

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

The Reverend Dr. Phyllis Blair Milton has served as the Bishop of the Virginia Synod since September 1, 2023. In the ELCA Conference of Bishops, Bishop Milton serves as a member of the Bishop Formation Committee, assisting newly elected bishops in their first year of transition in their new call as synod bishops. She also represented the ELCA at the Lutheran World Federation Retreat of Newly Elected Leaders (RoNEL) in 2024.

Prior to her election, Bishop Milton previously provided five years of leadership in the Office of the Bishop in the area of faith formation with the ministries of ACTS and Roots and Wings of the Virginia Synod. She also served with the Christian Education Network of the ELCA as Region 9 Advocate. She has served as a Virginia Synod’s Candidacy Committee member and as an ELCA Coach with the Virginia Synod’s Renew 145 Church Vitality Initiative and Council Launch 2021.

Bishop Milton was ordained at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church (her first call) in 2014. Her former pastorates include Holy Communion Lutheran Church in Portsmouth Virginia, from May 2022-July 2023, Interim Associate Pastor at First Lutheran Church in Norfolk, Virginia from March through November of 2021 and Gloria Dei Lutheran Church and School in Hampton, as Vicar, School Chaplain, Associate Pastor, Interim Senior Pastor, and Head of Staff from 2013 -2021.

Bishop Milton was born in Levelland, Texas, and graduated from Levelland High School in 1971, South Plains College in 1973, and Morgan State University in 1976 with Highest Honors.

Bishop Milton has graduate degrees in Business Education from Georgia State University in 1980 and Christian Education from Bethel Seminary, San Diego, CA in 1995. Her doctorate is in Church Leadership Development and Organizational Systems from Bethel Seminar in Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN in 2004. She completed her Lutheran studies at Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary in Columbia, South Carolina, in 2010.

She has owned her own Christian education consulting ministry, presenting workshops on multi-sensory teaching and learning. She has also served as adjunct faculty, teaching practical ministry courses for Diploma and Master’s level students at the John Leland Center for Theological Studies in Arlington, VA.

She has been married for 50 years to Nathaniel Milton (Captain, USN, Retired, LPC) and lives in Newport News, Virginia. They have two adult children and three granddaughters.

The Virginia Synod is comprised of 145 congregations around the Commonwealth of Virginia. Information about the Virginia Synod is available at <https://vasynod.org/>.