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NORTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Bishop's Staff Changes for 2025

To view the full "Strategic Intent" document in detail, visit godslove.org/2025-strategic-intent

Written by: Bishop Christopher deForest of the Northeastern PA Synod

"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)

Our gracious God is in our midst, transforming all of us, 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.

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.

Strategic Goals

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 baptismal 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 resources.

Bishop's Staff – New Roles and Changes

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. **Search begins 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. **Search begins 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 new and existing special ministry communities designated as "Synod Authorized Worshipping Communities' (SAWCs) and "Synod Authorized Outreach Communities" (SAOMs). This Lead Servant will help us take our "Growing Young" initiatives into new ministries and new directions. **Search begins 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 will be 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 role 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.

In depth details are available in the "Strategic Intent" document found at godslove.org/2025-strategic-intent. If you have additional questions, please call or email Bishop Chris deForest at (610) 266-5101, bishopd@nepsynod.org, or contact out Director of Communication, Stacey Burke, at (610) 266-5101, stacey@nepsynod.org.

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