrefuge.org/give](http://www.globalrefuge.org/give)
- **Learn more and Advocate** – Explore resources with more information about executive orders and accompanying actions: [www.globalrefuge.org/advocate](http://www.globalrefuge.org/advocate)
- **Know Your Rights** – Our partners at AMMPARO have a great resource for communities to read about their rights and those of immigrants in their care. [www.blogs.elca.org/ammparo/the-latest-kyr/](http://www.blogs.elca.org/ammparo/the-latest-kyr/)
- **Explore Resources** – Visit our Congregational Resources page to explore all the resources available to you: [www.globalrefuge.org/congregations](http://www.globalrefuge.org/congregations)
- **Sign up for our Monthly E-newsletters** – Get the latest updates for faith leaders by emailing [outreach@globalrefuge.org](mailto:outreach@globalrefuge.org).
- **Volunteer with us** – Support refugees in your community and beyond: [www.globalrefuge.org/volunteer](http://www.globalrefuge.org/volunteer)

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](mailto:outreach@globalrefuge.org)

## **NEPA SYNOD FAITH COMMUNITY NURSE NETWORK**

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. The LFCNA offers many helpful resources for nurses and congregations, including continuing education, and grants to congregations to implement parish nursing programs, or strengthen existing programs. For more information contact the association using the links below.

For more information about the Lutheran Faith Community visit [www.lutheranfcna.org](http://www.lutheranfcna.org) or contact [lutheranfcna@gmail.com](mailto: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](mailto:maryowens903@yahoo.com).



## **Section V**

# **Minutes of the 2024 Synod Assembly**

# **2024 SYNOD ASSEMBLY MINUTES**

## **2024 Synod Assembly Minutes**

**37<sup>th</sup> Annual Synod Assembly  
Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA  
June 8, 2024  
Atonement Lutheran Church, Wyomissing**

### **Plenary Session One**

Saturday, June 8, 2025, 10:30a.m.

**ASSEMBLY OPENING.** Bishop Christopher DeForest called the first plenary session of the 2024 Synod Assembly of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) to order at 10:30a.m. on Saturday, June 8, 2025. The assembly was held at Atonement Lutheran Church, 5 Wyomissing Blvd, in Wyomissing, PA. Bp. DeForest welcomed voting members and visitors both in person at Atonement and joining by Zoom.

Bishop DeForest introduced the theme for the Assembly, which was “Hungry for Life Together in Christ.” He highlighted celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of hunger ministries.

Bishop DeForest called upon Secretary Melber to report registration statistics. Pr. Melber noted that of 370 voting member registrants, there was a quorum present. Bishop DeForest declared a quorum.

The Assembly was opened through the “Order for Opening Assembly,” with Bishop DeForest then declaring the assembly to be in session.

**LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.** Bishop deForest invited the Rev. Samantha Drennan, co-convener of the Racial Justice Ministry Team to present the following land acknowledgement: 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.

**ASSEMBLY PROGRAM, 2023 MINUTES, RESOLUTIONS.** Bishop deForest briefly provided an explanation on where to find important information online, including the Bulletin of Reports and the Agenda. He also briefly explained how to vote using electronic devices. He further explained that, according to Robert's Rules, there is no need to call for abstentions in a vote. The explanation for voting was concluded with the result of a test vote taken at the end of opening worship, which asked which of the principal songs was the individual's favorite, the test vote having been cast as follows:

Let Us Go Now to the Banquet – 66 votes

All Are Welcome – 166 votes

The River is Here – 77 votes

On behalf of the Synod Council, the Rev. Kenneth Melber, Jr., Synod Secretary, presented the following resolution, which was adopted in a vote of 297-1:

**(SA2024.06.01) Resolved, That the 2024 Synod Assembly program be adopted.**

Pastor Melber, Jr. then informed the assembly of a resolution on behalf of the Synod Council, arising from a concern of the Elections Committee, which was adopted in a vote of 292-9:

**(SA2024.06.02) Resolved, That the 2024 Synod Assembly program be amended to move “ELECTIONS-FIRST BALLOT” to follow “REFERENCE AND COUNSEL-FIRST REPORT.”**

The Bishop asked Pastor Melber, Jr., if the 2023 minutes have been received, corrected, and certified by the Bishop and Secretary, and are prepared for deposit in the archives. Pastor Melber indicated that this is so.

**THANK-YOUS AND INTRODUCTIONS.** Bishop deForest introduced various individuals:

The Rev. Kenneth Melber, Jr., Synod Secretary and Co-Parliamentarian

The Rev. Rachael Dietz, Executive Associate for Leadership and Co-Parliamentarian

Dr. Donald Boyer, Synod Treasurer

Nancy Reichelt, Synod Vice President

Marie Anne Silwinski, ELCA Churchwide Representative (Senior Director for Building Resilient Communities, ELCA)

Bishop deForest gave thanks to Atonement Lutheran Church for hosting this year's Synod Assembly. He welcomed the Senior Pastor of Atonement, The Rev. Katie Lyon to address the assembly.

Pastor Lyon expressed her joy to be able to host the Synod Assembly and provided information on some of the ways the church is reaching out into the community. She also provided practical guidance on navigating the area.

**NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS.** Bishop deForest called upon the Rev. Rachael Dietz, Executive Associate for Leadership and the Rev. Michael Scholtes, chair of the Elections Committee, to explain the nominating and elections process.

Pastor Dietz explained that some members have been nominated by their Mission Districts and would be voted en bloc as members of the Synod Council. These included Pastor Dana Heckman-Beil, Jim Doxsey, and Amy Mietelski.

By a vote of 304-4, they were approved and Bishop deForest declared them elected.

Pastor Dietz then explained that some members have been nominated by their Mission Districts and would be voted en bloc as voting members of the Churchwide Assembly. These included Brian Beissel, Stephanie Druckenmiller, Ron Mordowski, Seth Nagle, Betty Jane Schaefer-Hassler, Tom Scornavacchi, Mark Stana, Dawn Talley, and Jackie Williams.

By a vote of 295-4, they were approved and Bishop deForest declared them elected.

Pastor Scholtes explained the positions open for Synod Council: 2 lay female, 2 clergy, 1 female youth, and 1 male-person of color or primary language other than English. He further explained the positions open for Churchwide Assembly: 3 lay female, 2 lay male, 4 clergy, 1 person of color or primary language other than English, and 1 youth or young adult.

Bishop deForest opened nominations for Synod Council, for which there was one: Nancy Bleam (Lay Female). There being no further nominations, he declared them closed.

Bishop deForest opened nominations for Churchwide Assembly, for which there were nine: Erla Biasi (Lay Female), Madison DeLuca (Young Adult), Ashley Gheer (Young Adult), Rashion Santiago (Clergy), Barbara Marciano (Person of Color), Elizabeth Leibenguth (Young Adult), April Mulvey (Lay Female), Jennifer Dee (Clergy), Deborah Staniszewski (Clergy). There being no further nominations, he declared them closed.

Bishop deForest explained how to submit biographical forms so that those nominated during the plenary could be included with those nominations which arrived before the Synod Assembly.

**STORIES OF TRANSFORMATION: “GOD’S WORK, OUR HANDS”.** Bishop deForest invited to the podium Georgia Suranofsky and Charlotte Gross of the God’s Work Our Hands Storytellers.

Charlotte Gross asked the assembly to raise their hands if their congregation had a food pantry or church garden. She explained that in 2023, ELCA World Hunger helped 63 countries and 41 U.S. states and territories, helping with aid and sustainability. She shared a story from Santiago, Chile, of the Amajudisa Community Garden, highlighting the work of Educacion Popular en Salud which was founded in 1982 by ELCA mission Karen Anderson. She invited the assembly to invite a storyteller to come to their congregation in order to share further stories of mission.

Bishop deForest noted a need to move the Report of the Bishop to the start of Plenary Two, and made a motion to do so. Having been properly seconded, it was then approved.

**REFERENCE AND COUNSEL – FIRST REPORT.** Bishop deForest invited the Rev. Brandon Heavner, chair of the Committee on Reference and Counsel to the podium to present resolutions that had been brought to the Synod Assembly. Pastor Heavner thanked the members of the committee and explained that any resolutions received later than two weeks prior to the Synod Assembly would need approval by the Synod Assembly for consideration. Having explained this, Pastor Heavner presented the first resolution:

**A RESOLUTION CONCERNING NEPA SYNOD RECONCILING IN CHRIST (RIC) UPDATED AFFIRMATION STATEMENT**

*WHEREAS, The Gospel of Mark speaks the words of Christ to us all, saying “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation,” and in the second letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul writes, “All this is from God, who reconciled us through Jesus Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation”; and*

*WHEREAS the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod approved a resolution to become a Reconciling in Christ Synod in 2001; and*

*WHEREAS the Reconciling Works program has recognized the importance of the intersectional commitments to racial equity when building inclusive worship spaces, and has called on existing Reconciling in Christ bodies to reflect on their welcome and affirmation statements and revise them by 2025 to affirm their commitment to "racial equity" or "anti-racism" as part of their welcome of people of "all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions;" and*

*WHEREAS the LGBTQ+ Task force of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod has reviewed our welcome and affirmation statement and updated the statement to reflect our synod's continued commitment to social and racial justice; and*

*WHEREAS the Racial Justice Ministry team has approved this revised language as aligned with our synod's work toward racial justice; and*

*WHEREAS we believe that open, visibly inclusive worship and gatherings are central to God's charge to love our neighbors as God loves us, and we call on our congregations and ministry partners to provide safe, supportive worship spaces and practices for all; and*

*WHEREAS 12 congregations within the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod are recognized as Reconciling in Christ congregations; therefore be it*

*RESOLVED that the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America reaffirms its commitment to welcoming and loving the whole body of Christ by adopting this updated affirmation statement: The Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod welcomes all people to join us in celebrating God's love. We affirm that we are divinely and wonderfully made in God's image, and that we strengthen and enrich our whole church body when we are welcoming to everyone. We encourage and invite people of all sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, races and ethnicities, ages, socioeconomic statuses, abilities, citizenship and migration statuses to participate fully in the life and work of the church. We commit ourselves to supporting social and racial equity. And be it further*

*RESOLVED, that the Assembly direct the Secretary of the Synod to forward a copy of this resolution to Reconciling Works to reaffirm our status and commitment to being recognized as a Reconciling in Christ Synod; and be it further*

*RESOLVED that the Northeastern PA Synod in assembly affirms that the NEPA Synod Council will ensure that an annual donation is made to Reconciling Works in keeping with our commitment to the program.*

*The Committee of Reference and Counsel offered this recommendation: That the Resolution concerning NEPA Synod Reconciling in Christ (RIC) Updated Affirmation Statement be adopted.*

Bishop deForest opened the floor for discussion on the resolution.

Pastor Hans Becklin spoke in favor of the resolution, but expressed that he was troubled by the whereas statements. Noting he was new to the Synod, he further noted he was drawn to his congregation due to their support of the LGBTQ+ community. He explained, however, that he was troubled that so few of the Synod's congregations were a part of the Reconciling in Christ program and encouraged them to do so.

Pastor Kim Truebenbach spoke in favor of the resolution.



There being no further discussion, Bishop deForest called for the assembly to vote. By a vote of 259-38, the resolution was adopted:

**(SA2024.06.03) That the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America reaffirms its commitment to welcoming and loving the whole body of Christ by adopting this updated affirmation statement: The Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod welcomes all people to join us in celebrating God's love. We affirm that we are divinely and wonderfully made in God's image, and that we strengthen and enrich our whole church body when we are welcoming to everyone. We encourage and invite people of all sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, races and ethnicities, ages, socioeconomic statuses, abilities, citizenship and migration statuses to participate fully in the life and work of the church. We commit ourselves to supporting social and racial equity. And be it further**

**RESOLVED, that the Assembly direct the Secretary of the Synod to forward a copy of this resolution to Reconciling Works to reaffirm our status and commitment to being recognized as a Reconciling in Christ Synod; and be it further**

**RESOLVED that the Northeastern PA Synod in assembly affirms that the NEPA Synod Council will ensure that an annual donation is made to Reconciling Works in keeping with our commitment to the program.**

Bishop deForest then called upon Pastor Heavner to present the next resolution, which he did:

**A RESOLUTION CONCERNING A CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE FOR ELIGIBILITY TO SERVE AS DEAN OF A MISSION DISTRICT**

*WHEREAS the current synod constitution states that a dean shall be elected "from among the rostered ministers of Word and Sacrament of the mission district (BLS12.01.d.2);" and*

*WHEREAS many current rostered ministers are stretched to serve multiple point congregations, not allowing for additional responsibilities; and*

*WHEREAS retired pastors are able to serve in roles such as interim ministry and synod staff; and*

*WHEREAS retired pastors have the ability to serve in this manner, and the understanding of the role; and*

*WHEREAS rostered ministers of Word and Service have taken a significant role in the life of congregations, and the greater church; therefore be it*

*RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the ELCA change the language in section BLS12.01.d.2 to read "from among the entire body of rostered ministers whose congregational membership is in a congregation of the mission district."*

The Committee of Reference and Counsel offered this recommendation: *That "A Resolution Concerning a Constitutional Change for Eligibility to Serve as Dean of a Mission District" be adopted as amended:*

*RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the ELCA substitute BLS12.01.d.2) as follows: "The Mission District Assembly shall elect a dean from among the rosters of Ministers of Word and Sacrament and Ministers of Word and Service, under call or retired, whose congregational membership is in a congregation of the mission district. It shall also elect a secretary, and such other persons as may be assigned by this synod's constitution and bylaws. They shall serve terms of three years, and shall serve no more than two terms consecutively."*

Bishop deForest opened the floor for discussion on the resolution.

Pastor Carl Shankweiler spoke in favor of the resolution. He noted that in the Schuylkill Mission District where he serves as pastor that there was a difficulty at times in finding a Dean and that in his work as an Association for the Hazleton/Lehighon Mission District the same problem was true. He said that this is largely because the number of pastors under call could be very small. He pointed out further that this resolution could include a call to "general service" such as a social agency or educational institution, so long as the membership of the individual is in the particular Mission District. He noted while it was unfortunate that there has been difficulty in finding people to serve as Dean, it was beneficial to expand the pool of possible candidates.

Pastor Heavner affirmed that this resolution would indeed include those under "general service."

Pastor Matthew Hacker rose to provide the following amendment: Whereas the current resolution as it stands would allow for an individual who has never served in Northeastern Pennsylvania and has no intention of serving in Northeastern Pennsylvania be elected Dean and make policy decisions for a context they have never directly served, therefore:

Strike the line "the Mission District Assembly shall elect a Dean from among the rosters of Ministers of Word and Sacrament and Ministers of Word and Service, under call or retired, whose congregational membership is in a congregation of the mission district" and replace with: "Mission District Assemblies shall elect a Dean from among the rosters of active Ministers of Word and Sacrament, Ministers of Word and Service, who have been under contract or call in their previous three years and those who are on the retired roster who have been under contract or call in the previous three years, whose congregational membership is in a congregation of the mission district."

Having asked the secretary to clarify the motion, Bishop deForest secured a second and opened the floor for discussion on the amendment.

Rene Rodriguez spoke in favor of the amendment. He noted his congregation has six retired pastors, but that some had never served in the Synod and that it would be important for Deans to have had experience serving in the Synod.

Pastor Carl Shankweiler spoke in opposition of the amendment. While noting that a Dean should be knowledgeable about the area in which they serve as Dean, he warned that the amendment would restrict the pool of candidates and expressed that the Mission District Assembly could be trusted to know the candidate for Dean and that they would have the needed background. He further expressed that the candidate for Dean should know whether or not they have the needed experience to serve.

Jen Schlegel rose to speak to the amendment, noting that while it is important to have someone with experience and trust those in the Mission District. She expressed that she was in favor of the amendment with the concern that three years limits things.

Pastor Brian Beissel spoke in opposition to the amendment. He spoke from his role as the Dean of the Schuylkill Mission District, noting that the district had a long-term vacancy, having been elected with just three years of experience and that there may not be individuals to step into that role.

Pastor Brian Holben spoke in favor of the amendment, but expressed concern over a limit of three years given pastors change calls and Mission Districts.

Pastor Heavner explained that the three year term is already a part of the Synod constitution and noted that the purpose of Pastor Hacker's amendment would not change the term of a Dean.

Pastor Matthew Hacker further clarified that his amendment speaks regarding his use of the term "three year", that it is in reference to a call or contract, not the term of the Dean.

Pastor Kim Truebenbach spoke in opposition of the amendment, noting that it is not necessary as there are not many willing to serve as Dean and that it is a lot of work and that someone not willing to take on that work wouldn't be interested in serving anyway.

Amy Litvinov called the question. Having been properly seconded, the amendment came before the assembly.

By a vote of 105-195, the amendment was defeated. Bishop deForest then turned the attention of the assembly back to the original recommendation of Reference and Counsel and opened the floor for discussion. There being no further discussion, the resolution was voted upon. By a vote of 266-32, the following resolution was adopted:

**(SA2024.06.04) That the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the ELCA substitute BLS12.01.d.2) as follows: "The Mission District Assembly shall elect a dean from among the rosters of Ministers of Word and Sacrament and Ministers of Word and Service, under call or retired, whose congregational membership is in a congregation of the mission district. It shall also elect a secretary, and such other persons as may be assigned by this synod's constitution and bylaws. They shall serve terms of three years, and shall serve no more than two terms consecutively."**

**ELCA REPRESENTATIVE.** Bishop deForest invited the ELCA representative, Marie Anne Sliwinski, Senior Director for Building Resilient Communities, to the podium to give her presentation.

She introduced herself to the assembly, sharing a photo from Angola from where she visited a initiative of ELCA World Hunger to support communities affected by the long civil war in Angola as they returned to Angola after having fled to other places. They set up Village Development Committees, headed by young female volunteers who are empowered to ensure that their ancestral homes are not taken away by miners and others trying to encroach on their properties.

She thanked congregations and individuals for their Mission Support which helps support various ministries of the ELCA, noting that these collective gifts does more than any one could do alone, and expressed again her thanksgiving for over \$800,000 given through Mission Support to the ELCA.

She noted that in the last year, \$20,000,000 was raised for ELCA World Hunger. She then turned the attention to another ministry of the ELCA, Lutheran Disaster Response, which raised more than \$13,600,000 last year. She spoke of the various places in the United States and across the world who benefit from this ministry following difficult circumstances.

She spoke to AMMPARO (Accompanying Migrants with Protection, Advocacy, Representation, and Opportunities), the whole church response to the issues of migration around the world, a network that continues to grow in the United States, with 251 congregations, 36 Synod communities, and 59 Synods involved in welcoming new Americans.

She lifted up the work of 10 years of "God's Work, Our Hands Sunday" in 2023 with congregations participating in acts of service. She lifted up the ELCA Coaching program and the Companion Church Program. She also highlighted the ongoing work of the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church, which will be making a report to the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly. Finally, she lifted up the upcoming ELCA Youth Gathering.

She concluded by once again thanking the assembly for their generosity. Bishop deForest presented Ms. Silwinski with a gift of gratitude.

**UNCONTESTED ELECTIONS, FIRST BALLOT.** Bishop deForest invited the Rev. Michael Scholtes, chair of the Elections Committee, to present the First Ballot.

He began by listing individuals who were running unopposed:

Synod Council Lay Female, Clergy, Female Youth, Male Person of Color  
Churchwide Assembly, Lay Male

Bishop deForest declared Jean Sandberg, Nancy Bleam, Carl Shankweiler, and Seraphina Ware elected to Synod Council and declared Stephen Hikes and Donald Boyer to Churchwide Assembly.

Bishop deForest offered a prayer before the first ballot. Following the votes of the first ballot, Bishop deForest thanked Pastor Scholtes for his work.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS.** Bishop deForest asked the Rev. Kenneth Melber, Jr., Synod Secretary, to provide announcements prior to lunch. Bishop deForest provided a prayer over the meal and dismissed the first plenary.

## **Plenary Session Two**

Saturday, June 8, 2025, 1:50p.m.

**OPENING OF PLENARY.** Bishop deForest welcomed the Assembly to the second and final plenary of the assembly. He noted that the plenary began late because just a few minutes before the plenary was to start the church lost power, which led to needing time to get everything back online. He thanked the assembly for remaining engaged in conversation with one another in their seats while the technical difficulties were handled.

**ELCA WORLD HUNGER.** Bishop deForest welcomed the Rev. Eileen Smith LeVan of the NEPA Hunger Team to help celebrate the 50th year of focus on world hunger ministries. Through those ministries, Pastor LeVan highlighted the work that helps others know they are beloved children of God, worthy of respect and dignity, and worthy of the bounty of the planet given by God. She highlighted a walk for World Hunger on June 22, 2024, at the Conrad Weiser Middle School in Robesonia. She spoke of just some of the congregations of the Synod who embrace hunger ministry, including Prince of Peace, Bangor; St. John, Boyertown; Grace, Macungie; Holy Spirit, Emmaus; Friedens, Oley; and Trinity, Robesonia. She shared a logo created by Pastor Lauren Applegate, highlighting the various ways in which local Lutherans support hunger ministries. She encouraged others to be involved in the Hunger Team and provided [hunger@nepsynod.org](mailto:hunger@nepsynod.org) as a means of contact for those interested.

**STORIES OF TRANSFORMATION: 6261 MINISTRY COMMUNITY PILOT.** Bishop deForest invited Deacon Kat Tigerman, Director for Evangelical Mission, "and friends" to present on the Synod's first beginnings of a 6261 Ministry Community. The member congregations represented included Bethany, West Reading; Christ, Reading; Hope, Reading; Good Shepherd, Reading; St. Paul's, Reading; Nativity, Reading; and Zion (Spies), Reading. She mentioned that these congregations are discerning together to be one of the first pilot 6261 ministries community.

Individuals from each of the congregations were invited to share their experience and excitement for the future: Mary Swartz, a member of Zion (Spies), Reading, noted that her congregation was celebrating their 250th anniversary. She highlighted that the other congregations bring an urban perspective while Zion (Spies) is in a more rural area. All six congregations are within fifteen minute drives of each other. Charylene Shollenberger, a member of Nativity, Reading, spoke of their use of space to house a head start program, food ministry, and music, and how their local pastors have already done work collaboratively with each other. Bill Knox, a member of Hope, Reading, spoke of the need for transformation in our communities, particularly in Reading where poverty is a challenge. He highlighted the work of Hope's Table, a Synod Authorized Worshipping Community, that helps to bridge that gap. Lynette Nuvedo, a member of Christ, Reading, spoke of lifting up lay leadership and celebrated the diversity within their congregation, and noted that the six congregations have three individuals who are entering into the Licensed Lay Ministry Program.

Judy Stout, a member of St. Paul's, Reading, highlighted their food ministry, and spoke of the excitement that many have had about members of the congregations learning about one another and how deeper discussions on what leadership may look like in the future. Robin Gross, a member at Bethany, West Reading, asked the assembly what they thought about a potential name for the 6261 community: "The Pretzel City Parish."

**REPORT OF THE VICE PRESIDENT.** Bishop deForest welcomed Nancy Reichelt, Synod Vice President, to the podium to present her report. She pointed others to her report found in the Bulletin of Reports. She expressed her gratitude for the trust and support of the assembly. She highlighted her goal to "get out and meet with people in the synod." She thanked Bishop deForest for being open to doing these trips with her, and to Deacon Kat Tigerman and Deacon Travis Woodfield. She thanked Laurie Christman for the extra work of organizing host churches and sending out invitations. She noted that over the past year she had met over 1,000 people and driven over 4,000 miles. She highlighted changes in staff and staff responsibilities. She promised that discussions continue on how to reach out and be present with the people of the Synod. She thanked the congregations for their Mission Support and encouraged the assembly to turn to their neighbor and thank them as well, as all are Synod together. "We are a Church of grace and gratitude for the gifts God gives us." She encouraged the Synod to work together. She read from John 21:15-17 and noted she had been fed in faith and with friendship and invited others to feed one another.

**REPORT OF THE FIRST BALLOT, SECOND BALLOT.** Bishop deForest welcomed the Rev. Michael Scholtes, chair of the Elections Committee, to present the results of the First Ballot:

Churchwide Assembly, Person of Color/Language Other Than English. 300 votes were cast. 151 required for election.

Maria Marcano: 154

Rev. Nelson Quinones: 146

Bishop deForest declared Maria Marcano elected.

Churchwide Assembly, Youth/Young Adult. 299 votes were cast. 150 required for election.

Madison DeLuca: 110

Ashley Gheer: 72

Elizabeth Leibenguth: 117

No individuals having reached the required votes for election, Madison DeLuca and Elizabeth Leibenguth moved to the second ballot.

Bishop deForest provided a prayer prior to voting on the second ballot for Youth/Young Adult Churchwide Assembly voting members and the first ballot for Lay Female, and Clergy Churchwide Assembly voting members.



**REPORT OF THE SECRETARY AND THE SYNOD COUNCIL.** Bishop deForest invited the Rev. Kenneth Melber, Jr., Synod Secretary, to present the Report of the Secretary and the Report of the Synod Council. Pastor Melber noted that this was his first Synod Assembly as Secretary and thanked his predecessor, the Rev. Carl Shankweiler. Pastor Melber introduced himself and the work of the Secretary to the assembly. As he dealt also with the data on transitions, he encouraged the assembly with words that he noted likely came from an early Church father: "You've got to know when to hold 'em. Know when to fold 'em. Know when to walk away. And know when to run."

Pastor Melber turned the assembly's attention to three changes to the Synod's governing documents which were to be voted on by the assembly and previously presented during one of the Zoom pre-sessions:

1) A proposal giving Licensed Lay Ministers the right of voice and vote at Synod Assembly through the addition of the following:

**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.**

Bishop deForest opened the floor for discussion.

Pastor Tom Irwin asked whether this limits those serving in institutions, like a chaplain.

Janice Stavrou spoke in favor of the resolution.

Jean Tjornhom spoke in favor of the resolution.

There being no further discussion, a vote was held on the proposal. While the vote was counted, the next resolution was read.

2) A proposal making the secretary and treasurer ex-officio members of the Churchwide Assembly through the addition of the following:

**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.**

Deacon Tigerman rose to a point of order regarding the vote on the first item, noting that people were confused as the wrong question appeared on the devices. Bishop deForest noted that the vote would need to be retaken on the first item.

Rene Rodriguez asked if the assembly can take action to make the secretary and treasurer members of the Churchwide Assembly. Pastor Melber noted the process for electing members to the Churchwide Assembly and how each Synod is apportioned a particular number of members.

Pastor Marty Milne spoke in opposition, celebrating the diversity of being able to elect more of the body outside of just the officers of the Synod.

Pastor Carl Shankweiler, chair of the Governance Committee, spoke to the wording, noting that the language proposed is the same as the wording for the Bishop to be ex-officio a member of the Churchwide Assembly. He spoke in favor, noting the value to the voting members and to the officers to be part of the Assembly: the officers can provide information to the voting members and the officers learn more as they are independently elected officers of the Synod and not a part of the Synod staff.

Pastor Matthew Hacker raised a question, asking whether we're increasing the number of total delegates with this resolution. Pastor Melber noted that this is not so.

There being no further discussion, a vote was held on the second proposal.

As a re-vote was needed for the first proposal, that vote was held immediately following.

3) A proposal creating an Archives Committee of the Synod:

**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.**

Bishop deForest opened the floor for discussion. There being none, the resolution was voted upon.

The first resolution (LLM Voice and Vote) was adopted by a vote of 271-19:

**(SA2024.06.05) 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.**

The second resolution (Officer Ex-Officio Membership to Churchwide) was defeated by a vote of 199-105.

The third resolution (Creating an Archives Committee) was adopted by a vote of 280-11:

**(SA2024.06.06) 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.

**REFERENCE AND COUNSEL, SECOND REPORT.** Bishop deForest invited the Rev. Brandon Heavner to the podium to provide the second report of Reference and Counsel. No noted that no late resolutions had been received and that only one resolution remained to be voted upon, which he presented to the assembly:

### **A RESOLUTION CONCERNING 2025 SYNOD ASSEMBLY INCLUDE RITE OF DEACON ORDINATION**

*WHEREAS this NEPA Synod has publicly stated intention to be a synod who actively welcomes and values Deacons and their varied gifts of the Spirit lived-out in Word & Service - past, present and future; and*

*WHEREAS there have been many generations, in the ELCA and predecessor bodies, of amalgamated roles and titles culminating with 'deacon;' and*

*WHEREAS when the 2020 Synod Assembly which was to include this rite of ordination and celebration was postponed due to Covid; some of these individuals have not been publicly lifted-up;*

*therefore be it RESOLVED that with intentionality and thanksgiving to God for these baptized children of God and their gifts, that the Bishop and appropriate Associate(s) of the Bishop establish a working group including Deacons on the roster of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod who have already been faithfully serving, but who have not yet been ordained according to the established rite of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for the Ordination to the Ministry of Word and Service, to plan the celebration of this rite for these Deacons as part of the 2025 Synod Assembly.*

The Committee of Reference and Counsel provided the following recommendation: *That the Resolution Concerning 2025 Synod Assembly Include Rite of Deacon Ordination be adopted.*

Bishop deForest opened the floor for discussion.

Deacon Joy Gerhart spoke in favor of the resolution, noting that the ELCA said that Deacons should be considered ordained and should therefore be ordained. She gave a brief history of the many different titles and names by which those now Deacons had been referred. She noted that the pandemic delayed plans to include this Rite of Ordination and hoped that the assembly would act on what was intended years ago. She was joined by Pastor Rebecca Knox, who also spoke in favor of the resolution.

Jen Schlegel spoke in favor of the resolution and inquired if there were any opportunity to recognize this retroactively to 2020 in consideration of those deacons who have died and whether there was a way to recognize their service. Bishop deForest noted that it is something that could be brought to the appropriate committee to consider.

Pastor Rebecca Knox inquired whether the issue could be proposed as a friendly amendment. Pastor Melber explained that this could not be so as the resolution was already properly before the assembly. Pastor Knox wished to make an amendment, which she provided to the secretary:

*Resolved, That the words "all past and present Deacons" be added following the phrase, "Ordination to the Ministry of Word and Service".*

Pastor Tom Irwin asked whether ordinations would take place at each Synod Assembly and whether or not the words "at the Synod Assembly" should be added to the resolution. Bishop deForest noted that those items would be the purview of the appropriate committee.

Pastor Hans Becklin spoke in opposition of the amendment, citing the sacramental character of ordination and thusly questioned how a Deacon who was deceased could then be ordained.

Having noted the absence of a second to the amendment, a second was secured.

Pastor Rebecca Knox rose to answer Pastor Irwin's question noting that this resolution is retroactive for those Deacons who have not received the Rite of Ordination and that it does not necessarily need to go forward into future years as Deacons are now being either ordained or consecrated.

Deacon Kelly Brooks rose to make clarification that the ELCA already voted on the ordination of Deacons and that the assembly is not voting on whether or not to ordain Deacons, but rather handling those individuals who had not gone through that rite.

Deacon Michael Krentz spoke in opposition of the amendment, noting that the decision to ordain Deacons does not invalidate any of the work done by Deacons prior to the ELCA's decision to ordain Deacons and noted a concern that this may make it appear as though what Deacons did in the past would not be as valid as what they would be doing in the future. He also shared that if a Deacon would choose not to be ordained that their validity would be called into question and that it could create a two-tiered system of Deacons.

The amendment was adopted by a show of voting cards.

The amendment having been passed, Bishop deForest called for a vote on the amended resolution. The following resolution was passed by a vote of 239-38:

**(SA2024.06.07) That with intentionality and thanksgiving to God for these baptized children of God and their gifts, that the Bishop and appropriate Associate(s) of the Bishop establish a working group including Deacons on the roster of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod who have already been faithfully serving, but who have not yet been ordained according to the established rite of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for the Ordination to the Ministry of Word and Service, all past and present Deacons, to plan the celebration of this rite for these Deacons as part of the 2025 Synod Assembly.**

**REPORT OF THE TREASURER.** Bishop deForest invited Dr. Donald Boyer, Synod Treasurer, to the podium to present his report. He noted that much of the report was presented at one of the Zoom pre-sessions, but wanted to highlight a few things that were not mentioned in that initial report.

Dr. Boyer first spoke about Mission Support. He informed the assembly that at one time the Mission Support revenue was enough to cover the entire Synod budget. The largest recipient at that time was Muhlenberg College. In 2023, Muhlenberg received less than \$10,000 and Mission Support did not cover the total cost of the Synod Operations. The 2023 expenditures were \$2,002,100 and Mission Support was \$1,729,398, meaning the remainder came from sources other than Mission Support (14.6% of operations).

Dr. Boyer noted that it would soon be time to discuss the budget, containing \$2,216,294 in expenditures and only \$1,700,000 in Mission Support, for a difference of \$516,294 (23.29% of the total), meaning almost ¼ of the funding for the operations of the Synod comes from other sources. He called attention to the fact that the gap between Mission Support dollars and Synod operations cannot continue and must be addressed in the next few years.

He concluded by noting that the Synod Finance Committee was preparing a workshop for Treasurers and asked for feedback on what topics would be valuable to congregations.



**PRESENTATION OF THE 2025 BUDGET.** Bishop deForest invited The Rev. Carl Shankweiler, Chairperson of the Finance Committee, to the podium to present the 2025 budget. Pastor Shankweiler pointed to where the assembly could find the budget in the Bulletin of Reports. He noted that at first glance, the 2025 budget looks great, showing an increase in revenue, but explained that this is because the budget is now reporting revenue and expenditures that were once excluded as they were dealt with by special funds.

On the revenue side, he called attention to a line called "Transfers" in the amount of \$208,389 from some of the Synod's special funds. He also noted the line for "Fund Management Fees," a revenue line generated from the special funds to help pay for the cost of bookkeeping staff and auditors. Included also is a line for rental income from a congregation utilizing a portion of the Lutheran Center. He explained to the assembly that the line "Deferred Revenue Available for Appropriations" is money being taken from past savings that accumulated during years when income exceeded spending.

Pastor Shankweiler then turned his presentation to the expenditures. He explained that since the transfers from special funds were now being reported in revenue, the expenditures related to those special funds are now included in the budget as well. He noted that the budget also includes traditional and expected expenses, highlighting staff salaries, which represented a modest 3% increase over the prior year. He called attention to the share of the budget expected to pass to the ELCA at \$799,999. Expressing the oddity of that number, he asked the assembly if anyone could give one dollar to make an even \$800,000. The portion that goes to the ELCA is a calculated percentage (47%) of Mission Support, with 53% remaining in the Synod. He informed the assembly that the Finance Committee holds hearings regarding requests from the Synod budget in regards to Synod ministries and related agencies and that nearly all of those requests were reflected in the proposed budget.

He concluded by encouraging the assembly regarding whether the budget were "nice" or "scary", noting that if Mission Support is faithfully given ministry can occur, but otherwise something may need to be extracted, but expressed the confidence of the Finance Committee and the Synod Council because they have confidence in the people of the Synod.

The following resolution was presented:

*Resolved, That the 2025 budget proposal (February 1, 2025, to January 31, 2026) be adopted. The Synod Council is hereby authorized to establish the 2025 spending proposal no later than its January 2025 meeting, making any necessary adjustments 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).*

Bishop deForest opened the floor for discussion. There being no discussion, he called for a vote. The resolution passed by a vote of 270-7:

**(SA2024.06.08) That the 2025 budget proposal (February 1, 2025, to January 31, 2026) be adopted. The Synod Council is hereby authorized to establish the 2025 spending proposal no later than its January 2025 meeting, making any necessary adjustments 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).**

Bishop deForest thanked the Finance Committee, Pastor Shankweiler, Dr. Boyer, and the Synod Council for their work.

**PRESENTATION OF THE COMPENSATION GUIDELINES FOR 2025.** Bishop deForest called upon the Rev. Rachael Dietz, Executive Associate for Leadership, to present the 2025 Compensation Guidelines. She noted that the guidelines for Ministers of Word and Sacrament represent a 3% increase.

Bishop deForest opened the floor for discussion. There being no discussion, he called for a vote. The following resolution was passed by a vote of 248-7:

**(SA2024.06.09) That the 2025 compensation guidelines for rostered pastors be approved.**

Bishop deForest then opened the floor for discussion on the compensation guidelines for Ministers of Word and Service. There being no discussion, he called for a vote. The following resolution was passed by a vote of 254-4:

**(SA2024.06.10) That the 2025 compensation guidelines for rostered deacons be approved.**

**NEPS HUNGER MINISTRY MOMENTS.** Bishop deForest welcomed back to the podium the Rev. Eileen Smith LeVan of the NEPA Synod Hunger Team. She celebrated again the 50 years that Lutherans have been involved in hunger ministries and noted that this will continue for years to come. She again highlighted the upcoming 50th Anniversary Walk for Hunger, but also encouraged congregations to do events of their own and donate proceeds to the hunger walk. She shared that 828 million people worldwide would go hungry today and beyond. 44 million of those individuals live in the United States and more than 50% of those 44 million are children. Only 10% of the provision of food comes from congregations and non-profit groups. The other 90% comes from government programs and she encouraged the importance of letting the government know how people want their tax dollars spent. She again encouraged communication through [hunger@nepsynod.org](mailto:hunger@nepsynod.org) and noted that she would be available to come and give talks.

**REPORT OF THE BISHOP.** Due to time constraints, Bishop deForest noted that while there would not be time for his report at the assembly that he would commit to providing a report at a later time and asked the assembly to commit to watching it.

**REPORT OF THE SECOND BALLOT, THIRD BALLOT.** Bishop deForest invited the Rev. Michael Scholtes, chairperson of the Elections Committee, to make the report of the second ballot.

Churchwide Assembly, Young/Young Adult. 300 votes were cast. 151 required for election.

Madison DeLuca: 149

Elizabeth Leibenguth: 151

Bishop deForest declared Elizabeth Leibenguth elected.

Churchwide Assembly, Clergy. 302 votes were cast. 152 required for election.

Rev. Lauren Applegate: 170

Rev. Robert Argot: 62

Rev. Hans Becklin: 48

Rev. Jennifer Dee: 79

Rev. Chris Druckenmiller: 117

Rev. Jamie Edelman: 48

Rev. Ken Melber, Jr.: 85

Rev. Nelson Quinones: 157

Rev. Stephanie Roth: 47

Rev. Rashion Santiago: 84

Rev. Deb Stanisewski: 75

Deacon Travis Woodfield: 98

Bishop deForest declared Rev. Lauren Applegate and Rev. Nelson Quinones elected. Rev. Chris Druckenmiller, Deacon Travis Woodfield, Rev. Ken Melber Jr., and Rev. Rashion Santiago moved to the next ballot.

Churchwide Assembly, Lay Female. 300 votes were cast. 151 required for election.

Erla Biasi: 94

Barbara Hikes: 89

Amanda Melber: 143

April Mulvey: 137

Jean Sandberg: 153

Alicia Wood: 159

Bishop deForest declared Jean Sandberg and Alicia Wood elected. Amanda Melber and April Mulvey moved to the next ballot.

Bishop deForest offered a prayer prior to casting the third ballot, including Churchwide Clergy and Churchwide Lay Female.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS.** Bishop deForest moved a resolution to expend the program to 4:45p.m. Having been properly seconded and voted in the affirmative, it was then adopted. As the votes were being tallied, Bishop deForest highlighted the upcoming Rostered Ministers Anniversary Luncheon on October 8 at Muhlenberg College. He noted also that the 2025 Synod Assembly would be held on May 30-31, 2025.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS.** Bishop deForest asked Pastor Melber to provide closing announcements. He noted that the World Hunger offering included \$2,365. He encouraged the Synod Assembly to fill out their assembly evaluations and also to fill out the Communications survey so that the Synod knows by which mechanism people of the Synod would most like to receive and provide communications.

**RESULTS OF THE THIRD BALLOT.** The Rev. Michael Scholtes, chairperson of the Elections Committee, reported the results of the third ballot:

Churchwide Assembly, Lay Female, 269 votes were cast. 135 required for election.

Amanda Melber: 155

April Mulvey: 114

Bishop deForest declared Amanda Melber elected.

Churchwide Assembly, Clergy. 272 votes were cast. 137 required for election.

Rev. Chris Druckenmiller: 148

Rev. Ken Melber, Jr.: 137

Rev. Rashion Santiago: 120

Deacon Travis Woodfield: 118

Bishop deForest declared Rev. Christ Druckenmiller and Rev. Ken Melber, Jr. elected.

**THANK-YOUS.** Bishop deForest expressed thanks to various individuals who played a part in the assembly.

**CLOSING WORSHIP.** Bishop deForest led the assembly in closing worship. Worship included readings from 1 Timothy 4:4-5, 13-15 and Romans 12:2, 6-9. Installations were held for the Rev. Lauren Applegate for the new Free To Be Synod Authorized Outreach Ministry, as well as for deans, Synod Council members, and Churchwide Assembly voting members. Blessings were provided for the Synod's SAWCs and SAOM, for Licensed Lay Ministers, Synodically Authorized Lay Ministers, and Rostered Ministers, and for the Synod's congregations and ministries.

**ADJOURNMENT.** A motion to adjourn was made by the Rev. Rashion Santiago. Having been properly seconded, it was adopted. Bishop deForest closed with the Order for Closing of an Assembly.

Respectfully Submitted,  
The Rev. Kenneth Todd Melber, Jr.  
Synod Secretary