



Bulletin of Reports

Digital Virginia Synod Assembly
on April 27, 2024



The Virginia Synod

of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
In Partnership with the New Guinea Islands District of Papua New Guinea



"Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified. Do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."
-Joshua 1:9 NIV

Romans 12:5 (The Voice)

"⁵ we, too—the many—are different parts that form one body in the (Christ) the Anointed One. Each one of us is joined with one another, and we become together what we could not be alone."

Strong Connections . . . for God is with us.

. . . and we become together what we could not be alone. The emphasis for this year's Synod Assembly is the command that God gives to the Virginia Synod to be strong. We discover strength together by focusing on our ministries, on the people that serve, and on how ministries grow stronger through our partnership in the Gospel.

Welcome to the 2024 Virginia Synod Assembly! This is our first Assembly to be live streamed from one of our churches in the Peninsulas Conference, Trinity Lutheran Church in Newport News. Thank you, Pastor Tina Melusky and Trinity, for hosting the 2024 Virginia Synod Assembly.

Our thematic focus is on Strong Connections. Strong connections ministerially, among our congregations, among our conferences, our Virginia Synod ministry partners, our ecumenical partners, churchwide and global relationships. With all of us "following the example of Jesus", we can become the spiritual force together, what we could not be alone.

We are the body of Christ and we are entering at a time in the life of the Virginia Synod when we are being called upon to display characteristics of strength, courage, and fearlessness; knowing that God is with us as we live out our baptismal call, to proclaim Christ through word and deed, to care for others, to care for the world God made, and to work for justice and peace, and to do this work, as a united force, *"together"*.

Now, our not being in person this year for our Assembly, does not negate our "strong connections" with each other. In fact, our remote presence actually strengthens our desire to be present in-person next year. It encourages us not to take each other's presence for granted and truly treasure our time together, whether in-person or remote.

Thanks be to God for all of the individuals who have contributed their time and talent to ensure that we have an Assembly that will help us to give praise and honor to God through our worship and also to conduct the business of the Synod.



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Special thanks to Pastor Leslie D. Weber, Synod Assembly Director, Pastor Colleen Montgomery, Director for Digital Ministries, Pastor John Wertz Jr., Director of Evangelical Mission and Assistant to the Bishop, and Lenae Osmondson, Administrative Coordinator for Events and Data Manager, for all of their dedicated and hard work in preparing for this Assembly. Thanks also to our worship leadership led by Pastor David Fox and the team from Gloria Dei, Hampton. Thank you to our Chaplain for this Assembly, Deacon Liz Brendle Fox.

Thank you to the Synod Staff, Synod Council, Rostered Ministers, and Lay Leaders, who have also contributed their time and effort to this event.

Our thanks to our subject matter presenters and our Digital Ministry Team for the advance preparation through on-line and recorded Pre-Assembly Meetings.

Thanks to our committees, agencies, and institutions for submitting reports of how our connections help us to fulfill our mission to love God and to love our neighbor.

And thank you for your presence and voice during this Assembly meeting.

We pray:

Holy God, we praise you for calling diverse people in the church's ministry.
Uphold us with your strong and loving arms. Empower us to serve your people. Equip us with both beloved traditions and fresh ideas; grant us joy in our tasks; and renew us daily by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, the Word among us, now and forever. Amen. *(Adapted from Prayers, Thanksgivings and Laments from All Creation Sings.)*

Blessings,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Phyllis Blair Milton".

The Rev. Dr. Phyllis Blair Milton
Bishop, Virginia Synod, ELCA

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Virginia Synod Assembly

Saturday, April 27, 2024

We, too -the many – are different parts that form one body in the Anointed One [Christ]. Each one of us is joined with one another, *and we become together what we could not be alone.* – Romans 12:5
(The Voice Translation)



Strong Connections

Pre-Assembly Meetings 2024

In preparation for the Synod Assembly, the Virginia Synod Office of the Bishop offered pre-assembly meetings online to help prepare you for the assembly. All were invited to participate in any meetings (lay, rostered, voting member, or not), and there was no cost to attend. Each meeting was recorded and was available on the Synod Assembly website.

Below are the meetings offered and a description of each:

- **Resolution and Memorial Writing – January 23**
 - Thinking about submitting a resolution or memorial to the 2024 Virginia Synod Assembly? You are invited to learn more about how to write an effective memorial or resolution and what specific format to use for those.
- **Virginia Synod and ELCA Churchwide Elections – February 29**
 - Pre-Assembly meetings have been organized for those discerning synod leadership and those coming as voting members to the 2024 Synod Assembly.
- **Investment in Ministry Plan and Compensation Guidelines – March 7**
 - Bring your questions about the 2025 Investment in Ministry Plan and Compensation Guidelines to this meeting. Your questions and participation in this meeting will help streamline the Assembly and assist others with similar questions.
- **How to Vote 101 – April 16**
 - This pre-Assembly meeting will explain how voting members for the 2024 Virginia Synod Assembly will cast their votes. There will be time for questions and answers. All voting members are encouraged to attend or watch the recording.
- **Resolution and Memorial Review – April 18**
 - This pre-assembly meeting will review the resolution(s) and memorial(s) that have been submitted for the 2024 Virginia Synod Assembly. There will be time for questions and answers. Your questions and participation in this meeting will help streamline the Assembly and assist others who may have similar questions. All voting members are encouraged to attend or watch the recording.



Synod Assembly Order of Business

Pre-Event	
8:45 am-9:00 am	Gathering and Welcome
Plenary Session 1	
9:00 am-10:30 am	Opening Worship; Organization of the Assembly; Report of Nominating Committee; Nominations from the Floor for Elections; Report of the Officers
10:30 am-10:45 am	Break
Plenary Session 2	
10:45 am-1:00 pm	Elections; Investment in Ministry Plan; Compensation Guidelines; Report of ELCA Representative; Elections; Report of Lutheran Youth Organization; Resolutions/Memorials; Closing of the Assembly



The Virginia Synod Youth Assembly

The **Virginia Synod Youth Assembly** is the annual meeting of the **Virginia Synod Lutheran Youth Organization**, to which all Lutheran Youth in grades 7-12 in the Virginia Synod automatically belong. The Virginia Synod LYO is also the group in Virginia that relates to ELCA Youth Ministries. The Youth Assembly meets at the same time as the Synod Main Assembly on the Roanoke College Campus.

This year's youth assembly will be held on Saturday, May 25 from 10:00am-3:30pm. The event will allow youth to gather at one of four places around the synod and be linked via Zoom for our presentations, singing, and discussions!

Our four locations are:

- Christ the King, Richmond
- College, Salem
- Muhlenberg, Harrisonburg
- Trinity, Newport News



The Purpose of the Youth Assembly is:

- to give glory to God, celebrate the good news of the gospel, and nurture faith in the synod's young leaders.
- to conduct the business of the Synodical Lutheran Youth Organization, including the election of the LYO Board.
- to hear and explore the story of the church's work beyond the congregations of the youth delegates and equip them to share and interpret those stories in their home contexts.
- to give voice to and encourage leadership among youth in the church.

Each congregation of the VA Synod is invited to send up to **four delegates** to the Youth Assembly. Delegates may be in **7th through 12th grade**.

Members of the Synod's Lutheran Youth Organization Board are normally selected at the Youth Assembly. Board Members plan the next year's Youth Assembly, relate to ELCA Youth Ministries, and serve on the Synod's Youth Ministry Committee. Representatives from Grades 9-12 are elected and the 8th grade Representative is appointed, along with multi-cultural and table representatives.

For more information and to register, go to vasynod.org/event/youth_assembly. Contact Synod Youth Director Pastor Dave Delaney with any questions about the Youth Assembly.



Best Practices for Participating Together

The following recommendations will help congregations prepare to participate in the 2024 Virginia Synod Assembly from a single location.

If you have questions about your set-up, you can contact Pastor Colleen Montgomery at montgomery@vasynod.org by April 18, 2024.

Attendance, Parliamentary Procedure, Voting

- Attendance, parliamentary procedure, and voting will go most smoothly if every voting member has their own device. A smart phone, tablet, or computer will work. Each voting member will have their own login information. While logging in and out on a shared device is possible, it is not the most efficient approach, so it is not recommended.
- Attendance will be taken via the voting platform.
- Motions, raising hands, and other parliamentary procedure interactions will occur on the voting platform. The Zoom chat or raise hands feature will not be recognized for these interactions.
- When a voting member is recognized by the chair, they will be invited to unmute on Zoom and address the Assembly.
- All votes will occur via the voting platform, including simple yea/nei votes.
- Be sure that the internet at your location is strong enough to support the Zoom device as well as each person's voting device.
- Instructions on how to vote will be covered at the April 16 Pre-Assembly Meeting.

Streaming the Assembly

- The Synod Assembly will be held on Zoom. A link will be sent to each voting member. The meeting will open prior to 9am to allow time for everyone to join the meeting.
- A single computer hooked up to either a projector or large screen will be the easiest way to view together. Having the computer accessible to all voting members to be able to type into the chat, speak into the microphone, and be seen by the camera should be a priority.
- If a large group is gathered, more individuals may want to join the Zoom meeting on another device so they can access the chat more easily. However, if multiple devices are logged in, then special attention will need to be paid to the sound. Unmuting on multiple devices in the same room or having sound from large speakers playing while a different device is unmuted will cause feedback. Having a designated device for all sound (both listening and speaking) will be best.
- Only voting members will be provided links to the Zoom room and will be permitted to speak to the assembly. All visitors, regardless of designation, will be invited to watch via YouTube. If non-voting members are in the physical room with voting members, the non-voting members should not type in the chat or address the assembly.



Dais Leaders of the 2024 Virginia Synod Assembly



The Rev. Dr. Phyllis Blair Milton
Bishop of the Virginia Synod



Ms. Blythe Ann Scott
Vice President of the Synod



Ms. Judy Castelee
Secretary of the Synod



Mr. John Krallman
Treasurer of the Synod



Mr. Phil Hopkins
Synod Assembly Parliamentarian



The Rev. Leslie Weber
Synod Assembly Director



Deacon Liz Brendle Fox
Synod Assembly Chaplain



Synod Assembly Committees 2024

- **Committee on Report of Officers**
 - The Rev. Jonathan Boynton (Northern Valley)
 - Liz Leonard (Southern)
- **Committee of Reference and Counsel**
 - Alli Beck (Germanna) - chair
 - The Rev. Adam Schultz (Southern Valley)
 - Sue Clemens (Peninsulas)
 - Glen Kirk (Highlands)
- **Committee on Official Roll**
 - The Rev. Becca Ajer Frantz (Richmond)
 - Jillian Stierwalt (Tidewater)
- **Committee on Minutes**
 - Sister Phyllis Cox (Southern Valley)
 - Joann Fawley-All Places Together
- **Nominating Committee**
 - Christine Weller (Peninsulas) – co-chair
 - The Rev. Laura Swanson (Southern) – co-chair
 - Pat Carriker (New River)
 - Cam Haggett (Southern)
 - Dave Raecke (Germanna)
 - Blythe Scott (Tidewater)
 - The Rev. Alex Sheppard-Witt (Peninsulas)
 - Kathy Thompson (Southern Valley)
 - Ronnie Good (Page)
- **Committee on Conduct of Elections**
 - The Rev. Daniel Hess (Southern)
 - Carlton Hardy (Peninsulas)
- **Committee on Transportation**
 - The Rev. Virginia Banister (Central Valley)
 - Mike Samerdyke (Highlands)



Congregational Lay Voting Members

All congregations certify their lay voting members using a [voting member credential form](#).

Congregations are encouraged to turn in this form by March 28, 2024.

The cut-off time for lay voting member credential form is 10 days (April 17, 2024) before the first day of the assembly. If the credential form is not received in the Synod Office by April 17, the layperson will not be able to vote (per the Virginia Synod Constitution S7.21.03.)

Voting members at the Synod Assembly serve on behalf of all the people of this synod. Voting members are called to make decisions for the well-being of our synod and the whole church.

Constitutionally, Voting Members are:

- All Rostered Ministers (Ministers of Word & Sacrament [Pastors] and Ministers of Word & Service [Deacons]) under call on the roster of this synod
- Subject to S7.22.01. and S7.22.02 of the Virginia Synod Constitution, all Rostered Ministers retired, on leave from call, and on disability leave on the roster of this synod.
- Congregational Lay Voting Members (elected by their congregation)
- At-large Lay Voting Members (appointed by Synod Council)
- Synod Council Members
- Lay Officers of the Synod

Please note that every congregation is entitled to at least two (2) lay voting members, typically one of whom is to be a woman and one to be a man.

EARLY election and [certification of voting members](#) are highly desirable so that assembly committees can be formed in a timely manner with proper representation from the conferences.

Additional Lay Voting Members: Larger congregations are entitled to additional lay voting members on the following basis of baptized members (as of December 31, 2023). For each additional 200 baptized members or portion thereof over 400, the congregation should elect an additional lay voting member.

0-400 = 2 voting members

801-1000 = 5 voting members

401-600 = 3 voting members

1001-1200 = 6 voting members

601-800 = 4 voting members



Expectations of a person elected as a voting member of the Synod Assembly:

1. Serve a one-year term commencing with the convening of the assembly to which elected.
2. Attend all the Synod Assembly sessions.
3. Attend special assemblies as called during the term.
4. Study the agenda and advance materials received before the Synod Assembly.
5. Be an advocate of the mission and ministry of the synod in the home congregation and throughout the synod as appropriate.
6. Be familiar with the synod constitution insofar as it affects the activities of the Synod Assembly.
7. Participate in assembly committees as appointed.
8. Be an active member of your home congregation.
9. Make a report on the assembly to your home congregation.
10. Serve with no compensation.
11. Cost of registration to be reimbursed by the home congregation.
12. Be responsible for personal expenses not directly related to responsibility as a member of the assembly.



Constitution and Parliamentary Notes

1. **General** (Section 7.01.)

This synod shall have a Synod Assembly, which shall be its highest legislative authority. (Section 7.01., Synodical Constitution)

2. **Assembly Voting Members** (Section 7.21.)

The membership of the Synod Assembly, of which at least 60% of the voting membership shall be composed of laypersons, shall be constituted as follows:

- a. All rostered ministers (Pastors and Deacons) under call on the roster of this synod in attendance at the synod Assembly shall be voting members.
- b. A minimum of two lay members elected by each congregation related to this synod, typically one of whom shall be a man and one of whom shall be a woman, shall be voting members. The Synod Council shall establish a formula to provide additional lay representation from congregations on the basis of a number of baptized members in the congregation. The Synod Council shall seek to ensure that, as nearly as possible, at least 45 percent of the lay members of the Assembly shall be women and at least 45 percent shall be men.
- c. Voting membership shall include the Officers of this synod.

3. **Additional Voting Members from Larger Congregations** (Section 7.21.03.)

- a. Each congregation related to this synod having 400 or less baptized members shall be entitled to two voting lay members of the Synod Assembly, normally one of whom shall be male, and one of whom shall be female.
- b. For each additional 200 baptized members, or a portion thereof, the congregation shall be entitled to an additional voting member.
- c. Additional members of each congregation shall normally be equally divided between male and female.
- d. Each congregation, upon choosing its voting lay members, shall certify to the secretary of this synod, at least ten days before the first day of the Synod Assembly, the names of the persons chosen.

4. **Additional Members to Meet Inclusiveness Goal**

- a. The Synod Council shall be authorized to appoint up to 10 at-large voting members of the annual Assembly who are persons of color or whose primary language is other than English, in addition to those elected by congregations. (Section 7.21.A22.)
- b. The Synod Council shall be authorized to appoint up to 10 at-large members of the Synod Assembly who are youth and/or young adults (as defined in †S6.04.02.), in addition to those elected by congregations. (Section 7.21.B22.)

5. **Voting by Retired Rostered Ministers**

All retired Rostered Ministers on the roster of this synod in attendance at the 2024 Synod Assembly shall be voting members. (Section 7.22.01.)

6. **Voting by Rostered Ministers On Leave from Call**

All on leave from call rostered ministers on the roster of this synod in attendance at the 2024 Synod Assembly shall be voting members. (Section 7.22.02.)



7. Voting by Rostered Ministers on Disability Roster

All disability leave rostered ministers on the roster of this synod in attendance at the 2024 Synod Assembly shall be voting members. (Section 7.22.A22.)

8. Voting Membership of Synod Council

Duly elected voting members of the Synod Council who are not otherwise voting members of the Synod Assembly under Section 7.21, shall be granted the privilege of both voice and vote as members of the Synod Assembly. (Section 7.28.)

9. Persons Having Voice But Not Vote

The presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and such other official representatives of the churchwide organization as may be designated by the presiding bishop, shall have voice but not vote in the meetings of the Synod Assembly. Like privileges shall be accorded to those additional persons whom the Synod Assembly or the Synod Council shall from time to time designate. (Section 7.23.)

10. Quorums and Program

- a. One-third of members of the Synod Assembly shall constitute a quorum. (Section 7.14.)
- b. The agenda and program proposed by the Synod Council, as adopted by the Assembly, **shall be the official agenda and program; there shall be no departure therefrom except** by unanimous consent or by a two-thirds vote. (Section 7.40.16.)

11. Attendance and Excuses

- a. Any member of the Assembly contemplating an absence from an Assembly shall send to the Secretary a written excuse prior to the convening of the Assembly. The excuse shall be referred to the Committee on Official Roll, which shall determine and report to the bishop whether such absence is without good cause. Absence without good cause shall be grounds for censure to be administered by the bishop. (Section 7.40.20.)
- b. Excuses for absences from any meeting of the Synod Assembly shall be presented to the Committee on Official Roll. This committee shall pass on the acceptability of any excuse and shall assemble the composite record of attendance and report thereon at the final meeting of the Assembly. (Section 7.40.21.)

12. Nominations and Elections

- a. There shall be a Nominating Committee of at least eight members who shall be appointed by the Synod Council to serve for each regular meeting of the Synod Assembly. Additional nominations may be made from the floor at the Synod Assembly for all elections for which nominations are made by the Nominating Committee. (Section 9.03.)
- b. In all elections by the Synod Assembly, other than for the bishop, a majority of the votes cast shall be necessary for election. (Section 9.02.)
- c. In all elections, except for the bishop, the names of the persons receiving the highest number of votes, but not elected by a majority of the votes cast on a preceding ballot, shall be entered on the next ballot to the number of two for each vacancy unfilled. (Section 9.08)



- d. The results of each ballot in every election shall be announced in detail to the Assembly. (Section 9.09)

13. Reports

- a. All reports and all resolutions and principal motions shall be given to the secretary in triplicate. Reports shall be typewritten. (Section 7.40.19)
- b. If the Committee of Reference and Counsel fails to report on any resolution given it, or any matter referred to it by the Assembly, the Assembly may nevertheless by majority vote decide to consider such resolution or matter. (Section 7.40.17)

14. Financial Matters

- a. Any proposal to appropriate funds, whether by amendments to the budget or otherwise, which is presented to a meeting of the Synod Assembly without the approval of the Synod Council shall require a two-thirds vote for adoption. (Section 10.04.)
- b. No appeal to congregations of this or any other synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for the raising of funds shall be conducted by congregations or organizations related to or affiliated with this synod without the consent of the Synod Assembly or the Synod Council. (Section 15.21.)
- c. When a motion calls for (a) an amendment to the budget, either increasing or decreasing the total of the budget or (b) an appropriation, or (c) a special financial appeal comes before the Assembly from any source other than the Synod Council, it shall be referred at once to the Synod Council for consideration. The Synod Council will report at the meeting immediately following the meeting at which the referral was made. Any referral made at the last meeting of the Assembly shall be reported on during that meeting. If the Synod Council fails to report, the Assembly may proceed to consider the matter referred, but adoption shall require a two-thirds vote. (Section 10.04.01.)
- d. The annual budget of this synod shall reflect the entire range of its own activities and its commitment to supportive funding with other synods and the churchwide organization. (Section 15.12.)

15. Rules of Procedure

- a. Unless otherwise determined by a two-thirds vote of the Assembly, all speeches in general discussion shall be limited to five minutes. (Section 7.40.22.)
- b. Robert's Rules of Order, latest edition, shall govern parliamentary procedure of the Synod Assembly, unless otherwise ordered by the Assembly. (Section 7.32.)

16. Resolutions for Consideration by the Annual Assembly (Section 7.30.A91.)

- a. The Assembly Committee of Reference and Counsel shall receive, consider and report to the Assembly on all resolutions submitted by congregations, conferences, and delegates for consideration by the annual Assembly.
- b. Priority consideration will be given to resolutions received at least 30 days before the annual Synod Assembly convenes.
- c. A cut-off time of close of business 30 days before the start of the assembly is established for the receipt of resolutions for consideration of the Committee of Reference and Counsel. The Assembly Committee of Reference and Counsel shall meet prior to the Assembly to review resolutions which are submitted in advance.



- d. Recommendations of the committee are to be distributed to members prior to the convening of the Assembly.
- e. All resolutions will normally be considered by the committee in order of receipt.
- f. Resolutions that cannot be adequately covered during the regular Assembly agenda time will be referred to the Synod Council.

17. **Bylaws, Amendments, and Continuing Resolutions**

- a. Certain sections of this constitution incorporate, and record therein required provisions of the constitution and bylaws of this church. If such provisions are amended by the Churchwide Assembly, corresponding amendments shall be introduced at once into this constitution by the secretary of this synod upon receipt of formal certification thereof from the secretary of the ELCA. (Section 18.11.)
- b. Whenever the secretary of the ELCA officially informs this synod that the Churchwide Assembly has amended the Constitution for Synods; this constitution may be amended to reflect any such amendment by a simple majority vote at any subsequent meeting of the Synod Assembly without presentation at a prior Synod Assembly.
- c. An amendment that is identical to a provision of the Constitution for Synods shall be deemed to have been ratified upon its adoption and the Church Council shall be given prompt notification of its adoption. (Section 18.12.)
- d. Other amendments to this constitution may be adopted by this synod by being introduced with the support of at least twenty-five voting members and having been approved by a two-thirds vote of the voting members present and voting at a regular meeting of the Synod Assembly, an amendment may be adopted unchanged by a two-thirds vote at the next regular meeting of the Synod Assembly.
- e. The Synod Council may propose an amendment with notice to be sent to the congregations of this synod at least six months prior to the next regular meeting of the Synod Assembly. Such an amendment shall require for adoption a two-thirds vote of the voting members present and vote at such a regular meeting of the Synod Assembly.
- f. All such amendments shall become effective upon ratification by the Churchwide Assembly or by the Church Council. (Section 18.13.)
- g. This synod may adopt bylaws not in conflict with this constitution nor with the constitution and bylaws of this church. This synod may amend its bylaws at any meeting of the Synod Assembly by a two-thirds vote of voting members of the Assembly present and voting. (Section 18.21.)
- h. This synod may adopt continuing resolutions not in conflict with this constitution or its bylaws or the constitution, bylaws, and continuing resolutions of the churchwide organization. Such continuing resolutions may be adopted or amended by a majority vote of the Synod Assembly or by a two-thirds vote of the Synod Council. (Section 18.31.)

18. **Conduct of Discussions, Motions, and Resolutions**

- a. All voting members shall have the privilege of the floor. When seeking recognition and permission of the floor, the member shall indicate their desire to speak in the electronic voting system. When called upon, they shall unmute on Zoom and address the chair of the meeting by stating their name and their worshiping community/location or ministry/ministry's location. The Chair recognizes the member and assigns them the floor by stating their name.



- b. Debate shall be limited to two minutes for each speaker. No member shall speak more than once on the same questions unless everyone who wishes has spoken. In cases where persons seeking the floor have opposite opinions on the question, the chair should let the floor alternate, as far as possible, between those favoring and those opposing the measure. Any motion to change the limits of the debate is not debatable and requires a two-thirds vote for approval.
- c. All motions shall be emailed to the recording secretary of the Assembly. Motions are the tools used to introduce business into a meeting. A main motion is defined as a proposal that certain action be taken or an opinion be expressed by the group. Main motions allow a group to do its work. They are motions that spend money, adopt projects, etc..
- d. A resolution is a main motion submitted in writing. Resolutions are generally used when an organization wishes to publish policy, principles, and sentiments or when more formality is desired.
- e. There are two parts to the resolution. The first part is known as the preamble and begins with "Whereas." The preamble should be limited to providing the reasons for the resolution and any background information that might strengthen it. The second part of the resolution begins with "Resolved" and contains the motion to be adopted.
- f. The resolves of a resolution are stated by the presenting officer and are acted upon first. They are handled like any other main motion and are open to amendment.
- g. Once the resolves are adopted, the preamble is presented. The reason for presenting the preamble last is that any amendment of the resolves may require amendment of the preamble.



Bishop's Report to the Virginia Synod Assembly April 27, 2024 – Virtual – Trinity Lutheran Church, Newport News, VA

In my first report to the Virginia Synod Council, I shared this scripture from Ephesians 4:12 (TLB)

¹² Why is it that he gives us these special abilities to do certain things best? It is that God's people will be equipped to do better work for God, building up the Church, the body of Christ, to a position of strength and maturity;

Our focus during these first six months of leadership has been "Strong Connections." From our conversations with individuals and groups around the Synod, the overriding desire was strengthening relationships within the Virginia Synod.

Building up the Body of Christ to make it Stronger! One of my goals during my time as Bishop is to strengthen our Synod relationships; relationships with our rostered leaders, our congregations/ministry sites, our ministry partners, and relationships with Churchwide.

In order to accomplish that goal, especially with our rostered ministers and congregations/ministry sites, my schedule is being structured, so that I can spend "quality time" in the Western area of the state with an office in Salem, at Roanoke College and an office in the Eastern area of the state at First Lutheran in Norfolk.

It has also been a joy to become reacquainted with some and introduced to others that make up the awesome staff of the Office of the Bishop.

So, come, read my report, and take a ride with me as I travel our beautiful state and build strong connections with the people of God.

September 1, 2023 – March 23, 2024

Administrative Responsibilities

- Monthly Staff Meetings
- Monthly Region 9 Bishop's Gathering on Zoom
- Region 9 Council on Zoom
- Synod Council Orientation on Zoom
- September Synod Council Meeting at Epiphany, Richmond
- Bishop Installation in Waynesboro
- Dean's Meeting at Bethlehem, Waynesboro
- VA Synod Assembly Planning Meeting on Zoom
- ELCA Conference of Bishops on Zoom
- Synod Council Meeting on Zoom
- Call Process Candidate Zoom Interviews
- Synod Staff Visioning/Planning Retreat
- Ordination of Grace Casola at College Lutheran Church, Salem



- DEM (John Wertz) Performance Review (ELCA)
- Call Process Conversations with Parish of the Valley (St. Jacobs, Spader/Trinity, Keezletown)
- Call Process and School Board Conversations with St. John Lutheran Church, Norfolk
- Region 9 First Call Consultation
- Ordination of Lucas Cochran at Our Savior Lutheran Church, Virginia Beach
- Ministerium Team Planning Meeting on Zoom
- Call Process Interviews with Rostered Minister Candidates
- Conference Deans Meeting
- Region 9 Boundary Training Conversation
- Summer Power in the Spirit Planning Meeting
- Call Process Conversation with Christ Lutheran Church, Staunton
- Responding to Annual Bishop Report Submissions
- Conference of Bishops, Eaglewood Resort, Itasca, Ill.
- Conference of Bishops, Bishops Formation Team Meeting
- Weekly update with Virginia Synod Vice President
- March Synod Council Meeting at Grace Lutheran Church, Waynesboro

Church Visitation

- Preached at Christ Lutheran Church, Roanoke
- Preached at College Lutheran Church, Salem
- Preached at St. Mark Lutheran Church, Yorktown
- Preached at First English Lutheran Church, Richmond
- Preached at St. Peter, North Mountain Parish, Toms Brook.
- Gathering with the Mt. Rogers Lutheran Parishes; St. James, St. Matthew, and Faith Lutheran Churches
- Preached for the 150th Anniversary of Morning Star Lutheran Church, Luray
- Hosted confirmation students from Epiphany Lutheran Church, Richmond
- Preached at Reformation Lutheran Church, Newport News
- Preached at Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Lynchburg
- Preached at Trinity Lutheran Church, Newport News: 125th Anniversary.
- Preached at St. Paul Lutheran Church, Hampton: 70th Anniversary.
- College Lutheran Church, Salem: Mid-week Advent supper and Service
- Preached at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Lexington
- “Thanksgiving for Ministry” service for retiring pastor Karen Taylor/church council at Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Waynesboro.
- “Thanksgiving for Ministry” service (Zoom) for pastor Rob McCarty/church council at Christ Lutheran Church, Staunton.
- Christmas Eve Candlelight Service, First Lutheran Church, Norfolk
- New River Conference Congregation Tour – Pastor John Wertz/Pastor Wanda Childs
- Preached at St. John’s Lutheran Church, Norfolk
- Preached at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Lynchburg
- Preached/Call Process Orientation at Christ Lutheran Church, Staunton
- Coastal Conference Partnership Rostered Ministers Strong Connections Conversations
- Preached/Call Process Orientation at Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Waynesboro



- Blue Ridge Conference Partnership Rostered Ministers Strong Connections Conversations
- Germanna Conference Chrism Mass at Resurrection Lutheran Church, Fredericksburg
- Preached at Church of the Good Shepherd, Galax (Episcopal/Lutheran)
- Appalachia Conference Partnership Rostered Ministers Strong Connections Conversations
- Germanna Conference Partnership Rostered Ministers Strong Connections Conversations

Ministry Partners

- Participating in Lutheran Visit Day at Roanoke College.
- Participating in “God’s Work, Our Hands” at Brandon Oaks, Virginia Lutheran Homes in Roanoke
- Attending the Bishop Crumley Lecture Series (Habitat for Humanity-Jonathan Reckford) at Roanoke College.
- ADLA (African Descent Lutheran Association) Pre-Installation Reception in Waynesboro
- Roanoke College Board Meeting
- Roanoke College Inauguration of President Frank Shushok, Jr.
- Conversation with Cyndi Walters of National Lutheran Community Services on Zoom
- Participation at Lost and Found, Eagle Eyrie Conference Center, Lynchburg
- enCircle Executive Board meeting on Zoom
- VICPP Day for All People – Richmond
- VCC Judicatory Retreat – Roslyn Retreat Center, Richmond
- Participation at Winter Celebration, Eagle Eyrie Conference Center, Lynchburg
- Meeting with CEO for enCircle
- Provided leadership in worship for Mid-Winter Power in the Spirit on Zoom
- Attended as an ecumenical guest to the Episcopal Diocese of Southern Virginia Council, Williamsburg
- Bishops visit to United Lutheran Seminary, Philadelphia

Pastoral Care

- Conversations and prayers with Rostered Ministers
- Conversations with Synod Candidacy Seminarists
- Prayer to open Virginia House Assembly on Friday, January 19

Conference Attendance

- Southern Conference Gathering, El Rodeo Mexican Restaurant, Salem
- Tidewater Conference Gathering, Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Virginia Beach
- Richmond Conference Gathering, Epiphany Lutheran Church, Richmond
- Peninsula Conference Gathering – Newport News
- New River Conference – Radford
- Southern Valley Conference - Waynesboro



Community Activities

- Speaker at the 50th Anniversary of Gloria Dei Lutheran School, Hampton
- Offered opening prayer for the 50th Anniversary of the Peninsula Pastoral Counseling Center, Newport News
- Preached at The Chesapeake Senior Living Facility in Newport News (2x)
- Roanoke College “Watch Party” for Professor Gary Hollis, a Jeopardy contestant!

Continuing Education

- Monthly Mentor Bishop Check-in Meeting on Zoom
- Lay Ministry Conversation Zoom hosted by United Lutheran Seminary
- New Bishop Formation and Conference of Bishops at The Lutheran Center, Chicago
- VA Synod Orientation for Rostered Ministers new to the VA Synod, the VA Synod Ministerium and First Call Retreat in Virginia Beach.
- Region 9 Boundaries and Inclusion Training on Zoom
- Bishop Formation Zoom on Social Media and Press Communications
- ELCA Land Acknowledgement and Land Back on Zoom
- Zoom meeting with Nick Kiger, Dir. Mission Support Churchwide
- Monthly Mentor Bishop Check-in Meeting on Zoom
- LGBTQIAS+ Training on Zoom with United Lutheran Seminary
- DISC Behavior Training (Dominance, Influence, Steadiness and Compliance) – Take Flight
- Maternal Mobility Health on Zoom
- Tapestry MLK Emphasis on Zoom
- Mid-Winter Power in the Spirit on Zoom

It is truly an honor and a privilege to serve this Synod as its Bishop. As always, I ask for your prayers and for your grace.

Blessings,
Bishop Milton



Report of the Vice President

Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands.

Serve the Lord with gladness; come before his presence with singing.

Know ye that the Lord he is God; it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise; be thankful unto him, and bless his name.

For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.

Psalm 100

In this time of spring and season of renewal, let us all come together to make a joyful noise and work for stronger connections to each other, to our congregations, to our Synod, and to our ELCA. Since the Synod Assembly of 2023, I have been faithfully and diligently trying to remain connected to my Synod with the help of our Bishop, Synod staff and the whole Synod Council as Vice President of the Virginia Synod.

It has been an honor and a privilege to serve the Virginia Synod and lead the Synod Council. Bishop Milton and I talk regularly to make sure that we are connecting for the good of the Virginia Synod. As we focus on our Synod Assembly and doing the work that is necessary for the 2025 Churchwide Assembly in Phoenix, AZ, please remember to rejoice in the Lord and connect with the Synod. We are here for you and the whole Synod Council seeks to provide the support and care that the Synod needs across the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Thank you to Bishop Milton for the grace she shows me and the prayers she lifts up for all of us - the Virginia Synod. To Judy Castele, the Synod Secretary, you are my rock and a sister in faith - I am beyond grateful for your support, counsel and kindness. To the Office of the Bishop staff, your tireless work makes sure that we can all stay connected - many thanks for all that you do that is seen and unseen. To my fellow members of the Synod Council, thank you for sharing your time, talents and selves with each other and I am looking forward to connecting with you all more. Finally, to the Virginia Synod - all that I do as Vice President is so that we can all join together with STRONG CONNECTIONS!

Peace and blessings,

Blythe Ann Scott



Report of the Synod Council

Meetings and Areas of Responsibility

Meetings: Regular meetings of the Synod Council were held on: June 8, 2023, September 21-23, 2023, December 7, 2023, and March 15-16, 2024.

Areas of Responsibilities: The Synod Council is served by five Standing Committees as follows: Executive Committee, Consultation Committee, Committee on Discipline, Investment Committee, and Mutual Ministry Committee.

The President of the Virginia Synodical Women's Organization - Women of the ELCA and those who chair the Candidacy Committee and the Ministerium Team serve as advisory members of the Council.

2024 Synod Assembly: The 2024 Assembly arrangements were made by the Council for the Assembly to be held online on April 27, 2024. The theme of the Assembly will be: "Strong Connections."

Elections and Appointments

1. **Conference Deans-**The Council ratified the appointments of the following persons as deans of the conferences noted below:
 - Central Valley: The Rev. Katie Gosswein
 - Germanna: The Rev. Michael Church
 - Highlands: The Rev. Jonathan Hamman
 - New River: The Rev. Bill King
 - Northern Valley: The Rev. Martha Sims
 - Page: The Rev. Tarja Stevenson
 - Peninsulas: The Rev. Joel Neubauer
 - Richmond: The Rev. Dennis Andersen
 - Southern Valley: The Rev. Paul Pingel (January 1, 2024-present)
 - The Rev. Robert McCarty (until December 31, 2023)
 - Southern: The Rev. Cynthia Keyser (July 1, 2023-present)
 - The Rev. David Derrick (until June 27, 2023)
 - Tidewater: The Rev. Harry Griffith
2. **Virginia Lutheran Homes-** Synod Council ratified the appointments of the following Board Members: Jamie L. Dillard, The Rev. Laura D. Swanson, and ratified the reappointments of R. Allen Blackwood Jr., Mr. Phillip H. Harris, and Ms. Barbara L. Phelps.
3. **Youth Ministry Committee and Lutheran Youth Organization Board-**Synod Council ratified the appointments of committee members.



4. **Region 9 Council-** Synod Council appointed The Rev. John Wertz Jr. to serve on the Region 9 Council.
5. **Candidacy Committee-** Synod Council appointed Robert Quandahl as the committee chair, Rev. Luke Swanson, The Rev. Viktoria Parvin, Anna Lehman, and David Mayersky to serve on the committee.
6. **Virginia Synod Treasurer:** Synod Council appointed John Krallman.
7. **Synod Assembly-** Synod Council appointed Nikhil Patel as a youth to attend the 2024 assembly as an at-large voting member.
8. **Synod Council-** Synod Council appointed Liz Leonard to serve as the lay member on the executive committee and Cam Haggett, Pat Carriker, and The Rev. Kayla Keilholtz to serve vacant positions for their conference partnerships. Appointed Fiona Stapleton to serve as the youth representative.

Items from Synod Council:

1. Approval for the 2024 Synod Assembly to be held online.
2. Approval of updates made to Virginia Synod Vehicle Policy.
3. Created and approved a Synod Council Reimbursement Policy.
4. Approved the plan to meet our constitutional requirement of a 60/40 split of lay person and rostered ministers for the Synod Assembly.
5. Approval of the 2025 Investment in Ministry Plan
6. Approval of the 2025 Virginia Synod Compensation Guidelines.
7. Approval of the Virginia Synod Personnel Policy.
8. Approval of the sale of the Virginia Synod's 2017 Prius.
9. Approval of the process for appointments of At-Large Synod Assembly Voting Members.

Finances:

1. **Regular Review of the Financial Program:** Since the Investment in Ministry Plan reflects the program of the synod for mission and ministry and sets certain priorities, the Synod Council, especially through the counsel of the Treasurer of the Synod, regularly reviewed the current financial position of the synod and adjusted as seemed warranted.
2. **Audits:** The Synod Council made arrangements with the Roanoke firm of Kennett and Kennett, Certified Public Accountants, to secure an audit of the treasurer's books. The 2023 audit for the fiscal year ended on January 31, 2024. The audit was in process and not complete in time for the 2024 Synod Assembly.
3. **Investments:** The Synod Council's Investment Committee regularly reviews synodical funds available for investment, made in accordance with the Virginia Synod Investment Policy.
4. **Investment in Ministry Plan for 2025:** The proposed 2025 Investment in Ministry Plan is based on trends observed in 2023 and in 2024, ministry priorities for 2025, and anticipated mission support from congregations for the mission and ministry of the synod and churchwide organization. Details of the 2025 Investment in Ministry Plan are found on the following pages B-12.



Synod Council Recommendations

Recommendation Number 1

To approve the Order for Business as the agenda of the 2024 Assembly of the Virginia Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Recommendation Number 2

That the 2025 Investment in Ministry Plan be given general approval. (Beginning page B-12)

Recommendation Number 3

Beginning in 2025, the Virginia Synod Compensation Guidelines recommend a 3% to 7% increase. The figures in Appendix A show an increase from the 2024 3% increase recommendation. In addition, all rostered ministers continuing to serve in the Virginia Synod would receive a 1.75% step increase in base salary. (The step chart is capped at 25 years of experience).

The unadjusted minimum base salary for a pastor serving in the Virginia Synod would be set at \$47,594 for pastors with a parsonage and \$60,021 for pastors with housing allowance, and the unadjusted minimum base salary of a deacon serving in the Virginia Synod would be set at \$48,448.

The compensation guidelines include a formula to adjust the minimum unadjusted salary to reflect the local cost of housing.

The Synod encourages all congregations to meet or exceed these minimum compensation recommendations. (Beginning page B-15)



Report of the Secretary

Official Items

The Virginia Synod Archives are in the James R. Crumley Jr. Region 9 Archives at Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, Columbia, SC.

Certification of Minutes: Printed minutes of the thirty-fifth assembly of the Virginia Synod, ELCA, held on April 27, 2024, as certified by the bishop and secretary, be approved as the official protocol of the Assembly, with two copies to be deposited in the archives of the synod.

Roster Statistical Information:

By Ordination:

- **Pastor Lucas Cochran** was ordained and installed at **Our Saviour Lutheran Church in Virginia Beach** on January 28, 2024. Lucas accepted a call to serve as Pastor at Our Saviour.

By Transfer:

- **The Rev. Kristen Van Stee** transferred from the Nebraska Synod on April 1, 2024.
- **The Rev. Elise Anderson** transferred from the Southeastern Synod on March 1, 2024.
- **The Rev. Brian Riddle** transferred from the Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod on March 10, 2024.
- **The Rev. Marissa Sotos** transferred from the Minneapolis Synod on December 4, 2023.
- **The Rev. Gerry (Gerald) Johnson** transferred from the Metro DC Synod on September 18, 2023.

Congregational Calls and Installations:

- **The Rev. Kristen Van Stee** accepted a call to serve as Pastor at **Mt. Zion Lutheran Church in New Market** and started serving on **April 1, 2024**. She was installed on April 21, 2024.
- **The Rev. Elise Anderson** accepted a call to serve as Pastor at **St. John Lutheran Church in Abingdon** and started serving on March 1, 2024.
- **The Rev. Brian Riddle** accepted a call to serve as Pastor at **St. Michael Lutheran Church in Virginia Beach** and started serving on March 10, 2024. He was installed on April 14, 2024.
- **The Rev. Jay Serafin** accepted a call to serve as Pastor at **Apostles Lutheran Church in Gloucester** and started serving on June 25, 2023. He was installed on September 24, 2023.
- **The Rev. Jason Darty** accepted a call to serve as Pastor at **Rural Retreat Parish** serving **Grace Lutheran Church, Rural Retreat** and **St. Paul Lutheran Church, Rural Retreat** and started serving on July 1, 2023. His installation service was held on September 25, 2023 at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Rural Retreat.
- **The Rev. Jessica Darty** accepted a call to serve as Pastor at **Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church in Pulaski** and started serving on July 1, 2023. She was installed on August 27, 2023.

Non-Congregational Calls:

- **The Rev. Cynthia Long** accepted a call from Synod Council on December 1, 2023 to serve as Lead Chaplain at Sunnyside Retirement Community in Waynesboro.
- **The Rev. Jennifer Osheim-Owen** accepted a call from Synod Council on August 17, 2023 to serve as Chaplain at Williamsburg Landing in Williamsburg.



- **The Rev. Kelly Bayer Derrick** accepted a call from Synod Council on September 1, 2024 to serve as Assistant to the Bishop for the Virginia Synod.
- **The Rev. John Wertz Jr.** accepted a call from Synod Council on September 1, 2024 as Assistant to the Bishop for the Virginia Synod.
- **The Rev. Liz Radtke** accepted a call from Synod Council on September 1, 2024 to serve as Director for Congregational Leadership and Support for the Virginia Synod.
- **The Rev. Dave Delaney** accepted a call from Synod Council on September 1, 2024 to serve as Director for Youth and Young Adult Ministry for the Virginia Synod.
- **The Rev. Colleen Montgomery** accepted a call from Synod Council on September 1, 2024 to serve as Director of Digital Ministry for the Virginia Synod.
- **The Rev. Anna Havron** accepted a call from Synod Council on July 31, 2023 to serve as Hospice Chaplain at Blue Ridge Hospice in Winchester.
- **Deacon Elizabeth Brendle Fox** accepted a call from Synod Council on June 8, 2023 to serve as a Family Resource Specialist at Hampton Healthy Families in Hampton.

Dismissals to other Synods:

- **The Rev. Karen Taylor** transferred to Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod on March 25, 2024.
- **The Rev. Angela Lambert** transferred to West Virginia Synod on December 31, 2023.
- **The Rev. Stephen Bohannon** transferred to Metro DC Synod on July 2, 2023.
- **The Rev. Joshua Copeland** transferred to North Carolina Synod on June 12, 2023.

Resigned from a Congregational Call:

- **The Rev. Karen Taylor** resigned her call at **Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Waynesboro** on December 31, 2023.
- **The Rev. Jeff Marble** resigned his call at **Morning Star Lutheran Church in Luray** on December 31, 2023.
- **The Rev. Robert McCarty** resigned his call at **Christ Lutheran Church in Staunton** on December 31, 2023.
- **The Rev. Angela Lambert** resigned her call at **Timberville Parish** serving **Rader Lutheran Church** and **St. Paul Lutheran Church in Timberville** on December 24, 2023.
- **The Rev. Dr. Phyllis Blair Milton** resigned her call at **Holy Communion Lutheran Church in Portsmouth** on July 30, 2023.
- **The Rev. Anna Havron** resigned her call at **Mountain View Parish** serving **Mt. Zion Lutheran Church in Woodstock** and **St. Luke Lutheran Church in Woodstock** on July 15, 2023.
- **The Rev. Stephen Bohannon** resigned his call at **St. Michael Lutheran Church in Virginia Beach** on July 2, 2023.
- **The Rev. Bill Nabers** resigned his call at **Parish of the Valley** serving **Trinity Lutheran Church in Keezletown** and **St. Jacob's Lutheran Church in Spader's** on June 30, 2023.
- **The Rev. Jessica Darty** resigned her call at **St. Luke Lutheran Church in Culpeper** on June 15, 2023.
- **The Rev. Jason Darty** resigned his call at **Hebron Lutheran Church in Madison** on June 15, 2023.
- **The Rev. Joshua Copeland** resigned his call at **Our Saviour in Christiansburg** on June 12, 2023.
- **The Rev. Michelle Stramiello** resigned her call at **St. Michael Lutheran Church in Blacksburg** on June 12, 2023.

Resigned from a Non-Congregational Call:

- **The Rev. Beth Woodard** resigned her call at Kindred Hospice as Bereavement Coordinator (formally Personal Touch Home Care in Virginia Beach) on May 9, 2023.



Retirements:

- **The Rev. Jeff Marble** retired on January 1, 2024.
- **The Rev. Karen Taylor** retired on January 1, 2024.
- **The Rev. Bill (William) Nabers** retired on July 1, 2023.

Deaths:

- **The Rev. K. Roy Nilsen** December 29, 1931-March 22, 2024
- **Deacon Doug Price** September 5, 1952-February 29, 2024
- **The Rev. Hal Harter** June 13, 1928-September 5, 2023
- **The Rev. Cliff (Clifford) Olsen** May 27, 1932-June 13, 2023

Resigned from the ELCA Roster:

- The Rev. Austin Propst on October 16, 2023.

Congregational Statistical Information:

- Floyd-Willis Parish (St. Mark Lutheran Church, Floyd and Zion Lutheran Church, Floyd) became a Reconciling in Christ Congregation.
- First Lutheran Church Norfolk became a Reconciling in Christ Congregation.

In thanksgiving for these celebrations and anniversaries, we share these congregations with significant events submitted by the congregations for 2024.

Anniversaries

- St. Andrew Lutheran Church, Portsmouth
 - Our 60th Congregational Anniversary

Blessings

- St. Andrew Lutheran Church, Portsmouth
 - Received the Faith-Based Volunteer Award from the Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce.

Respectfully submitted,
Judy Castele
Secretary of the Virginia Synod



2025 Virginia Synod Proposed Investment in Ministry Plan

Recommended by the Synod Council on December 7, 2023.

The subsequent pages include the proposed 2025 Investment in Ministry Plan for Virginia Synod. This plan comes to the Assembly as a recommendation from the Synod Council.

The Investment in Ministry Plan includes three columns:

- The first column includes the name or description of the ministry being supported.
- The second column includes the Approved 2024 Virginia Synod Investment in Ministry Plan.
- The third column includes the Proposed 2025 Virginia Synod Investment in Ministry Plan.

	2024	2025
Investment in Ministry Plan	02/01/2024 - 01/31/2025	02/01/2025 - 01/31/2026
Mission Area		Proposed
Financial Support		
Mission Support from Congregations	\$1,650,000	\$1,500,000
Other Revenues, Income from Investments, Insurance, DEM grants	150,000	150,000
Other Grants		
Forwarding Faith	82,000	82,000
Balancing Figure		
Individual Giving	15,000	15,000
	\$247,000	\$247,000
TOTAL FINANCIAL SUPPORT	\$1,897,000	\$1,747,000
Investments in Ministry		
Mission Support to ELCA Churchwide	\$660,000	\$600,000
Office of the Bishop		
Deans	\$11,000	\$11,000
Staff Synod Staff - Salaries and Benefits (all)	745,000	745,000
Continuing Education	6,000	6,000
Travel & Living	50,000	50,000
Ecumenical Support	6,210	6,210
Total Office of the Bishop	\$818,210	\$818,210



Synod Ministry		
Mission Table	\$500	\$500
Stewardship	6,000	6,000
Youth Ministry General Expenses	10,000	10,000
Candidacy Committee	35,000	35,000
Young Adult Ministry	2,500	2,500
First Call Theological Education	3,000	3,000
Orientation to New Leaders in Virginia Synod	1,500	1,500
Gathering of the Ministerium	5,000	5,000
Boundaries Training	1,500	1,500
Power in the Spirit	6,000	6,000
Adult Faith Formation	1,500	1,500
Communications	8,000	8,000
Global Missions Team	2,000	2,000
Women in Ministry	3,000	3,000
Justice Ministries	2,000	2,000
FF Seed Money for New Ministry	1,000	1,000
TOTAL Synod Ministry	\$88,500	\$88,500
Grants to Ministry Partners		
Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary	\$32,500	\$32,500
Roanoke College	12,480	12,480
Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy (VICPP)	2,550	2,550
Grace Inside Prison Chaplains	9,180	9,180
Virginia Lutheran Homes	8,000	8,000
Region 9 of ELCA (Regional Center)	8,500	8,500
Caroline Furnace Lutheran Camp	32,500	32,500
Hungry Mother Lutheran Camp	18,000	18,000
Campus Ministry Grants to Congregations	68,800	68,800
TOTAL Grants	\$192,510	\$192,510
Synod Council Activities		
Synod Council Expenses	\$6,000	\$6,000
Insurance Premiums	12,500	12,500



Audit	14,500	14,500
Legal Retainer Fees (Acct 50924)		
Archives	6,000	6,000
TOTAL Synod Council	\$39,000	\$39,000
Synod Assembly	(\$1,500)	(\$3,000)
<u>Synod Office Operations</u>		
Postage	\$4,500	\$4,500
Office Supplies	22,000	22,000
Telecommunications	17,500	17,500
Vanco Credit Card Processing Charges	3,500	3,500
Maintenance	8,500	8,500
Bank Charges	1,760	1,760
Leasing - Copiers	28,000	28,000
Payroll Processing	5,800	5,800
Help Desk Support/Network	1,870	1,870
Rent - East Office (Norfolk)	7,000	9,000
Rent - Bittle Hall, Salem	33,428	33,428
Office Operations - Misc (Acct 50952)		
Event Registration Software	1,000	1,000
TOTAL Synod Office	\$134,858	\$136,858
<u>Contingencies & Other</u>		
Contingency		
Furnishings & Equipment	\$3,000	\$3,000
Bishop's Discretionary Fund	5,000	5,000
TOTAL Other	\$8,000	\$8,000
TOTAL INVESTMENTS IN MINISTRY	\$1,939,578	\$1,880,078
<i>Other Events and Misc. Accounts</i>		
NET SURPLUS OR (DEFICIT)	(\$42,578)	(\$133,078)
Depreciation of Assets**	(\$30,000)	(\$30,000)
Net Surplus or Deficit, including Depreciation	(\$72,578)	(\$163,078)



2025 Compensation Guidelines

Rostered Ministers

(Guidelines for Rostered Ministers of
Word and Service and Ministers of Word and Sacrament)

Updated on April 2, 2024

**Please note: Sections of the document with major revisions or additions are highlighted to make them easier to locate.*

The Virginia Synod
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The Virginia Synod

of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
In Partnership with the New Guinea Islands District of Papua New Guinea



“Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified. Do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”
-Joshua 1:9 NIV

TO: Council Presidents/Vice Presidents of Congregations and Rostered Ministers
FROM: Synod Council, Virginia Synod
DATE: May 2024
SUBJECT: 2025 Recommended Minimum Compensation and Reimbursement Guidelines

We are pleased to share with you the 2025 recommended minimum compensation guidelines for all Virginia Synod Rostered Ministers. There are no substantive changes in the policies from 2024 to 2025. The primary update is in the suggested compensation tables.

Since compensation guidelines need to be approved before any cost-of-living increase for 2025 can be approved, the Synod Council once again suggests that for 2025, congregations consider giving a 3% to 7% cost-of-living increase and a step increase of 1.75% based on years of experience. These increases are reflected in the tables included in Appendix A. *(Note: In previous years, the recommendations have included the full cost of living increase recommended for Social Security and the 1.75% cost of living increase.)*

The 2025 compensation guidelines include a method to adjust for the local cost of housing and tools to suggest adjustments for related non-pastoral experience, additional education, and complexity of call.

To assist with these calculations, please download and use 2025 Compensation Workbook (Excel) at: <https://www.vasynod.org/resources/compensation-guidelines/>. There are tabs for calculating Compensation for Pastor or Deacons, Reimbursable Expenses, Benefits, and a tab providing 2024 Housing Data as a reference document to show the median cost of housing around the Synod. **The workbook will be published in September 2024 so it can include the most current housing data.**

In addition to the information we have provided, you will need information from Portico Benefits regarding pension, health, and disability contributions for the coming year. That information, along with guidelines for pension contributions, will be sent directly to each parish. The Portico website is www.porticobenefits.org.

We encourage the formation of a Mutual Ministry Committee in every congregation. We also recommend *Pastor and People—Making Mutual Ministry Work*, in the [Congregational Leader](http://www.augsburgfortress.org) Series from Augsburg Fortress www.augsburgfortress.org.

If you need any assistance from our Synod Council, please contact the Virginia Synod office at 540-389-1000.

May God continue to bless your ministry, and may you be able to see God’s hand moving and guiding you in this process of compensation so that the partnership in your parish helps usher in the kingdom and brings glory to God.

Peace,
The Synod Council



Western Office: P.O. Box 70, 221 College Lane, Salem, VA 24153 | 540.389.1000

Eastern Office: 1301 Colley Avenue, Norfolk, VA 23510 | 757.622.9421



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COMPENSATION PLANNING

It is a special opportunity and responsibility of the Christian community for members of the congregation to work together prayerfully with their pastor to provide fair compensation. Both congregations and the Rostered Minister benefit when this process is characterized by openness, honesty, and mutual care. The guidelines that follow are presented as an aid to your conversation.

A Rostered Minister's total compensation package should, as much as possible, be comparable to the compensation received by congregation members in professional occupations, considering their level of education and years of experience. In order to fulfill their calling, it is essential that they receive sufficient financial resources to care for themselves and their families.

The modern context for ministry presents the church with a variety of challenges and opportunities that require creative and informed responses if congregations are going to thrive. It is with this in mind that the guidelines stress the importance of continuing education for Rostered Ministers. Furthermore, our commitment to modeling a healthy work environment means that adequate vacation time, sick leave, parental leave, family leave, and sabbaticals are included in these guidelines.

The Rostered Minister's salaries and other benefits should be reviewed annually, and adjustments should be thoughtfully considered.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q1. Why do you use the term "Rostered Minister"?

- A.** This term includes ordained pastors and deacons who are listed on the official rosters of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Rostered Ministers include Ministers of Word and Service (deacons) and Ministers of Word and Sacrament (pastors).

Q2. Who determines compensation?

- A.** The responsibility for determining compensation rests with the Congregation Council, yet it is difficult for the entire Congregational Council to undertake such a task. The annual appointment of a temporary **Compensation Committee** is recommended, with membership to include:
1. the Council President or Vice-President
 2. two members of the congregation agreed upon by BOTH the Rostered Minister and the Council
 3. the Chairperson of the Mutual Ministry Committee
 4. the Rostered Minister

Q3. Should the Rostered Minister be on the Compensation Committee?



- A. Making your Rostered Minister a part of the group that deals with compensation will provide for a more satisfactory outcome. While there may be a portion of the discussion in which it may not be appropriate for the Rostered Minister to be present, there are also matters for which this help will be needed.

Q4. Where does evaluation enter our deliberations?

- A. In formulating a recommendation to the Congregation Council, the **Compensation Committee** should consult with the congregation's **Mutual Ministry Committee**. Regular evaluation of the relationship of the Rostered Minister and parish helps to maintain a supportive, vital, growing partnership for both. This kind of mutually supportive relationship between the congregation and the Rostered Minister will positively affect the quality of the ministry.

Q5. What about the recommended Minimum Cash Compensation Levels for Pastors?

- A. The Compensation Guidelines recommend a minimum "Cash Compensation" instead of a minimum "Salary" for pastors in an effort to overcome the wide disparities in the synod in total compensation, especially when it comes to housing allowances and the rate at which the Social Security Tax is compensated.

In order to be more equitable in the Virginia Synod, the Synod Council advocates the current synod guidelines as **minimum** cash compensation. We are aware that these recommendations may seem beyond the means of some of our parishes. It is particularly in these locations that we strongly encourage movement toward these levels of compensation. In addition to fair compensation for your current pastor, following the recommended guidelines will expand the pool of available candidates in a future call process.

Q6. What about the recommended Minimum Cash Compensation Levels for Deacons?

- A. The Compensation Guidelines recommend a minimum cash compensation instead of a minimum "Salary" for Rostered Ministers in an effort to overcome the wide disparities in the synod in total compensation.

In order to be more equitable in the Virginia Synod, the Synod Council advocates the current synod guidelines as **minimum** cash compensation. We are aware that these recommendations may seem beyond the means of some of our parishes. It is particularly in these locations that we strongly encourage movement toward these levels of compensation. In addition to fair compensation for your current deacon, following the recommended guidelines will expand the pool of available candidates in a future call process.



Q7. What Salary Adjustment Factors need to be considered?

- A. Appropriate adjustment factors include congregational size and complexity, the cost of living in the area, as well as the pastor's experience, gifts for ministry, and continuing education. Additionally, previous work experience in the case of second career Rostered Ministers should be considered.

To assist congregations in determining appropriate adjustments for housing costs, the Compensation Guidelines now provide a means to adjust the Minimum Cash Compensation based on the cost of housing in your area. The current average cost of a house based on a survey of 25 towns and cities on Zillow is \$(To be Updated), and the median housing allowance is set at \$(To be Updated) (12% of the median cost of a home). The formula in the "Cost of Housing Adjustment" section of the 'Compensation Workbook' adjusts the minimum cash compensation by increasing or decreasing the housing allowance amount to match the cost of housing in your area.

The "Additional Compensation Added by Mutual Agreement" section uses a point system to account for years of related non-Rostered Minister experience, additional degrees, and the number of staff supervised. The rostered ministry completes this section of the workbook. The values entered are added (up to a max of 10 points) and that number is multiplied by \$500. While this additional compensation is not a part of the minimum compensation requirement, it provides a helpful guide for mutual conversation and agreement. Download the Compensation Workbook (Excel) at:

<https://www.vasynod.org/resources/compensation-guidelines/>

Q8. Is a deacon self-employed or an employee of the congregation?

- A. Ministers of Word and Service are considered employees by the IRS for purposes of Social Security and income taxes and require standard withholdings from their salaries. A standard W-2 is issued. If you have questions about whether or not a Deacon qualifies for a housing allowance, please consult a tax professional.

Q9. Is the pastor self-employed or an employee of the congregation?

- A. The IRS and the Courts have held that ministers are common-law employees for income tax purposes even though clergy are considered self-employed for social security purposes. **Pastors should be given W-2 forms (not a 1099)** by the church for income tax purposes. For more information on the congregation's Federal and Virginia income tax reporting of your pastor's compensation, please contact the synod office.

Q10. How are the pastor's income and self-employment taxes figured?

- A. The pastor's **income tax** is figured on the base salary plus the cash allowance for the self-employment tax. The pastor's **self-employment tax** is figured on the base salary, plus the housing allowance or the fair rental value of the parsonage, plus the cash allowance for the self-employment tax.



Q11. How do we determine Base Salary, Housing, and Social Security components from the Minimum Cash Compensation guidelines for pastors with a Housing Allowance?

- A. The Cash Compensation figure should be seen as a "pie" which may be divided in whatever way seems fair and beneficial to the pastor to cover Base Salary, Housing, and Social Security/Medicare. For example, pastors with a Housing Allowance will want to maximize this amount for tax purposes up to the limits that are set by the Internal Revenue Service. Typically, a Housing Allowance Resolution must be passed by the Council each year to set the amount of the housing allowance for the next year.

Regarding Social Security and Medicare contributions, even though pastors receive a W-2 from the congregation, the federal government considers pastors to be self-employed persons who must pay their own self-employment tax at a rate of 15.3% (Social Security 12.4% and Medicare 2.9%). In a typical employment setting, the employer pays 7.65% of these costs and the employee pays 7.65% of these costs. The cash compensation figure includes the full 15.3% for self-employment tax to cover both the employer and the employee portions of the tax. (Reminder: any Social Security Allowance is included as income when figuring income tax.)

Regardless of how the 'pie' is divided, it is helpful to clearly identify how much of the cash compensation is being allotted for Base Salary, Housing, and Social Security/Medicare.

Q12. How do we determine Base Salary and Social Security components from the Minimum Cash Compensation guidelines for pastors with a Parsonage?

- A. The Cash Compensation figure should be seen as a "pie" which may be divided in whatever way seems fair and beneficial to the pastor to cover Base Salary and Social Security/Medicare.

Regarding Social Security and Medicare contributions, even though pastors receive a W-2 from the congregation, the federal government considers pastors to be self-employed persons who must pay their own self-employment tax at a rate of 15.3% (Social Security 12.4% and Medicare 2.9%). In a typical employment setting, the employer pays 7.65% of these costs and the employee pays 7.65% of these costs. The cash compensation figure includes the full 15.3% for self-employment tax to cover both the employer and the employee portions of the tax. (Reminder: any Social Security Allowance is included as income when figuring income tax.)

Regardless of how the 'pie' is divided, it is helpful to clearly identify how much of the cash compensation is being allotted for Base Salary and Social Security/Medicare.

Note: It is recommended that the congregation and the Rostered Minister to create an 'Equity Allowance' to save for the eventual purchase of a home. For details on establishing an Equity Allowance, talk to a Portico representative.



Q13. How do we determine compensation for part-time Rostered Ministers?

- A. “Compensation for part-time Rostered Ministers is typically determined by applying the percentage of call (.25%, .50%, .75%) to the recommended minimum compensation. In addition, the same percentage should be applied in benefits calculations to assist in providing health care and retirement. In addition, the same percentage should be applied in benefits calculations to assist in providing health care and retirement. For example, if an individual is half-time, then the congregation will contribute 50% of the cost required to provide benefits if the individual were enrolled in benefits through the Synod’s benefits provider. The congregation may elect to offer full benefits to an individual working less than full-time as a part of compensation negotiations. Those determinations will be made case-by-case by congregation leadership in consultation with the Rostered Minister and the Office of the Bishop. Please note that the cost of providing full benefits is based on the total compensation of the Rostered Minister, so reducing the percentage of the call also reduces the cost of the benefits.

Q14. Is the congregation required to provide health care and retirement benefits?

- A. Congregations and other organizations issuing a call to a Rostered Minister of the ELCA are expected to provide health care and retirement benefits for Rostered Ministers, and their spouse, and child(ren). The ELCA recommends Portico Benefits, but the use of another provider for health care and retirement benefits can be negotiated by the Rostered Minister and the hiring organization. In the case of part-time Rostered Ministers, the percentage of the call should be applied to benefits calculations to assist in providing health care and retirement benefits. Should the Rostered Minister, in consultation with the congregation, elect to seek coverage from another benefits provider, the congregation will pay the premium or retirement contribution directly or reimburse the Rostered Minister for that cost.

Q15. How is vacation time granted?

- A. Vacation time (typically four weeks and four Sundays for a full-time Rostered Minister) is granted on a yearly basis beginning on the first day of the calendar or fiscal year. Vacation time for Rostered Ministers is not accrued on a paycheck-by-paycheck basis. Policies regarding rolling over vacation time from one year to the next should be addressed by the congregation or hiring organization.

Q16. Why should congregations establish “accountable reimbursement plans”?

- A. An **accountable reimbursement plan** as described on the Expense Worksheet and in **Appendices H & I**, provides the Rostered Minister 100% reimbursement for professional expenses such as business expenses, mileage, and books. If the congregation provides an allowance for professional expenses, the “allowances” are considered as income, will be subject to income tax, and must be reported on the Rostered Minister’s W-2. Business expenses, mileage, books are considered business expenses and deductible as miscellaneous itemized deductions, deductible only to the extent that they exceed 2% of adjusted gross income.



Q17. What about Parental Leave?

A. A specific **Parental Leave Plan** should be carefully drawn up in open consultation with your Rostered Minister. Parental leave is directed towards the birth or adoption of a child.

1. Parental Leave: twelve (12) weeks full salary, housing, benefits for both Childbearing and Adoption Parental Leave, including twelve (12) Sundays for both primary and secondary caregivers.

Factors for consideration:

- a) Twelve (12) weeks is needed for physical healing, bonding time, working out feeding schedule, and recognition that day care centers do not accept newborns.
 - b) Primary and Secondary Caregivers Language – If a distinction is going to be made for different parents, please use these terms. The language is preferable to mother/father or maternity/paternity because primary and secondary do not reflect sex or gender.
2. Childcare Leave: A specific childcare leave should also be carefully drawn up in open consultation with the Synod, your Rostered Minister. Childcare Leave is to be used within the first year of a child's birth. Childcare Leave can be used to ease a parent back into full time hours.

Example:

Pastor A is in a fulltime call and is returning from parental leave. Pastor A has 4 weeks of childcare leave (160 hours). For the first two weeks of work, Pastor A works quarter time, using 1.5 weeks of childcare leave (60 hours). For Pastor A's second two weeks of work, Pastor A works half time, using another week of childcare leave (40 hours). Pastor A then returns full time. Pastor A has 1.5 weeks of childcare leave (60 hours) left to use up until the child's first birthday.

Deacon B's child is 6 months old. Deacon B has two weeks of childcare leave, which Deacon B uses to take one extra day off each week for 10 weeks.

Factors for consideration:

- a. Sundays may or may not be included.
 - b. Age of adopted child and/or needs of a child may affect length of time (more or less) offered.
 - c. Depending on geographic location, paid childcare may not be available until babies are 12 weeks old.
 - d. Discussion of bringing baby to work for set number of hours during the week or increased hours of working from home.
3. If both parents are Rostered Ministers, (either in the same congregation/agency/Synod or separate ones), both should be given the recommended leave.



Q18. What about Family Leave or Bereavement Leave?

- A. A specific **Family Leave Policy** and **Bereavement Leave Policy** should also be carefully drawn up in open consultation with your Rostered Minister. **Family Leave** is directed towards illness or other special needs for family members, not limited to children. Such leave should include up to two (2) weeks full salary and benefits. **Bereavement Leave** provides time for grieving following a loss. Any other specific conditions should be clearly defined in writing.

Q19. Whom do we contact if we need further information?

- A. Pensions Information is available at Portico web site: www.porticobenefits.org (Site includes a Pension Calculation program, updated annually). Portico's telephone is: 800.352.2876.
- B. Cost of living variances for your county are available at the Bureau of Labor Statistics website: www.bls.gov.



ADDITIONAL NOTES ON COMPONENTS OF COMPENSATION FOR ROSTERED MINISTERS RECEIVING HOUSING ALLOWANCE

Minimum Cash Compensation: The Chart of Minimum Cash Compensation is based on years of service and is capped at 25 years. For pastors, the figures on the chart **include** amounts for salary, housing allowance, and self-employment tax (Social Security/Medicare). For deacons, the figures on the chart reflect cash compensation for salary. The figures for 2025 should include a cost-of-living increase from 2024.

Adjustments to Compensation: To assist congregations in determining appropriate adjustments for housing costs, the Compensation Guidelines now provide a means to adjust the Minimum Cash Compensation based on the cost of housing in your area. The current average cost of a house based on a survey of 25 towns and cities on Zillow is **\$(To be Updated)** and the median housing allowance is set at **\$(To be Updated)** (12% of the median cost of a home). The formula in the “**Housing Allowance**” section of the Excel Workbook adjusts the minimum cash compensation by increasing or decreasing the housing allowance amount to match the cost of housing in your area.

The “**Additional Compensation Added by Mutual Agreement**” section uses a point system to account for years of related non-pastoral experience, additional degrees, and the number of staff supervised. The rostered ministry completes this section of the workbook. The values entered are added (up to a max of 10 points) and that number is multiplied by \$500. While this additional compensation is not a part of the minimum compensation requirement, it provides helpful guidance for mutual conversation and agreement. See Compensation Workbook (Excel) for details:

<https://www.vasynod.org/resources/compensation-guidelines/>

Housing Allowance: A portion of this Total Cash Compensation for pastors should be designated as Housing Allowance. A housing allowance is a tax-exempt (for income tax purposes) allocation of the pastor’s cash compensation approximating the fair rental value of a home, plus the furnishings and cost of utilities. This allowance should be sufficient to provide adequate housing as well as care for the related expenses of utilities and upkeep. The amount of this allowance that is excludable from gross income is the LEAST of 1) the amount actually used to provide a home, 2) the amount officially designated as housing allowance, or 3) the fair rental value of the home, including furnishings and utilities. To meet IRS requirements, the annual amount of housing allowance must be officially designated **prior to the time period for which it applies**. (See Appendix H)

Retirement: Regarding pensions, we recommend 12% of “Defined Compensation” as calculated on the Portico worksheet. If the congregation is currently contributing at a lower rate, we strongly encourage a movement to 12% as soon as possible at a rate of at least 0.5% each year until the full 12% level is achieved. **Please be sure to read all materials sent from Portico to determine the correct amount to include on this line.** (See Appendix I) Visit www.porticobenefits.org for the 2025 Retirement Calculator.



Health Care: For health care, the total percentage of “defined compensation” (as defined by Portico) will vary according to the selected package. The Synod Council recommends selecting either the Gold+ or Silver+ package in consultation with the Rostered Minister. The actual figures for 2025 will be mailed by Portico. Should the Rostered Minister, in consultation with the congregation, elect to seek coverage from another insurance provider, the congregation will pay the premium directly or reimburse the Rostered Minister for the cost of the premium. Please use the Portico materials to determine the correct amount to include on this line. Visit their website at www.porticobenefits.org for their 2025 Health Care Costs Calculator.

Vacation: We recommend four weeks of vacation which includes four Sundays to give your pastor ample time away to maintain personal and family health.

Sick Leave. We recommend two weeks of sick leave per year with full salary, housing, and benefits should be provided for the Rostered Minister.

Short-term Disability Leave. Short-term Disability Leave of up to two months with full salary, housing, and benefits should be provided for the Rostered Minister, if needed. The Portico Disability Plan provides for the potential of 2/3 of defined compensation to be paid beginning in the third month. Portico will assist each Rostered Ministers in applying for long-term disability benefits provided by the Lincoln Financial Group. Each application for disability must be made prior to the end of employment.

Continuing Education. ELCA guidelines suggest two weeks (including two Sundays) of continuing education for those in full-time calls.

Download the Compensation Workbook (Excel) at:
<https://www.vasynod.org/resources/compensation-guidelines/>



ADDITIONAL NOTES ON COMPONENTS OF COMPENSATION FOR ROSTERED MINISTERS WITH PARSONAGE PROVIDED

Minimum Cash Compensation: The Chart of Minimum Cash Compensation is based on years of service and is capped at 25 years. The figures on the chart **include** amounts for salary and self-employment tax (Social Security/Medicare). The figures for 2025 should include a cost-of-living increase from 2024.

Adjustments to Compensation: The “**Additional Compensation Added by Mutual Agreement**” section uses a point system to account for years of related non-pastoral experience, additional degrees, and the number of staff supervised. The rostered ministry completes this section of the workbook. The values entered are added (up to a max of 10 points) and that number is multiplied by \$500. While this additional compensation is not a part of the minimum compensation requirement, it provides a helpful guidance for mutual conversation and agreement.

A congregation providing a parsonage for its Rostered Minister is encouraged to establish an “**Equity Allowance**” of at least \$1,000 per year. These funds are set aside to help the Rostered Minister accumulate equity for the purchase of a home when that is needed or desired. Please see Appendix B for further information about equity allowances. A congregation providing a parsonage for its Rostered Minister is strongly encouraged to pay the actual expenses for the maintenance and the utilities for the parsonage. If the congregation prefers to not pay the utilities, a realistic utility adjustment should be made to the Rostered Minister’s salary. See Compensation Workbook (Excel) for details:

<https://www.vasynod.org/resources/compensation-guidelines/>

Retirement: Regarding pensions, we recommend 12% of “Defined Compensation” as calculated on the Portico worksheet. If the congregation is currently contributing at a lower rate, we strongly encourage a movement to 12% as soon as possible at a rate of at least 0.5% each year until the full 12% level is achieved. **Please be sure to read all materials sent from Portico to determine the correct amount to include on this line.** (See Appendix I) Visit www.porticobenefits.org for the 2022 Pensions Calculator.

Health Care: For health care, the total percentage of “defined compensation” (as defined by Portico) will vary according to the selected package. The Synod Council recommends selecting either the Gold+ or Silver+ package in consultation with the Rostered Minister. **Should the Rostered Minister, in consultation with the congregation, elect to seek coverage from another insurance provider, the congregation will pay the premium directly or reimburse the Rostered Minister for the cost of the premium.** The actual figures for 2025 will be mailed by Portico. **Please use the Portico materials to determine the correct amount to include on this line.** Visit their website at www.porticobenefits.org for their 2025 Health Care Costs Calculator.

Vacation: We recommend four weeks of vacation, including four Sundays, so that the Rostered Minister has ample time away to maintain personal and family health.



Sick Leave. We recommend two weeks of sick leave per year with full salary, housing, and benefits should be provided for the Rostered Minister.

Short-term Disability Leave. Short-term Disability Leave of up to two months with full salary, housing, and benefits should be provided for the Rostered Minister, if needed. The Portico Disability Plan provides for the potential of 2/3 of defined compensation to be paid beginning in the third month. Portico will assist each Rostered Ministers in applying for long-term disability benefits provided by the Lincoln Financial Group. Each application for disability must be made prior to the end of employment.

Continuing Education: ELCA guidelines suggest two weeks (including two Sundays) of continuing education for those in full-time calls.

Download the Compensation Workbook (Excel) at:
<https://www.vasynod.org/resources/compensation-guidelines/>



NOTES ON REIMBURSABLE EXPENSES

Professional expenses can be reimbursed in a number of ways. The most desirable is a fully **accountable reimbursement plan** under which the Rostered Minister submits expenses to the Treasurer and is reimbursed. Under this arrangement the Rostered Minister need not include the reimbursement as income nor be concerned that the expenses might not be deductible. See [Appendix F](#) and [Appendix G](#) for details and examples.

A. Automobile Expenses. If an automobile is not purchased or leased by the church for the pastor's use, reimbursement should be made at the prevailing IRS allowable rate.

B. Professional Expenses.

- **Continuing Education.** To facilitate the updating of skills, and thereby the strengthening of ministry, the congregation should provide at least two weeks each year, including two Sundays, (in addition to vacation time) **and** \$800 annually, both of which may accrue up to three years.
- **Books & Periodicals.** We encourage \$300 annually to keep abreast of developments in the many facets of parish ministry.
- **Synod Events.**
 - Attendance at the **Synod Assembly** is required. Therefore, all expenses (travel, lodging, and registration) should be paid. Please note, for **individuals under call by the Synod Council**, please contact the Synod Office for details on assistance available to attend Synod Assembly.
 - **First Call Theological Education** is required. Documents outlining this program are available through the Synod Office.
 - We strongly encourage attendance at the **Gathering of the Ministerium**. This gathering is a time away with the bishop and other Rostered Ministers for worship, spiritual sharing, conversation, and to learn from gifted presenters.
- **Other.** See [Appendix F](#) & [Appendix G](#) for examples.

Appendix A: 2025 Pastor Cash Compensation Guidelines with Housing Allowance

The suggestion for 2025 is that congregations consider a 3% to 7% cost of living increase over the 2024 beginning salary recommendation. (Note: In previous years, the recommendations have included the full cost of living increase recommended for Social Security.) Step increases in the cash compensation tables (base salary, housing, and full Self-Employment Tax compensation), based on **total years of ministry experience or time under call** for Rostered Ministers, continue to be set at 1.75% per year.

The guidelines offer suggestions for a 3%, 5%, or 7% cost of living increase for 2025 and numbers from 2024 as a reference.

Years of Experience	2025 3% CC	2025 5% CC	2025 7% CC	For Comparison 2024 3% CC
Year 1	60,021	61,187	62,352	58273
Year 2	61,072	62,258	63,444	59293
Year 3	62,140	63,347	64,553	60330
Year 4	63,229	64,456	65,684	61387
Year 5	64,334	65,583	66,832	62460
Year 6	65,460	66,731	68,002	63553
Year 7	66,605	67,898	69,192	64665
Year 8	67,771	69,087	70,403	65797
Year 9	68,957	70,296	71,635	66949
Year 10	70,164	71,526	72,888	68120
Year 11	71,391	72,778	74,164	69312
Year 12	72,927	74,343	75,759	70803
Year 13	73,912	75,347	76,782	71759
Year 14	75,206	76,667	78,127	73016
Year 15	76,523	78,009	79,495	74294
Year 16	77,861	79,373	80,885	75593
Year 17	79,222	80,761	82,299	76915
Year 18	80,534	82,097	83,661	78188
Year 19	82,020	83,613	85,205	79631
Year 20	83,456	85,076	86,697	81025
Year 21	84,915	86,564	88,213	82442
Year 22	86,403	88,080	89,758	83886
Year 23	87,922	89,629	91,336	85361
Year 24	89,454	91,191	92,928	86849
Year 25 +	91,019	92,786	94,554	88368

Download the Compensation Workbook (Excel) at:
<https://www.vasynod.org/resources/compensation-guidelines/>

Appendix A1: 2025 Pastor Cash Compensation Guidelines with Parsonage

The suggestion for 2025 is that congregations consider a 3% to 7% cost of living increase over the 2024 beginning salary recommendation. (Note: In previous years, the recommendations have included the full cost of living increase recommended for Social Security.) Step increases in the cash compensation tables (base salary, housing, and full Self-Employment Tax compensation), based on **total years of ministry experience or time under call** for Rostered Ministers, continue to be set at 1.75% per year.

The guidelines offer suggestions for a 3%, 5%, or 7% cost of living increase for 2025 and numbers from 2024 as a reference.

Years of Experience	2025 3% CC	2025 5% CC	2025 7% CC	For Comparison 2024 3% CC
Year 1	47,594	48,518.4	49,443	46208
Year 2	48,070	49,003.5	49,937	46670
Year 3	49,274	50,231.0	51,188	47839
Year 4	50,136	51,109.8	52,083	48676
Year 5	51,013	52,003.4	52,994	49527
Year 6	51,907	52,914.8	53,923	50395
Year 7	52,814	53,839.8	54,865	51276
Year 8	53,738	54,781.7	55,825	52173
Year 9	54,679	55,740.3	56,802	53086
Year 10	55,634	56,714.7	57,795	54014
Year 11	55,824	56,907.9	57,992	54198
Year 12	57,600	58,718.1	59,837	55922
Year 13	58,608	59,746.1	60,884	56901
Year 14	59,633	60,790.8	61,949	57896
Year 15	60,678	61,856.6	63,035	58911
Year 16	61,739	62,938.1	64,137	59941
Year 17	62,820	64,039.5	65,259	60990
Year 18	63,920	65,160.9	66,402	62058
Year 19	65,038	66,301.2	67,564	63144
Year 20	66,175	67,460.4	68,745	64248
Year 21	67,334	68,641.7	69,949	65373
Year 22	68,513	69,842.9	71,173	66517
Year 23	69,711	71,065.1	72,419	67681
Year 24	70,931	72,308.3	73,686	68865
Year 25 +	72,172	73,573.5	74,975	70070

Download the Compensation Workbook (Excel) at:
<https://www.vasynod.org/resources/compensation-guidelines/>

Appendix A3: 2025 Deacon Cash Compensation Guidelines

The suggestion for 2025 is that congregations consider a 3% to 7% cost of living increase over the 2024 beginning salary recommendation. (Note: In previous years, the recommendations have included the full cost of living increase recommended for Social Security.) Step increases in the cash compensation tables based on **total years of ministry experience or time under call*** for Rostered Ministers, continue to be set at 1.75% per year.

Note: The Compensation Guidelines for Deacons are under review by the Synod Council in response to the change in candidacy and education requirements to be ordained as a Deacon. Assuming that work is complete before the 2025 Assembly, updates will be approved by the Synod Council.

*Prior to the creation of the Word and Service roster, members of the deaconess community, associates in ministry, and others serving in roles now on the Word and Service roster were not eligible to be called, so we figuring compensation, please include all ministry experience.

Years of Experience	For Comparison			
	2025 3% CC	2025 5% CC	2025 7% CC	2024 3% CC
Year 1	48,448	49,389	50,330	47037
Year 2	49,296	50,253	51,210	47860
Year 3	50,159	51,133	52,107	48698
Year 4	51,037	52,028	53,019	49550
Year 5	51,932	52,940	53,948	50419
Year 6	52,839	53,865	54,891	51300
Year 7	53,763	54,807	55,851	52197
Year 8	54,705	55,768	56,830	53112
Year 9	55,662	56,743	57,824	54041
Year 10	56,637	57,736	58,836	54987
Year 11	57,627	58,746	59,865	55949
Year 12	58,636	59,774	60,913	56928
Year 13	59,662	60,820	61,979	57924
Year 14	60,706	61,885	63,064	58938
Year 15	61,768	62,967	64,167	59969
Year 16	62,849	64,069	65,289	61018
Year 17	63,949	65,190	66,432	62086
Year 18	65,067	66,331	67,594	63172
Year 19	66,207	67,493	68,779	64279
Year 20	67,365	68,673	69,981	65403
Year 21	68,630	69,963	71,295	66631
Year 22	69,743	71,098	72,452	67712
Year 23	70,964	72,342	73,720	68897
Year 24	72,206	73,608	75,010	70103
Year 25 +	73,470	74,897	76,323	71330

Download the Compensation Workbook (Excel) at:
<https://www.vasynod.org/resources/compensation-guidelines/>

Appendix B: Equity Allowance

An equity allowance is strongly encouraged if the Rostered Minister lives in a parsonage. This may help to provide housing later in a pastor's ministry, in retirement, at death or disability or when a parsonage is no longer available. The Virginia Synod encourages congregations to establish an equity allowance of at least \$2,400 per year. This allowance can be paid directly to the Rostered Minister each year, in which case it is included in the defined compensation figures. Alternatively, the congregation can pay into a depository (agreeable to the Rostered Minister and the parish). These funds are designated for the provision of housing and remain in the depository until a parsonage is no longer available or until the rostered retires, is disabled, dies, or resigns. At this time payment is made to the Rostered Minister, their beneficiaries, or the funds are transferred to another parish for the Rostered Minister. These funds are taxable to the rostered when they are withdrawn for use. Other tax planning strategies such as Rabbi Trusts or Crumney Trusts, could also be explored with your Rostered Minister's personal tax advisor.

Appendix C: Pulpit Supply

We recommend the following compensation for pulpit supply for Rostered Ministers or Synod Authorized Lay Preachers:

One Service	\$ 200.00 - \$300.00
Each Additional Service during One Visit	\$75.00

Plus the IRS rate for the ROUND TRIP mileage

Note: The range of the pulpit supply recommendation has also been broadened. This is in recognition of the reality that the local context and the cost of living vary widely across the Virginia Synod. We encourage congregation councils to factor in the complexity of their context when determining where they fall within this recommended range. In addition, for some congregations the pulpit supply recommendations also serve as one of the guidelines used to determine honorarium gifts for funerals and weddings. We believe that the 2025 recommendation is an accurate reflection of the actual time and effort expended in pulpit supply.

Appendix D: Sabbatical/Extended Study Leave

It is important for Rostered Ministers as well as congregations and agencies to realize the value of continuing education through workshops, seminary courses, and personal study. ELCA congregations have long been encouraged to provide time and financial assistance to enable Rostered Ministers to maintain and improve their skills. From time-to-time, however, Rostered Ministers may desire an extended period of time for study, personal growth, and reflection without the responsibilities of regular service — thus a sabbatical leave. These guidelines are provided to assist Rostered Ministers and congregations, synods, and agencies in preparing for sabbatical leaves.

1. Sabbatical leaves are intended for in-depth study of one or two topics directly related to the pastor's call and should include time for personal and familial reflection.
2. The initial development will utilize the annual continuing education arrangements between the pastor and congregation, synod or agency.
3. The bishop will need to be consulted early in the process to assure adequate interim ministry during the sabbatical leave.



4. Sabbatical leaves are normally for a period of 12 to 26 weeks.
5. Those who may present proposals are pastors who have a minimum of seven years in the ministry and who have served in their current call for five or more years. The proposal shall include:
 - a. A rationale for the sabbatical, including personal goals, and potential value for the Church, congregation or agency.
 - b. A detailed outline of the intended course of study and use of time.
 - c. An outline of financial implications for the sabbatical, including pastoral coverage during the absence.
6. Proposals for sabbatical leaves shall be presented to the governing body of the congregation or agency not less than six months prior to the leave.
7. Careful consideration shall be given to all aspects of the proposal and implications for the congregation or agency and the pastor.
8. Congregations or agencies may give sabbatical leaves as merit benefits.
9. Normally the financial considerations for the sabbatical shall be negotiated by the Rostered Minister and the congregation/agency. It is suggested, however, that the total compensation (base salary, housing and Self-employment Tax, pension/health, and vacation) be maintained at the current level, with the Rostered Minister assuming responsibility for all other personal and family expenses.
10. Sabbatical grants are available from the Lilly Endowment at:
www.lillyendowment.org/religion and the Louisville Institute at www.louisville-institute.org/Grants/programs/sgpldetail.aspx.
11. When a sabbatical leave is granted, a Rostered Minister shall normally agree to serve that congregation or agency for a minimum of one year following its completion.
12. Within six weeks of the completion of the sabbatical leave, the Rostered Minister shall present to the congregation/agency and the bishop a detailed reflection on the experiences of the leave.
13. Congregations and/or Rostered Ministers who want assistance in developing sabbatical plans should contact the synod office.



Appendix E: Counseling for Rostered Ministers and Their Families

Video Conferencing Counseling is now available through Employee Assistance Program (EAP). Our EAP provider is now offering EAP video counseling to all Rostered Ministers. These licensed counselors are specially trained in offering video counseling. Remember, you and your family members may qualify for up to six in-person EAP counseling sessions per issue per year, at no cost for you.

The Virginia Synod and ELCA support mental and emotional health care. If you need additional care beyond what is available through EAP or through your health care provider and funding is a roadblock, please contact the Office of the Bishop to inquire about potential grants.



Appendix F: Reimbursement Policy - Example

REIMBURSEMENT POLICY

In accordance with Treasury Regulations 1.162-17 and 1.274-5(e) _____ (name) _____

Lutheran Church hereby establishes reimbursement accounts and a reimbursement policy for the Rostered Ministers(s) and staff members with the following terms and conditions:

1. A reimbursement account will be established with each Rostered Ministers and staff member consisting of an amount designated by the congregation for the reimbursement of ministry expenses and any additional amount which the Rostered Minister or staff member wishes to add as a salary reduction.**

2. The church will reimburse only ministry-related expenses incurred by a Rostered Minister or staff member. Such expenses will include:

- Business use of automobile, up to the current IRS standard mileage rate. It is understood that one daily round trip's commuting miles between the Rostered Minister's or staff member's home and the church will not be reimbursed.
- Business travel away from home; transportation, lodging, and meals.
- Convention and conference registration expenses.
- Educational expenses
- Books, journals, magazines, computer software, cell phone access, internet access costs, and organizational supplies if related to ministry or employment.
- Purchase and maintenance of clerical garments.
- Children's sermon resources.
- Entertainment/hospitality expenses, if business/ministry connection is met.

3. The Rostered Minister or staff member will account for each allowable expense in writing monthly. Documentation will include the amount, time and place, business/ministry purpose and relationship of each expense. A receipt will accompany the documentation.

4. The Rostered Minister or staff member will return advances or reimbursements that exceed actual business/ministry expenses.

5. Under this accountable arrangement, the church will not report amounts reimbursed as taxable income on the pastor's or staff member's Form W-2. Neither will the Rostered Minister nor staff member report reimbursed amounts as income on Form 1040 for personal income tax purposes.

** Under a salary reduction plan, if the designated amount by which the salary is reduced is not used, that amount must be forfeited. It is strongly suggested that before adopting any plan your legal/tax advisor be consulted to be certain that your plan complies with the most recent regulations

**Appendix G: Reimbursement Authorization Form – Example****Reimbursement Authorization Form**

Date _____

No. _____

LUTHERAN CHURCH

Payment Authorization Form

Budget Account No. _____

Requested By: _____ Title _____

Approved By: _____ Title _____

ITEMS	COST
Auto - Mileage (_____miles)	\$
Parking Fees/Tolls	\$
Books/Publications/Software	\$
Continuing Education Costs	\$
Maintenance of Clergy Garments	\$
Professional Gifts/Cards/Postage	\$
Meals/Entertainment – Church Business	\$
Meals/Entertainment of Out-of-Town Speakers	\$
Children Sermons	\$
Cellphone	\$
Hospitality/Social Ministry/Assistance	\$
Other:	\$
TOTAL	\$

Date Bill Paid _____ Check No. _____ Amount _____



Appendix H: Rostered Ministers' Housing Allowance Designation - Example

Insert for Minutes of Congregation Council Meeting:

The Congregation Council of _____ Lutheran Church meeting on (date), after considering the Statement of Pastor _____, setting forth the amounts estimated to be designated as Housing Allowance beginning (date), (based upon a home valued at \$ _____, with a fair rental value of the home, furnished, plus the cost of all utilities @ \$ _____ per month) upon motion duly made and seconded, adopted the following resolution:

Resolved, that the Rev. _____ receive payment in the amount of \$ _____ designated as Parsonage Housing Allowance effective (date), as follows:

Housing-Mortgage PIT \$
Utilities and Fuel
Maintenance
Insurance
Furnishings

Total 2025 Housing Allowance: \$

and \$ _____ shall be designated as Base Salary,

and \$ _____ shall be designated as Social Security Allowance.

Notification by Secretary of the Congregation Council:

The Secretary of the Congregation Council should officially inform the Pastor of the action taken and the amounts of the designated allowances, in writing, as follows:

Notification of Parsonage Housing Allowance

Date:

Dear Pastor _____:

This is to advise you that at a meeting of the Congregation Council of _____ Lutheran Church held on _____ (date), your Parsonage Housing Allowance beginning (date) was officially designated and fixed in the amount of \$ _____.

Accordingly, \$ _____ of the total payments to you beginning (date) will constitute Parsonage Housing Allowance, \$ _____ will constitute base salary, and \$ _____ will constitute Social Security Allowance, for a total Compensation Package of \$ _____.

Under Section 107 of the Internal Revenue Code, an ordained minister of the gospel is allowed to exclude from gross income the Parsonage Housing Allowance paid as part of compensation to the extent used to rent or provide a home (meals and maid service excluded). You should keep accurate records of your expenditures to rent or provide a home in order to substantiate any amounts excluded from gross income in filing your federal income tax return.

Sincerely,

_____, Council Secretary



Appendix I: Defined Compensation for Portico Benefits Service

For 2025 Pension calculations and Medical calculations, visit the Portico Benefits Service website at www.porticobenefits.org to access their calculation programs.

Q. What is defined compensation?

A. Defined compensation is the basis that Portico Benefits Service uses to determine the amount which a congregation or sponsoring organization pays toward pension and health benefits for a pastor.

Defined compensation is calculated as follows:

- (A) cash salary - annual base salary (before reductions for tax sheltered annuities or reimbursement accounts); *plus*
- (B) clergy Social Security tax allowance; *and*
- (C) if housing/parsonage is provided, 30 percent of (A) + (B), plus furnishings and utility allowances paid directly to the member, *or* if housing is not provided, the actual cash housing allowance paid to the member.

Defined compensation also includes

- housing equity contributions, if the sponsoring congregation or organization pays them directly to the member (include in base salary);
- additional tax-sheltered annuity contributions, made by way of a voluntary salary reduction agreement reached between the member and the sponsoring congregation or organization, including tax-sheltered contributions made to other financial institutions (include in base salary);
- furnishings and utilities allowance, if the sponsoring congregation or organization pays it directly to the member.

Defined compensation **does not** include

- housing equity contributions made on the member's behalf to the Optional Pension Plan or to another financial institution;
- furnishings and utilities allowance, if the sponsoring congregation pays these expenses directly;
- additional pension contributions (above the Regular Pension Plan requirement) paid by the sponsoring congregation or organization on the member's behalf, in addition to the member's salary;
- automobile allowance/reimbursement;
- book allowance/reimbursement;
- continuing education allowance/reimbursement.

See Portico Benefits Service materials for worksheets which are usually received by congregations in August or visit their website at www.porticobenefits.org for the latest information.



Appendix J: Suggested Office Holidays

At the request of congregations, the Compensation Guidelines now include a potential list of holidays that may be observed by office closure and not included as vacation days for Rostered Ministers or church employees. *(Please note, the Virginia Synod Office of the Bishop also observes all Federal Holidays not included in the list below.)*

New Year's Day (if not on a Sunday)

Birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Easter Monday

Memorial Day

Juneteenth

Independence Day

Labor Day

Indigenous People's Day

Thanksgiving

Day after Thanksgiving

Christmas Day (if not on a Sunday)

Day after Christmas Day (if not on a Sunday)



Virginia Synod Council

The Virginia Synod Council serves a visionary role in the Virginia Synod. In conjunction with the Office of the Bishop, the Council reviews and coordinates all planning proposals and establishes synod priorities. The members of Synod share their various gifts for the purposes of God's mission and ministry through the Virginia Synod and through the churchwide organization of the ELCA.

The Synod Council also serves as the board of directors of the Virginia Synod and meets quarterly to supervise the administration of the Synod. These leaders are elected by the Synod Assembly. The Synod Council is composed of members of congregations from across the Virginia Synod, including both rostered ministers (pastors and deacons) and laypeople (those not ordained). Congregation membership and conference partnership are listed for each member.

Officers of the Virginia Synod

Bishop	The Rev. Dr. Phyllis Milton*	First Term, concludes 2029		
Vice President	Blythe Ann Scott*	First Term, concludes 2027	First, Norfolk	Tidewater-Coastal
Secretary	Judy Castelee*	First Term, concludes 2027	Good Shepherd, Lexington	Southern Valley-Blue Ridge
Treasurer	John Krallman*	First Term, concludes 2027	St. Michael, Blacksburg	New River-Appalachia

Term Concludes 2024

Fiona Stapleton	Youth member (1 year term)	Epiphany, Richmond	Richmond-Piedmont
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Term Concludes 2025

The Rev. Jonathan Boynton*	Second Term	Grace, Winchester	Northern Valley-Valley
Rick Corliss	Second Term	St. Timothy, Norfolk	Tidewater-Coastal
The Rev. Leslie Weber	Second Term	Grace, Chesapeake	Tidewater-Coastal
Dave Raecke	First Term	Our Saviour, Warrenton	Germanna-Piedmont
Pat Carriker**	First Term	Good Shepherd, Galax	New River-Appalachia
Liz Leonard*	Second Term	St. Philip, Roanoke	Southern-Blue Ridge

Term Concludes 2027

Cam Haggett**	First Term	College, Salem	Southern-Blue Ridge
The Rev. Harry Griffith	Second Term	St. John, Norfolk	Tidewater-Coastal
Carlton Hardy	Second Term	St. Mark, Yorktown	Peninsulas-Coastal
Christie McKee	First Term	Grace, Winchester	Northern Valley- Valley
The Rev. Philip Martin	Second Term	Epiphany, Richmond	Richmond-Piedmont
Christine Weller	First Term	Our Saviour, Williamsburg	Peninsulas-Tidewater
The Rev. Kayla Keilholtz**	First Term	Ebenezer, Marion	Highlands-Appalachia
The Rev. James Armentrout	First Term	Christ, Roanoke	Southern-Blue Ridge
Lily Harmison	First Term	Muhlenberg, Harrisonburg	Southern Valley-Blue Ridge
Jillian Stierwalt	First Term	St. Andrew, Portsmouth	Tidewater-Coastal

*Executive Committee Member

**Appointed by Synod Council in 2023, the position will need to be elected at the 2024 Synod Assembly



Expectations of a Member of the Virginia Synod Council

1. Attend all meetings of the Synod Council. Presently these include:
 - a. Two regular meetings (one in-person, one on Zoom)
 - b. A meeting on the afternoon and evening on Thursday preceding the Synod Assembly and a brief meeting immediately following the Synod Assembly
 - c. One annual retreat (evening of the 1st day through noon of the 3rd day)
 - d. Synod Assembly
 - e. Special meetings as called
2. Serve a four-year term commencing at the adjournment of the Assembly at which elected.
3. Maintain active membership in a congregation of the Synod.
4. Study the agenda and advance materials received before each meeting.
5. Study the agenda and advance materials received before the Synod Assembly.
6. Participate in committees, task forces, and individual assignments as directed by the Council.
7. Be familiar with the Synod constitution insofar as it affects the activities of the Council, the Assembly, and the Synod.
8. Share the vision and mission of the Virginia Synod with congregations, rostered ministers, ministry partners, and all members of the Synod.
9. Be a representative of the synod in your home congregation, conference, and throughout the synod, as appropriate as an advocate of the mission and ministry of the Synod.
10. Assume responsibility occasionally for opening and closing devotions at meetings.
11. Serve without compensation.
12. Receive expense reimbursement for transportation, housing, and meals, and other expenses directly related to the responsibility, but such reimbursement does not include personal arrangements necessary for the member to be away from home.
13. Make your congregations aware of these expectations if you are a pastor or deacon serving on the Synod Council.

*For more information and who serves on the Synod Council go to: vasynod.org/about/synod-council/
Expectations are defined in the [Virginia Synod's Constitution, Bylaws, & Continuing Resolutions](#)*



Report of the Assembly Nomination Committee

The Assembly Committee on Nominations for the 2024 Synod Assembly, co-chaired by Christine Weller and The Rev. Laura Swanson, reviewed all positions to be filled and attempted, where possible, to present more than one nominee for each position to be filled in a particular category.

The committee presents the following slate of nominees for:

Synod Council

- Class of 2025
 - Youth Member (1 to be elected; 1-year term; 11-12 grade)
 - Ali Armentrout
- Class of 2025
 - Appalachia Conference Partnership (1 Lay Member/any Gender to be elected)
 - Pat Carriker
- Class of 2025
 - Blue Ridge Conference Partnership (1 Lay Member/any Gender to be elected)
 - Cam Haggett
 - Appalachia Conference Partnership (1 Rostered Minister/Woman to be elected)
 - The Rev. Kayla Keilholtz

Consultation Committee

- Class of 2029 (6-year term) Lay Members (2 to be elected, at least 1 man and 1 woman)
 - Lay Member – Man
 - Richard Fraenkel
 - N. Duane Melson
 - Lay Member – Woman

ELCA Churchwide Assembly

2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly (8 voting members to be elected)

- Rostered Ministers (Pastor or Deacon): (3 to be elected)
 - One Man
 - The Rev. Michael Church
 - The Rev. Luke Swanson
 - One youth/young adult (person of any gender; 30 or younger at time of election)
 - One person of color and/or whose primary language is other than English (person of any gender)
 - The Rev. Harry Griffith
 - The Rev. Viktoria Parvin
 - The Rev. Tarja Stevenson
- Lay Members (5 to be elected)
 - One Man
 - Tom Bartkiewicz
 - Richard Corliss
 - Carlton Hardy
 - One Woman
 - Judy Castele



- One person of any gender
 - Sylva Miles
- One youth/young adult (person of any gender; 30 or younger at time of election)
 - Cam Haggett
 - Jillian Stierwalt
- One person of color and/or whose primary language is other than English (person of any gender)
 - Dr. Yolanda Shea

ELCA Church Council

Nominees for the Class of 2031 – 2 to be elected (1 of which will be elected to a 6-year term at the 2025 Churchwide Assembly)

- Lay Member – Woman – Person of color and/or whose primary language is other than English – Young Adult (between 18-30 years old at the time of election at the 2025 Churchwide Assembly)



Roles to be Elected at the 2024 Synod Assembly

Virginia Synod Council

The Virginia Synod Council serves a visionary role in the Virginia Synod. In conjunction with the Office of the Bishop, the Council reviews and coordinates all planning proposals and establishes synod priorities. The members of Synod Council share their various gifts for the purposes of God's mission and ministry through the Virginia Synod and through the churchwide organization of the ELCA.

The Synod Council also serves as the board of directors of the Virginia Synod and meets quarterly to supervise the administration of the Synod. These leaders are elected by the Synod Assembly. The Synod Council is composed of members of congregations from across the Virginia Synod, including both rostered ministers (pastors and deacons) and laypeople (those not ordained).

Unless otherwise noted, all Synod Council terms are 4 years. Members may be elected to a second consecutive term.

What are the conference partnerships in the Virginia Synod?

Reflecting the diversity across the Virginia Synod, the goal of Synod Council elections is to have a lay person and a rostered minister from each of these five Conference Partnerships:

- Coastal (Tidewater and Peninsulas Conferences)
- Piedmont (Richmond and Germanna Conferences)
- Valley (Northern Valley, Central Valley, and Page Conferences)
- Blue Ridge (Southern Valley and Southern Conferences)
- Appalachia (New River and Highlands Conferences)

Class of 2025 – 1 member (1-year term, concludes June 2025)

- Youth (currently in 10th - 12th grade); any gender
 - Any Conference Partnership

Class of 2025 – 1 member (*Because they were not elected during the 2023 Synod Assembly, Synod Council appointed a member in 2023*)

- ONE Lay Member, any gender:
 - Appalachia Conference Partnership

Class of 2027 – 2 members (*Because they were not elected during the 2023 Synod Assembly, Synod Council appointed members in 2023*)

- ONE Lay Member, any gender:
 - Blue Ridge Conference Partnership
- ONE Rostered Minister (Pastor or Deacon), woman:
 - Appalachia Conference Partnership



Consultation Committee

The Virginia Synod Consultation Committee assists the bishop in efforts to resolve a situation - involving rostered ministers - in which there are indications that a cause for discipline may exist and before charges are made. The Consultation Committee is described by the ELCA Constitution and Bylaws in [20.22.04](#).

Class of 2029 (6-year term)

- Two to be elected, lay members: at least 1 man and 1 woman

ELCA Churchwide Assembly

The ELCA Churchwide Assembly, the primary decision-making body of the church, is a process of communal spiritual discernment that happens every 3 years. This event is invitation-only, but always available via live stream for the general public. The next one will take place in Phoenix, Arizona on July 28-August 2, 2025.

The Virginia Synod has a total of 10 voting members - two of the ten are automatically allocated to the synod bishop and vice president. The other 8 voting members will be elected at the 2024 Virginia Synod Assembly.

2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly – 8 voting members to be elected

- Rostered Ministers (Pastor or Deacon) – 3 to be elected
 - One Man
 - One youth/young adult (person of any gender; 30 or younger at time of election)
 - One person of color and/or whose primary language is other than English (person of any gender)
- Lay Voting Members – 5 to be elected
 - One Man
 - One Woman
 - One person of any gender
 - One youth/young adult (person of any gender; 30 or younger at time of election)
 - One person of color and/or whose primary language is other than English (person of any gender)

The Nominating Committee's goal is to consider individual skills and qualifications, as well as our Synod's and Churchwide Assembly's inclusivity goals. These goals address the balance between laypersons and rostered ministers, gender, status as a youth or young adult, and racial/ethnic background. Achieving some geographical diversity of nominees will also be a factor in the Nominating Committee's decisions.

Responsibilities of Voting Members of our Churchwide Assembly

The Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is its highest legislative authority. Its responsibilities, as described in constitutional provision 12.21., include the following:

1. Review the work of the churchwide officers, and for this purpose require and receive reports from them and act on business proposed by them.



2. Review the work of the churchwide units, and for this purpose require and receive reports from them and act on business proposed by them.
3. Receive and consider proposals from synod assemblies.
4. Establish churchwide policy.
5. Adopt a budget for the churchwide organization.
6. Elect officers, board members, and other persons as provided in the constitution or bylaws.
7. Establish churchwide units to carry out the functions of the churchwide organization.
8. Have the sole authority to amend the constitution and bylaws.
9. Fulfill other functions as required by the constitution and bylaws.
10. Conduct such other business as necessary to further the purposes and functions of the churchwide organization.

Voting members are elected by Synod Assemblies to serve at the Churchwide Assembly. Their individual responsibilities are to:

1. Represent the interests of this whole church to facilitate its mission and ministry
2. Seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit and approach the Churchwide Assembly's work with reflection and prayer
3. Participate in orientation, both that provided by the synod and that provided by the churchwide organization
4. Be present during the entire Churchwide Assembly, attending plenary sessions, worship, hearings, and other assembly-related activities
5. Study in advance the *Pre-Assembly Report*, particularly the reports of officers and the matters on which the Churchwide Assembly will take action
6. Listen to presentations and discussion and be prepared to participate responsibly
7. Exemplify servant leadership in words, life-style, and manner of leadership, recognizing accountability to the Triune God, the whole Church, each other, and to the Churchwide Assembly as a whole
8. Provide reports about the Churchwide Assembly to congregations and others within the synod

ELCA Church Council

The Church Council operates as part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and serves as both a governing body and community of faith in the Lutheran tradition. The Council must comply with the Continuing Resolutions of ELCA and policies adopted by the Churchwide Assembly, while recognizing its interdependent partnership with synods and congregations in the ELCA's mission. It must provide advice and encouragement to other expressions of the church and exercise fiduciary, strategic, and generative leadership to fulfill the church's mission. The Governance Policy Manual outlines the Council's responsibilities to better fulfill the church's mission and clarify its governance responsibilities.

Nominees for the Class of 2031 – 2 to be elected (1 of which will be elected to a 6 year term at the 2025 Churchwide Assembly)

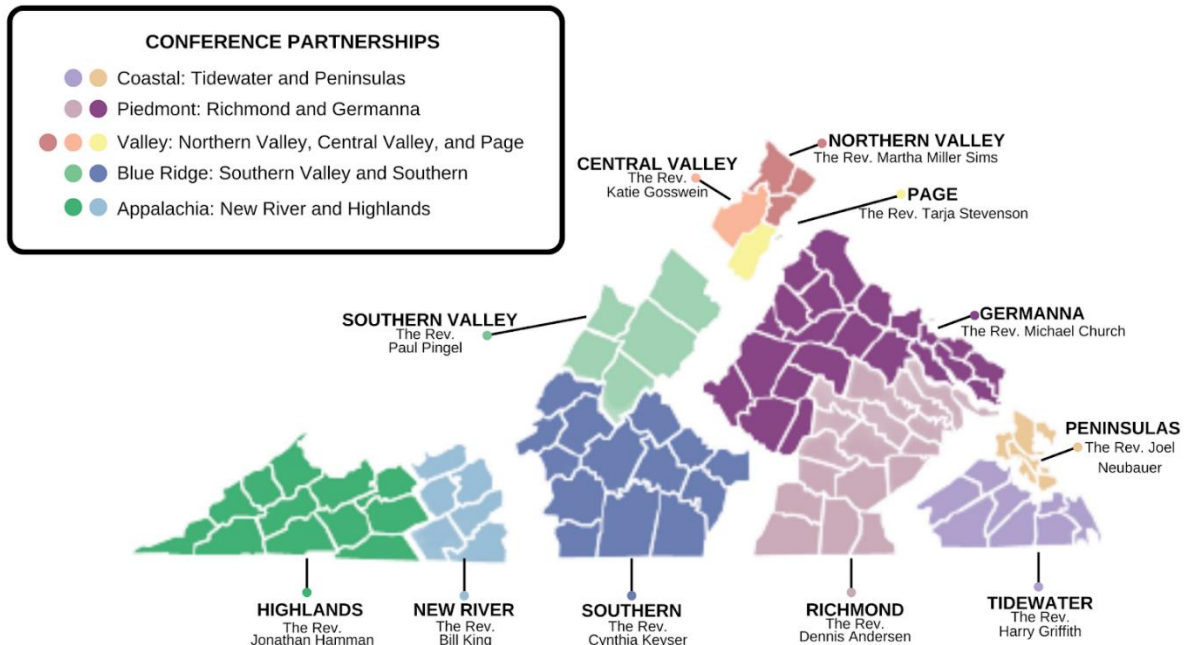
- Lay Member – Woman – person of color and/or whose primary language is other than English – Young Adult (between 18-30 years old at the time of election at the 2025 Churchwide Assembly)



Virginia Synod Conferences and Conference Partnerships Map

In January of 2019, Synod Council approved the creation of five Conference Partnerships (listed below) to provide for communication between this synod and conferences, promote or provide assistance for programs or projects, and provide balanced representation to certain organizational units. (S12.01.52.).

The Virginia Synod, ELCA Conference Map



The Virginia Synod is divided into eleven conferences. Deans serve as representatives, advisors, and communication links between Rostered Ministers (pastors and deacons) and lay leaders in each of the conferences and the Office of the Bishop.

The 11 conferences that make up the Virginia Synod and the abbreviation we use for each:

- Central Valley-CV
- Germanna-GR
- Highlands-HI
- New River-NR
- Northern Valley-NV
- Page-PG
- Peninsulas-PN
- Richmond-RI
- Southern-SO
- Southern Valley-SV
- Tidewater-TD



**Strong
Connections**



Nomination Form for 2024 Synod Assembly

Nominee For: Virginia Synod Council

Virginia Synod Council

Nominee For: Synod Council: Class of 2025-Youth Member (Currently in 10-12 grade)

Gender Female

Do you Identify as a Person of Color and/or Language other than English No

Nominee Contact Information

Name Ali Armentrout

Preferred Pronouns She/Her

Congregation/Parish Name and Location St. Mark's, Roanoke

Conference Southern

Conference Partnership Blue Ridge (Southern & Southern Valley)

Nominee Experience

Nominee Occupation Student

List experiences or factors that you believe have prepared you for service in this position (up to three) Active at church as a worship leader and in youth group. Active participant in synod youth ministry.

List current or past congregational, synod or churchwide activities related to qualification for this position (up to three) Representative from St. Mark's for youth assembly. Help with children's ministry at church.



List current or past community-related service activities (up to three)

Volunteer to help teach ballet to preschoolers. Member of suicide prevention club at Hidden Valley High School. Part of choir council at Hidden Valley High School.

Will serve if elected

Yes

Submission

Name of person submitting the form

Ali Armentrout

Signature

Date Submitted:

Mar 25, 2024



Strong Connections



Nomination Form for 2024 Synod Assembly

Nominee For: Virginia Synod Council

Virginia Synod Council

Nominee For: Synod Council: Class of 2025-Lay Member from Appalachia Partnership, any gender

Gender Female

Do you Identify as a Person of Color and/or Language other than English No

Nominee Contact Information

Name Pat Carriker

Congregation/Parish Name and Location Good Shepherd, Galax

Conference New River

Conference Partnership Appalachia (Highlands & New River)

Nominee Experience

Nominee Occupation Retired pre-school teacher

List experiences or factors that you believe have prepared you for service in this position (up to three) All of my experiences serving in civic and church organizations have helped me to develop the gifts of leadership and organization with which God has blessed me.



List current or past congregational, synod or churchwide activities related to qualification for this position (up to three)

While I was a member of St. Matthew Lutheran Church in Wilmington, NC for 29 years I taught adult Bible classes, sang in the choir, served on and chaired several different church committees and on the church council. I was also president of the congregation several times. While a member at St. Matthew, I was elected to the NC Synod Council and served two terms. We moved to the mountains of North Carolina in 2004 and joined Church of the Good Shepherd, in Galax, Virginia. Good Shepherd is an Episcopal and Lutheran Federated congregation. I was part of the task force that drafted the Federation Document.

I lead a weekly Bible study group as well as other study opportunities from time to time. I have chaired the Stewardship Committee and the Christian Education Committee and served on the Worship and Liturgy Committee. I have served on the Vestry Council five different terms and as Senior Warden (the Episcopal title for lay leader of the congregation) five times. I have served on a Search Committee for a clergy leader for the congregation.

I have also sung in the choir and serve as lay worship leader, acolyte and lector and am part of a Worship Planning Team when the church is without permanent clergy leadership, as it is now.

List current or past community-related service activities (up to three)

In Wilmington I was an active member of two Women's Clubs. I was president and served on the District level in a leadership position. I served several years on the child advocacy organization call Partnership for Children. I was serving as president when we moved away from the Wilmington area.

Will serve if elected

Yes

Submission

Name of person submitting the form

Pat Carriker

Signature

Date Submitted:

Mar 19, 2024



Strong Connections



Nomination Form for 2024 Synod Assembly

Nominee For: Virginia Synod Council

Virginia Synod Council

Nominee For: Synod Council: Class of 2027-Lay Member from Blue Ridge Partnership, any gender

Gender Non-binary

Do you Identify as a Person of Color and/or Language other than English No

Nominee Contact Information

Name Cam Haggett

Preferred Pronouns they/them

Congregation/Parish Name and Location College, Salem

Conference Southern

Conference Partnership Blue Ridge (Southern & Southern Valley)

Nominee Experience

Nominee Occupation Student

List experiences or factors that you believe have prepared you for service in this position (up to three)

1. Lifelong Lutheran
2. Involved in the church in many different capacities, ranging from worship assistance to youth participation



List current or past congregational, synod or churchwide activities related to qualification for this position (up to three)

1. Youth representative for College Lutheran Church congregation council (2023-present)
2. Appointed lay member from Blue Ridge Partnership on VA Synod Council (2023-present)
3. Lay Voting Member-At-Large for the 2023 Synod Assembly

List current or past community-related service activities (up to three)

1. Regularly fosters dogs through the Roanoke Valley SPCA
2. Volunteering with organizations such as the Salem Food Pantry through College Lutheran Church youth group
3. Tutoring younger students through the Cave Spring High School Beta Club

Will serve if elected

This is a self-nomination

Submission

Name of person submitting the form

Cam Haggett

Signature

Date Submitted:

Mar 18, 2024



**Strong
Connections**



Nomination Form for 2024 Synod Assembly

Nominee For: Virginia Synod Council

Virginia Synod Council

Nominee For: Synod Council: Class of 2027-Rostered Minister from Appalachia Partnership who is a woman

Gender female

Do you Identify as a Person of Color and/or Language other than English No

Nominee Contact Information

Name Kayla Keilholtz

Preferred Pronouns she/her

Congregation/Parish Name and Location Ebenezer, Marion

Conference Highlands

Conference Partnership Appalachia (Highlands & New River)

Nominee Experience

Nominee Occupation Pastor

List experiences or factors that you believe have prepared you for service in this position (up to three)

I am on tapestry and co-lead the Justice for Women tapestry thread and try to be as active as I can within the synod.

I enjoy working with others and look for opportunities on how to make the church world better.



List current or past congregational, synod or churchwide activities related to qualification for this position (up to three)

I have been able to attend three synod council meetings when I was nominated and then elected to join when a seat was vacant, I have been learning what the synod council does and it works, and believe that I can add value to the discussions, decisions, and ideas that are shared there.

Before being elected to synod council I had no experience in any sort of council position, aside from leading Ebenezer's church council, but I am a dedicated learner and enjoy working as a group.

List current or past community-related service activities (up to three)

I am a part of Appalachian Community Connectors in Marion which seeks to teach how to have hard conversations empathetically and to teach active listening when having hard conversations.

I am very active in Marion's work toward helping the homeless and underhoused population with in our community, this involves providing donations and talking to other community leaders.

If there is an opportunity to serve the community and I'm able to be there, then I'm there.

Will serve if elected

Yes

Submission

Name of person submitting the form

Kayla Keilholtz

Signature

Date Submitted:

Mar 05, 2024



Strong Connections



Nomination Form for 2024 Synod Assembly

Nominee For: Consultation Committee

Consultation Committee

Nominee For: Consultation Committee: Lay Member-Man

Do you Identify as a Person of Color and/or Language other than English No

Nominee Contact Information

Name Richard J Fraenkel

Congregation/Parish Name and Location Grace, Chesapeake

Conference Tidewater

Conference Partnership Coastal (Tidewater & Peninsulas)

Nominee Experience

Nominee Occupation US Navy Civilian

List experiences or factors that you believe have prepared you for service in this position (up to three)

- As a retired Naval Officer and currently serving Navy civilian I've led a variety of organizations with diverse personnel.
- I have some experience with human resources activities.

List current or past congregational, synod or churchwide activities related to qualification for this position (up to three)

- Served on a variety of congregational councils across the country (i Washington, Nebraska, and two congregations in Virginia). Served as President of my current congregation, currently serving as the Financial Secretary. Served on two call committees.
- Active in youth ministry at all congregations



List current or past community-related service activities (up to three) - Active in Scouting while my kids were growing up.

Will serve if elected This is a self-nomination

Submission

Name of person submitting the form Richard Fraenkel

Signature



Date Submitted: Mar 26, 2024



**Strong
Connections**



Nomination Form for 2024 Synod Assembly

Nominee For: Consultation Committee

Consultation Committee

Nominee For: Consultation Committee: Lay Member-Man

Do you Identify as a Person of Color
and/or Language other than English No

Nominee Contact Information

Name N. Duane Melson

Congregation/Parish Name and
Location St. Mark, Yorktown

Conference Peninsulas

Conference Partnership Coastal (Tidewater & Peninsulas)

Nominee Experience

Nominee Occupation Retired from NASA Langley, Researcher (25yrs), Supervisor (10+ yrs)

List experiences or factors that you
believe have prepared you for service in
this position (up to three)

I have years of supervisory experience in a diverse workforce first as an Assistant Branch Head in an engineering Branch, as a Branch Head in an IT Branch, as the Deputy CIO supervising supervisors, and as the acting CIO. During this time, I was able to participate in many Agency and government-wide training courses that helped me as an engineer better understand the Human Element of working with people. I was selected and attended a month-long Government-wide residence course in Charlottesville for potential Senior Executive Service employees entitled "Leadership for a Democratic Society" where we covered a full range of topics needed by senior leaders including personality types, public relations, and the foundations of our government structure.

I also participated in various Agency-wide teams to design paths forward to implement controversial management directives. These included the consolidation of supercomputing resources to an



Reports from the Nominating Committee

C

(Continued) List experiences or factors that you believe have prepared you for service in this position (up to three)

Agency-versus-field-Center implementation. I was also a member of an ad hoc team tasked with developing a charging model to programs and projects for a new Agency-wide IT desktop services contract. In the preamble telecons before the face-to-face meetings, I was able to successfully propose a set of evaluation criteria that helped the team constructively evaluate the alternatives while reducing emotional sidetracks.

I also led three contract Source Evaluation Boards (SEBs) for Center-wide contracts. These 3-7 member teams' activities included developing contract requirements working with organizations across the Center, identifying a proper contract type, presenting the contract requirements at an industry day meeting, evaluating the contract proposals, and presenting the SEB's evaluations to the Source Selection Official. These teams required close cooperation with Procurement Personnel, the Legal Office, as well as Center Management.

List current or past congregational, synod or churchwide activities related to qualification for this position (up to three)

I have served two terms on the St Mark Congregation Council for a total of 6 years, including 4 years as Council President. Two of the years as Council President were during COVID. We made decisions during COVID to follow CDC guidance and so did not meet in the building for many months but we did not miss a single Sunday of worship. We met in the parking lot with social distancing (rain or shine; hot or cold) and used Zoom for others who preferred to worship remotely. The accommodations we made to continue worship were not popular with everyone but we worked hard to hear everyone's point of view and to share the logic behind the decisions the Council made.

I have participated in the church choir for the past 11 years, singing at both service each week.

I have participated on the property committee for many years doing small repairs and painting many walls. I was also part of the Building Committee for the addition to our building complex in the late 90's.

List current or past community-related service activities (up to three)

I volunteer playing Bassoon in the Yorktown Coast Guard Training Center Ceremonial Band.

Will serve if elected

Yes

Submission

Name of person submitting the form

Duane Melson

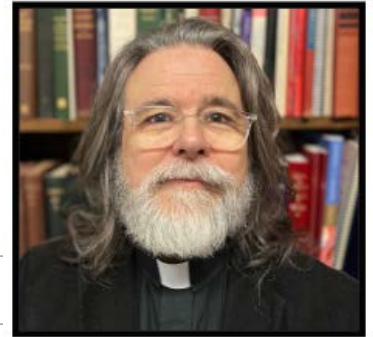
Signature

Date Submitted:

Feb 16, 2024



**Strong
Connections**



Nomination Form for 2024 Synod Assembly

Nominee For: ELCA Churchwide Assembly Voting Member

ELCA Churchwide Assembly Voting Member

Nominee For: Churchwide Assembly: Rostered Minister - Man

Gender: Male

Do you Identify as a Person of Color and/or Language other than English: No

Nominee Contact Information

Name: Rev Michael Church

Preferred Pronouns: he, him, his

Congregation/Parish Name and Location: Our Saviour, Warrenton

Conference: Germanna

Conference Partnership: Piedmont (Richmond & Germanna)

Nominee Experience

Nominee Occupation: Clergy

List experiences or factors that you believe have prepared you for service in this position (up to three)

(1) A deep understanding of Lutheran history in the American context including the history of the ELCA. (2) A passion for the church as an instrument of God's mission, centered on the Gospel as it is described in our statements of faith.



List current or past congregational, synod or churchwide activities related to qualification for this position (up to three)

(1) Twenty-eight years of ordained ministry in urban, suburban and small-town settings. (2) Service as ELCA Global Missions deployed staff in Romania. (3) Six years as conference dean.

List current or past community-related service activities (up to three)

(1) Board president, St. John's House (transitional housing in the Bronx, NY); (2) Participant, Leadership Fauquier (community leadership program, Virginia)

Will serve if elected

This is a self-nomination

Submission

Name of person submitting the form

Michael Church

Signature

Date Submitted:

Mar 29, 2024



**Strong
Connections**



Nomination Form for 2024 Synod Assembly

Nominee For: ELCA Churchwide Assembly Voting Member

ELCA Churchwide Assembly Voting Member

Nominee For: Churchwide Assembly: Rostered Minister - Man

Gender: Man

Do you Identify as a Person of Color and/or Language other than English: No

Nominee Contact Information

Name: Rev Luke M Swanson

Preferred Pronouns: he/him

Congregation/Parish Name and Location: Trinity, Roanoke

Conference: Southern

Conference Partnership: Blue Ridge (Southern & Southern Valley)

Nominee Experience

Nominee Occupation: Pastor

List experiences or factors that you believe have prepared you for service in this position (up to three)

I have experience in my congregation working in partnership with other organizations in the Roanoke Valley. I cultivate the leadership of my community to see themselves as partners so that our ministry can go beyond the borders of our ministry site while using the resources we have to help others. I believe this helps me see myself as a partner in the wider ministry of the church, which is helpful when participating in wider church events, like the churchwide assembly. Furthermore, I don't rush in to assert my view, but I carefully listen and discern based on the experiences and voices of others. My work with the VA Synod candidacy committee also requires me to carefully look over materials provided so that I respect the information that comes to me and value the person/s who have presented it to me and/or the group I am working with. Most importantly, I lead by faith and careful discernment of who God is calling me to be.



List current or past congregational, synod or churchwide activities related to qualification for this position (up to three)

In addition to serving as a pastor in my first call, I serve on the Virginia Candidacy Committee. I bring a younger voice to the conversations and I can identify with candidates having so recently gone through the candidacy process myself. Additionally, I served as a Young Adult in Global Mission, so my understanding of the wider church goes beyond the ELCA and I can see how the decisions made at a wider level have implications locally and globally.

List current or past community-related service activities (up to three)

My most recent work in the community has been through interactions with the Spanish speaking community in Roanoke, VA. I have conversational competency in Spanish due to past educational and volunteer experiences I have had in Spanish speaking countries. Currently, I am using my gifts to build relationships with leaders in the Spanish speaking community. I use my competency and experience in Spanish to help the Fralin Free Clinic in Roanoke where they provide free healthcare to the unhoused, migrants, and others who do not have access to healthcare. The primary way I help is through relationship building and Spanish language interpretation. Conversing in Spanish allows me to connect and support others, allowing them to communicate authentically and feel valued. Lastly, I volunteer my time to support feeding ministries of other congregations in the Roanoke Valley, directing me to look beyond myself and see how God is there for all people.

Will serve if elected

This is a self-nomination

Submission

Name of person submitting the form

Luke Swanson

Signature

Date Submitted:

Mar 27, 2024



Strong Connections



Nomination Form for 2024 Synod Assembly

Nominee For: ELCA Churchwide Assembly Voting Member

ELCA Churchwide Assembly Voting Member

Nominee For: Churchwide Assembly: Rostered Minister - Person of color and/or whose primary language is other than English - Person of any Gender

Gender Man

Do you Identify as a Person of Color and/or Language other than English Yes

Nominee Contact Information

Name Pr. Harry W Griffith

Preferred Pronouns he/ him

Congregation/Parish Name and Location St. John, Norfolk

Conference Tidewater

Conference Partnership Coastal (Tidewater & Peninsulas)

Nominee Experience

Nominee Occupation Retired Parish Pastor and US Navy Chaplain

List experiences or factors that you believe have prepared you for service in this position (up to three) Currently serving as Tidewater Conference Dean.
Member of Virginia Synod Tapestry Task Group



List current or past congregational, synod or churchwide activities related to qualification for this position (up to three)

US Navy Chaplain (33 years)
Parish Pastor (3 years in Cleveland, Ohio) Parish Pastor (12 years, Our Saviour - Virginia Beach)

Member of ELCA Federal Chaplain Endorsement Committee

Member of ELCA Federal Chaplaincy Scholarship Committee

List current or past community-related service activities (up to three)

Bayside Ecumenical Partners (local clergy group involving nine of our ecumenical partners)

Member of the Roanoke College Board of Trustees

Will serve if elected

This is a self-nomination

Submission

Name of person submitting the form

Harry Griffith

Signature

Date Submitted:

Mar 28, 2024



**Strong
Connections**



Nomination Form for 2024 Synod Assembly

Nominee For: ELCA Churchwide Assembly Voting Member

ELCA Churchwide Assembly Voting Member

Nominee For: Churchwide Assembly: Rostered Minister - Person of color and/or whose primary language is other than English - Person of any Gender

Gender Female

Do you Identify as a Person of Color and/or Language other than English Yes

Nominee Contact Information

Name Viktoria H Parvin

Preferred Pronouns She/Her

Congregation/Parish Name and Location St. Mark, Charlottesville

Conference Germanna

Conference Partnership Piedmont (Richmond & Germanna)

Nominee Experience

Nominee Occupation Pastor

List experiences or factors that you believe have prepared you for service in this position (up to three)

In 2022 I served on the CWA Memorials Committee
In 2023 I attended the Rostered Ministers Gathering
I served at the Episcopal Lutheran Joint Committee in the VA Synod



List current or past congregational, synod or churchwide activities related to qualification for this position (up to three)

I was previously member of the Global Mission Committee in central Southern illinois.
Currently I serve on the Candidacy Committee for Virginia Synod.
I serve a Reconciling in Christ Congregation with Preschool and Campus Ministry.

List current or past community-related service activities (up to three)

Hosted those homeless at church through PACEM (People and Congregations Engaged in Ministry)
Worked with students at the University of Virginia via United Ministries Group.
Participated at the annual Pride Festival with my church.

Will serve if elected

Yes

Submission

Name of person submitting the form

Viktoria Parvin

Signature

Date Submitted:

Apr 03, 2024



**Strong
Connections**



Nomination Form for 2024 Synod Assembly

Nominee For: ELCA Churchwide Assembly Voting Member

ELCA Churchwide Assembly Voting Member

Nominee For: Churchwide Assembly: Rostered Minister - Person of color and/or whose primary language is other than English - Person of any gender

Gender Female

Do you Identify as a Person of Color and/or Language other than English Yes

Nominee Contact Information

Name Rev Tarja K Stevenson

Preferred Pronouns She/her

Congregation/Parish Name and Location St. Paul, Shenandoah-River of Life Parish

Conference Page

Conference Partnership Valley (Central Valley, Northern Valley, & Page)

Nominee Experience

Nominee Occupation Pastor

List experiences or factors that you believe have prepared you for service in this position (up to three)

I was born and raised in Finland and have years of experience working as a volunteer and as well as youth director and pastor both in Finland and US. I have a long experience serving as an ELCA pastor both in congregations and in t synods; I have been a member of number of synod committees over the years from youth to finances and everything between. I bring a unique perspective having been trained both in the US and Finland.



List current or past congregational, synod or churchwide activities related to qualification for this position (up to three)

The dean of Page County Conference.
Synodical youth ministry coordinator.
National Lutheran taskforce to respond to the veterans needs returning to civilian life.

List current or past community-related service activities (up to three)

Mission support activities for sister church in Namibia.
Work with local social ministry agencies to alleviate food and housing insecurity.
Chaplaincy services at local and Lutheran retirement/nursing facilities.
Hosting international church guests at my home and church from places like Estonia and Namibia and others.

Will serve if elected

This is a self-nomination

Submission

Name of person submitting the form

Tarja Stevenson

Signature

Date Submitted:

Mar 29, 2024



Strong Connections



Nomination Form for 2024 Synod Assembly

Nominee For: ELCA Churchwide Assembly Voting Member

ELCA Churchwide Assembly Voting Member

Nominee For: Churchwide Assembly: Lay Member-Man

Gender Male

Do you Identify as a Person of Color and/or Language other than English No

Nominee Contact Information

Name Tom Bartkiewicz

Preferred Pronouns He/Him

Congregation/Parish Name and Location Our Saviour, Warrenton

Conference Germanna

Conference Partnership Piedmont (Richmond & Germanna)

Nominee Experience

Nominee Occupation Software Engineer

List experiences or factors that you believe have prepared you for service in this position (up to three)

Past Congregation Council President

A heart for learning (completed VA Synod's ACTS program) and teaching (Adult Education Teacher) enables me to tell the story to others in an accessible way.

Deeply involved with both stewardship and finance within the congregation serving as the stewardship committee chair, finance and audit committee member, and Financial Peace & Six Weeks on Money coordinator/coach.



List current or past congregational, synod or churchwide activities related to qualification for this position (up to three)

VA Synod Adult Leader for Youth Assembly, Winter Celebration, Junior High Servant Event and Kairos

LTSS / ELCA Region 9 Council for Stewardship Education - At Large Member

ELCA Level 1 Coach & ELCA Level 2 Stewardship Coach

List current or past community-related service activities (up to three)

Fauquier Habitat for Humanity - Board Member/Board Chair

Virginia Statewide Community Land Trust - Founding Board Member

Leader for Our Saviour Warrenton's 30 Hour Famine for World Vision raising funds and awareness in youth and community.

Will serve if elected

Yes

Submission

Name of person submitting the form

Dave Raecke

Signature

Date Submitted:

Mar 26, 2024



**Strong
Connections**



Nomination Form for 2024 Synod Assembly

Nominee For: ELCA Churchwide Assembly Voting Member

ELCA Churchwide Assembly Voting Member

Nominee For: Churchwide Assembly: Lay Member-Man

Gender Male

Do you Identify as a Person of Color and/or Language other than English No

Nominee Contact Information

Name Mr Richard W Corliss

Congregation/Parish Name and Location St. Timothy, Norfolk

Conference Tidewater

Conference Partnership Coastal (Tidewater & Peninsulas)

Nominee Experience

Nominee Occupation Warehouse manager, bus driver for school and assisted living, teacher assistant, uniform salesman

List experiences or factors that you believe have prepared you for service in this position (up to three)

I have visited over 25 Virginia Synod congregations from Norfolk to Bristol and Winchester.
Previous churchwide assembly lay voting member in New Orleans
Presently serving on Virginia Synod Council, 2nd term expiring in 2025



List current or past congregational, synod or churchwide activities related to qualification for this position (up to three)

20 plus years as St Timothy, Norfolk treasurer
Former Sunday School teacher at St John and St Timothy, Norfolk
Volunteer at Caroline Furnace Lutheran camp

List current or past community-related service activities (up to three)

Three time international Thrivent/Habitat for Humanity build volunteer
Volunteer at St Timothy, Norfolk food pantry
Property coordinator at St Timothy, Norfolk

Will serve if elected

This is a self-nomination

Submission

Name of person submitting the form

Richard Corliss

Signature

Date Submitted:

Mar 22, 2024



**Strong
Connections**



Nomination Form for 2024 Synod Assembly

Nominee For: ELCA Churchwide Assembly Voting Member

ELCA Churchwide Assembly Voting Member

Nominee For: Churchwide Assembly: Lay Member-Man

Gender Man

Do you Identify as a Person of Color and/or Language other than English No

Nominee Contact Information

Name Mr. CARLTON P HARDY

Preferred Pronouns he/him

Congregation/Parish Name and Location St. Mark, Yorktown

Conference Peninsulas

Conference Partnership Coastal (Tidewater & Peninsulas)

Nominee Experience

Nominee Occupation Retired (Federal Civil Service - Army)

List experiences or factors that you believe have prepared you for service in this position (up to three)

1. Church Council - St. Paul's, Hampton - 2 ter
2. Church Council - St. Mark, Yorktown - 2 terms - Preside
3. Synod Council - Virginia Synod - 2 terms (currently serving second te and the first openly LGBT council member)



List current or past congregational, synod or churchwide activities related to qualification for this position (up to three)

1. Facilitate the Serving Boldly Award (4 years)
2. St Mark Council President
3. 50th Anniversary chair for both St Mark and St Paul

List current or past community-related service activities (up to three)

1. Board member, Young Audiences of Virginia (arts education)
2. Board member, Cultural Alliance of Greater Hampton Roads (President, Vice President, Secretary)
3. City of Newport News representative on the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission's Community Advisory Committee.

Will serve if elected

This is a self-nomination

Submission

Name of person submitting the form

CARLTON HARDY

Signature

C. P. Hardy

Date Submitted:

Mar 16, 2024



Strong Connections



Nomination Form for 2024 Synod Assembly

Nominee For: ELCA Churchwide Assembly Voting Member

ELCA Churchwide Assembly Voting Member

Nominee For: Churchwide Assembly: Lay Member-Woman

Gender female

Do you Identify as a Person of Color and/or Language other than English No

Nominee Contact Information

Name Judy Castelee

Preferred Pronouns she/her

Congregation/Parish Name and Location Good Shepherd, Lexington

Conference Southern Valley

Conference Partnership Blue Ridge (Southern & Southern Valley)

Nominee Experience

Nominee Occupation Nonprofit Executive Director

List experiences or factors that you believe have prepared you for service in this position (up to three) Experience in all expressions of the church
30+ years of nonprofit business management experience
BS in Human Resources Management



List current or past congregational, synod or churchwide activities related to qualification for this position (up to three)

Synod Council Secretary (current)
Virginia Synodical Women's Organization president (past)
Congregational Council President (past)

List current or past community-related service activities (up to three)

Feeding the Timber Framers
Baking for the Community Table
Participation in MLK and Pride events

Will serve if elected

Yes

Submission

Name of person submitting the form

Judy Castelee

Signature

Date Submitted:

Feb 29, 2024



**Strong
Connections**



Nomination Form for 2024 Synod Assembly

Nominee For: ELCA Churchwide Assembly Voting Member

ELCA Churchwide Assembly Voting Member

Nominee For: Churchwide Assembly: Lay Member-Person of any gender

Gender: Female

Do you Identify as a Person of Color and/or Language other than English: No

Nominee Contact Information

Name: Sylvia M Miles

Preferred Pronouns: she/her

Congregation/Parish Name and Location: Good Shepherd, Galax

Conference: New River

Conference Partnership: Appalachia (Highlands & New River)

Nominee Experience

Nominee Occupation: Pharmacist, Retired

List experiences or factors that you believe have prepared you for service in this position (up to three)

- Local mission: served on Board of Directors of Food Independence (a food bank) - established and operated since 2020. Served as information collection and reporting Board Member. (4 years)
- Hospitality Committee Chairperson: coordinating weekly after-church hospitality events, as well as all other special events - with a focus on fellowship (4 years)
- Owned and operated Williamstown Pharmacy for 25 years)



List current or past congregational, synod or churchwide activities related to qualification for this position (up to three)

- Elected and served on (Vestry) Council 2020-2024
- Commissioned Lay Preacher, first in the Presbyterian denomination x 15 yrs, then in Lutheran (commissioned 2023)
- Synod Authorized Minister-to be commissioned in June, 2024

List current or past community-related service activities (up to three)

- Served on the Board of Directors of the Hearts and Hands Ministry and supervised our paid coordinator. This Ministry provided financial assistance and counselling for those in need. (10 Years)
- Operated a Clothing Exchange in the basement of my pharmacy - provided new and used clothing for those in need, at no charge (10 years)
- Served as a year-long mentor to 2 women that were being sponsored by a grant from the Sisters of St Joseph to become financially self-sufficient (2 years/1 woman per year).

Will serve if elected

Yes

Submission

Name of person submitting the form

Sylvia Miles

Signature

Date Submitted:

Mar 28, 2024



**Strong
Connections**



Nomination Form for 2024 Synod Assembly

Nominee For: ELCA Churchwide Assembly Voting Member

ELCA Churchwide Assembly Voting Member

Nominee For: Churchwide Assembly: Lay Member - Young Adult (30 or younger) -
Person of any gender

Gender Non-binary

**Do you Identify as a Person of Color
and/or Language other than English** No

Nominee Contact Information

Name Cam Haggett

Preferred Pronouns they/them

**Congregation/Parish Name and
Location** College, Salem

Conference Southern

Conference Partnership Blue Ridge (Southern & Southern Valley)

Nominee Experience

Nominee Occupation Student

**List experiences or factors that you
believe have prepared you for service in
this position (up to three)**

1. Lifelong Luther
2. Involved in the church in many different capacities



List current or past congregational, synod or churchwide activities related to qualification for this position (up to three)

1. Youth representative for College Lutheran Church congregation council (2023-present)
2. Lay member from Blue Ridge Partnership on VA Synod Council (2023-present)
3. Lay Voting Member-At-Large for the 2023 Synod Assembly

List current or past community-related service activities (up to three)

1. Regularly fosters dogs through the Roanoke Valley SPCA
2. Volunteering with organizations such as the Salem Food Pantry through College Lutheran Church youth group
3. Tutoring younger students through the Cave Spring High School Beta Club

Will serve if elected

This is a self-nomination

Submission

Name of person submitting the form

Cam Haggett

Signature

Date Submitted:

Mar 16, 2024



**Strong
Connections**



Nomination Form for 2024 Synod Assembly

Nominee For: ELCA Churchwide Assembly Voting Member

ELCA Churchwide Assembly Voting Member

Nominee For: Churchwide Assembly: Lay Member - Young Adult (30 or younger) - Person of any gender

Gender Female

Do you Identify as a Person of Color and/or Language other than English Yes

Nominee Contact Information

Name Jillian C Stierwalt

Congregation/Parish Name and Location St. Andrew, Portsmouth

Conference Tidewater

Conference Partnership Coastal (Tidewater & Peninsulas)

Nominee Experience

Nominee Occupation Student @ Norfolk State University and Wait Staff Trainer @ Longhorn Steakhouse

List experiences or factors that you believe have prepared you for service in this position (up to three) Jillian is the NSU chapter president of NEXTGEN (a non-partisan voting rights advocacy group teaching college-age adults about civics and responsible citizenship), She has interacted with various members of local and state government. She has worked in the service industry for many years. Jillian is passionate about sharing her faith and caring for the students at NSU.



List current or past congregational, synod or churchwide activities related to qualification for this position (up to three)

Jillian currently serves on the Synod Council, has attended all youth events, and is a voting member in good standing at St. Andrew Lutheran Church.

List current or past community-related service activities (up to three)

Jillian has been a member of the Nansemond River Magnificent Marching Warriors and the Norfolk State Spartan Legion. These groups have allowed her to participate in several service activities including parades and music education for elementary and high school youth. Jillian has served at Portsmouth Volunteers for the Homeless and at Oasis, caring for those in need. She has used her American Sign Language skills to communicate with those often left out, connecting them with valuable resources within their communities.

Will serve if elected

Yes

Submission

Name of person submitting the form

Suzanne Stierwalt

Signature

Date Submitted:

Mar 27, 2024



**Strong
Connections**



Nomination Form for 2024 Synod Assembly

Nominee For: ELCA Churchwide Assembly Voting Member

ELCA Churchwide Assembly Voting Member

Nominee For: Churchwide Assembly: Lay Member - Person of color and/or whose primary language is other than English - Person of any gender

Gender Woman

Do you Identify as a Person of Color and/or Language other than English Yes

Nominee Contact Information

Name Dr Yolanda Shea

Preferred Pronouns She/her

Congregation/Parish Name and Location First, Norfolk

Conference Tidewater

Conference Partnership Coastal (Tidewater & Peninsulas)

Nominee Experience

Nominee Occupation Atmospheric Research Scientist



List experiences or factors that you believe have prepared you for service in this position (up to three)

1. I am currently the science lead for an Earth Science mission that will take measurements of Earth from space. In this role I condense complex concepts into relatable explanations for diverse audiences, fiercely advocate for my project and co-workers, and shepherd my team toward project goals.
2. I served as my co-op's secretary, which required attention to detail, responsiveness to the needs of the community, and significant organization.
3. I have worked on and led several diverse teams that spanned multiple disciplines, organizations, and personalities. This extensive team work has taught me about how to effectively navigate conflict to come to a resolution, while respecting the diverse voices in the room.

List current or past congregational, synod or churchwide activities related to qualification for this position (up to three)

1. I have served as a member of my congregation's worship committee
2. I am serving on the VA Synod Serving Boldly Award selection panel.
3. I have attended the 2022 VA Synod Assembly as a voting member from my congregation.

List current or past community-related service activities (up to three)

The bulk of my community service is related to exposing and engaging students in STEM fields. In this work, I travel to local schools to talk about my work in atmospheric science and encourage students to follow their curiosity, even if they find a topic challenging. I also participate in virtual classroom visits including through the organization DreamWakers.

Will serve if elected

This is a self-nomination

Submission

Name of person submitting the form

Yolanda Shea

Signature

Date Submitted:

Mar 28, 2024



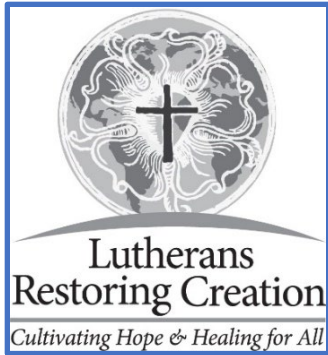
Resolution Request for the 2024 Synod Assembly

Virginia Synod 2024 Resolution on Care for Creation

- WHEREAS scripture clearly describes God declaring all of creation to be good; and
- WHEREAS care for creation is deeply rooted in scripture-humanity created in God's loving image (see Gen. 1:27) and given stewardship responsibility to tend that creation (see Gen. 2:15; 9:8ff); and
- WHEREAS we are called in faith as Jesus' disciples and as the church to love "your neighbor as yourself" (see Lk. 10:27; Jn. 13:34) as did Christ who gave himself for us (see Gal. 2:20; Eph. 5:1-2; Titus 2:14) and for the sake of the world (see Jn. 3:16-17; Rom. 8:19-21; Col. 1:20); and
- WHEREAS the 1993 ELCA Social Statement Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice affirms that "we are called to care for the earth as God cares for the earth;" and recognizes that "action to counter [earth's] degradation....is essential to the future of our children and our children's children;" and declares that "each congregation should see itself as a center for exploring scriptural and theological foundations for caring for creation;" and that "as congregations and other expressions of this church, we will seek to incorporate the principles of sufficiency and sustainability in our life"; and
- WHEREAS the 1999 ELCA Social Statement Economic Life: Sufficient Sustainable Livelihood for All recognizes that "the growth of economic activity during the twentieth century, and the industrialization and consumerism that fueled it, radically changed the relationship between humans and the earth. Too often the earth has been treated as a waste receptacle and a limitless storehouse of raw materials to be used up for the sake of economic growth, rather than as a finite, fragile ecological system upon which human and all other life depends"; and
- WHEREAS the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), meeting in Churchwide Assembly 2022, reaffirmed "the commitment of this church to engage in creation care and advocacy based on the principles of sufficiency, sustainability, participation, and solidarity," and encouraged "congregants, rostered ministers, and bishops to commit themselves to education about the urgency of the climate emergency,¹ the global opportunities of a just transition [away from greenhouse gasses],² and to lift up loving our neighbor in response to the climate emergency in their preaching [teaching, and Christian witness]"; and
- WHEREAS as individuals, congregations, and as a synod of the ELCA, we share the calling to care for creation; therefore, be it



- RESOLVED that the Virginia Synod in assembly direct all congregations of the synod to accept their responsibility to be stewards of the earth, and adopt a covenant such as the one provided by Lutherans Restoring Creation (attached) which will provide support and educational materials to grow faithfully and intentionally in this responsibility as individuals within the synod by:
- Worshiping in ways that celebrate and foster care for creation,
 - Educating adults and children about biblical and theological foundations for creation care, ecological issues, and community practices,
 - Improving energy conservation efforts in church buildings and grounds, and in means of practicing ministry,
 - Promoting earth-friendly, creation-sustaining practices of members at home and work,
 - Demonstrating care for creation in their local communities, and
 - Advocating for energy policies at the local, state, national, and international levels that will foster cleaner, renewable, and more efficient energy use in all sectors of society; and be further
- RESOLVED that the Virginia Synod Council at its earliest convenience be requested to:
1. provide leadership and oversight of this covenant by directing the Creation Justice thread of the Tapestry Team to work with partner groups (e.g., Arbor Day Foundation, Blessed Tomorrow, Center for Climate Justice and Faith, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Citizens' Climate Lobby, Honor the Earth, Land Stewardship Project, Lutherans Restoring Creation, National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, The Nature Conservancy, Virginia Interfaith Power and Light, and others) for its fulfillment;
 2. adopt the "Synod Covenant with God's Creation" provided by Lutherans Restoring Creation and attached to this Resolution to assist in guiding the Virginia Synod congregations in caring for God's creation.
1. IPCC, 2021: Summary for Policymakers. In: Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) [Masson Delmotte, V., et al (eds.)]. Cambridge University Press. See also the AR6 Synthesis Report of the IPCC, publ. March 19, 2023.
 2. "Just transition" is the transition to a net-zero carbon sustainable, resilient world without leaving stranded individuals or communities...Knowing that climate change impacts marginalized and vulnerable people the most, we must commit to actions that leave no one behind. In our efforts to protect God's good creation, we will not exclude voices, because doing so would only mirror and deepen existing racial, gender, and economic inequalities. (from the ELCA Advocacy document "Just Transition to a Sustainable Future" March 2021, pp. 1, 7)
- "\Fillable_Template_Synod-Covenant-with-Creation (1).pdf"
- "\Congregational-Covenant-2021.pdf"



Synod Covenant with God's Creation

As the _____ Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America committed to care for creation, we **affirm** God's creation in all its glory and beauty. We **acknowledge** God as the source of all things. We acknowledge Christ as the redeemer of all things. We acknowledge the Spirit as the sustainer of all things. As a result, we strive to respect all of life as sacred. We **accept** our vocation as Earth-keepers who care for creation. We accept our responsibility to live justly in relation to our fellow human beings in ways that all creatures may mutually thrive together.

Worship: We seek to worship throughout the year so that we express our gratitude and praise to God as creator, redeemer, and sustainer. We are committed to glorify God intentionally together with all creation. In worship, we will celebrate creation, confess our sins against creation, grieve the losses of creation, and commit ourselves to care for Earth.

Education: We seek to learn about the biblical, theological, and ecclesial traditions concerning creation, including the biblical mandate from God for us to care for Earth. We also seek to learn about the present degradations of creation due to human activity, how these degradations are related to human exploitation and oppression, how we as religious people are implicated in these matters, and what we as Christians can do to heal and restore creation for future generations.

Building and Grounds: We agree to assess the impact that our facilities and events may have upon creation—in such matters as energy and water use, cleaning products, lawn care, paper use, food choices, recycling and waste, and transportation. We will strive to make choices that lessen our negative impact on Earth and that serve to renew and restore Earth community.

Discipleship as Home and Work: We encourage ourselves as individual members of congregations, rostered leaders and staff—at whatever age, economic level, ethnic group, or walk of life—to care for creation in our personal lifestyle, in our homes, and at our work—knowing that our habits and practices can contribute significantly to care for creation. We seek to foster a closer relationship with nature so that we can live simply and walk lightly upon Earth.

Public Ministry: We seek to change the systems that foster the degradation of creation and to rectify the injustices that result from it. And we seek to alert our members to environmental legislation that protects creation and to encourage their active participation in the development of public policy. We encourage members to engage in civic activities that foster ecological health.

Because we desire to leave Earth a better place for our children, we will promote love and respect for creation among our youth, teach them responsible Earth practices, and engage them in projects that restore creation. We will pursue this mission in a grace-filled manner, seeking to find hope and joy in the commitments and sacrifices these provisions may entail and in the restorations they engender. We seek to let our care for creation be known to others.

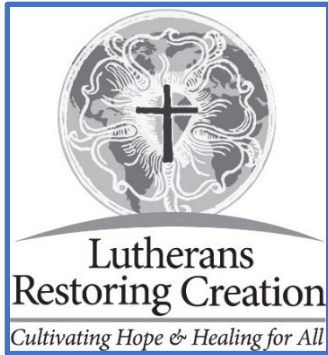
Synod Bishop: _____ Date: _____

Liaison to Communicate with Lutherans Restoring Creation: _____

Phone/Email: _____

Send this completed form to: info@LutheransRestoringCreation.org

For support with all these affirmations explore: www.LutheransRestoringCreation.org



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Synod Bishop: _____ Date: _____

Liaison to Communicate with Lutherans Restoring Creation: _____

Phone/Email: _____

Send this completed form to: info@LutheransRestoringCreation.org

For support with all these affirmations explore: www.LutheransRestoringCreation.org



Name of individual submitting the resolution:

Sister Phyllis C Cox Deacon

Email

peacocks2360@gmail.com

Phone

15404574553

Signature of individual submitting the resolution:

Congregation/Parish Name and Location

Christ, Staunton

Name of Pastor or Congregational President

Scott Langston

Signature of Pastor or Congregational President

Date Submitted

Mar 28, 2024



Resolution Request for the 2024 Synod Assembly

Restitution of Privileged Associate Membership

- WHEREAS Lord of Life Lutheran Church, Sun City West, AZ with over 1,300 full and associate members ("Persons who are in the area part-time, and who desire to maintain their membership "back home" may become Associate members. This means that for statistical purposes you are counted in the other congregation but have all the privileges of membership at Lord of Life.) is precedence for the value of "Associate Membership" and recognized by the ELCA as vital to the well-being of certain congregations; and
- WHEREAS In an era of highly mobile, dual location retiree populations, and aging congregations, many rural congregations (outside Arizona) are also dependent on "snow bird" members to provide a necessary pool of privileged members to meet governance, operational and functional requirements; and
- WHEREAS Living Water Lutheran Church "privileged" membership is decimated by the elimination of an associate membership class by reducing voting membership from 42 to 31 members which make the previous healthy congregation now unsustainable due to a deficit of persons able to participate in governance; and therefore be it
- RESOLVED That Living Water Lutheran Church, Weems, Virginia be granted the "Arizona" exception and authorized a privileged Associate Membership class; and be it further
- RESOLVED That the 2025 Church-wide Assembly, in order to maintain the well being of Living Water Lutheran Church, grant the privileges of full membership to associate members who may be counted in their home congregation for statistical purposes.



Name of individual submitting the resolution:

Mr. Bruce W Adams

Email

brucead45@gmail.com

Phone

(804) 724-4226

Signature of individual submitting the resolution:

Bruce W Adams

Congregation/Parish Name and Location

Living Water, Weems

Name of Pastor or Congregational President

Mrs Joanna G Bradley

Signature of Pastor or Congregational President

Joanna G Bradley

Date Submitted

Apr 04, 2024



Report of the Candidacy Committee

The Candidacy Committee of the Virginia Synod seeks to support, encourage, and counsel any baptized member of this synod who would undertake the preparation needed for rostered ministry in the ELCA. Our purpose is to accompany candidates along their journey of formation for ministry – serving as a constructive and critical resource in helping candidates discern their sense of call, gifts for ministry, and readiness for service. At the same time, our charge is also to serve as an advocate for the needs and hopes of the whole church and to exercise, on behalf of the church, our best discernment of a candidate's readiness for a particular area of call or rostered service.

While overseeing the candidacy process, we are attentive to the vital participation of the home congregation and rostered minister(s), the seminary community, and the mentors and friends in Christ—all of whom have important ministries to and interactions with a candidate. Either in person or through regular written reports, a seminary informs us of a candidate's progress in classes, clinical pastoral education, and internship. Every candidate is matched with a committee member who serves as a contact person for regular communication of a candidate's concerns, questions, discoveries, and struggles.

In late March the Candidacy Committee plans to meet for a retreat/meeting. This will be a wonderful opportunity to spend time and build relationships, especially with our newer members. We will also be discussing potential upcoming changes to the candidacy process.

We are very pleased to report that in 2023 four candidates were approved for ordination in the ministry of Word and Sacrament: Mycah McNett, Kyle Duff, Grace Casola, and Lucas Cochran.

In 2023 and 2024, to date there have been three positive endorsement decisions, and four positive entrance decisions. At any given time, we have approximately twenty inquirers, individuals who are actively discerning their call to ministry.

Our committee is grateful for the Virginia Synod Seminary Scholarship fund, established under the umbrella of the ELCA Fund for Leaders in Mission, and its financial support of Virginia Synod candidates. We are pleased and thankful that the fund continues to receive support from churches and individuals within our synod.

The committee wishes to lift up the service of Oris Griffin (Muhlenberg, Harrisonburg) who completed her term on the committee. Thank you, Oris, your service on the committee supporting our ministry candidates is very much appreciated.

In 2023 we welcomed four new members to the Candidacy Committee. Joining the committee are Pastor Viktoria Parvin (St Mark, Charlottesville), Pastor Luke Swanson (Trinity, Roanoke), Anna Lehman (Grace, Winchester), and David Mayersky (Good Shepherd, Lexington). The committee is blessed to have these members bring their gifts and put them to use in the hard work of getting to know our candidates, participate in interviewing them, and using understanding, patience, and compassion in supporting these candidates on their ministry journey. Welcome!

Robert Quandahl, Chair



Report of the Companion Synod Program with the New Guinea Islands (NGI) District of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Papua New Guinea (ELCPNG)

2023 was a year of waiting and praying for our companions in the New Guinea Islands and for our partnership in the gospel. The New Guinea Islands District experienced internal challenges in leadership and administration which made it challenging to have dialogue with our companions; however, we did maintain contact for prayers and updates together. In December, the Companion Synod Team learned that the ELCPNG was going to appoint an interim district president for a one-year term. On January 7, 2024, the Rev. Gedisa Okamaisa was installed. It is anticipated that Pastor Gedisa will provide stability and leadership for the NGI District as they seek to reform and rebuild their District Council and other leadership teams.

This was also a time when the VA Synod gave thanks for the many years the Rev. Bobby Eleasar served as the NGI District President. During his last years, like in many places around the globe, they were dealing with the Covid Pandemic. On top of that, there was another serious volcano eruption that closed down schools and congregations for some time in the Bialla Circuit of the West New Britain Province where Ps. Bobby resides.

Late in 2023, the VA Synod Companion Synod Team learned that we would have the opportunity to join the other 3 ELCA Synods who have ELCPNG Companions for a visit with our respective ELCPNG District companions. In August 2024 four VA Synod pastors will join our companions from across the ELCA and across the ELCPNG for this visit: the Revs. Kelly Bayer Derrick, Derek Boggs, Wanda Childs, and Michael Church.

We ask for Synod-wide prayers for our siblings in the New Guinea Islands District of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of PNG, as well as for safe travel and fruitful dialogue between VA Synod leaders and the NGI leadership.

The VA Synod Companion Synod Team is comprised of Rev. Kelly Bayer Derrick, Rev. Derek Boggs, Rev. Bruce Burslie, Rev. Wanda Childs, Rev. Michael Church, Diane Giessler, Chuck Hays, Ann Mitchell, and Matt Wertman.

Respectfully submitted – Diane Giessler



Report of the Ecumenical Relations Committee

In 1991, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America created ["A Declaration of Ecumenical Commitment"](#) as section II of "The Vision of the ELCA" which states:

*"A Confessional Church that is Evangelical, Catholic and Ecumenical - The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is a confessional church, as Chapter 2 of its constitution ("The Confession of Faith") makes clear. Its confessions teach that community in Christ, proclaimed in the Gospel and the sacraments, is the basis for unity in the Church. The Augsburg Confession, Article VII, stresses this when it says that "For the true unity of the Church it is enough to agree concerning the teaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments." **The unity of the church, as it is proclaimed in the Scriptures, is a gift and goal of God in Christ Jesus. Ecumenism is the joyous experience of the unity of Christ's people and the serious task of expressing that unity visibly and structurally to advance the proclamation of the Gospel for the blessing of humankind.** Through participation in ecumenical activity, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America seeks to be open in faith to the work of the Spirit, so as to manifest more fully oneness in Christ." (II. A Declaration of Ecumenical Commitment: A Policy Statement of the ELCA, A. The Basis)*

Guided by this vision, the Virginia Synod's Ecumenical Relations Committee works through various programs or organizations to live out our commitment to manifesting the unity of the Church of Jesus Christ. Our main involvement in 2023 included the Virginia Lutheran-Episcopal Joint Committee and the Virginia Council of Churches' Coordinating Cabinet, of which Bishop Phyllis Milton and the Rev. Terrie Sternberg (Ecumenical Representative of the Virginia Synod) are members. The Lutheran/Anglican/Roman Catholic/United Methodist (LARCUM) organization has been inactive in 2023 due to significant losses in leadership, but is in rejuvenation mode in 2024. LARCUM has traditionally offered a yearly conference in the fall for members of the four bodies that constitute it; we look forward to its revival in the year to come.

The Virginia Lutheran-Episcopal Joint Committee is very active with monthly meetings which are attended by our committee members as well as ecumenical representatives from the Metro-D.C. Synod and the Episcopal Dioceses of Virginia, Southern Virginia, and Southwestern Virginia. Each member has distinct gifts and areas of responsibility as we work with our Episcopal siblings. Due to a number of challenges, we were not able to put together the hoped-for conference on Baptism and Eucharist that was mentioned in last year's synod assembly report. As we regrouped in the late summer of 2023, the direction we agreed to take was to increase our use of social media, podcasts, denominational news channels, and redesigned website to share stories of where our "Called to Common Mission" full communion agreement is taking actual form in congregations in our respective synods/dioceses as well as beyond Virginia. We believe that seeing the fruit that is borne through ecumenical cooperation and common mission is what inspires others to give ecumenism a try. If a Virginia Synod congregation is engaged in ecumenical relationships in their locality, we would certainly want to hear all about it and share the stories with others! Our joint committee is committed to our full-communion agreements with the Episcopal, United Methodist and Presbyterian Church USA and works diligently to see how we can invite others throughout Virginia to catch the vision.



The mission of the Virginia Council of Churches: ***“As we work together as Christian communions, we build Christian Unity; as we work together with persons of other faiths, we build human community.”*** The main areas of work within the VCC in which our committee members are involved include Rural Family Development, the Rev. Eric Moehring, President; and “Now” Generation Ecumenists (Pastors Tina Melusky, Joel Neubauer, and Alex Sheppard-Witt). Rural Family Development, is responsible for identifying funding and willing partner churches to work together in a rural region to offer programming geared to the support of early elementary children and families.

The VCC, led by General Minister the Rev. Dr. Mary Ann Glover, works tirelessly to invite churches throughout Virginia to work together to build the unity of the church in service to the people in Virginia whom God loves. We are grateful to our bishops, the Rev. Bob Humphrey and the Rev. Dr. Phyllis Milton, for their participation and leadership in the VCC each and every year.

The installation of Bishop Phyllis Milton on October 21, 2023, was an occasion for wonderful ecumenical sharing with synodical bishops or their designees from around the ELCA as well as ecumenical officers of the Moravian Church and Episcopal Church in attendance. The Virginia Council of Churches was present through General Minister Glover and the Rev. Sheresa Simpson-Rice of the United Church of Christ. It was a true joy to have these partner churches join in the celebration of the day, with Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton as the officiant and preacher.

Participation in Episcopal Conventions as ecumenical guests - we take every opportunity we can to attend the annual conventions of our full-communion partners. In early 2024, Bishop Milton attended the Episcopal Diocese of Southern Virginia Convention in Williamsburg, and the Rev. Terrie Sternberg attended the Episcopal Diocese of Southwestern Virginia Convention in Roanoke. In turn, we invite ecumenical guests from our full-communion partners and the Virginia Council of Churches to attend our synod assembly whenever we meet in person at Roanoke College. We have been blessed to have good attendance from these partners in the past, and we look for that to continue.

Why do we exist as a committee of the Virginia Synod? We are called into the work of ecumenism because the Gospel compels us to live in and into the unity of the one holy, catholic, and apostolic church. When the unity of the church is fractured, the witness of Jesus’ gospel is harmed. I’d like to end this report with another section of the policy on ecumenism with which this report began:

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is an active participant in bilateral and multilateral dialogues, which it does not view as competitive, but as mutually re-enforcing means for ecumenical advance. At the same time it seeks other means, such as joint efforts at mission, religious instruction, and use of the mass media to grow in understanding and agreement with other churches. These efforts, including joint study, prayer, and worship, must be found in the various organizational expressions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and other churches. All these activities need to be encouraged and to inform each other. Local ecumenism, with its synodical and regional forms, provides a rich area of progress and challenge for the unity of the Church. It has much to teach and much to learn from the national and international ecumenical movement. The primary experience of ecumenism for most Christians is through their congregations, local gatherings of believers that relate to other local gatherings of other traditions, which share the same Lord, the same Baptism, the same mission. (II. A Declaration of Ecumenical Commitment: Policy Statement of the ELCA, D. Forms of Ecumenism)



We exist - our work exists - to help support and strengthen the work of ecumenism at the congregational and synodical level that "Christ may be known." It is our hope and prayer that each congregation in the Virginia Synod would keep the work of unity and ecumenical relationships in the forefront of everything they do so that the Gospel message may not be diminished by disunity. We are here to help in whatever way we can to accomplish the gift and task of unity. And we are always open to members - lay and clergy - who wish to join us in these endeavors.

In Christ's Service,

The Rev. Terrie Sternberg, Committee Chair and Synod Ecumenical Representative

Committee Members:

Darlene Allen: Christ, Fredericksburg; darleneallen2015@gmail.com

Pastor Lou Florio: Christ, Fredericksburg; lou@christ-lutheran-church.org

Pastor Eric Moehring: Richmond; ericjohnmoehring@gmail.com

Pastor Bill Nabers: Basye; billnabers@hotmail.com

Pastor Libby Pfaff: Radford; pastor@ninevehnr.org

Pastor Terrie Sternberg: Pulaski; terrie.sternberg@gmail.com

"Now" Generation Ecumenists: Virginia Council of Churches

Pastor Tina Melusky: Trinity, Newport News; tina.melusky@gmail.com

Pastor Joel Neubauer: St. Mark, Yorktown; pastor.joel.neubauer@gmail.com

Pastor Alex Sheppard-Witt: Our Saviour's, Norge; pastoralexwitt@gmail.com



Report for the 2023-2024 Lay Ministry Academy of the Virginia Synod

In the fall of 2023, the Virginia Synod took a significant step forward in its commitment to lay ministry formation by establishing the Lay Ministry Leadership Team. This dedicated group was formed with the specific purpose of shaping and supporting the newly integrated Lay Ministry Academy (LMA). The integration brought together two distinct programs, namely the Lay Preaching Academy and the Synod Authorized Minister (SAM) program. This team is led by Assistant to the Bishop Pastor Kelly Bayer Derrick and is made up of rostered ministers and one member in the SAM program: Pastor Wanda Childs, Pastor Chris Flohr, Marty Holliday, Pastor Karen van Stee, Pastor Marty Wagner (chaplain for the LMA), and Pastor Chris Wulff.

We are thrilled to offer a comprehensive curriculum grounded in biblical wisdom, theological understanding, and practical application. This curriculum includes Preaching, Worship and Sacraments, Pastoral Care, Biblical Studies, Lutheran theology and leadership. Wow!

Currently, the Lay Ministry Academy has two cohorts of gifted and faithful lay people being formed as either lay preachers or Synod Authorized Ministers. The 2023 Cohort of 8 people will be commissioned at Power in the Spirit in June 2024. The 2024 Cohort of 6 people have just begun their studies. Please hold all of these folks in your prayers.

The 2023-2024 Lay Ministry Academy of the Virginia Synod serves as a valuable and exciting platform for equipping and empowering lay leaders within Lutheran congregations across the synod! I am honored to be part of this groundbreaking ministry.

Sincerely,
Pastor Wanda Childs



Report from the Ministerium Team for 2023

The Ministerium Team of the Virginia Synod exists to lift up, strengthen, support and care for all rostered ministers throughout the Commonwealth. When rostered ministers purposefully and faithfully foster relationships, strengthen collegial connections, and live in healthy and hope-filled ways, congregations mirror that practice. We are intentionally in covenant with one another as professional leaders in the church so we can lead in connected ways with the people of the Virginia Synod.

As the Synod and all of its ministry expressions, ordained leaders, and members acknowledged the losses of pandemic and dared to move forward with hope, the Ministerium Team was intentional about offering space for rostered ministers to do this important and critical reflective work.

We lived out the Covenant of the Ministerium in the following ways:

- **2023 Gathering of the Ministerium** In an effort to plan wisely and be sensitive to the varying comfort levels of rostered ministers, the 2023 Gathering was hybrid. The majority of attendees gathered at Virginia Beach for the Gathering; less than 15 ministers attended online. The Rev. Dr. Dawn Alitz facilitated four sessions around the theme, “Leading with Hope in a Season of Change.” In addition to the four sessions, a special reception sponsored by Roanoke College was held to welcome the Rev. Dr. Phyllis Blair Milton, Bishop of the Virginia Synod.
- **Iron Sharpens Iron: First Decade of Ministry Retreat** was held immediately following the Gathering of the Ministerium.
- **Boundaries Education** In 2023, rostered ministers were required to attend Region 9’s Basic Boundaries & Inclusion Education.

I give great thanks for the creativity, collaboration, and witness to the power of God at work in the members who serve on the Ministerium Team for 2023. The team included: the Reverend Bob Humphrey, Bishop of the Virginia Synod, the Reverend Doctor Phyllis Blair Milton, Bishop of the Virginia Synod, the Reverend Kelly Bayer Derrick, Assistant to the Bishop, the Reverend Scott Mims, the Reverend Laura Swanson, and the Reverend Timothy Crummitt.

Respectfully submitted,

Reverend Anne Jones Martin
Chairperson of the Ministerium Team



Power in the Spirit is a two-part ministry of inspirational and educational programs for people of all ages.

Midwinter Power in the Spirit is a three-day, on-line event. The 2023 Midwinter Power in the Spirit (January 30-February 1) theme was “Blessed Are” based on the Beatitudes. People gathered on zoom from across the Synod for keynote presentation, workshops, and evening worship. The Rev. Brenda Smith from New York was the Keynote Speaker. Workshops included “Blessed Are the Righteous: The Role of Relationships in Racial Equity and Justice”, by the Rev. Paul Pingel; “Blessed Are the Pure in Heart: Bishop Election Process” by the Rev. Joshua Copeland, “Blessed Are the Children” by the Rev. Suzanne Stierwalt; Bible Study on the Beatitudes by the Rev. Kelly Bayer Derrick, Assistant to the Bishop; “Blessed Are the Peacemakers” by the Rev. Lou Florio; and “Blessed Are the Meek,” by Deanna Rennon.

Summer Power in the Spirit is an onsite gathering at Roanoke College for all those who wish to explore God’s call to service through joyous worship, Bible studies, keynote addresses, workshops, games, and fellowship. The 2023 Summer event (July 13-15) – “Seeking and Finding” – was based on the story of Zaccheus, in Luke 9.1-10. The Rev. Dr. Mary Hinkle Shore, retired dean of Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary was the keynote speaker; the Rev. Stephen Tuell, James A. Kelso Professor emeritus of Hebrew and Old Testament, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary was the Bible Study leader; and the music leader was Michael Benshish from Chicago/ Virginia Beach.

This three-day event was filled with worship, great music, Bible Study, and workshops. Workshop topics and their presenters included: “And Strangers Now Are Friends”: Seeking and Evangelism” by The Rev. Dr. Mary Hinkle Shore; “Who ARE Those Guys? The (Not So) Minor Prophets” by Dr. Stephen Tuell; “Seeking and Finding in Short Story Literature” by The Rev. Robert McCarty; “What Do You Practice” an Oyster Shell Craft by Maribeth Ocock; “Early Church in Virginia” by Trenton Hizer; Lutheran “Perspective on Christian Nationalism” by the Rev. James Cobb; “Building the Kingdom of God Through Public Policy” by Sheila Hennessee; “Truth in Love” by the Rev. Liz Radtke; “Music in Today’s Worship” by Michael Benshish; “Biblical Storytelling” by Judy Wilfong and Kathy Thompson; “Growing Congregational Compassion” by The Rev. Terrie Sternberg and The Rev. Libby Pfaff; and “The Church and Race” by the Rev. John Ericson.

Most importantly, fellowship was enjoyed by people from across the Virginia Synod who gathered for spiritual renewal and rest. We had the opportunity to experience a different worship experience with Michael’s Jazz Mass. We also had the privilege to have Bishop Humphrey preside during our Jazz Mass on Friday evening and Bishop-elect Milton preach during our closing worship on Saturday. During opening worship, we had the honor to hear one of the Lay Preachers, Norma Fredrickson.

All are invited to **2024 Power in the Spirit gatherings**: 2024 Midwinter (Feb 5-7): “Witness Like the Women” led by Virginia Synod pastors and lay leaders; and 2024 Summer (June 13-15): “Esther the Risk Taker” around the Old Testament story of Esther.

It is heart-warming to serve this committee as the Holy Spirit works among us to bring forth these events. A big thank you to all who worked tirelessly to make this happen.

Submitted by the tri-chairs:

Donna Gum (Grace, Waynesboro); Edith Blake (St. Andrew, Portsmouth); and the Rev. Wes Smith (Zion, Waynesboro).



Report of the Synodical Youth and Young Adult Ministries In 2023-2024

As we continue to build our ministries following the pandemic shutdown, our event participation continues to be small compared to pre-pandemic numbers, but our energy and enthusiasm remains strong. We continue to give thanks to God for raising up both youth and adult leaders in this important ministry.

Our events included:

- Youth Assembly – June 9-11, 2023
- Kairos - June 25-30, 2023
- Water's Edge – July 23-28, 2023
- Lost and Found - Nov. 17-19, 2023
- Winter Celebration – Feb. 2-4, 2024
- Seventh Day - March 2-3, 2024
- Youth Assembly – May 25, 2024

Special thanks goes to:

- Youth Ministry Committee chair Pastor Joseph Bolick (Epiphany, Richmond)
- Event Chaplains Meredith Williams, Tina Melusky, Cindy Keyser, David Drebes, Scott Mims and Bryan Katz.
- Numerous youth and adult Planning Group members from 14 different congregations
- Numerous other adults who served as small group leaders, musicians, first-aid and other caregivers, and congregational youth advisors from 42 congregations.
- As we prepare to conclude the 2023-2024 program year, we look forward to new growth in our synod events as well as our congregations.

THE REV. DAVID K. DELANEY, PH.D
DIRECTOR FOR YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT MINISTRIES
VIRGINIA SYNOD ELCA, PO Box 70, SALEM VA 24153 - OFFICES ON THE CAMPUS OF ROANOKE COLLEGE
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Tapestry Team 2023-2024 Update

The [Tapestry Team](#) is the VA Synod's diversity strategy team, lifting up interweaving justice threads throughout the year: Racial Justice, LGBTQIA2S+ Inclusion, Creation Care, and Justice for Women.

The **Racial Justice** thread was highlighted by Pastor Paul Pingel's presentation on work being done to forge a relationship between a traditionally BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) church in the Waynesboro, VA area and Grace Lutheran, Waynesboro. This thread also included a celebration of the life of Moses the Black in August, led by Pastor Harry Griffin.

The **LGBTQIA2S+ Inclusion** thread featured a Conversation with the Church on Gender Justice on three Sundays in May and June, led by Pastors Joel Neubauer and Alex Sheppard-Witt, and culminated with our annual [Synod-Wide Virtual PRIDE worship](#) gathering.

The **Care for Creation** thread included a four-week Creation Justice worship series made available through an agreement with the Indiana Synod's Creation Justice Team. The highlight of this emphasis was Climate Change in Context in October - an open discussion with [Lutherans Restoring Creation's](#) leader, Phoebe Morad, and LTSS Dean and Rector Chad Rimmer.

The **Justice for Women** emphasis included a Bible study on "God of Our Mothers" led by Assistant to the Bishop, Pastor Kelly Bayer Derrick, and a presentation on Maternal Mortality with staff from Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy.

Tapestry's 2024 ministry began in January with the **Racial Justice** thread's two-part series on Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letters From A Birmingham Jail" led by Pastor Harry Griffin. March featured a wonderful PowerPoint presentation on Women in the VA Synod. Both showcased intricate weavings that make our Tapestry Team so rich and beautiful!

As we continue through 2024, Tapestry Co-chairs have invited individual thread leaders to be involved in the discussion and planning of all events across all Tapestry Threads in hopes of braiding each thread even more closely together.

A particular hope for 2024 is the addition of a new LGBTQIA2S+ Thread co-leader. **We thank** Carlton Hardy who has co-chaired this thread with George Donovan for the past few years. Carlton's wisdom has been invaluable as we have worked to build this Thread's offerings. George Donovan will continue to co-lead this thread in addition to co-chairing the Tapestry Ministry with Sr. Phyllis Cox.

We give thanks to all other 2024 Thread Leaders:

- **Care of Creation**: Sr. Phyllis Cox & Bill Franz
- **Racial Justice**: Pr. Harry Griffith, Maurice Gallimore & Pr. Paul Pingel
- **Justice for Women**: Sylvia Vick-Eley & Pr. Kayla Keilholtz

The biggest shoutouts are due to our Synod Staff liaisons, Pastor Kelly Bayer Derrick and Pastor Colleen Montgomery, without whom a Synod-wide Tapestry Ministry simply could not be.

Respectfully submitted,

Sr. Phyllis Cox, *ELCA Deacon*, and George Donovan, Jr., *Commissioned Lay Preacher*



Virginia Synodical Women's Organization (VSWO)

The VSWO of the Women of the ELCA is a “community of women, created in the image of God, called to discipleship in Jesus Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit.” We are women of holy purpose as we “commit ourselves to grow in faith, affirm our gifts, support one another in our callings, engage in ministry and action, and promote healing and wholeness in the church, the society, and the world.” Our mission statement is to “mobilize women to act boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ.” **Any woman who is a member of an ELCA church is automatically a member of Women of the ELCA.**

The VSWO annual convention was held July 21 and 22, 2023 at Roanoke College.

Our convention chaplain was the Rev. Laura Swanson, who led our worship and Bible Study, and our churchwide representative was Liz Burgess from the New England Synod. We had wonderful presenters who led awareness sessions: Meghann Cotter, Servant Leader of Micah's Ministry in Fredericksburg, and Pastor Colleen Montgomery, All Places Together, who talked with us about Reconciling in Christ. We also heard from Pastor Kelly Bayer Derrick, who preached at our opening worship and gave greetings from our Synod Office.

We elected board officers: Lavelva Stevens (Trinity, Wytheville) was elected as President and Jody Smiley (St. Michael, Blacksburg) as Treasurer, both to 2-year terms. We also elected three new board members: Ashley Saunders (Muhlenberg, Harrisonburg), Teresa Bowers (Christ, Fredericksburg) and Nicole Ocheltree (Salem, Mt. Sidney); they joined Carol Bailey (Resurrection, Fredericksburg), Pat Seelenbinder (Emmanuel, Virginia Beach) and Diane Priestly (Our Saviour's, Norge), to make a complete board of 4 officers and 6 board members, which we have not had for a few years!

Our other officers are Sylvia Eley (St. Timothy, Norfolk), Vice-President, and JoAnn Fawley (All Places Together), Secretary/Social Media Coordinator. Jody Smiley is also our Circulation/Website Manager, which includes Editor of our newsletter, Visions.

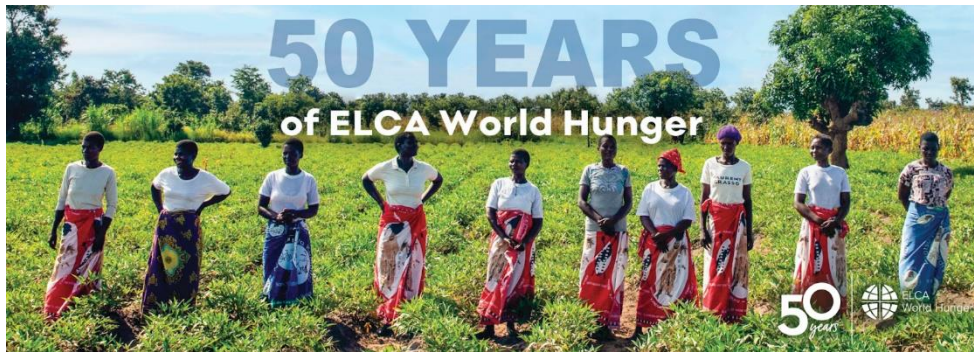
In September, the 2023 Triennial Convention and Gathering was held in Phoenix. Those attending the convention as voting members were Lavelva Stevens, Jody Smiley, Sylvia Eley, and Pat Seelenbinder.

This year's VSWO convention will be held at Our Saviour's Lutheran in Norge, outside of Williamsburg, on July 26 and 27, and our theme will be centered around 'Empowering Change'. Our chaplain will be the Rev. Alex Sheppard-Witt. We will hear from representatives of Latisha's House, an organization which helps victims of human trafficking, and from enCircle, to learn about their foster care program.

The VSWO is helping to promote the All Lutheran Women's Retreat, November 7-9, 2024 to be held at the Hilton Garden Inn Richmond Innsbrook. Jacqueline Bussie author of *Love Without Limits* will be the retreat leader. She was a keynote speaker at the 2023 Women of the ELCA Triennial in Phoenix.

We give thanks to the many dedicated women who serve the VSWO, both in time and in resources, to make this organization vital in our Virginia Synod.

Respectfully Submitted,
Lavelva Stevens
VSWO President



Virginia Synod Hunger Team Annual Report 2024

Keeping with Christ's commandment to love one another, the Virginia Synod's Hunger Team's mission is to educate, facilitate, and encourage congregations to engage in aspects of hunger and poverty elimination both domestically and internationally.

In 2023, ELCA World Hunger was blessed with the work of the Rev. Evie Landrau, the new Director of Networking and Engagement. She has met with the team on several occasions and conducted one on one's with chair Betsy Liljeberg. She is keeping our synod connected to synods across the country. Betsy attended several zoom meetings with leadership from other synods and the ELCA Building Resilient Communities team.

The team had an informational table at Synod Assembly with an offering of letters for the Farm Bill renewal. Postcards were sent to Senators and Congressional representatives.

Each year the team is tasked with reviewing Domestic Hunger grant applications from our Synod. Members of the team reviewed Letters of Interest and made contacts with the various ministries. We completed 10 reviews. One group, Plenty! Farm and Food Bank, was awarded a 3-year grant. See link for more information: <https://plentylocal.org/>

The team has been attempting to build a better network throughout the synod so that we can get hunger related information to the congregations. Pastors and congregational leaders are encouraged to enlist the help of one congregant to receive news and updates from the team. 2024 will be spent planning and promoting the 50th anniversary of ELCA World Hunger. We have some exciting programs and activities to promote. Send contact info to Betsy at: b4liljeberg@gmail.com.

Also, everyone is encouraged to review the resources that the team has created and posted at the VA synod website under Ministries: World Hunger. You will find bible studies, feeding ministry webinars and easy cut and paste items for your church newsletters.

Until All are Fed,
Betsy Liljeberg
Virginia Synod hunger team chair



Created to Be . . . Free, Brave, Authentic, a Disciple, and Together

We thank you for your renewed and increased commitment to Caroline Furnace in 2023! The increase in financial support is much appreciated and went to furthering the ministry and mission of the wider church. Here are some highlights from 2023:

Building in 2023 ~ We finished framing construction and enclosing the ceiling of our Solar Pavilion. We dedicated the Solar Pavilion at our Open House in May and began using it during summer camp for camper drop off and pick-up and for our closing worship. In 2024, we will finish the pavilion with the solar panels and catering kitchen.

Summer Camp in 2023 ~ We had 300+ campers and volunteers and 10 domestic and 4 international counselors! It was the first time in a while (due to pandemic travel restrictions) that we had international counselors. We are building our staff diversity and plan on more campers and international staff in 2024.

Retreats in 2023 ~ We had 95 events and retreat groups with people coming to experience the beauty and peace of our space. We had so many groups who came for their 2nd, 3d, 4th . . . or 47th visit (a private school has been coming for 47 years!) You're invited to join us for an event or retreat in 2024!

Faith in 2023 ~ We had too many faith moments to count! We had faith moments every day as we prayed for you and for each other. We had faith that you were there to pray for, visit, and support us as Your Outdoor Ministry and our faith was well-placed! Let's do it again in 2024!

Did you know 55 former summer camp staff from Caroline Furnace are serving as clergy in congregations or synod offices and five more are currently in seminary? Let us not forget the thousands of other adults who have hiked our trails over the last 67 years that are now involved in mission work and leading congregational teams.

Donors – over 300 individual donors, and 40 congregations and businesses in 2023

Volunteers - over 178 individual volunteers providing 2,498 volunteer hours.

Expenses: \$525,071 (44% staffing, 16% Operations, 20% programs, 7% Maintenance, 8% Utilities, 5% Insurance))

Revenue: \$571,664 (43% donations, 27% programs, 13% rental, 11% Grants and Logging, 6% Synod Support)

Total Inclusion: We continued our commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion by developing 14 action steps around becoming more welcoming for people in the LGBTQIA+ community, BIPOC community, and people living with diversabilities community..

These are just a few examples that provide a clear vision of the impact outdoor ministry has across the ages and well beyond our three synods. What a blessing it is to share this journey with you again this year. Wherever you are in your spiritual and earthly life, there is a place for you here at Caroline Furnace.



At enCircle, our goal is to make the world a more loving place. We are focused on the present — and we plan carefully for the future — but we are also proud of our long history of service and our ability to adapt to the changing needs of children, families, and our communities since 1888. We believe everyone deserves an abundant life, full of meaning and purpose. We were born out of the faith and service of the Lutheran Church in Virginia, and we maintain close ties to the faith community.

We were founded by a Lutheran pastor as an orphanage in Salem, VA in 1888, serving children from across the South who needed a home. We have expanded the ways we support people in our communities throughout our long history. As a proud mission partner of the Virginia Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and with God's guidance over decades of growth, we have worked to widen our circle to include people of all backgrounds, faiths, and abilities. We strive to create a diverse, equitable and inclusive culture in our workplace, programs, and communities. We have services in all regions of Virginia, and in Martinsburg, West Virginia and support more than 1,500 people each day. When we find a new way to support people in our communities, we simply enlarge our circle.

Today, our 650 staff and caregivers across Virginia and West Virginia educate students in our Minnick Schools who need additional supports, empower people with developmental disabilities through a variety of community-based services, recruit and train loving foster parents for children and teens in care, provide trauma-informed counseling to children and families, and help reunite unaccompanied immigrant children with family or sponsors in the U.S.

Our circle is wide, and all are included. We are grateful to be a mission partner of the Virginia Synod.

Minnick Schools – Educating students with special needs

Our Minnick Educational Staff help students ages 5 to 22 who have experienced challenges in public schools reach their academic, behavioral, vocational, and developmental goals. Minnick Schools, licensed by the Virginia Department of Education as private day schools, serve students in the Harrisonburg, Roanoke, Wytheville, Wise, Bristol, and Grundy regions. We're working to expand into Lynchburg later this year.

Highly trained educators and treatment specialists help nearly 250 students learn about behavior choices, how to make better decisions, and how to respond to stressful and challenging situations, alongside a vibrant academic program meeting the requirements and expectations of more than school districts. Minnick Schools offer social skills groups and individualized behavioral supports to students with emotional and learning disabilities. Our educational staff support them so they can return successfully to their home public schools or make the transition to life after school.



Immigration and Refugee Services - Welcoming immigrants

EnCircle partners with Global Refuge (formerly Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services) to help reunite unaccompanied immigrant children with family or sponsors in the U.S. We work to ensure that children in reunited families have the resources they need to heal and thrive. We conduct fingerprinting required for background checks that ensure children are placed in a safe and secure home. Our bilingual staff also conduct home visits and provide case management services to ensure that children have what they need to be safe and healthy after being released from federal custody. We link families to health and mental health services, legal assistance, educational services, and other community resources. We also partner with Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area to support adult immigrants preparing for immigration hearings.

Developmental Services - Supporting people with developmental disabilities

EnCircle offers adults with developmental disabilities an array of community-based supports. We provide a variety of residential options through our Group Homes (in VA and WV), Family Care Homes, and In-Home Services, including specialized Skilled Nursing for those with complex healthcare needs. We also support full community inclusion through Day Support, and Community Engagement. All our programs and services focus on quality care, with the goal of supporting meaningful life experiences for people with disabilities. Our staff act as a mentor and friend to help people attain their goals while ensuring their health, safety, and medical needs are met.

Counseling – Strengthening mental health and well-being

EnCircle's experienced counselors are trained in treatment interventions for children, teens, young adults, adults, and families dealing with emotional and behavioral issues. They offer trauma-informed and integrative approaches to individual and family counseling. By offering both telehealth and in-person options, our counselors are available throughout Virginia.

Foster Care – Wrapping kids in support

EnCircle continues its training, support and recruitment of Foster Parents willing to share their strengths, skills and courage with children and teenagers. We support three programs: Treatment, Transitional, and Long-term Foster Care. Our Treatment Foster Care program is committed to helping Virginia children in the custody of the Department of Social Services, many who have experienced trauma, find permanency and stability. Our Transitional Foster Care program supports unaccompanied immigrant children by providing safe, temporary, foster homes in our community while they wait to be reunited with family members or sponsors in the U.S. Our Long-term Foster Care program is new and provides foster homes for immigrant children who are unlikely to be placed with permanent sponsors before they turn 18. We welcome foster parents of all faiths and backgrounds, and we support LGBTQ parents and youth.



2024 Annual Report

GraceInside has been on the mission field for 104 years. In 1920, seven Protestant Christian denominations, including the Virginia Lutherans, decided that they wanted to see a change in the prison system. Since the Chaplains were not Virginia state employees, they couldn't be compensated with taxpayer monies per Virginia's State Constitution. GraceInside is still, to this day, the light for those individuals that society sees as "less than." The Chaplains view this ministry as a gift from God because they're present to assist with worship services, serve Holy Communion, provide pastoral care, counsel prison staff, and coordinate the activities of each religious volunteer.

We praise God for our Chaplains because they are the ambassadors for Jesus Christ. They see the imprisoned men and women as potential disciples who need to be guided in the right direction. They allow inmates to assist with the program(s), share the importance of walking in the light, and not to be afraid to share what God is doing in their lives. We thank God for those individuals who take time out of their schedules to go into the prison system and hear what the incarcerated men and women will need once they leave the prison system. GraceInside has 33 Chaplains who serve in 42 Virginia state correctional facilities with a total of 24,000 inmates. We're so grateful that the Virginia Synod of the ELCA continues to support our ministry.

We are excited to report that during 2024, our Chaplains have had 38 baptisms. God is working in His Kingdom to allow each inmate to seek His Face and turn from their wicked ways. They are coming to the light despite the darkness of the prison system. The Word says to "*so let your light shine*" and the Chaplains are God's torchbearers. Your theme this year is '*Strong Connection*' and that is what GraceInside strives to continue doing in the Virginia state correctional facilities. Praise God that the Virginia Synod and GraceInside can be partners in our ministry to reach the "least of these".

We thank God for your faithful support to assist our ministry. We know that it takes one person at a time to help God's kingdom to grow. We thank you for your spiritual and financial assistance, and for pouring out support for over a century. Blessings to you, my sisters and brothers in Jesus Christ.

Yours in Christ Jesus,

Randy

Rev. J. Randy Myers
Executive Director
GraceInside
randymyers@graceinside.org
Office Phone: (804) 358-7650



"Our Mission is to satisfy the world's hunger for God's presence in our lives and nurture the spirit of Christ with gifts of the natural world."

Greetings in Christ!

Hungry Mother Lutheran Retreat Center continues to serve it's guests by providing space for gatherings and events. Spending time here will surely allow one's senses to be filled with God's presence in nature. From our rustic cabins and bunkhouse to our large pavilion, we can offer a variety of accommodations. Couple that with many acres of pristine forest that is disturbed only by the trails that allow one to experience it's majesty and peace. Outdoor worship spaces and primitive tent sites exist to appeal to the more outdoor adventurous type.

Here are some of the highlighted events from 2023:

- Summer Bible Camp resumed after a two-year pause. The grounds were once again filled with song and laughter from the return of this traditional week of camp. Bible lessons, lake swimming, Creeper Trail bike ride, fireworks, and, of course, critterman all returned to highlight the week. Songs, skits, s'mores and bonfires ruled the evening activities.
- The Scouts continue to have a strong connection with camp. Another Eagle Scout project was started to replace the old benches at the hilltop chapel. A lectern and a new cross will also be added. Supporting the Scouts is one of the ways that we partner with the local community.
- Another successful quilt auction and raffle were held during the annual Corn Roast. This is the main Highlands Conference event of the year at camp, combining worship, fellowship, food, and a fundraiser.
- The bunkhouse showers underwent renovations due to damage from a plumbing leak in late 2022.
- The new plumbing and electricity provided an upgrade to what existed. The ceilings were vaulted, which created a larger, more campground feel.
- Our board of directors has made great strides in web page upgrades and increased social media presence. Anyone interested should visit our website www.hungrymother.org and our Facebook page for the latest news and information.

I want to thank all who support and keep HMLRC in their thoughts and prayers. It has been an extreme pleasure and honor to serve as the director and I will forever cherish the friendships and the fond memories acquired from my time spent here.

In His Service,

Christopher Stevens



James R. Crumley Jr Archives 2024 Report

Administration

Personnel and Hours of Operation

The Archives employs five part-time workers: Shannon Smith, director and archivist; Trudy Bouknight, office manager; Scott Reeves, assistant archivist; Ashley Ragland, archivist aide; and Margaret Mancuso, project specialist.

Accessions

New and reoccurring accessions from Region-9 synods, congregations, and individuals are deposited in the Crumley Archives and are processed by staff.

Special Projects:

“Unsung: A Chronicle of Black Lutherans”

The Crumley Archives, under the direction of Dr. Harvey Huntley and Scott Reeves, is producing another feature film entitled, “Unsung: A Chronicle of Black Lutherans”.¹ Filming began with pastors and laity from the S.C. and S.E. Synods who shared their stories and memories. This film is based upon the scholarship of Dr Huntley, who for more than two years has sought to compile and catalog congregation, mission, and personal records related to African descent Lutherans. These records are preserved in the Crumley Archives. Filming will involve each synod in Region-9. Please check our website for updates as segments are produced.²

If you have a story or record to share, please contact Shannon Smith at crumleyarchivist@gmail.com.

Archives Relocation

After LRU’s decision to move the Seminary to the Hickory campus, the Archives has begun investigating possibilities for its relocation. Discussions among the Crumley Archives board of directors and synods are active and ongoing.

Friends of the Archives Banquet

This year’s banquet will be held in Columbia, S.C. and will honor the Rev. James and Mrs. Celie Addy; St. Michael’s Lutheran Church (Irmo), and the S.C. Synod. It will be held Friday, Sept. 20. Details will follow. Please contact Shannon Smith at crumleyarchivist@gmail.com for more information.

Shannon L. Smith

¹ See trailer here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SobFCVCcFOI>

² Crumley Archives: www.crumleyarchives.com



2024 Report to the Synod Assemblies of Region 9

Greetings from Seminary Ridge, in the name of the Holy Trinity!

Our vocation to “teach, form and nurture” leaders for public ministry has never been stronger. Even in times when economic and social headwinds make it difficult to sustain higher education in general, and theological education in particular, we are strengthened by the gift and promise that is echoed in the words of Jeremiah:

“I have plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.” Jeremiah 29:10-12

The Lenoir-Rhyne University Board of Trustees’ decision to relocate LTSS to the Hickory campus is a bold move to sustain our mission. In this tender time, I lift up pilgrimage as a model for the changing landscape. Pilgrimage begins with the Divine invitation to be refined, renewed, and build resilience. The Love of the Trinity goes before us and calls us to become. Pilgrimage marked the story of our seminary from 1830 to 1911. After a time of rootedness in Columbia, we are again entering a pilgrimage. This is to continue the mission entrusted to us in hope for the next 200 years. Leaning into this hope of a dynamic future, this transition will be a time to hold and heal memories while we continue our vibrant programs.

Curriculum

Over the last two years we have worked to continue diligent self-assessment in pursuit of our mission. Building on our improved MDiv curriculum, we have created three separate tracks within our MACM program: ELCA Deacon, Congregational Ministry and Methodist Studies.

We have launched an Explore Program that allows students and alumni to take one-hour interdisciplinary courses. We are also expanding our Lifelong Learning Program in the areas of continuing education and formation events for alumni and the general public. In these and other ways, we are beginning to realize the four main initiatives of our strategic plan: (1) innovative teaching and learning, (2) vibrant formation, (3) telling our story and (4) creating dynamic partnerships for learning.

First Week Formation

First Week continues to be one of the most lifegiving experiences in the life of the seminary. During the first week of each semester all students, faculty and staff gather in residence on campus to build community around worship, classes, fellowship and learning. We are grateful for the contributions made by the Advisory Council, Alumni Board and local congregations that support us with meals and times of fellowship.

Special Events

In the past year, LTSS hosted the LRU Visiting Writer’s Series Indigenous Writer Kaitlin Curtice, our engaged Student Body participated in the Mayor’s Student Council “Fish Project” initiative, held fora on candidacy and participated in the Thirteenth Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation in Krakow.



Relocation to Hickory

A seminary is a living laboratory for public ministry, where students have opportunities to build their capacity for ministry with a vibrant formation and community life, and interdisciplinary engagement. On the Hickory campus, our students preparing for ministry will have more access to courses in fields related to ministry, including Spanish language; business; counseling; environmental and health sciences, and will also be able to take advantage of campus amenities for recreation, arts and culture. Through contact with undergraduate students and faculty, we can realize our Bridges to Dreams pathway that will create new pipelines for undergraduate students and the next generation of pastors and theologians. We can expand our lifelong learning opportunities for lay and clergy leaders. The Lineberger Library will move with us to Hickory, ensuring that our students continue to have access to the best resources available for us to strengthen our call to engage in transformative theological education and formation. Please look for the most up to date and accurate information at <https://www.lr.edu/ltss-future> . We welcome you to join the various fora, liturgies, and events in Columbia and Hickory as we make this pilgrimage.

Gratitude for the past, present and future

The logistics of this move center the wellbeing of our students, staff and faculty. We are also tending to the holiness of the artifacts and places that have been sanctified by the faithful service of the LTSS family across generations. Every detail is a reminder of the vast web of relationships that is LTSS. We are grateful to the Advisory Council and the Alumni Board. We are grateful to our Bishops for their ministry among us. We are grateful for the financial support of your Synod, faithful congregations and individuals in Region 9 and beyond. And we are grateful to you who encourage and invite the faithful to consider their vocation to public ministry.

2030 will be the 200th anniversary of LTSS and the 500th anniversary of the Augsburg Confession. Embedded on a campus with a long and rich history of Lutheran higher education, the entire LTSS family will be equipped to fulfill the seminary's strategic plan that guides the way in which LTSS nurtures, educates and forms leaders for public ministry in today's world.

Peace be yours,

Rev. Dr Chad M. Rimmer
Rector and Dean
Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary of Lenoir-Rhyne University



The Mission Investment Fund: Your financial partner

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



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

Why is MIF the right choice?

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

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

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

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

- 15 Mission Investment Fund loans, with a balance of \$6,980,208
- \$7,257,180 in Mission Investment Fund investment obligations

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



Greetings,

Over 130 years ago, National Lutheran Communities & Services (NLCS) began its mission to serve our neighbors by building a space where older adults could embrace their next chapter. Now, residents live in thriving communities with their peers, explore new adventures, and foster faithful lives with volunteer and stewardship opportunities. NLCS is proud to continue its servant-minded vocation for our residents, our planet, and our mission.

This is only made possible by the support of our committed donors, steadfast volunteers, and compassionate community members.

Testimonials

"As residents, we decided that one of the best ways to contribute, in a way that our budget was not too greatly affected, was to contribute a small amount each time that a resident died. We believe strongly in benevolent care and hope that we would not find it necessary to use it ourselves. We have been told how it has helped a few of our neighbors so they could remain living in our community and have a good quality of life. As the residents age, more and more will probably need benevolent care. We have included it in our will."
— Anonymous Legacy Society member and annual donor

"I have supported the mission for many years and have included it in my will because of the way the community cared for my parents 30 years ago. My father died within a year, but my mom enjoyed a wonderful life there, worry free, for another 12 years. I know National Lutheran ran through the money for their care, but I was never asked for additional funds. I contribute now because I want to be sure that the mission can continue to do God's work for all His children, regardless of their financial situation."
— Anonymous child of benevolent care recipient and Legacy Society member

"Giving our time as well as our dollars is paying it forward at its best. It is heartwarming to see that we are making a positive impact on our greater community. Volunteering lifts us all up and together we thrive. And the "payback"? It is the joy of knowing we have made a difference. This "psychic income", if you will, is immeasurable. It truly does take a village to make our world a better, kinder place for our friends, family, neighbors, and even those we don't know."
— Anonymous donor, volunteer, and Legacy Society member

2023 Impact

- NLCS supported twelve residents across three communities (The Village at Orchard Ridge, The Village at Rockville, and The Legacy at North Augusta)
- \$591,400 in benevolent care supported these residents

Your gift will help us continue the 130-year-long vocation of community care. We invite you to join our calling to serve one another, stewarding the gifts that we are given by sharing them with those in need.

Sincerely,

Zach Heeter
Mission Advancement Director

Cyndi Walters
President and Chief Executive Officer



P.S. Scan this QR code to learn more about ways to give.

5275 Westview Drive | Suite 110 | Frederick, MD 21703



National Lutheran Communities & Services (NLCS) is a faith-based, not-for-profit ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's (ELCA) Delaware-Maryland, Metropolitan Washington, D.C. and Virginia Synods, serving people of all beliefs. NLCS honors, inspires and supports choice and opportunity in partnership with older adults.



**National Lutheran
Communities & Services**

5275 Westview Drive, Suite 110
Frederick, Maryland 21703
P: 301-354-2710 F: 240-386-8623
www.nationallutheran.org

National Lutheran Communities & Services (NLCS) is a not-for-profit, faith-based ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's (ELCA) Delaware-Maryland, Metropolitan Washington, D.C. and Virginia synods, serving people of all beliefs. NLCS provides older adults with a variety of lifestyle, residential and health care options through retirement communities and services in Maryland and Virginia.

Our communities include The Village at Rockville (Rockville, Maryland), The Legacy at North Augusta (Staunton, Virginia), The Village at Orchard Ridge (Winchester, Virginia), The Village at Providence Point (Annapolis, Maryland), and services through myPotential at Home.

As a not-for-profit with more than 130 years of serving older adults, NLCS offsets the cost of care for residents who have been good financial stewards yet have outlived their resources and can no longer afford the services or care they need, due to no fault of their own, by providing more than \$3 million in benevolent care yearly. Revenues are also invested back into its communities for better services, amenities and capital improvements that benefit both residents and team members.

NLCS visits congregations to share their direct impact and strengthen our vocational connection. Through temple talks, we provide updates on our shared ministry during services, then speak one-on-one after with congregation members who may have personal questions on adult care topics, volunteer opportunities, or stewardship.

For more information regarding individual communities, benevolent care, or congregational connections, please contact Director of Mission Advancement Zachary Heeter at zheeter@nationallutheran.org or call 240-686-6002

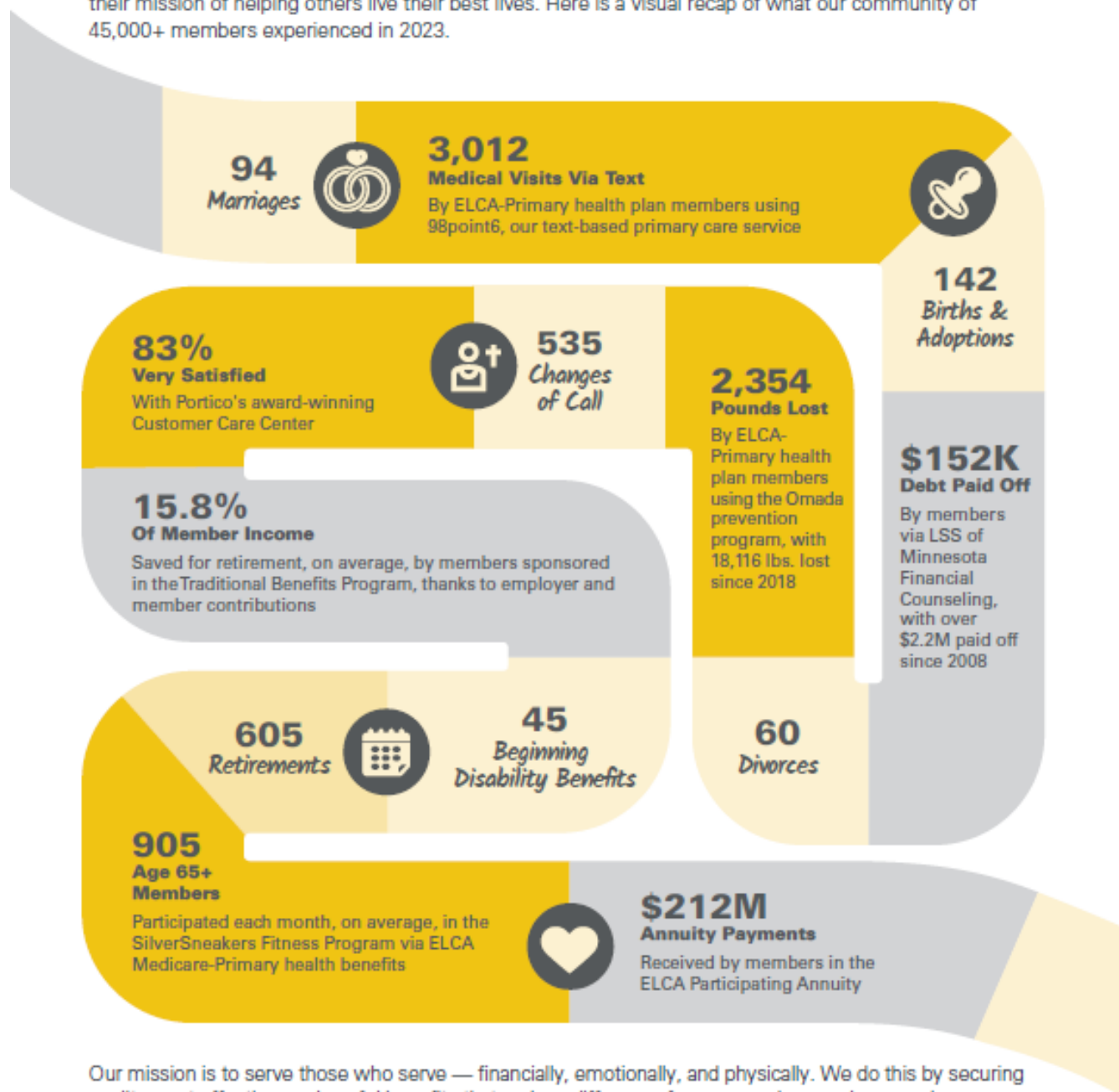
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To view a full listing of our communities and service lines, visit www.nationallutheran.org.



Benefits Making a Difference

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



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

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

60-302 (02/24)



2023 ANNUAL REPORT

HIGHLIGHTS Seafarers International House

MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: Into the Faithful Future

Dear friends of Seafarers International House (SIH):

"Though your beginning was small, your latter days will be very great." Job 8:7

In 2023, Seafarers International House celebrated its 150th anniversary of uninterrupted service to well over two million people. Starting humbly with one pastor in 1873, we have been fulfilling our mission of being the *Lutheran response to the urgent needs of vulnerable seafarers and immigrants*, or more succinct: of welcoming in the stranger.

Reflecting on our past, of the evolution of our services, always adapting, often moving physically from one guest-house building to the next, we have reaffirmed that Seafarers International House is not a place but a service. In 2023, we welcomed fifty asylum seekers and provided them with free lodging and assistance from our new Social Worker, Michael Bradford, who collaborates with me tirelessly to make people who escaped violence and persecution feel at home, enabling many to become contributing members of their new homeland. We also offered 159 seafarers, often young mariners starting their careers or senior seafarers transitioning into retirement, affordable accommodations as they prepared for their next 3-6 months voyage or starting a new chapter of life, respectively.

During 2023, we strengthened our partnership with the Albany Maritime Ministry (AMM) with Pastors Kate Drefke and Lowell Chilton and hired Rev. Jonathan Westerlund to aid in the busy port of New Jersey & New York. In all ports, including Baltimore and New Haven, we visited 1,094 ships with

12,522 crew members, bringing on-board essentials and being present and transporting 2,061 of these seafarers to the mall or medical facilities.

Thanks to many individuals, youth and business groups, and congregations, a record 3,216 seafarers regardless of their faith felt some Holiday cheer when they opened their Christmas-at-Sea satchels filled with warm clothing and season's greetings, letting them know that we appreciate their sacrifices while they transport 90% of the things we use. Just look at the faces on the cover of this report and you can see the joy you have spread!

With our partners in the shipping industry, ship owners, and unions we celebrated our 150th anniversary at the Setting the Course Reception breaking an income record of over \$250,000 in crucial support of our Port Mission and subsidized lodging for mariners. We are grateful for the 2023 honorees John Atkins (Global Container Terminals), Mark W. Barker (Interlake Maritime Services), and Adam Vokac (Marine Engineers' Beneficial Association).

Yet, we also used the anniversary year to address future concerns. Through strategic planning involving all board members as well as members of the communities we serve, we determined that the current arrangement of renting our guesthouse to Breaking Ground furthers our mission by providing vital income to help us expand the port mission while continuing excellent lodging to asylum seekers and seafarers at the Markle Residence of the Salvation Army. This formula will allow us to save funds, complemented with donations from a comprehensive campaign, to eventually purchase

MISSION

Seafarers International House (SIH) is the Lutheran response to the urgent needs of vulnerable seafarers and immigrants.

SIH offers hospitality, social assistance, and advocacy to a multi-national and multi-faith community in maritime ports on the Eastern Seaboard, Albany and in New York City.

a new mission-based home with over eleven guest rooms by 2026, or earlier, if a cost-effective opportunity arises.

Please browse our web site (SIHNYC.org) for more details. I thank all of you who supported our essential services to "the stranger" through 2023, - from small beginnings to a faithful future sharing God's justice, welcome, and love.



Marsh Luther Drefke
Pastor and Executive Director



Members of Jerusalem Evangelical Lutheran Church in Lititz, PA, helped me (kneeling in black) assemble Christmas-at-Sea satchels in November 2023.



2023 Program Impact

18,005 immigrants and seafarers directly benefited from SIH services

2,297 lodging nights (up from 1,764) provided to 156 seafarers in Manhattan.

12,522 seafarers were visited and counseled on 1,094 ships, receiving essentials they requested.

2,061 seafarers were transported to a mall or medical facilities.

3,216 seafarers, regardless of faith, received Christmas-at-Sea satchels filled with warm clothing and holiday greetings prepared by volunteers to recognize these essential workers. This exceeds last year's record of 2,915!

50 asylum seekers received free lodging for a total of 766 nights. They hailed from Afghanistan, Angola, Benin, Chad, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Iran, Jamaica, Liberia, Libya, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Peru, Sudan, Tunisia, Ukraine, and Venezuela. (See highlighted countries with number of lodging nights on the map below).

Asylum Lodging Nights by Country of Origin

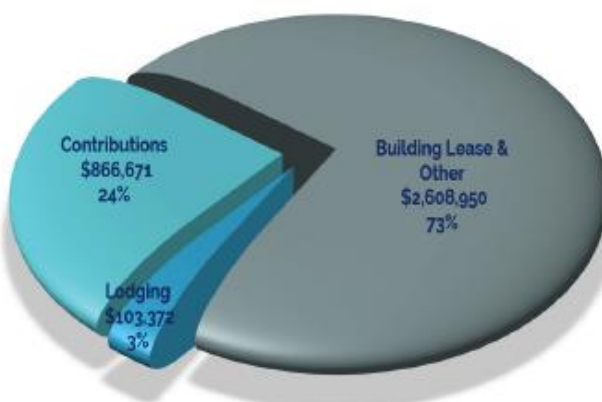


2023 FINANCIAL REPORT

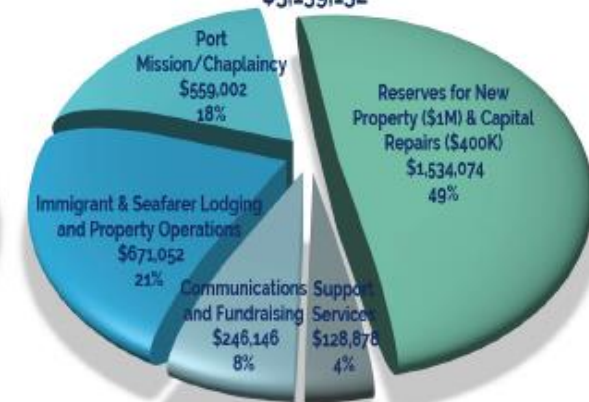
In accordance with our 2024 - 2028 strategic plan, operating gains help to build reserves for a new property (\$1M) with mission-based guest rooms and offices and to allow for capital repairs on the guesthouse (\$400,000), which is leased to Breaking Ground, which offers transitional housing to the community. That lease revenue supports our mission to seafarers and immigrants. Donations remain a vital pillar of income to support our services and future expansion.

Program services and reserves accounted for 88% percent of expenses with only 12% spent on support services and fundraising. Net Assets increased from \$8,258,768 in 2022 to about \$10 million. These figures reflect *unaudited revenue and expenses and are subject to change*. To request the audited 2023 financial statements send an email to henryk@sihnyc.org.

Operating Revenue 2023 (pre-audit)
\$3,578,993



Operating Expenses & Reserves for New Property 2023
(pre-audit)
\$3,139,152





Virginia Council of Churches Report The Virginia Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Grace and peace to you. Since 2022, the Virginia Council of Churches has been actively engaged in expanding ecumenical ministries in Virginia.

2024 One-Time Congregational Youth Grants-Ecumenical Congregational Covenant Program

First, April 24, 2024, the 2024 ten One Time Virginia Council of Churches Youth Grant recipients will meet in Richmond; the purpose of this gathering is tri-fold: to introduce each recipient to the VCC Ecumenical One Time Youth Grant to each other; introduce the Ecumenical Congregational Covenant Program, and for the grant recipients to report their grant project mid-term results. The Ecumenical Covenant Program is a network of ecumenical congregations who partner with VCC and other congregations to develop relationships, enhance their ministries and their ecumenical participation. The vision is to initiate congregations doing ecumenical ministries together; the first step is to partner with VCC pending approval by your congregation's governance body. There will be a Covenant Congregational Team who will work to bring this covenant ministry to fruition. Additionally, since the focus of the grant recipients are youth, this will initiate conversations among congregations who have a similar priority, youth ministry. The One Time Grant was to enhance congregations to re-start, re-ignite their youth ministry programs. During the COVID pandemic, many congregations close their youth ministries. Below are photos from several congregations who have already submitted their mid-term report:



April 2024 Anti-Racism Pro-Reconciliation Ministry Training

Presently, there are twenty-seven persons from east, west, south and central Virginia registered to attend the VCC Anti-racism Pro-reconciliation (ARPRT) Training, April 18-19, 2024, in Richmond, 9:30 a.m. – 7 p.m.; the closing is Saturday, April 20 at 2 p.m. The VCC ARPRT have been meeting for about five years; the team has transitioned through covid, the loss of several members due to death and members transitioning to other ministries. The trainings components include awareness, assessment, and action (response). The follow-up to the action response will be by the VCC ARPRT with the partnering of pastors and congregations ecumenically and cross culturally. This ministry initial first time-frame goal is three to five years.



January/February Judicatory Continued Visioning Process

Virginia Council of Churches Judicatory members met at the Roslyn Retreat Center, Jan. 22-23, 24 at the Roslyn Retreat Center. The continuation of this retreat was via zoom. The outcome of the Visioning retreat include three goals: VCC will create Easter/Lenten and Advent /Christian Unity devotions yearly written by constituents of VA; VCC will provide training & dialogue for Anti-racism & Pro-reconciliation; and VCC will address post-pandemic church decline through workshops, book studies and other appropriate mediums. The follow up zoom meeting included responses to the following three established goals at the Judicatory Retreat: questions: What are the markers of success for the three goals identified at the leadership retreat January 2024?; What would prevent VCC from achieving its goals identified at the 2024 retreat? And what action plans are in place to overcome roadblocks, and who has responsibility for these actions?

Virginia Council of Churches 79th Annual Day

The Virginia Council of Churches 79th Annual Day was on November 2, 2023. The First Baptist Church East End, Newport News, VA under the pastoral leadership of “NGE” Now Generation of Ecumenists participant, Rev. Jamaar Jones was the host congregation. The guest choir, the Booker T. Washington High School Choir under the leadership of Mr. Odell Ziegler, IV was stellar with a varied selection of gospel selections. The choir was comprised of freshman through senior participants. Bishop Susan Haynes, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Southern Virginia.



Booker T. Washington
High School Choir



Bishop Susan Haynes,
Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Southern Virginia

The 2023 was the inauguration of the VCC Attendance Staff Award; Rev. Dr. Leo Whitaker, moderator of VCC Coordinating Cabinet, presented this award to the Bishop Susan Haynes, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Southern Virginia, whose denomination had the most registered participants for the day. Bishop Haynes will keep the VCC Attendance Staff Award for the year, then the staff will be passed to the denomination with the highest attendance at the 2024 Annual Day.



Presentation of the VCC Attendance Staff Award

VCC Next – “Now” Generation of Ecumenists (NGE)

The Virginia Council of Churches NGE continues to meet monthly; the NGE priority is “getting to know each other,” relationship building. Group members have expressed their need to have a network of colleagues to support the transitioning of ministry following covid and constant ministry challenges. Persons interested in this ministry who are forty-five years old and younger, lay and ordained are welcomed to join this ministry. Please contact greenerl@vacouncilofchurches.org. for more information.

Grace and peace,
Rev. Mary Anne Glover
General Minister
Virginia Council of Churches



The Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy (VICPP) is proud to be the ELCA Advocacy Office for Virginia. VICPP values its partnership with the Virginia Synod as together we seek to engage people of faith in advocating economic, racial, and social justice in Virginia's policies and practices.

Policy Highlights from the 2023 and 2024 General Assemblies:

Criminal Justice Reform

- **Limit the use of solitary confinement.** VICPP led faith advocacy in the Virginia Coalition on Solitary Confinement to limit the use of solitary confinement. *A modest reform bill passed both chambers and was signed by the Governor.*
- **End profiteering in jails.** VICPP supported a bill in both 2023 and 2024 to allow free phone calls to people who are incarcerated. *A water-down bill passed in 2024 requiring the Department of Corrections to find the lowest cost vendors for communication.*
- **DOC Oversight Bill.** VICPP supported increasing Department of Corrections oversight. *Money was in the 2023 budget to start up the oversight office and the office was codified in 2024.*
- **Restricting the use of attack dogs.** VICPP led the effort to limit the use of attack dogs in prisons. *The bill passed in 2024.*

Health Equity (mostly a focus on maternal health)

- **Plan for expanding perinatal health hub model.** Bill would form a workgroup to address maternal health care deserts in Virginia. *Passed in 2023*
- **Authorize drugs for midwives to save lives.** Several preventable pregnancy-related deaths could be reduced by authorizing midwives to carry and use two typical drugs. *Passed in 2023.*
- **Cover All Kids.** Supported a bill to expand Medicaid coverage to undocumented children. *Killed in 2023. Carried over in 2024 to 2025.*
- **Unconscious Bias Training Requirement.** VICPP has led an effort for four years to get an unconscious bias training requirement for health professionals. *Bills got out of both chambers with strong bipartisan support in 2024. The outcome will depend upon the Governor's actions.*
- **Community Health Workers.** VICPP helped lead efforts to get money for community health workers. *The conference committee budget includes money for the community health workers in local health departments but not for DMAS to study how to get Medicaid to cover costs of community health workers. The budget must be negotiated with the Governor.*

Worker and Family Support

- **Paid sick days.** VICPP supported bills to expand paid sick days to low-wage workers. *The bills were killed in 2023 and continued to 2025 during the 2024 session.*



- **Childcare assistance.** VICPP supported childcare assistance for families with low incomes. *Almost \$100 million was included in the 2024 conference committee budget, which is pending budget negotiations with the Governor.*
- **Minimum wage.** VICPP led the faith effort in 2024 to get the Governor to sign the minimum wage bill which would have increased the minimum wage from \$12 to \$15 per hour over two years. VICPP recruited more than 400 clergy to sign a letter to the Governor urging him to sign it. Thank you, Bishop Milton, for signing the letter. *The Governor vetoed the bill.*

Affordable Housing

- **Housing and Faith in the Commonwealth.** VICPP led an effort to get Virginia to allow congregations to build affordable housing without special zoning changes. *The bill was assigned to the Virginia Housing Commission for work.*
- **Money.** VICPP supported more money for building affordable housing, rental assistance, and eviction prevention. *The 2024 conference compromise budget includes extra money for the VA Housing Trust Fund, manufactured home parks, down-payment assistance, and the eviction reduction program. The outcome depends upon budget negotiations with the Governor.*
- **Tenant protections.** VICPP supported protecting tenants against evictions. *Many bills have passed. Some have been signed into law and some are waiting for action from the Governor.*

Organizing and Congregational Highlights

- **Advocacy Days.** The 2023 and 2024 Day for All People Advocacy Days were in-person in Richmond and drew 300 and 350 people, respectively.
- **Student Advocacy Day.** VICPP hosted in-person student advocacy days in 2023 and 2024 that drew 150 and 100 students, respectively.
- **Congregational Liaisons.** VICPP has more than 200 Congregational Liaisons who help connect congregations with VICPP. If your congregation does not yet have a liaison with VICPP, please volunteer or recruit someone. Email Sheila Herlihy at Sheila@virginiainterfaithcenter.org.
- **Health Equity.** VICPP developed resources on vaccines as part of its health equity program in 2023 and 2024.
- **Civic Engagement Work.** VICPP engaged congregations in nonpartisan voter registration and turnout in 2023. VICPP recruited 95 congregations to be 100 percent voting. Volunteers wrote 10,000 postcards to infrequent voters. To get involved in 2024, contact Robert Lester at Robert@virginiainterfaithcenter.org.
- **Higher Education in Prison.** VICPP is leading an initiative to expand higher education in Virginia's prisons. If you are interested in this work, please contact Terri Erwin at Terri@virginiainterfaithcenter.org.
- **Speakers.** VICPP board and staff members can speak at your congregations about justice and advocacy. To line up a speaker, email Sheila Herlihy at Sheila@virginiainterfaithcenter.org.
- **Faith-based Childcare Center.** Does your congregation host a childcare center? Please connect the leadership with VICPP. Email Kim Bobo at Kim@virginiainterfaithcenter.org.

Respectfully submitted by,
Kim Bobo, Executive Director of VICPP
Kim@virginiainterfaithcenter.org



Virginia Lutheran Homes, Inc. Synod Report

Virginia Lutheran Homes is a leader in The Commonwealth of Virginia in providing the highest quality of senior services to the residents of the communities we serve. Our mission, to provide life-enriching services that promote well-being and build community, is at the center of how we operate and how decisions are made within the organization. 2023 allowed Virginia Lutheran Homes an opportunity to celebrate the history of one of our communities while preparing for a future of growth and continued high-quality service to our residents.

In 2023, Brandon Oaks our Continuing Care Life Plan Community in Roanoke Virginia, celebrated 50 years of providing services to seniors in the Roanoke Valley. In 1973 the Virginia Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America opened the Virginia Synod Lutheran Home with a mission of providing aging services to individuals in the Roanoke Valley region. The facility was transitioned to a life-plan community in 1983, offering independent living, assisted living and skilled nursing services to our residents. Each month in 2023 our Brandon Oaks Community had a celebration in honor of the 50-year anniversary. These events not only provided wonderful social outlets for our residents, but also allowed Virginia Lutheran Homes to honor its past leadership and donors who played such an important part in the expansion and development of our award-winning community in Roanoke.

Though we celebrated our past frequently in 2023, we continued to adapt our facilities to meet the needs of our residents throughout the continuum of aging services. As part of our Brandon Oaks Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, we provide a memory support neighborhood. The memory support neighborhood offers a safe and nurturing environment for residents that suffer from cognitive decline. Virginia Lutheran Homes, through a gracious donation from a member of our community, added a state-of-the-art sensory garden. The sensory garden includes various stations in an outdoor environment that offers stimulation to all senses through bright colors, soft texture plants and wind chimes all of which helps with cognitive impairment.

Our Brandon Oaks Nursing and Rehabilitation Center also was awarded the highest rating by U.S. News and World Reports. We are very proud of this ranking, and it is a testament to the leadership and staff of our nursing facility. In addition, our residents continue to take advantage of all the recent renovations done to the nursing and rehabilitation center including; our updated patio used for visiting with family and for outdoor events, our efficient dining facilities offering a modernized dining area for residents and families and to-go meal options, our updated community room, chapel and beauty salon.

Virginia Lutheran Homes also continues to offer our independent living accommodations at Luther Crest, our rent-subsidized facility in New Market, Virginia. We provided a number of events at Luther Crest to include a summer picnic and Christmas party with grilled steak and stocking-stuffer gifts. We are very proud of our work at Luther Crest and providing such needed services to Shenandoah County, Virginia and the surrounding areas.

Virginia Lutheran Homes is also very proud of our Chaplaincy program. As an Institution of the Virginia Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in American, we are proud to offer Chaplain services in all of our communities. We were blessed to add Pastor Meredith Williams as our second chaplain. Meredith along with Pastor Keith Olivier, offer valuable spiritual care to all of our communities. Our



residents in all of our communities come from varying faith backgrounds and beliefs, and Pastors Williams and Olivier do a wonderful job of serving them when spiritual needs are required.

Virginia Lutheran Homes, thanks to our donors, maintains a robust development program which allows us to provide expanded and enhanced senior services to our residents and community. This year our development dollars were used to have Teepa Snow, a world-renowned dementia care specialist speak at Brandon Oaks over three days. Through the generosity of our donors, we were able to offer her lectures at no cost to our community. We were proud to have members from the medical community, senior service community and church communities attend her talks on her trademarked Positive Approach to Care training. These services to our surrounding community can only be offered by the generous support of our donors. We look forward to sharing information in the future about additional fund-raising opportunities that allow Virginia Lutheran Homes to continue to be a leader in providing senior services to our residents and communities we serve. With the support of our leadership, staff, donors and community, Virginia Lutheran Homes is poised for future growth and expansion of services to enhance the lives of the seniors we serve.