



**Intertwining
Hope**

Bulletin of Reports

Virginia Synod Assembly
on June 13-15, 2025
at Roanoke College



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

John 15:5 – (The Voice)

⁵I am the vine, and you are the branches. If you abide in Me and I in you, you will bear great fruit. Without Me, you will accomplish nothing.

Strong Connections . . . Intertwining Hope.

Intertwining Hope is the theme for our in-person Virginia Synod Assembly 2025 at Roanoke College.

Welcome!

I am so glad that you are here. I am grateful that you have chosen to invest your time and financial resources in gathering with other Virginia Lutherans, rostered ministers, synod authorized ministers, laity, ecumenical guests, and ministry partners, for these three days.

This year's thematic focus is on our connection with our God and the hope that grows in us because of that relationship. A hope that is grounded in our experience of a God who, through our experiences, has proven to be faithful. The lyric of an old song illustrates our theme perfectly.

"I'm wrapped up, tied up, tangled up in Jesus."
(Lucien Henry)

According to the Oxford Languages Dictionary, to be intertwined means to be "closely connected together in a way that makes it difficult to separate or distinguish the separate parts."

It is our indistinguishable connection because of our baptism, that unimaginable mission and ministry can take place, and where intimate and meaningful spiritual communion can sustain us.


Hope resides in the continual embrace; being enveloped (wrapped up), feeling secure (tied up), and interlaced (tangled up) in Jesus.



**Strong
Connections**

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In the book of Romans, we are told that hope does not disappoint because of the love of God in our hearts. The psalmist tells us to put our hope in God, even when times are challenging. There is nothing like the comfort of God's Holy Spirit in times of distress. Our God is the God of hope.

The Voice commentary at the end of those verses in John 15 adds this:

"At a time when all of His disciples are feeling as if they are about to be uprooted, Jesus sketches a picture of this new life as a flourishing vineyard—a labyrinth of vines and strong branches steeped in rich soil, abundant grapes hanging from their vines ripening in the sun. Jesus sculpts a new garden of Eden in their imaginations—one that is bustling with fruit, sustenance, and satisfying aromas. This is the Kingdom life. It is all about connection, sustenance, and beauty."

During these next few days, we will participate in worship, listen to our ministry partners share their stories of hope through their ministries, conduct the business of the Virginia Synod, and share stories of hope with each other to experience that connection, sustenance, and beauty.

My prayer is that in our time together, God will accomplish God's purpose in and through us, as we follow Jesus' example. I pray that we grow in our relationship with each other and with our Lord, and that we will all experience the hope along our journey that only God can provide.

Thanks be to God for all of the individuals who have contributed their time and talent to coordinating the Order of Business for this assembly.


Special thanks to Jody Smiley, Synod Assembly Director, 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 work in preparing for this assembly.

Thanks also to our worship leadership team led by Pastors Chris Carr and Rebecca Ajer Frantz, and Synod Staff Liaison Pastor Liz Radtke. Thank you to Pastor Colleen Hetrick, Director for Digital Ministries for managing the technical aspects of the assembly. Thank you to our chaplain for this assembly, Chaplain Deanna Boynton.

Thank you to the synod staff, synod council, rostered ministers, synod authorized ministers, and lay leaders who have also contributed their time and effort to this event.

Thank you to Bishop Dee Pederson, Southwestern Minnesota Synod, for initiating the re-connection of our companion synod relationship.

Thank you to Jill Beverlin, Program Director, ELCA Coaching Ministry, our Churchwide (ELCA) Representative, for sharing your gift and expertise in coaching with us.



Thank you to our ecumenical guests for your presence of support and encouragement.

Thank you to our ministry partners for your in-person presentations and submission of your reports on how our connections help to fulfill our mission to love God and to love our neighbor.

And thank you, congregational representatives, for your presence and voice during this assembly meeting.

We pray:

"God of our lives, you are always calling us to follow you into the future, inviting us to new ventures, new challenges, new ways to care, new ways to touch the hearts of all. When we are fearful of the unknown, give us courage. When we worry that we are not up to the task, remind us that you would not call us if you did not believe in us. When we get tired, or feel disappointed with the way things are going, remind us that you can bring change and hope out of the most difficult situations." (Kathy Galloway)

Blessings,



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



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

April 2025

Dear friends in Christ,

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

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

Among the stories that were shared, we heard about a congregation's "bold" decision to reconstruct a food pantry to help increase the capacity to serve more people, a Christmas in July celebration for a single mom and her five children experiencing homelessness, a queer youth poetry open mic event described by one pastor as a tangible experience of God's Love Made Real, a partially gutted parsonage that was renovated to provide long-term housing for survivors of human trafficking, and an ecumenical ministry group that developed a community center that feeds people with meals and spiritual connections. Our vision of a world experiencing the difference God's grace and love in Christ make for all people and creation is being made manifest in these ministries, but these are only a few examples of what's happening throughout our church. I know this is work your congregations do every day, and I thank you for helping people know the way of Jesus to discover community, justice and love.

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

Amid these changes, our call remains the same: to love and serve others as Jesus taught. Our church will continue our work to proclaim the gospel and to serve all of God's people. It has been a privilege to serve as your presiding bishop. May God continue to hold us and guide us into the future.

In Christ,

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

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A

PROGRAM & ORDER OF BUSINESS

Pre-Assembly Meetings	A-1
Virginia Youth Assembly	A-2
Synod Assembly Order of Business	A-3
Dais Leaders of the Synod Assembly	A-4
Synod Assembly Committees	A-5
Congregational Lay Voting Members	A-6
Constitution and Parliamentary Notes	A-8

B

REPORTS OF OFFICERS & SYNOD COUNCIL

Report of the Bishop	B-1
Report of the Vice President and Synod Council	B-7
Report of the Secretary	B-11
Investment in Ministry Plans for 2026 & 2027	B-14
Compensation Guidelines for 2026	B-18
2023 Virginia Synod Audit	B-42
Synod Council Roster	B-63
Synod Council Expectations	B-64

C

REPORTS FROM THE NOMINATION COMMITTEE

Report of the Nomination Committee	C-1
Roles to be Elected	C-3
Conferences and Conference Partnerships Map	C-5
Nominations for Synod Council	C-6
Nominations for the Committee On Discipline	C-26

D

REPORTS FROM COMMITTEE OF REFERENCE & COUNSEL

Report from Committee of Reference & Counsel	D-1
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

E

REPORTS FROM TEAMS AND COMMITTEES

Report from the Candidacy Committee	E-1
Report from the Companion Synod Program Team	E-3
Report from the Ecumenical Relations Committee	E-4
Report from the Lay Ministry Academy	E-7
Report from the Ministerium Team	E-8
Report from the Power in the Spirit Team	E-9
Report from the Synodical Youth and Young Adult Ministries	E-11
Report from the Tapestry Team	E-12
Report from the Virginia Synod Hunger Team	E-13
Report from the Virginia Synodical Women's Organization	E-14

F

REPORTS OF MISSION PARTNERS

Report from Caroline Furnace Camp and Retreat Center	F-1
Report from enCircle	F-3
Report from Global Refuge	F-5
Report from GraceInside	F-7
Report from Hungry Mother Lutheran Retreat Center	F-9
Report from James R. Crumley Jr. Archives	F-10
Report from Luther Seminary	F-11
Report from Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary	F-15
Report from Mission Investment Fund	F-18
Report from National Lutheran Communities and Services	F-19
Report from Portico Benefit Services	F-24
Report from Roanoke College	F-25
Report from Seafarers International House	F-27
Report from St. Olaf College	F-29
Report from Virginia Council of Churches	F-32
Report from Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy	F-36
Report from Virginia Lutheran Homes	F-37
Report from Wartburg College	F-39



PROGRAM & ORDER OF BUSINESS



Virginia Synod Assembly

Friday, June 13-Sunday, June 15, 2025



**Intertwining
Hope**

“I am the vine, and you are the branches. If you abide in Me and I in you, you will bear great fruit. Without Me, you will accomplish nothing.”

- John 15:5 (The Voice Translation)

Pre-Assembly Meetings:

The following meetings were organized for those coming as voting members to the 2025 Virginia Synod Assembly. All were invited to attend any of the meetings (lay, rostered, voting member, or not). Each meeting was recorded and is available on the Synod Assembly website.

Below are the meetings offered, along with a description of each:

- Memorials and resolutions are one way that this church addresses broad policy issues or important issues for God’s mission in the world. Memorials address broad policy issues; resolutions have a narrower focus, requesting consideration or action by specific offices, committees, or groups within the Synod. This meeting was held on January 29.
- Learn about future investments in ministry plans and compensation guidelines, and ask your questions at this meeting. Participation will help streamline the assembly and assist others who may have similar questions. This meeting was held on April 29.
- Learn about proposed constitution amendments and ask your questions at this meeting, which was held on May 20.

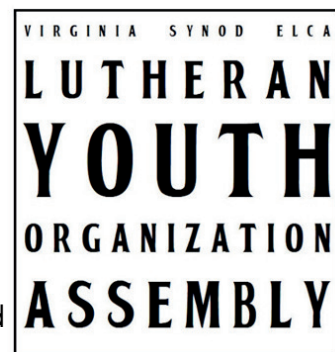
Pre-Assembly Devotions

The Virginia Synod Council prepared weekly devotions to invite reflection and prayer on the 2025 Virginia Synod Assembly’s theme: Intertwining Hope. Each Wednesday, a different person connected to the council shared a story of hope based on one of key biblical stories in the General Arrangements. Thank you to Deacon Lavelva Stevens, Cam Haggett, Dave Raecke, Pastor Jonathan Boynton, Vice President Blythe Scott, and Bishop Milton for their contributions.



The Virginia Synod Youth Assembly

The 2025 Virginia Synod Youth Assembly will be held on June 13-15, 2025 at Roanoke College, concurrent with the Virginia Synod Assembly. This assembly is planned and led by the Virginia Synod Lutheran Youth Organization Board. The Youth Assembly is attended by representatives in grades 7-12 from all the congregations of the Virginia Synod. Each congregation may send up to 4 delegates, and more may be possible if there is room once we get closer to the Assembly date.



Youth Assembly business includes receiving reports from the current Lutheran Youth Organization Board, electing the 2025-2026 Board Members, engaging with ministries of the Church beyond congregations, providing input on decisions and directions for the Synod's Youth Ministry, and discerning ways to support ministry with youth and young adults throughout the Synod.

Complete information about the Youth Assembly, instructions for registering, and information on nominating youth for positions on the Lutheran Youth Organization Board are all available on the Youth Assembly Page on the Synod website. Go to www.vasynod.org/event/youth-assembly.

If there are questions about the Youth Assembly, please contact the Rev. Dave Delaney, Synodical Director for Youth and Young Adult Ministries:
delaney@vasynod.org



Synod Assembly Order of Business

Friday Morning	June 13, 2025	Pre-Session
10:00 am-1:00 pm 11:30 am-12:00 pm 11:00 am-1:00 pm 11:00 am-12:30 pm	Cregger Fieldhouse Antrim Chapel Colket Center Commons Colket Center	Event Check-in Orientation Lunch Ecumenical Luncheon
Friday Afternoon	June 13, 2025	Session #1 (Anticipated Activities)
1:00-5:00 pm	Cregger Fieldhouse	Opening Worship; Organization of the Assembly; Introductions & Recognitions, Reference & Counsel; Exploration of Assembly Theme; Report of Nominating Committee; Report of the ELCA Rep; Constitutional Changes; New to VA Synod; Intro to Youth Assembly
5:00-7:00 pm	Colket Center Commons	Dinner
Friday Evening	June 13, 2025	Session #2 (Anticipated Activities)
7:00-8:00 pm	Cregger Fieldhouse	Report of the Ministerium; Report of Lay Ministry Academy Leadership Team; Serving Boldly Awards; Anniversary Celebrations
8:00-9:00 pm	Cregger Foyer/ Luther Plaza	Social Gathering
Saturday Morning	June 14, 2025	Session #3 (Anticipated Activities)
7:00-8:30 am	Colket Center Commons	Breakfast
8:30 am-12:00 pm	Cregger Fieldhouse	Morning Prayer with Necrology; Committee Reports; Report of the Officers (introduction of Investment in Ministry Plans); Introduction of Synod Council; Elections
12:00-1:30 pm	Colket Center Commons	Lunch
Saturday Afternoon	June 14, 2025	Session #4 (Anticipated Activities)
1:30-5:00 pm	Cregger Fieldhouse	ELCA Rep Presentation; Approval of Investment in Ministry Plan; Report on Elections; Additional Elections if needed; PNG Presentation
5:00-7:00 pm	Colket Center Commons	Dinner
7:30-9:30 pm	Cregger Fieldhouse	Festival Worship
Sunday Morning	June 15, 2025	Session #5 (Anticipated Activities)
7:00-8:30 am	Colket Center Commons	Breakfast
8:30 am-12:00 pm	Cregger Fieldhouse	Opening Prayer and Word; Committee Reports; Approval of Compensation Guidelines; Report of Reference and Council; Report of Youth Assembly; Sending Worship with Installations



Dais Leaders of the 2025 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 Castele
Secretary of the Synod



Mr. John Krallman
Treasurer of the Synod



Deacon Deanna Boynton
Synod Assembly Chaplain



Ms. Jody Smiley
Synod Assembly Director



The Rev. Dr. Dee Pederson
Bishop of the Southwestern MN Synod



Ms. Jill Beverlin
ELCA Representative



Mr. Bradley J. Moyers
Synod Assembly Parliamentarian



Deacon Lisa Geiger
Secretary of the Assembly



Synod Assembly Committees 2025

- **Nominating Committee** - Judy Castelee, chair
 - Bishop Phyllis Milton
 - Judy Castelee - Good Shepherd, Lexington
 - Rev. Harry Griffith - St. John, Norfolk
 - Dave Raecke - Our Saviour, Warrenton
 - Rev. Kayla Keilholtz - Ebenezer, Marion
 - Liz Leonard - St. Philip, Roanoke
 - Christie McKee - Grace, Winchester
 - Rev. Wanda Childs - Floyd-Willis Parish
- **Committee on Transportation** - Rev. Lou Florio, chair
 - Keith Gay - St. Michael, Blacksburg
 - Rev. Lou Florio - Christ, Fredericksburg
 - Mike Samerdyke - Christ, Wise
- **Committee of Reference and Counsel** - Alli Beck, chair
 - Rev. James Henricks - St. Michael, Blacksburg
 - Alli Beck - Resurrection, Fredericksburg
 - Rev. Leslie Weber - Grace, Chesapeake
- **Committee on Official Roll** - Rev. Scott Mims, chair
 - Nicole Ocheltree - Salem, Mt. Sidney
 - Jane Sathe - Mt. Nebo, Rochelle
 - Rev. Scott Mims - First, Norfolk
- **Committee on Minutes**
 - JoAnn Fawley - All Places Together
- **Committee on Conduct of Elections** - Rev. Paul Pingel, chair
 - Rev. Jonathan Boynton - Grace, Winchester
 - Karen Sutton - St. John, Norfolk
 - Rev. Paul Pingel - Grace, Waynesboro
 - Laura Doughty - Redeemer, Bristol
- **Committee on Report of Officers** - Rev. James Armentrout, chair
 - Rev. James Armentrout - St. Mark, Roanoke
 - Megan Edwards - Epiphany, Richmond



Congregational Lay Voting Members

All congregations certify their lay voting members using a voting member credential form and are encouraged to turn in this form by May 14, 2025.

The cut-off time for lay voting member credential form is 10 days (June 3, 2025) before the first day of the assembly. If the credential form is not received in the Synod Office by June 3, 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. 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 Virginia Synod Council subject to S7.21.04.)
- Synod authorized ministers (who have been authorized to serve by the bishop and subject to S7.26.B24.)
- Synod council members
- Lay officers of the synod

Please note that every congregation is entitled to at least two (2) lay voting members, typically of different genders.

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, 2024). 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
401-600 = 3 voting members
601-800 = 4 voting members

801-1000 = 5 voting members
1001-1200 = 6 voting members



Congregational Lay 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 2025 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 2025 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 2025 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.) 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.A24.)

- a. The Assembly Committee of Reference and Counsel shall receive, consider and report to the assembly on all resolutions submitted by congregations, conferences, and voting members for consideration by the Assembly.
- b. In reviewing proposed memorials, resolutions, and main motions, the Resolutions/Reference and Counsel Committee may edit, prepare an alternative memorial, resolution, or motion, or consolidate into a single proposed action multiple



- memorials, resolutions, or main motions on the same or similar subjects.
- c. Whenever the Resolutions/Reference and Counsel Committee recommends an edited or alternative memorial, resolution, or motion, the report to the assembly also shall contain the original maker's text.
 - d. 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.
 - e. Recommendations of the committee are to be distributed to members prior to the convening of the Assembly.
 - f. All resolutions will normally be considered by the committee in order of receipt.
 - g. 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.) 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.)
- g. 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 by coming to a microphone. When called upon, they shall address the chair of the meeting by stating their name and their worshipping 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 question 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 written and given 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 a 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 involve spending money, adopting 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.



REPORTS OF OFFICERS & SYNOD COUNCIL



Bishop's Report to the Virginia Synod Assembly

Strong Connections . . . Being Present

Isaiah 41:10 (Amplified Bible)

¹⁰ 'Do not fear [anything], for I am with you;

Do not be afraid, for I am your God.

I will strengthen you, be assured I will help you;

I will certainly take hold of you with My righteous right hand

[a hand of justice, of power, of victory, of salvation].'

This scripture from Isaiah reiterates the message in Joshua 1:9 that our God is always with us.

In my first Virginia Synod Council meeting in September 2023, I asked the Council members about their expectations of their new bishop. The overwhelming response **was to be present**.

Be physically present in the congregations and ministry sites of the Virginia Synod. In fact, I was presented with a challenge: to "set foot" in each of the congregations and ministry sites of the Virginia Synod at least once during this six-year term. I accepted their challenge. Because of their request, I am a more informed bishop.

I am often asked what the most enjoyable aspect of this call is. It is visiting with the rostered ministers, the congregations, and ministry sites of the Virginia Synod. One hundred forty-five unique congregations and ministry sites in which I have the opportunity to share God's Word, join in the celebration of The Lord's Supper, and participate in a time of good food and fellowship.

I have the opportunity to listen to the congregation and ministry site leaders share with me about their ministry in the community and how the church is making a difference in the lives of the individuals with whom they come in contact.

During these 604 days of this call, (I am writing this report on Sunday, April 27, 2025.) I have "set foot" in eighty-one of our congregations/ministry sites. I have been present at Sunday services and other meetings during the week, addressing pastoral transition, call process, and congregational concerns. These contacts have been both meaningful and beneficial to me.

My being present has also extended to attending enCircle, Roanoke College, and Virginia Council of Churches Board meetings and retreats. I have preached and shared about the ministries of the Virginia Synod at The Village at Orchard Ridge (National Communities and Services) and visited and participated in our synod staff's God's Work, Our Hands service day at Brandon Oaks (Virginia Lutheran Homes).



Last but not least, my being present includes my participation in the Conference of Bishops at the ELCA Churchwide Offices. I serve on the Bishops Formation Team, helping with the initial training of newly elected synod bishops as they transition from the role of congregational pastor to synod bishop.

I am grateful to our Synod Council for seeing the need and presenting this challenge. My being present is broadening my understanding and forming me into a bishop who listens and responds to the needs of the ministry that is before us.

“O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.”

September 2024 – April 2025

Administrative Responsibilities

- Monthly meeting with Roanoke College President, Frank Shushok Jr.
- Weekly update with Virginia Synod Vice President
- Monthly Region 9 Bishops Zoom Meeting
- Synod Council Executive Committee Meeting, Synod Council Meeting, and Synod Council Retreat at St. Paul Lutheran Church, Hampton
- Weekly Staff Meeting on Zoom
- Thanksgiving for Ministry Zoom – Pastor Dave Skole and Council at Christ, Lutheran Church, Roanoke
- Call Process Candidate Interviews
- Bishop’s Formation Team – Newly Elected Bishop Training and Conference of Bishops – Lutheran Center, Chicago
- Staff Call/Ministry Review
- Thanksgiving for Ministry Zoom – Pastor Bryan Katz, and Council from New Mt. Zion Lutheran Church, Blacksburg
- Attendance at Bishop Tim Graham’s Installation for the Indiana-Kentucky Synod
- Participated in Region 9 BIE Training
- Monthly Finance Team Meeting
- Attended and participated in Lost and Found, Eagle Eyrie Baptist Conference Center, Lynchburg
- Thanksgiving for Ministry – In-person, Pastor Tim Crummitt and Council from St. Paul’s Evangelical Lutheran Church, Hampton
- Attended and participated in Winter Celebration, Eagle Eyrie Conference Center, Lynchburg



- Hosted Confirmation Class from Epiphany Lutheran Church, Richmond
- VA Synod Dean's In-Person Meeting at Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Waynesboro
- Roanoke College Administration Team Meeting on Zoom
- Introduced Call Process to the Congregation at St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Hampton
- Region 9 Council Meeting on Zoom
- Thanksgiving for Ministry and Call Process Introduction Meeting with Pastor JMe Lowden and Council at Trinity Lutheran Church, Stephens City
- Synod Staff Winter Planning Meeting
- Conference of Bishops Retreat – Eaglewood Resort, Itasca, IL
- Call Process Information Meeting Zoom – River of Life Parish (St. Peter, Shenandoah; St. Paul, Shenandoah; and St. Luke, Stanley)
- Thanksgiving of Ministry Zoom Meeting with Pastor Ingrid Chenoweth and Church Council at Good Shepherd Evangelical Lutheran Church, Front Royal
- VA Synod Dean's Zoom Meeting
- First Call Consultation with Candidates
- Conference of Bishops Zoom on Social Statements – Faith & Civic Life and Sexuality
- Attended Bishops of Color meeting on BIPOC Theological Education Zoom
- Spring Synod Council Meeting on Zoom
- Attending the In-person Spring Board Meeting, Naming of Administration Building Ceremony and Dedication of "Authors and Architects" Memorial at Roanoke College
- Attended Church Wide Assembly Orientation on Zoom
- Participated in Synod Representatives Church Wide Assembly Orientation on Zoom
- Attended Region 9 Bishops' Retreat, Clearwater, Florida
- Attended VA Synod Investment in Ministry Plan Pre-Assembly Meeting on Zoom

Church Visitation

- Preached at Martin Luther Evangelical Lutheran Church, Bergton
- Preached at Bethel Lutheran Church, Edinburg
- Preached at Holy Communion Lutheran Church, Portsmouth
- Preached and presented Call Process to the Congregation at Christ Lutheran Church, Richmond
- Preached at Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Lynchburg for Stewardship Emphasis
- Preached at Ebenezer Luther Church, Marion for their 225th Anniversary
- Preached at Peace Lutheran Church, Charlottesville
- Preached at Hebron Lutheran Church, Madison, for the Installation of Pastor Jim Kniseley
- Preached at Epiphany Lutheran Church, Richmond
- Preached at Living Grace Lutheran Church, Bedford
- Attended service at Reformation Lutheran Church, Newport News
- Preached and presented Call Process at New Mt. Zion Lutheran Church, Blacksburg



- Preached and presented Call Process at St. Timothy Evangelical Lutheran Church, Norfolk
- Preached at St. Mark Lutheran Church, Charlottesville
- Preached at St. Stephen Lutheran Church, Williamsburg
- Preached at Zion Lutheran Church, Waynesboro
- Preached at Christ the King Lutheran Church, Richmond
- Preached and dedicated stain glass windows at Lakeside Lutheran Church, Littleton, NC
- Preached at St. Andrew Lutheran Church, Portsmouth

Ministry Partners

- Lutheran World Federation Retreat of Newly Elected Leaders – Geneva, Switzerland and Wittenburg, Germany
- Renewing RVA – One Day, One Step Toward Racial Healing for Richmond Racial Justice Event at First Presbyterian Church, Richmond
- enCircle Richmond – “God’s Work, Our Hands” – VA Synod Staff
- Attended LTSS Region 9 Bishops Roundtable on Lay Preachers and SAM’s
- Preached at Christ Tabernacle Church of God in Christ, Bishop Clyde Brown, Waynesboro
- Presented ELCA Chaplaincy Medal to Chaplain Brian Stamm on the occasion of his retirement from the United States Navy, St. Michael Lutheran Church, Virginia Beach
- Preached for All Saint’s Remembrance and Synod presentation at Donor’s Brunch at The Village at Orchard Ridge, Winchester
- Attended Peninsula Pastoral Counseling Center Annual Banquet
- Attended the Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary Service of Campus Decommissioning
- Zoom meeting with Dr. Justin Nickel’s class at Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary
- Attended VICPP Day For All People in Richmond, visiting Senators and Congress Representatives, advocating for underserved populations
- Participated in LARCUM event at St. Bernadet Catholic Church, Springfield
- Participated in the VA Council of Churches 2-day Zoom Retreat
- Participated in ELCA Webinar for National Day of Racial Healing Zoom
- Attended enCircle Board meeting on Zoom
- Attended Retirement Celebration for Bishop Tim Smith, St. John’s Lutheran Church in Salisbury, NC

Pastoral Care

- Conversations and prayers with Rostered Ministers
- Conversations with Synod Candidacy Seminar/First Call Rostered Ministers
- Written notes to Rostered Ministers, congregations, and ministry partners
- Attended the memorial service for Joyce Gunderlach, spouse of The Rev. David Gunderlach
- Conversations with Church Councils and pastors

**Conference Attendance**

- Attended Peninsula Monthly Conference at St. Mark Lutheran Church, Yorktown
- Attended Tidewater Monthly Conference at St. Andrew Lutheran Church, Portsmouth
- Co-led “Call to Allyship” with Pastor Kelly Bayer Derrick for EPIC Conference in St. Paul, Hampton; St. Luke, Richmond; and St. Michael, Blacksburg
- Attended and participated in the All-Lutheran Women’s Retreat, Hilton Garden Inn, Glen Allen
- Attended Central Valley Conference, Prince of Peace Evangelical Lutheran Church, Basye
- Led workshop on Spiritual Disciplines at EPIC Conference at Our Savior’s Evangelical Lutheran Church in Norge
- Participated in Rostered Ministers Strong Connection Conversations in the Coastal Conference at Holy Communion Lutheran Church, Portsmouth
- Participated in Rostered Ministers Strong Connection Conversations in the Germanna Conference at Christ Lutheran Church, Fredericksburg
- Participated in Rostered Ministers Strong Connection Conversations in the Central Valley Conference at Emanuel Lutheran Church, Woodstock
- Participated in Rostered Ministers Strong Connection Conversations in Richmond Conference at Christ Lutheran Church, Richmond
- Participated in Southern and Southern Valley Conference Rostered Minister Strong Connection Conversation, Mt. Tabor Lutheran Church, Staunton
- Participated in Highlands and New River Conference Rostered Minister Strong Connection Conversations, Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Wytheville

Community Activities

- Attended and participated in Peninsula Pastoral Counseling Center’s Clergy Connections
- Preached at the Chesapeake Senior Living Community
- Attended the Peninsula Pastoral Counseling Center’s Christmas Gathering
- Participated in the 500th Anniversary Celebration of Anabaptism, First Baptist Church of Richmond, Richmond

Continuing Education

- Attended the Zoom Bible Study for Synod emphasis for ELCA World Hunger 50th Anniversary
- Staff Book Study – Call to Allyship, Preparing Your Congregation for Leaders of Color
- Take Flight Staff Training – Monthly exercise reinforcement
- Attended Peninsula Pastoral Counseling Center’s workshop on “Hard Conversations,” Newport News
- Attended Bishop’s Academy in Puerto Rico to learn about the Caribbean Lutheran’s heritage and contribution to the ELCA
- Participated in Midwinter Power in the Spirit

**Continuing Education**

- Participated in Tapestry emphasis in Black History Month
- Participated in Staff IDI Assessment and Evaluation

Personal

- Visited my family in Levelland, Texas for Thanksgiving

It is truly an honor and a privilege to serve the Virginia Synod as its bishop. I ask for your prayers and for your grace.

Blessings,
Bishop Milton



Report of the Vice President and Synod Council

Meetings and Areas of Responsibility

Meetings: Regular meetings of the Synod Council were held on: June 8, 2024, September 19-21, 2024, December 5, 2024, and March 21, 2025.

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.

2025 Synod Assembly: The 2025 Synod Assembly arrangements were made by the Synod Council for the assembly to be held at Roanoke College on June 13-15, 2025. The theme of the assembly will be "Intertwining Hope."

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. Wanda Childs (June 1, 2025-present)
The Rev. Bill King (*until May 31, 2025*)
- 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
- Southern: The Rev. Cynthia Keyser
- Tidewater: The Rev. Harry Griffith

2. **Virginia Lutheran Homes-** The Synod Council ratified the appointment of The Rev. James Armentrout to serve as a Board Member.



3. **Youth Ministry Committee and Lutheran Youth Organization Board**- The Synod Council ratified the appointments of committee members.
4. **Churchwide Assembly Voting Member**: appointed the Rev. Adam Schultz to serve as a voting member for the Churchwide Assembly.
5. **Candidacy Committee**: appointed Kris McClellan to serve on the committee.
6. **Synod Assembly**-Synod Council appointed Cedric Wilson as a person of color and or whose primary language is other than English to attend the 2025 assembly as an at-large voting member.
7. **Synod Council**-appointed Megan Edwards to serve the vacant Young Adult position.

Items from Synod Council:

1. Approval for the 2025 Synod Assembly to be held at Roanoke College.
2. Approval to use funds from the Special Project Fund to cover the cost of meals and travel for Rostered Minister Strong Connection Conversations.
3. Approval to disperse from the Local Disaster Response Fund a total of \$3,000 to replenish and replace firefighting supplies for the Luray, Shenandoah, and Stanley fire departments.
4. Approval of a special project hire from May-August 2024 with implementation of the 2025 Mission Support Plan and to provide administrative structure and organization to the Lay Ministry Academy.
5. To create a task force to conduct a comprehensive review of the Virginia Synod Compensation Guidelines.
6. To create a task group to review the constitution and present recommended changes to the Synod Council.
7. Approval of the 2023 Virginia Synod Audit.
8. Approval of Synod Administration for Bethany Lutheran Church, Columbia Furnace.
9. Approval of the synod constitution bylaw updates and continuing resolutions as presented from the task group.
10. Authorized the following ministries as continuing Synod Authorized Worshipping Communities in 2025: All Places Together, The Micah Community/Micah Street Church, Nineveh Lutheran Justice Ministry, and Peace and Hope.
11. Approval of the creation of the Rev. Dr. Jean Bozeman Fund for Lay Leaders.
12. Adopt the Synod Care for Creation Covenant.
13. In 2026, the Virginia Synod will not hold a Synod Assembly.
14. To create a task force to plan the June 11-13, 2027 Synod Assembly.
15. Approval of the 2026 and 2027 Investment in Ministry Plans.
16. Approval of the 2026 Virginia Synod Compensation Guidelines.



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 and with the support of the Finance Team, 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 2024 audit for the fiscal year ended on January 31, 2025.
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 Plans for 2026 and 2027:** The proposed 2026 and 2027 Investment in Ministry Plans are based on trends observed in 2024 and in 2025, on the ministry priorities for 2025, and on anticipated mission support from congregations for the mission and ministry of the synod and churchwide organization. Details of the investment in ministry plans start on page [B-12](#).
5. **Forwarding Faith Investment Policy:** Updated the investment policy to allow a balanced ESB Portfolio.



Synod Council Recommendations

Recommendation Number 1

To approve the Order for Business as the agenda of the 2025 Assembly of the Virginia Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Recommendation Number 2

To approve the proposed constitutional amendments that were distributed in December 2024 to all congregations and rostered ministers.

Recommendation Number 3

To receive the Reports of the Officers and have the minutes of the 2025 Virginia Synod Assembly certified by the bishop and secretary and placed into the archives of the synod with one copy sent to the ELCA Office of the Secretary.

Recommendation Number 4

That the 2026 and 2027 Investment in Ministry Plans be given general approval.

Recommendation Number 5

To approve the 2026 Compensation Guidelines. The Virginia Synod Compensation Guidelines underwent an extensive review. Beginning in 2026, the Compensation Guidelines will recommend a minimum "Cash Compensation" for rostered ministers that includes salary, housing allowance, and self-employment tax compensation. In place of the grid with suggested raises based on years of experience, the guidelines now suggest appropriate ranges based on years of experience. In determining compensation, consideration should be given to the complexity of the call and the cost of living in a community.

The synod encourages all congregations to meet or exceed these minimum compensation recommendations.

Recommendation Number 6

To approve the Certificate of Audit of the accounts of the Treasurer of the Synod for the Fiscal Year ending January 31, 2024 be approved.

Recommendation Number 7

To approve the Certificate of Audit of the accounts of the Treasurer of the Synod for the Fiscal Year ending January 31, 2025 be approved.



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-sixth assembly of the Virginia Synod, ELCA, held on June 13-15, 2025, 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:

- **The Rev. Joel Antley** was ordained at St. David Lutheran Church in West Columbia, South Carolina on May 11, 2024. Joel accepted a call to serve as Pastor at **Our Saviour Lutheran Church in Christiansburg**.

By Transfer:

- **The Rev. David Bacon** transferred from the South Dakota Synod on May 29, 2024.
- **The Rev. Christine Roe** transferred from the Allegheny Synod on June 10, 2024.
- **The Rev. James Henricks** transferred from the South Carolina Synod on August 9, 2024.
- **The Rev. Lynn Miller** transferred from the Metro DC Synod on November 11, 2024.
- **The Rev. Ruth Fortis** transferred from the Delaware-Maryland Synod on February 4, 2025.

Congregational Calls and Installations:

- **The Rev. James Kniseley** accepted a call from Hebron Lutheran Church in Madison and started serving on July 1, 2024.
- **The Rev. Christine Roe** accepted a call from Lakeside Lutheran Church in Lake Gaston, North Carolina and was installed on September 1, 2024.
- **The Rev. James Henricks** accepted a call from St. Michael Lutheran Church in Blacksburg and started serving on September 29, 2024.
- **The Rev. Bryan Katz** accepted a call from Luther Memorial Church in Blacksburg to serve as Associate Pastor of the Well Campus Ministry. He was installed on November 17, 2024.
- **The Rev. Daniel Hess** accepted a call from Christ Lutheran Church in Staunton and started serving on February 1, 2025.
- **The Rev. Tarja Stevenson** accepted a call from St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church in Shenandoah and started serving on February 1, 2025.
- **The Rev. Karen Van Stee** accepted a call from Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Waynesboro and started serving on May 1, 2025.



Report of the Secretary

Non-Congregational Calls:

- **Deacon Lisa Geiger** accepted a call from Synod Council on June 17, 2024 to serve as Instructional Technologist at Virginia Wesleyan University in Virginia Beach.

Dismissals to other Synods:

- **The Rev. Robert McCarty** transferred to the North Carolina Synod on March 15, 2024.
- **The Rev. Beth Woodard** transferred to the North Carolina Synod on May 6, 2024.
- **The Rev. Katie Freund** transferred to the Metropolitan Chicago Synod on June 1, 2024.
- **The Rev. Alex Sheppard-Witt** transferred to the Lower Susquehanna Synod on June 17, 2024.
- **The Rev. Luke Swanson** transferred to the South Carolina Synod on August 11, 2025.
- **The Rev. Anders Nilsen** transferred to the Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod on September 14, 2024.
- **The Rev. Robert Vogl** transferred to the Florida-Bahamas Synod on November 1, 2024.
- **The Rev. Timothy Crummitt** transferred to the West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod on November 11, 2024.
- **The Rev. Michelle Stramiello** transferred to the Southeastern Synod on November 18, 2024.
- **The Rev. Jeniffer Tillman** transferred to the Western Iowa Synod on December 11, 2024.
- **The Rev. Laura Swanson** transferred to the South Carolina Synod on March 31, 2025.

Resigned from a Congregational Call:

- **The Rev. Phyllis Diamond** resigned her call at Pleasant View Lutheran Church in Staunton on May 30, 2024.
- **Deacon Lisa Geiger** resigned her call at St. Michael Lutheran Church in Virginia Beach on June 14, 2024.
- **The Rev. Anders Nilsen** resigned his call at Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Virginia Beach on June 16, 2024.
- **The Rev. Virginia Banister** resigned her call at Bethel Lutheran Church in Edinburg on June 30, 2024.
- **The Rev. Ralph Kirkpatrick** resigned his call at Christ Lutheran Church, Richmond on July 31, 2024.
- **The Rev. Laura Swanson** resigned her call at St. Philip Lutheran Church in Roanoke on August 11, 2024.
- **The Rev. Luke Swanson** resigned his call at Trinity Lutheran Church in Roanoke on August 11, 2024.
- **The Rev. Bryan Katz** resigned his call at New Mt. Zion Lutheran Church in Blacksburg on October 15, 2024.



Report of the Secretary

- **The Rev. Robert Vogl** resigned his call at St. Timothy Evangelical Lutheran Church in Norfolk on October 31, 2024.
- **The Rev. David Skole** resigned his call at Christ Lutheran Church in Roanoke on October 31, 2024.
- **The Rev. Timothy Crummitt** resigned his call at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Hampton on November 10, 2024.
- **The Rev. Tarja Stevenson** resigned her call at River of Life Parish (St. Peter, Shenandoah; St. Paul, Shenandoah; and St. Luke, Stanley) on December 31, 2024.
- **The Rev. JMe Lowden** resigned her call at Trinity Lutheran Church in Stephens City on January 5, 2025.

Resigned from a Non-Congregational Call:

- **Deacon Phyllis Cox** resigned her call at Virginia Interfaith Power & Light on October 31, 2024.

Retirements:

- **The Rev. Phyllis Diamond** retired on May 31, 2024.
- **The Rev. Ralph Kirkpatrick** retired on July 31, 2024.
- **The Rev. Dave Skole** retired on November 1, 2024.
- **Deacon Phyllis Cox** retired on November 1, 2024.
- **The Rev. Jme Lowden** retired on January 6, 2025.

Deaths:

- **The Rev. Waldron "Wally" Rosheim:** April 1, 1936-July 21, 2024
- **The Rev. Ronnie Peterson:** June 21, 1932-October 28, 2024
- **The Rev. Richard Umberger:** June 12, 1926-January 31, 2025
- **The Rev. C. Frederick Eichner:** December 17, 1941-February 6, 2025
- **The Rev. Thomas Bailey:** March 4, 1943-April 19, 2025
- **The Rev. William M. Van O'Linda:** November 26, 1951-April 26, 2025

Congregational Statistical Information:

- St. Mark Lutheran Church in Quicksburg held its final worship service on November 24, 2024.
- Bethany Lutheran Church in Columbia Furnace closed on August 1, 2024.
- River of Life Parish (St. Paul, Shenandoah; St. Peter, Shenandoah; St. Luke, Stanley) dissolved as a parish on December 31, 2024.
- Bethel Evangelical Lutheran Church became a Reconciling in Christ Congregation.

Respectfully submitted, Judy Castelee
Secretary of the Virginia Synod



Virginia Synod 2026 and 2027 Investment in Ministry Plan Notes and Information Updated 4/15/25

The Virginia Synod Finance Team has been meeting for more than a year to monitor the financial needs of the Virginia Synod and to provide guidance and support to the Synod Council. The 2026 and 2027 Investment in Ministry Plans are the result of prayerful consideration and the Synod Council's desire to both continue to support the ministries of the Virginia Synod and to return the Virginia Synod to a balanced Investment in Ministry plan over the next several years.

Mission Support from Congregations: Over the last two years giving from congregations has stabilized and increased very slightly. This is a significant improvement from previous years where giving was dropping \$70,000 to \$80,000 per year. In 2025, mission support from congregations is estimated to increase by 1% to 2%. While the overall increase is small, the emerging trend gives the Synod Council confidence that the projections for mission support for 2025, 2026, and 2027 are realistic.

Mission Support to ELCA Churchwide: Each synod is asked to share a portion of the mission support they receive with the ELCA Churchwide Expression. The percentage given from the Virginia Synod has varied, but in general it has been in the 35% to 50% range. For the last several years, the percentage given by the Virginia Synod has been 40%. To bring the investment in ministry plan more into balance, the finance team is recommending that the Synod reduce the percentage of giving to the Churchwide expression from 40% to 36% for the remainder of 2025, 2026, and 2027.

Synod Staff – Salaries and Benefits (all): This category reflects current investments in staffing and includes a 4% year increase to cover cost of living and benefit cost increases. This line covers the cost of all staff except for the DEM who is an ELCA employee.

Travel & Living Expenses: The staff has returned to pre-pandemic travel levels and increased the number of individuals who are traveling. While this category represents a significant expense, it reflects Bishop Milton's commitment to having the Office of the Bishop staff present with ministry sites as often as possible.

Synod Ministries: The Virginia Synod invests funds from the investment in ministry plan in various fee-based ministries to underwrite the cost and make the events more affordable. Youth events, the Gathering of the Ministerium, and Power in the Spirit all have subsidies that make it possible to reduce the overall registration fees to a more manageable level.

Capital Replacement: This plan introduces a capital replacement fund to allow the Virginia Synod to begin to put aside funds for large capital expenses like replacing automobiles. Currently those expenses are covered by cash on hand or investments.

Other Changes: The other changes in the plan reflect actual costs and anticipated changes in cost like the anticipated increase in the cost of the audit.



Proposed 2026 and 2027 Virginia Synod Investment in Ministry Plans

(Please note: The 2024 unaudited results and the 2025 Investment in Ministry Plan are included for reference purposes only.)

<u>Investment in Ministry Plan</u>	2024	2025	2026	2027
	Preliminary			
Mission Area	Actuals	Plan	Proposed	Proposed
Financial Support				
Mission Support from Congregations	1,482,192	1,500,000	\$1,500,000	\$1,530,000
Other Revenues, Income from Investments, Insurance, DEM grants		150,000	220,000	220,000
Grants				
Forwarding Faith		82,000	90,000	90,000
Balancing Figure				
Individual Giving		15,000	15,000	15,000
Other than Mission Support	306,930	\$247,000	\$325,000	\$325,000
TOTAL FINANCIAL SUPPORT	1,789,121	\$1,747,000	\$1,825,000	\$1,855,000
			-	-
Investments in Ministry				
Mission Support to ELCA Churchwide	594,062	600,000	\$540,000	\$550,800
		(50,000)		
Adjusted Mission Support for 2025		550,000		
Office of the Bishop	-	-		
Deans	11,188	11,000	\$11,000	\$11,000
Staff Synod Staff - Salaries and Benefits (all)	754,322	745,000	765,000	774,800
Continuing Education	6,675	6,000	8,000	8,000
Travel & Living	117,923	50,000	95,000	95,000
Counseling Service	(20)			
Ecumenical Support	6,460	6,210	6,210	6,210
Total Office of the Bishop	896,548	818,210	\$885,210	\$895,010
Synod Ministry	-	-		
Mission Table	625	500	\$0	\$0
Stewardship		6,000	3,000	3,000
Youth and Young Adult Ministry General Expenses	24,193	10,000	30,000	30,000
Candidacy Committee	27,036	35,000	35,000	35,000
Young Adult Ministry		2,500	-	-
First Call Theological Education	988	3,000	3,000	3,000
Orientation to New Leaders in Virginia Synod		1,500	1,500	1,500



Gathering of the Ministerium	10,176	5,000	6,000	6,000
Boundaries Training		1,500	1,500	1,500
Power in the Spirit	9,082	6,000	7,000	7,000
Adult Faith Formation		1,500	-	-
Communications	4,275	8,000	9,000	9,000
Global Missions Team		2,000	2,000	2,000
Women in Ministry		3,000	3,000	3,000
Justice Ministries		2,000	2,000	2,000
FF Seed Money for New Ministry		1,000	1,000	1,000
TOTAL Synod Ministry	76,375	\$88,500	\$104,000	\$104,000
Grants to Ministry Partners	-	-		
Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary	\$32,500	\$32,500	\$32,500	\$32,500
Roanoke College	\$12,480	\$12,480	8,000	8,000
Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy (VICPP)	\$2,550	\$2,550	2,550	2,550
Grace Inside Prison Chaplains	\$9,180	\$9,180	10,000	10,000
Virginia Lutheran Homes	\$8,000	\$8,000	8,000	8,000
Region 9 of ELCA (Regional Center)	\$8,668	\$8,500	8,500	8,500
Caroline Furnace Lutheran Camp	\$32,500	\$32,500	32,500	32,500
Hungry Mother Lutheran Camp	\$18,000	\$18,000	18,000	18,000
Campus Ministry Grants to Congregations	\$65,250	\$68,800	\$68,000	\$68,000
TOTAL Grants	\$189,128	\$192,510	\$188,050	\$188,050
Synod Council Activities	-	-		
Synod Council Expenses	11,786	6,000	\$12,000	\$12,000
Insurance Premiums	15,749	12,500	16,000	16,500
Audit	17,765	14,500	15,000	22,500
Legal Retainer Fees (Acct 50924)	0			
Archives	6,180	6,000	6,000	6,500
TOTAL Synod Council	51,480	39,000	\$49,000	\$57,500
Synod Assembly	(6,882)	(3,000)		
Synod Office Operations	-	-		
Postage	3,787	4,500	\$4,000	\$4,000
Office Supplies	20,728	22,000	22,000	22,000
Telecommunications	10,990	17,500	12,000	12,000



Vanco Credit Card Processing Charges	5,055	3,500	4,000	4,500
Maintenance	7,494	8,500	7,500	7,500
Bank Charges	985	1,760	1,250	1,250
Leasing - Copiers	41,560	28,000	30,000	30,000
Payroll Processing	4,614	5,800	4,000	4,000
Network/Websites	3,692	1,870	4,000	4,000
Rent - East Office (Norfolk)	7,500	9,000	7,000	7,000
Rent - Bittle Hall, Salem	30,955	33,428	33,428	33,428
Office Operations - Misc (Acct 50952)	1,737	1,000		
Event Registration Software				
TOTAL Synod Office	139,096	136,858	\$129,178	\$129,678
<u>Contingencies & Other</u>	-	-		
Contingency	402	3,000		
Furnishings Equipment	(8,407)		\$3,000	\$3,000
Capital Replacement			\$12,000	\$12,000
Bishop's Discretionary Fund		5,000		
			5,000	5,000
TOTAL Other TOTAL INVESTMENTS	(8,005)	\$8,000	\$20,000	\$20,000
IN MINISTRY Other Events and Misc.	1,931,801	1,830,078	\$1,915,438	\$1,945,038
Accounts			-	-
NET SURPLUS OR (DEFICIT)	(142,680)	(83,078)	(\$90,438)	(\$90,038)



2026 Compensation Guidelines

Rostered Ministers

(Guidelines for Rostered Ministers of
Word and Service and Ministers of Word and Sacrament)
(Updated - 4/21/25)

The Virginia Synod
P.O. Box 70
Salem, VA 24153-0070
Phone: (540) 389-1000
Fax: (540) 389-5962



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

A Letter from the Synod Council will be included on this page if the Proposed Guidelines are approved by the Synod Assembly.

Please note that in this document sections highlighted in yellow represent substantial changes from 2025 and sections highlighted in gray are related to the cost of living adjustment and will be updated closer to 2026 if the proposal is approved by the Synod Assembly.



**Strong
Connections**

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



Table of Contents

COMPENSATION PLANNING

NOTES ON REIMBURSABLE EXPENSES

[Appendix A: 2026 Rostered Minister Cash Compensation Guidelines](#)

[Appendix B: Equity Allowance](#)

[Appendix C: Pulpit Supply](#)

[Appendix D: Sabbatical/Extended Study Leave](#)

[Appendix E: Counseling for Rostered Ministers and Their Families](#)

[Appendix F: Reimbursement Policy - Example](#)

[Appendix G: Reimbursement Authorization Form – Example](#)

[Appendix H: Rostered Ministers' Housing Allowance Designation - Example](#)

[Appendix I: Defined Compensation for Portico Benefits Service](#)

[Appendix J: Suggested Office Holidays](#)



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. How do we determine where a rostered minister fits in the suggested range?

A. As a Compensation Committee considers where a rostered minister fits into a suggested salary range, the Committee should consider ministry experience, relevant prior work experience, and the complexity of the specific call. Consideration may also be given to a rostered minister's compensation at a previous call and local salary benchmarks. The goal for the Compensation Committee is to arrive at a compensation rate that is fair and equitable.

Q5. How do we undertake an annual compensation review??

A. In the four to six months prior to the end of a congregation's fiscal year, the Compensation Committee should begin an annual compensation review to determine compensation for the next fiscal year. The Compensation Committee should give consideration to both merit-based compensation increases and cost of living increased.

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 congregation(s) 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.

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

A. The Compensation Guidelines recommend a minimum "Cash Compensation" that includes salary, housing allowance, self-employment tax compensation. In place of the grid with suggested raises based on years of experience, the guidelines now suggest appropriate ranges based on years of experience. In determining compensation, consideration should be given to complexity of call and the cost of living in a community.

The Synod Council is aware that these recommendations may seem beyond the means of some of our congregations. 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.

Q7. What about the recommended Minimum Cash Compensation Levels for Deacons?

A. The Compensation Guidelines recommend a minimum "Cash Compensation". In place of the



grid with suggested raises based on years of experience, the guidelines now suggest appropriate ranges based on years of experience. In determining compensation, consideration should be given to complexity of call and the cost of living in a community.

The Synod Council is aware that these recommendations may seem beyond the means of some of our congregations. 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.

Q8. 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 rostered minister'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 \$322,321 and the median housing allowance is set at \$38,678 (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. Please note, the source of the housing data and the date when it was accessed will be referenced on the Housing page in the Compensation Workbook.

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/>

Q9. 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.

Q10. 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 Office of the Bishop.

Q11. 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.

Q12. 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.

Q13. 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.

Q14. 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. **Please contact Portico Benefits for more information on how benefits are calculated.** 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.

Q15. 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.

Q16. 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.

Q17. 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.

Q18. 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 a baby to work for a 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.

Q19. 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.

Q20. Whom do we contact if we need further information?

A. General Assistance with the Compensation Guidelines: If you need assistance interpreting the Compensation Guidelines or calculating compensation, please contact the Office of the Bishop at 540.389.1000.

B. Benefit Information is available at Portico website: www.porticobenefits.org. The website includes a Benefit Calculation program, updated annually. If you need assistance with specialized questions, like providing benefits for a rostered minister couple, please call Portico telephone at 800.352.2876.

C. Financial Difficulties: If your congregation is encountering financial difficulties and is in danger of missing a payroll or a benefits payment, please call the Bishop at 540.389.1000.

D. 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 recommended minimum and suggested compensation ranges were benchmarked against compensation recommendations from regional and comparable synods. For pastors, the compensation recommendations **include** amounts for salary, housing allowance, and self-employment tax (Social Security/Medicare). For deacons, the compensation recommendations reflect cash compensation for salary.

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 \$322,321 and the median housing allowance is set at \$38,678 (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 2026 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 minister 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 recommended minimum and suggested compensation ranges were benchmarked against compensation recommendations from regional and comparable synods. For pastors, the compensation recommendations **include** amounts for salary and self-employment tax (Social Security/Medicare). For deacons, the compensation recommendations reflect cash compensation for salary.

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 ministry.
- **Synod Events.**
 - o 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 Office of the Bishop for details on assistance available to attend Synod Assembly.
 - o **First Call Theological Education** is required. Documents outlining this program are available through the Office of the Bishop.
 - o 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: Suggested Compensation Ranges for Rostered Ministers in the Virginia Synod

Congregations and rostered ministers are encouraged to negotiate a fair and appropriate compensation package that accounts for the skill and experience of the rostered minister, the cost of living in the area, and the complexity of call.

Pastors with Housing Allowance: The minimum compensation for all pastors with a housing allowance is \$60,021. This amount includes base salary, housing, and full self-employment tax compensation, but is not adjusted for the cost of living in an area and does not include the cost of benefits.

- No experience to 8 years of experience: \$60,021 to \$67,771
- 9 years of experience to 17 years of experience: \$68,957 to \$79,222
- 18 years of experience to 24 years of experience: \$80,534 to \$89,454
- 25 years of experience or more: \$91,019 (minimum)

Pastors with Parsonage: The minimum compensation for all pastors with a housing allowance is \$47,594. This amount includes base salary and full self-employment tax compensation, but does not include equity allowance and does not include the cost of benefits.

- No experience to 8 years of experience: \$47,594 to \$53,738
- 9 years of experience to 17 years of experience: \$54,679 to \$62,820
- 18 years of experience to 24 years of experience: \$63,920 to \$70,931
- 25 years of experience or more: \$72,172 (minimum)

Deacons: The minimum compensation for all deacons is \$48,448. This amount includes base salary, but is not adjusted for the cost of living in an area and does not include the cost of benefits. When accounting for experience in adjusting the base salary, please consider to the following suggested ranges.

- No experience to 8 years of experience: \$48,448 to \$54,705
- 9 years of experience to 17 years of experience: \$55,662 to \$63,949
- 18 years of experience to 24 years of experience: \$65,067 to \$72,206
- 25 years of experience or more: \$73,470 (minimum)



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 congregation(s)). 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 congregation 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 2026 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](http://www.lillyendowment.org/religion%20and%20the%20Louisville%20Institute%20at%20www.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 Office of the Bishop.



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

Maintenanc

e Insurance

Furnishings

Total 2026 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 2026 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. For holidays that fall on a Sunday, consider observing the Friday before the holiday or the Monday following the holiday. *(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)



2023 Audit Report

VIRGINIA SYNOD, EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

SALEM, VIRGINIA

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

JANUARY 31, 2024

K E N N E T T & K E N N E T T P C

CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS

ROANOKE, VIRGINIA



VIRGINIA SYNOD EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

SALEM, VIRGINIA

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS WITH SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

JANUARY 31, 2024

OFFICERS AND SYNOD STAFF

Bishop
Vice-President
Secretary
Treasurer
Financial Advisor
Financial Advisor
Financial Bookkeeper

The Rev. Dr. Phyllis B. Milton
Blythe Scott
Judy Castelee
John Krallman
Skip Zubrod
Richard Hoffman
Debra T. Hux

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Independent Auditor's Report

Statement of Assets, Liabilities, and Net Assets-Modified Cash Basis

Statement of Support, Revenue, and Expenses-Modified Cash Basis

Statement of Functional Expenses-Modified Cash Basis

Statement of Cash Flows-Modified Cash Basis

Notes to Financial Statements

Supplemental Information:

Statement of Support, Revenue, and Expenses Without Donor Restrictions General - Modified Cash Basis

Schedule of Changes In Net Assets Without Donor Restrictions - Council Designated

Schedule of Changes In Net Assets With Donor Restrictions

Schedule of Investments as of December 31, 2023



KENNETT & KENNETT PC

CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS

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MICHAEL T. BROOKS, C.P.A.

MICHAEL W. GRAY, C.P.A.

MEMBERS

AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF

CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS

VIRGINIA SOCIETY OF

CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

To the Synod Council of Virginia Synod,
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Salem, VA

Opinion

We have audited the accompanying financial statements of Virginia Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (a nonprofit organization), which comprise the statement of assets, liabilities, and net assets-modified cash basis as of January 31, 2024, and the related statements of support, revenue, and expenses-modified cash basis, statement of functional expenses-modified cash basis, and the statement of cash flows-modified cash basis for the year then ended, and the related notes to the financial statements.

In our opinion, the financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the assets, liabilities and net assets of Virginia Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America as of January 31, 2024, and its support, revenue, expenses and cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with the modified cash basis of accounting as described in Note 1.

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements section of our report. We are required to be independent of Virginia Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and to meet our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the relevant ethical requirements relating to our audit. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

Basis of Accounting

We draw attention to Note 1 of the financial statements, which describes the basis of accounting. The financial statements are prepared on the modified cash basis of accounting, which is a basis of accounting other than accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America. Our opinion is not modified with respect to this matter.

Responsibilities of Management for the Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with the modified cash basis of accounting as described in Note 1, and for determining that the modified cash basis of accounting is an acceptable basis for the preparation of the financial statements in the circumstances. Management is also responsible for the design, implementation, and maintenance of internal control relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, management is required to evaluate whether there are conditions or events, considered in the aggregate, that raise substantial doubt about Virginia Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's ability to continue as a going concern within one year after the date that the financial statements are available to be issued.

**Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements**

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not absolute assurance and therefore is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control. Misstatements are considered material if there is a substantial likelihood that, individually or in the aggregate, they would influence the judgment made by a reasonable user based on the financial statements.

In performing an audit in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards, we:

- Exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit.
- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, and design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks. Such procedures include examining, on a test basis, evidence regarding the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of Virginia Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's internal control. Accordingly, no such opinion is expressed.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made by management, as well as the overall presentation of the financial statements.
- Conclude whether, in our judgment, there are conditions or events, considered in the aggregate, that raise substantial doubt about Virginia Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's ability to continue as a going concern for a reasonable period of time.

We are required to communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit, significant audit findings, and certain internal control related matters that we identified during the audit.

Report on Supplementary Information

Our audit was conducted for the purpose of forming an opinion on the financial statements as a whole. The supplemental information (see table of contents) is presented for purposes of additional analysis and is not a required part of the financial statements. Such information is the responsibility of management and was derived from and relates directly to the underlying accounting and other records used to prepare the financial statements. The information has been subjected to the auditing procedures applied in the audit of the financial statements and certain additional procedures, including comparing and reconciling such information directly to the underlying accounting and other records used to prepare the financial statements or to the financial statements themselves, and other additional procedures in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America. In our opinion, the information is fairly stated in all material respects in relation to the financial statements as a whole.

July 26, 2024

Kennett & Kennett PC

Certified Public Accountants
Roanoke, Virginia

VIRGINIA SYNOD, EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICASTATEMENT OF ASSETS, LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS - MODIFIED CASH BASISAS OF JANUARY 31, 2024ASSETS

Current Assets:		
Cash - checking	\$ 550,977.28	
Certificates of deposit - Mission Investment Fund	789,891.32	
Certificates of deposit - Radford Clousre	<u>25,372.45</u>	\$ 1,366,241.05
Fixed Assets:		
Furniture and equipment	86,390.12	
Automobiles	202,289.10	
Accumulated depreciation	<u>(236,801.69)</u>	51,877.53
Investments - At Market Value:		
ELCA Pooled Endowment Accounts	1,736,100.21	
Thrivent Deferred Annuity	-	
Thrivent Investment Account	907,655.70	
Charles Schwab Investment Account - Forwarding Faith	<u>2,263,601.11</u>	<u>4,907,357.02</u>
Total Assets		<u>\$ 6,325,475.60</u>

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

Current Liabilities:		
Payroll taxes and withholdings	\$ 388.00	
Funds held for others	<u>55,556.19</u>	<u>\$ 55,944.19</u>
Long-Term Liabilities:		
		<u>-</u>
Total Liabilities		55,944.19
Net Assets:		
Without Donor Restrictions - General	2,354,636.39	
Without Donor Restrictions - Council Designated	3,844,854.92	
With Donor Restrictions	<u>70,040.10</u>	<u>6,269,531.41</u>
Total Liabilities and Net Assets		<u>\$ 6,325,475.60</u>

See accompanying notes to financial statements.



VIRGINIA SYNOD, EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA
STATEMENT OF SUPPORT, REVENUE, AND EXPENSES-MODIFIED CASH BASIS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED JANUARY 31, 2024

	<u>Without Donor Restrictions</u>		<u>With Donor Restrictions</u>	<u>Total Year Ended 1/31/2024</u>
	<u>General</u>	<u>Council Designated</u>		
Support and Revenue:				
Income from congregations (benevolence remittances)	\$ 1,465,422.36	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,465,422.36
Non-cash contribution income	-	-	-	-
Investment income	155,206.35	-	-	155,206.35
Realized/Unrealized gain (loss) on Investments	429,054.86	-	-	429,054.86
Synod assembly	7,903.63	-	-	7,903.63
Loss on sale of fixed assets	-	-	-	-
Payroll protection loan forgiveness	-	-	-	-
Other income	97,901.33	-	-	97,901.33
Special benevolences and other designated receipts (Schedule A-1)	-	957,020.08	-	957,020.08
Total Support and Revenue	2,155,488.53	957,020.08	-	3,112,508.61
Expenses:				
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, apportionment	596,417.59	-	-	596,417.59
Virginia Synod Causes:				
Office of Bishop	561,559.44	-	-	561,559.44
Programming and communications	67,214.54	-	-	67,214.54
Educational institutions and agencies	117,180.00	-	-	117,180.00
Campus ministry	64,500.00	-	-	64,500.00
Social ministry organization and agencies	19,729.92	-	-	19,729.92
Outdoor ministries	41,835.00	-	-	41,835.00
Synodical council activities	51,858.00	-	-	51,858.00
Regional Center for Missions	8,668.00	-	-	8,668.00
Synod Office	374,648.09	-	-	374,648.09
Contingencies and Other	3,942.38	-	-	3,942.38
Depreciation & Gain/Loss on Disposition of Old Assets	23,237.86	-	-	23,237.86
Remittances of special benevolences and other designated disbursements	-	942,245.06	-	942,245.06
Total Expenses	1,930,790.82	942,245.06	-	2,873,035.88
Excess of support and revenue over expenses (deficit)	224,697.71	14,775.02	-	239,472.73
Transfer to Council Designated Fund Balance	(64,975.19)	64,975.19	-	-
Net Assets January 31, 2023	2,194,913.87	3,765,104.71	70,040.10	6,030,058.68
Net Assets January 31, 2024	\$ 2,354,636.39	\$ 3,844,854.92	\$ 70,040.10	\$ 6,269,531.41

See accompanying notes to financial statements.



VIRGINIA SYNOD, EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

STATEMENT OF FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES-MODIFIED CASH BASIS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED JANUARY 31, 2024

	<u>Program Services</u>	<u>Management and General</u>	<u>Fundraising</u>	<u>Total</u>
Remittances of designated disbursements	\$ 942,245.06	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 942,245.06
Church-wide and other mission support	596,417.59	-	-	596,417.59
Salaries and related expenses	253,900.50	447,146.99	4,231.68	705,279.17
Conference of Deans	11,470.86	-	-	11,470.86
Travel	21,699.13	38,214.57	361.65	60,275.35
Bishop Housing	2,594.79	4,569.71	43.25	7,207.75
Ecumenical	6,210.00	-	-	6,210.00
Programming and communications	67,214.54	-	-	67,214.54
Educational institutions and agencies	117,180.00	-	-	117,180.00
Campus ministry	64,500.00	-	-	64,500.00
Social ministry organization and agencies	19,729.92	-	-	19,729.92
Outdoor ministry	41,835.00	-	-	41,835.00
Synodical council activities	-	23,022.17	-	23,022.17
Regional center for missions	8,668.00	-	-	8,668.00
Insurance	4,904.91	8,638.09	81.75	13,624.75
Professional fees	7,028.76	12,378.43	117.15	19,524.34
Office supplies and expenses	12,414.52	21,863.36	206.91	34,484.79
Telephone and network expenses	6,991.87	12,313.47	116.53	19,421.87
Rent	13,723.95	24,169.39	228.73	38,122.07
Lease expense	15,095.61	26,585.05	251.59	41,932.25
Bank fees	1,478.35	2,603.55	24.64	4,106.54
Repairs and Maintenance	2,637.36	4,644.68	43.96	7,326.00
Donations	-	-	-	-
Depreciation	<u>8,365.63</u>	<u>14,732.80</u>	<u>139.43</u>	<u>23,237.86</u>
Total Expenses	<u>\$ 2,226,306.35</u>	<u>\$ 640,882.26</u>	<u>\$ 5,847.27</u>	<u>\$ 2,873,035.88</u>
	77.49%	22.31%	0.20%	100.00%

See accompanying notes to financial statements.



VIRGINIA SYNOD, EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS-MODIFIED CASH BASIS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED JANUARY 31, 2024

Cash Flows From Operating Activities:

Excess of support and revenue over expenses (deficiency)	\$ 239,472.73
Non Cash (income) expenses included in excess of support and revenue over expenses (deficiency):	
Depreciation expense	23,237.86
(Gain) loss on disposition of fixed assets	-
Realized (gain) loss on sale of investments	21,879.90
Unrealized (gain) loss on investments	(450,934.76)
Increase (Decrease) in:	
Payroll taxes and withholdings	(2,237.08)
Funds held for others	(63,375.24)
Net cash provided by (used in) operations	(231,956.59)

Cash Flows From Investing Activities:

Purchase of auto and equipment	(39,574.30)
Proceeds from sale of assets	-
Proceeds from sale of investments	857,575.72
Purchase of investments	(824,944.13)
Net cash provided by (used in) Investing Activities	(6,942.71)

Cash Flows From Financing Activities:

Proceeds from new borrowings	-
Net cash provided by (used in) Financing Activities	-
Increase (decrease) in Cash and Cash Equivalents	(238,899.30)

Cash and Cash Equivalents 1/31/23	1,605,140.34
-----------------------------------	--------------

Cash and Cash Equivalents 1/31/24	\$ 1,366,241.04
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Supplemental Disclosures of Cash Flows Information:

Cash payments for:	
Interest	\$ -
Income Taxes	\$ -

Cash and Cash Equivalents consists of cash, money market accounts and certificates of deposits included in Current Assets. Money market accounts and certificates of deposits included in investments are not considered cash for this cash flow statement.

See accompanying notes to financial statements.



VIRGINIA SYNOD EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA
NOTES TO FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
JANUARY 31, 2024

NOTE 1 – NATURE OF ACTIVITIES AND SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES:

Nature of Activities

The Virginia Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is the name for a grouping of 145 congregations of the ELCA who are mostly in Virginia. The Virginia Synod Office of the Bishop has oversight for the collection of remittances from Virginia Synod members and the administration of the ELCA's programs and services for the area.

Basis of Accounting:

The financial statements are presented on a modified cash basis of accounting. Under this method of accounting, revenues are recognized in the year in which they are received and disbursements are recognized in the year in which they are paid. Accordingly, the accompanying financial statements are not intended to present financial position and results of operations in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles.

Fund Accounting

To ensure observance of limitations and restrictions placed on the use of resources available to the Synod, the accounts of the Synod are maintained in accordance with the principles of fund accounting. This is the procedure by which resources for various purposes are classified for accounting and reporting purposes into funds established according to their nature and purposes. Separate accounts are maintained for each fund; however, in the accompanying financial statements, funds that have similar characteristics have been combined into fund groups. Accordingly, all financial transactions have been recorded and reported by fund group.

Financial Statement Presentation

The financial statements present information regarding the financial position and activities according to two classes of net assets: without donor restrictions and designated with donor restrictions.

Without donor restrictions – Net assets for the general operations and not subject to donor restrictions. The Synod Council has designated, from net assets without donor restrictions, net assets for a specific use.

With donor restrictions – Net assets subject to donor-imposed stipulations that they be maintained permanently by the Organization. The income from these assets is available for either general operations or specific programs as specified by the donor.

Estimates

The preparation of financial statements in conformity with the modified cash basis requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amounts of assets and liabilities and disclosure of contingent assets and liabilities at the date of the financial statements and the reported amounts of revenues and expenses during the reporting period. Actual results could differ from those estimates.

**NOTE 1 – NATURE OF ACTIVITIES AND SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES
(CONTINUED):****Risks and Uncertainties**

The Organization invests in various types of investment securities which are exposed to various risks, such as interest rate, market, and credit risks. Due to the level of risk associated with certain investment securities, it is at least reasonably possible that changes in the values of investment securities will occur in the near term and such changes could materially affect the amounts reported in the statements of financial position.

Cash and Cash Equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents consist of cash, money market accounts and certificates of deposit included in the Current Asset section of the Statement of Assets, Liabilities and Net Assets – modified cash basis. Any money market accounts and certificate of deposits included in the Investment section of the Statement of Assets, Liabilities and Net Assets – modified cash basis have been set aside by The Virginia SYNOD as Investments and are not considered Cash and Cash Equivalents for these financial statements.

Capitalization and Depreciation

The Organization capitalizes all expenditures in excess of five hundred dollars (\$500) for property and equipment at cost, while donations of furniture and equipment are recorded at their estimated fair values. Such donations are reported as unrestricted unless the donor has restricted the donated asset to a specific purpose. Absent donor stipulations regarding how long those donated assets must be maintained, the Organization reports expirations of donor restrictions when the donated or acquired assets are placed in service as instructed by the donor. The Organization reclassifies temporarily restricted net assets to unrestricted net assets at that time.

Furniture and equipment are depreciated using the straight-line method over the estimated useful lives as follows:

Furniture and fixtures	7 years
Vehicles and equipment	5 years

Depreciation expense totaled \$23,237.86 for the year ended January 31, 2024.

Maintenance and repairs are charged to operations as incurred. Upon sale or disposition of property or equipment, the asset account is reduced by the cost and the accumulated depreciation account is reduced by the depreciation taken prior to the sale. Any resultant gain or loss is then recorded as income or expense.

Investments

Investments in marketable securities with readily determinable fair values and all investments in debt securities are reported at their fair values in the Statement of Assets, Liabilities, and Net Assets – Modified Cash Basis. Unrealized gains and losses are included in the Statement of Support, Revenue and Expenses – Modified Cash Basis.

These financial statements present investment balances at market value at December 31, 2023. The difference between the values at December 31, 2023 and January 31, 2024 are not reflected in these financial statements and do not have a material effect on these financial statements.

Compensated Absences

The Company has not accrued vacation pay. The Company's policy is to recognize these costs when actually paid.

**NOTE 1 – NATURE OF ACTIVITIES AND SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES
(CONCLUDED):**Revenue Recognition

The Synod's revenues consist of contributions by Synod congregations and grant income. Revenues are recognized when earned.

Donated Services and Support

The Organization utilizes the services of volunteers throughout the year. This contribution of services by the volunteers is not recognized in the financial statements unless the services received (a) create or enhance nonfinancial assets or (b) require specialized skills which are provided by individuals possessing those skills and would typically need to be purchased if not provided by donation. The donated services for the year ended January 31, 2024, did not meet the requirements above, therefore no amounts were recognized in the accompanying financial statements.

Income Taxes

The Organization is considered a Church Organization and is tax-exempt under Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code. The Organization is not required to file an income tax return with the Internal Revenue Service. The Organization is not a private foundation and had no unrelated business income for the year ended January 31, 2024.

Concentrations

The Synod maintains its commercial deposits with a local financial institution. Commercial deposits are insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation up to \$250,000. From time to time, the cash balances on deposit may exceed the FDIC insured limits. To date, the Synod has not experienced any losses in such account and believes it is not exposed to any significant credit risk on its cash deposits.

Subsequent Events

The Organization has evaluated subsequent events through July 26, 2024, which is the date on which the financial statements were available for issuance and concluded that there were no events or transactions that needed to be disclosed.

NOTE 2 – SUMMARY OF FIXED ASSETS IS AS FOLLOWS:

	<u>Cost</u>	<u>Accumulated Depreciation</u>	<u>Net</u>
Furniture and Equipment	\$ 86,390.12	\$ 79,583.89	\$ 6,806.23
Automobiles	<u>202,289.10</u>	<u>157,217.80</u>	<u>45,071.30</u>
Total	<u>\$ 288,679.22</u>	<u>\$ 236,801.69</u>	<u>\$ 51,877.53</u>

Depreciation expense for the year amounted to \$23,237.86. Additional revenue of \$-0- was charged under this category for obsolete equipment which was donated or scrapped or sold.

**NOTE 3 – LEASE COMMITMENTS:**

The Synod leases Bittle Hall from Roanoke College for use as its headquarters. The lease renews annually. The monthly rental is \$2,579.62, which is adjusted annually for inflation. The Synod also leases office space in Norfolk, Virginia. The lease renews annually. Rent is \$533.33 per month.

Minimum lease payments have not been computed.

NOTE 4 – PENSIONS:

The Synod contributes 12% of each employee's wages to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's National Pension Plan in each employee's behalf. The account is maintained in the employee's name. The amount remitted by the Synod to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for the year ended January 31, 2024 was \$64,578.64.

NOTE 5 – FUNDS HELD FOR OTHERS

Contributions that are designated for specific organizations or ministries not administered by the Synod are recorded as a current liability until forwarded to the proper organization or agency. The Synod's policy is to distribute the contributions on a monthly basis.

World Hunger	\$ 13,296.93
Designated Advance Gifts	4,647.07
ELCA Disaster Relief	2,927.75
First Portsmouth	16,527.71
Local Disaster Relief	<u>18,156.73</u>
 Total Funds held for Others	 <u>\$ 55,556.19</u>

NOTE 6 – FAIR VALUE:

Fair value is defined as the price that would be received to sell an asset or paid to transfer a liability in an orderly transaction between market participants at the measurement date. Accounting standards set a framework for measuring fair value using a three-tier hierarchy based on the extent to which inputs used in measuring fair value are observable in the market.

Financial assets and liabilities valued using level 1 inputs are based on unadjusted quoted market prices within active markets. Financial assets and liabilities valued using level 2 inputs are based primarily on quoted prices for similar assets or liabilities in active or inactive markets. Financial assets and liabilities using level 3 inputs were primarily valued using management's assumptions about the assumptions market participants would utilize in pricing the asset or liability. Valuation techniques utilized to determine fair value are consistently applied.



NOTE 6 – FAIR VALUE: (CONCLUDED)

Fair Value Measurements at Reporting Date Using:

<u>December 31, 2023</u>	<u>Fair Value</u>	<u>Quoted Prices In active Markets for Identical Assets (Level 1)</u>	<u>Significant Other Observable Inputs (Level 2)</u>	<u>Significant Unobservable Inputs (Level 3)</u>
Cash	\$ 44,990.19	\$ 44,990.19	\$ -	\$ -
Pooled investment account:				
Domestic equities	3,591,155.86	3,591,155.86	-	-
International equities	410,201.89	410,201.89	-	-
Fixed income instruments	861,009.08	861,009.08	-	-
Limited partnerships	-	-	-	-
Total	<u>\$ 4,907,357.02</u>	<u>\$ 4,907,357.02</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ -</u>

NOTE 7 - LIQUIDITY

The SYNOD has \$1,411,231.24 of financial assets available within 1 year of the balance sheet date to meet cash needs for general expenditure consisting of cash of \$1,366,241.05 and short-term investments of \$44,990.19. None of the financial assets are subject to donor or other contractual restrictions that make them unavailable for general expenditures within one year. The SYNOD has a policy to structure its financial assets to be available as its general expenditures, liabilities, and other obligations come due.



SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

VIRGINIA SYNOD, EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICASTATEMENT OF SUPPORT, REVENUE, AND EXPENSES WITHOUT DONOR RESTRICTIONSGENERAL-MODIFIED CASH BASISFOR THE YEAR ENDED JANUARY 31, 2024

Operating Revenue:	
BE/Mission Support	\$ 1,465,422.36
Non-Cash Contributions	-
Interest and Dividend Income	88,570.75
Thrivent Endowment Fund Income	66,635.60
Realized Gain(Loss) on Investments	(21,879.90)
Unrealized Gain(Loss) on Investments	450,934.76
Loss on sale of fixed assets	-
Synod assembly	7,903.63
Other Revenues	<u>97,901.33</u>
 Total Support and Revenue	 <u>2,155,488.53</u>
 Expenses:	
ELCA Apportionment	<u>596,417.59</u>
 Virginia Synod Causes:	
Office of Bishop:	
Conference of Deans:	
Deans - Expenses	470.86
Deans - Compensation	11,000.00
Staff:	
Staff Salary/Housing/SS Equiv	362,032.48
Staff Pension/Health Ins.	106,611.85
Staff Continuing Education	7,751.15
Staff Travel Living	39,725.31
Car Expense	20,447.96
DEM Travel Expense	102.08
Bishop Housing	7,207.75
Ecumenical:	
ERC - Council of Churches - Grant	<u>6,210.00</u>
 Total Office of Bishop	 <u>\$ 561,559.44</u>

See accompanying notes to financial statements.

**Programming and Communications:**

Christian Education

CE - Power In The Spirit 369.03

Youth Ministry:

YM - Youth Events 27,292.30

Candidacy:

CC - Expenses 746.48

CC - Annual Conference 1,467.10

CC - Candidate Processing Fees 1,000.00

CC - Financial Aid 21,680.04

Leadership Support:

LSC - Day Of Ministerium 7,608.24

LSC - 1st Call Theological Ed 110.00

Communications:

Communications Materials 6,941.35

Total Programming and

Communications 67,214.54**Educational Institution and Agency:**

Seminary Support 104,700.00

Roanoke College 12,480.00

Total Educational Institution

and Agency 117,180.00**Campus Ministry:**Campus Ministry Agencies 64,500.00

Total Campus Ministry

\$ 64,500.00

See accompanying notes to financial statements.

**Social Ministry Organization and Agencies:**

VICPP	\$ 2,550.00
Chaplain Services/Prison/Churches - VA	9,180.00
Virginia Lutheran Homes	<u>7,999.92</u>

Total Social Ministry Organization and Agencies	<u>19,729.92</u>
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Outdoor Ministry:

Caroline Furnace Camp	29,445.00
Hungry Mother Camp	<u>12,390.00</u>

Total Outdoor Ministry	<u>41,835.00</u>
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Synod Council Activities:

Synod Council - Expenses	16,842.17
Insurance Premiums	13,624.75
Legal Retainer Fees	111.08
Audit Support	15,100.00
Archives	<u>6,180.00</u>

Total Synod Council Activities	<u>51,858.00</u>
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Regional Center	<u>8,668.00</u>
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Synod Office:

Support Staff Salaries	148,757.05
Support Staff Pensions/Health	68,236.76
Support Staff - Employer SS	11,889.88
Office Oper. - Postage/Mail	2,545.15
Office Oper. - Office Supplies	25,192.39
Office Oper. - Telecomm.	18,189.37
Office Oper. - Misc.	2,804.87
Office Oper. - Vanco Charges	4,059.38
Office Oper. - Maint/Repairs	7,326.00
Office Oper. - Bank Charges	47.16
Office Oper. - Leasing	41,932.26
Office Oper. - Payroll Processing	4,313.25
Office Oper. - Network	1,232.50
Office Oper. - East	7,166.63
Office Oper. - Rent	<u>30,955.44</u>

Total Synod Office	<u>\$ 374,648.09</u>
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See accompanying notes to financial statements.

**Contingencies and Other**

Office Furnishings & Equipment	\$ 3,942.38
Office Oper. - Depreciation Expense	<u>23,237.86</u>

Total Contingencies and Other	<u>27,180.24</u>
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Virginia Synod Causes:

Total Synod Causes	<u>1,334,373.23</u>
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Total Expenses	<u>1,930,790.82</u>
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Excess of Support and Revenue Over Expenses (deficit)	<u>\$ 224,697.71</u>
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See accompanying notes to financial statements.



VIRGINIA SYNOD, EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

SCHEDULE OF CHANGES IN NET ASSETS WITHOUT DONOR RESTRICTIONS - COUNCIL DESIGNATED

FOR THE YEAR ENDED JANUARY 31, 2024

	Balance (Deficit) 1/31/2023	Receipts	Disbursements	Transfer Between Accounts	Balance (Deficit) 1/31/2024
<u>Congregational Life Activities</u>					
Winter Celebration Youth Event	\$ -	\$ 16,685.78	\$ 3,707.03	\$ -	\$ 12,978.75
7th Day Youth Event	250.79	13,329.85	12,810.04	-	770.60
Kairos Youth Event	-	28,251.95	28,251.95	-	-
Lost & Found Youth Event	-	14,111.43	14,111.43	-	-
Power in the Spirit	85.69	24,834.59	61,183.88	36,263.60	-
Power in the Spirit Scholarships	6,835.37	-	-	(6,835.37)	-
Roots & Wings	-	-	1,000.00	1,000.00	-
Total Congregational Life Activities	<u>7,171.85</u>	<u>97,213.60</u>	<u>121,064.33</u>	<u>30,428.23</u>	<u>13,749.35</u>
<u>Outreach</u>					
PNG Scholarship	68,807.83	3,681.92	-	-	72,489.75
Youth to Youth Project	23,978.99	-	-	(23,978.99)	-
Women In Ministry	<u>4,851.00</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>4,851.00</u>
Total Outreach	<u>97,637.82</u>	<u>3,681.92</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>(23,978.99)</u>	<u>77,340.75</u>
<u>Ministry</u>					
Pre-Retirement Retreat	-	-	500.00	500.00	-
Day of the Ministerium	-	22,794.13	22,294.13	(500.00)	-
Total Ministry	<u>-</u>	<u>22,794.13</u>	<u>22,794.13</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
<u>Miscellaneous</u>					
Leadership Convocations	-	34.83	34.83	-	-
Synod Assembly Expenses	-	114,825.60	120,795.49	4,000.00	(1,969.89)
Bishop Transition Costs	-	33,446.29	36,243.38	2,797.09	0.00
PNG Companion Travel Fund	-	333.33	-	34,893.99	35,227.32
ACTS Scholarships	3,759.69	-	-	(3,759.69)	-
ACTS	-	-	1,000.00	1,000.00	-
Healthy Congregation Ministry	14,995.99	299.00	15,294.99	-	-
Youth Director Discretionary Fund	3,100.00	5,223.22	1,015.02	-	7,308.20
Messiah, VB Closing	849,154.97	9,028.10	-	(69,000.00)	789,183.07
Warne Trust Fund	923,903.30	21,957.14	138,682.25	-	807,178.19
Funding For Stewardship Events	(554.39)	6,429.29	6,044.90	170.00	-
Forwarding Faith	1,656,930.57	4,109.35	84,660.21	-	1,576,379.71
SYNOD Vitality Grant	17,668.90	27,418.14	33,454.00	(2,622.72)	9,010.32
Holy Innovation Grant	11,595.72	-	3,553.22	-	8,042.50
Crib To Cross ST Church	16,915.16	11,500.00	22,917.16	-	5,498.00
Faith, Finance and Freedom	18,027.50	5,100.09	22,323.33	-	804.26
LCM ELCA Grant	10,701.23	-	1,500.00	-	9,201.23
Peace & Hope	9,212.25	1,365.00	2,296.13	-	8,281.12
All Places Together	-	68,161.40	96,627.37	29,302.97	837.00
Lay Preacher Academy	(3,097.95)	8,860.18	825.51	(240.31)	4,696.41
VA Synod Western Shore Exploration	(2,282.85)	-	-	2,282.85	-
Truth In Love Conflict Mgt Project	18,939.82	20,678.19	32,240.73	(7,377.28)	-
Lake Anna Exploration	3,918.84	-	2,056.40	(1,862.44)	-
1st Port Ministry Support Fund	25,653.19	-	-	-	25,653.19
1st Port Ministry Special Project Fund	22,337.71	-	-	10,000.00	32,337.71
1st Port Ministry New Mission Start Fund	44,623.93	4,506.12	-	(18,803.51)	30,326.54
Radford Ministry	13,951.46	489,401.83	108,831.68	-	394,521.61
Congregation Workshops	840.00	320.00	990.00	(170.00)	-
VA Fund & Mission - Ministry Renew	-	-	67,000.00	67,000.00	-
Ministry Renewal Leaves Grant Funds	-	333.33	-	10,915.00	11,248.33
Total Miscellaneous	<u>3,660,295.04</u>	<u>833,330.43</u>	<u>798,386.60</u>	<u>58,525.95</u>	<u>3,753,764.82</u>
Total Net Assets Without Donor Restrictions - Council Designated	<u>\$ 3,765,104.71</u>	<u>\$ 957,020.08</u>	<u>\$ 942,245.06</u>	<u>\$ 64,975.19</u>	<u>\$ 3,844,854.92</u>

See accompanying notes to financial statements.



VIRGINIA SYNOD, EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA
SCHEDULE OF CHANGES IN NET ASSETS WITH DONOR RESTRICTIONS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED JANUARY 31, 2024

	Balance (Deficit) 1/31/2023	Receipts	Disbursements	Balance (Deficit) 1/31/2024
Koontz Bequest	\$ 50,011.36	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 50,011.36
Bozeman Endowment Fund	20,028.74	-	-	20,028.74
Total Net Assets With Donor Restrictions	\$ 70,040.10	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 70,040.10

See accompanying notes to financial statements.



VIRGINIA SYNOD, EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

SCHEDULE OF INVESTMENTS

DECEMBER 31, 2023

	<u>Cost Basis</u>	<u>Market Value</u>	<u>Unrealized Gain (Loss)</u>
ELCA Pooled Investment Accounts	\$ 1,367,803.66	\$ 1,736,100.21	\$ 368,296.55
Thrivent Investment Account	954,913.56	907,655.70	(47,257.86)
Charles Schwab Investment Account	<u>1,875,251.94</u>	<u>2,263,601.11</u>	<u>388,349.17</u>
	<u>\$ 4,197,969.16</u>	<u>\$ 4,907,357.02</u>	<u>\$ 709,387.86</u>
Unrealized Gains/(Loss) End of Year	\$ 709,387.86		
Unrealized Gains/(Loss) Beginning of Year	<u>258,453.10</u>		
Unrealized Gains/(Loss) Current Year	450,934.76		
Realized Gains/(Loss) Current Year	<u>(21,879.90)</u>		
Total Realized/Unrealized Gains	<u>\$ 429,054.86</u>		

Detail - ELCA Pooled Investment Accounts

Trust For Mission #270772	\$ 227,052.12	\$ 348,959.56	\$ 121,907.44
Mission Support #270792	63,895.52	89,902.76	26,007.24
Unrestricted Copenhaver Fund #270922	226,744.00	327,150.54	100,406.54
Small Congregation Ministry Fund #270927	23,503.02	29,626.61	6,123.59
Messiah/All Saints Closing #272158	<u>826,609.00</u>	<u>940,460.74</u>	<u>113,851.74</u>
	<u>\$ 1,367,803.66</u>	<u>\$ 1,736,100.21</u>	<u>\$ 368,296.55</u>

See accompanying notes to financial statements.



Virginia Synod Council

The Virginia Synod Council serves a visionary role in the Virginia Synod. In conjunction with the Office of the Bishop, the Synod 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	Tidewater-Coastal
Secretary	Judy Castelee*	First Term, Concludes 2027	Southern Valley-Blue Ridge
Treasurer	John Krallman*	First Term, Concludes 2027	New River-Appalachia

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-Coastal
The Rev. Kayla Keilholtz	First Term	Ebenezer, Marion	Highlands-Appalachia
The Rev. James Armentrout	First Term	Christ, Roanoke	Southern-Blue Ridge
Megan Edwards**	First Term	Epiphany, Richmond	Richmond-Piedmont
Jillian Stierwalt	First Term	St. Andrew, Portsmouth	Tidewater-Coastal
Ali Armentrout	Youth Member	Christ, Roanoke	Southern-Blue Ridge

*Executive Committee Member

**Appointed by Synod Council in 2024, the position will need to be elected at the 2025 Synod Assembly



Expectations of a Member of Synod Council

1. Attend all meetings of the Synod Council. Presently, these include:
 - Two regular meetings (one in-person, one on Zoom)
 - A meeting on the afternoon and evening of the Thursday preceding the Synod Assembly and a brief meeting immediately following the Synod Assembly
 - One annual retreat (evening of the 1st day through noon of the 3rd day)
 - Synod Assembly
 - Special meetings called
2. Serve a four-year term commencing at the adjournment of the Synod Assembly at which elected.
3. Maintain active membership in a congregation of the Virginia 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 Synod Council.
7. Be familiar with the Virginia Synod constitution insofar as it affects the activities of the Synod Council, the Synod Assembly, and the Virginia Synod.
8. Share the vision and mission of the Virginia Synod with congregations, rostered ministers, ministry partners, and all members of the Virginia 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 Virginia Synod.
10. Assume responsibility occasionally for opening and closing devotions at meetings.
11. Serve without compensation.
12. Receive expense reimbursement for transportation, housing, 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 on who serves on the Synod Council: vasynod.org/about/synod-council/

Expectations are defined in the [Virginia Synod's Constitution, Bylaws, & Continuing Resolutions](#)



REPORTS FROM THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE



Report of the Assembly Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee for the 2025 Synod Assembly, chaired by Judy Castelee, 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

Nominee for Class of 2027 – 1 member (*Synod Council appointed in 2024*)

- One Lay Member, young adult (30 or younger), any gender:
 - Germanna
 - No nominee identified by the time of the report

Nominees for Class of 2029 – 6 members

- One Lay Member, man:
 - Piedmont
 - No nominee identified by the time of the report
- One Lay Member, man:
 - Appalachia
 - No nominee identified by the time of the report
- One Lay Member, any gender:
 - At-Large
 - Patricia Corliss
 - Karen Sutton
- One Lay Member, any gender:
 - Person of Color or whose primary language is other than English
 - Sylvia Eley
 - Cedric Wilson
- One Rostered Minister (Pastor or Deacon):
 - Coastal- woman
 - Deacon Liz Brendle Fox
 - Deacon Lisa Geiger
 - Rev. Tina Melusky
 - Rev. Jennifer Osheim-Owen
- One Rostered Minister (Pastor or Deacon):
 - Valley- woman
 - Rev. Kristen Van Stee



Report of the Assembly Nominating Committee

Committee on Discipline

Nominees for Class of 2031 - 4 members (6-year term)

- Three to be elected, lay members: at least 1 man, 1 woman, 1 any gender
 - Woman
 - Erin Hagar
 - Man
 - No nominee identified by the time of the report
 - Any Gender
 - No nominee identified by the time of the report
- One to be elected, rostered minister: 1 any gender
 - Rev. Joel Neubauer

ELCA Church Council

Nominee for Class of 2031 - 1 to be elected (6-year term)

- Lay Member - Woman - person of color and/or whose primary language is other than English - Young Adult (at the time of the synod assembly between 18-30 years old)
 - No nominee identified by the time of the report
 - (Note: While Jillian Stierwalt has already been nominated for the position at the 2024 Synod Assembly, the ELCA Constitution requests that two nominees be presented to allow attendees at the 2025 Churchwide Assembly to vote for one of two candidates.)



Roles to be Elected at the 2025 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 the 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 2027 – 1 member (*Synod Council appointed in 2024*)

- **ONE Lay Member, young adult (30 or younger), any gender:**
 - Germanna

Class of 2029 – 6 members

- **ONE Lay Member, man:**
 - Piedmont
- **ONE Lay Member, man:**
 - Appalachia
- **ONE Lay Member, any gender:**
 - At-Large



Class of 2029 (*continued*)

- **ONE Lay Member, any gender:**
 - Person of Color or whose primary language is other than English
- **ONE Rostered Minister (Pastor or Deacon):**
 - Coastal- woman
- **ONE Rostered Minister (Pastor or Deacon):**
 - Valley- woman

Committee on Discipline

The Virginia Synod Committee on Discipline serves the Consultation and Discipline Process in this church. The consultation and discipline process assures due process and due protection for the accused, other parties, and this church in the discipline process, which governs officers, rostered ministers, congregations, and members of congregations. When charges are brought following the consultation process, the detailed Disciplinary Process is outlined in the ELCA Constitution and Bylaws (**20.22.17.**) takes effect.

Class of 2031 - 4 members (6-year term)

- **Three** to be elected, lay members: at least 1 man, 1 woman, 1 any gender
- **One** to be elected, rostered minister: 1 any gender

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.

Class of 2031 - 1 to be elected (6-year term)

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



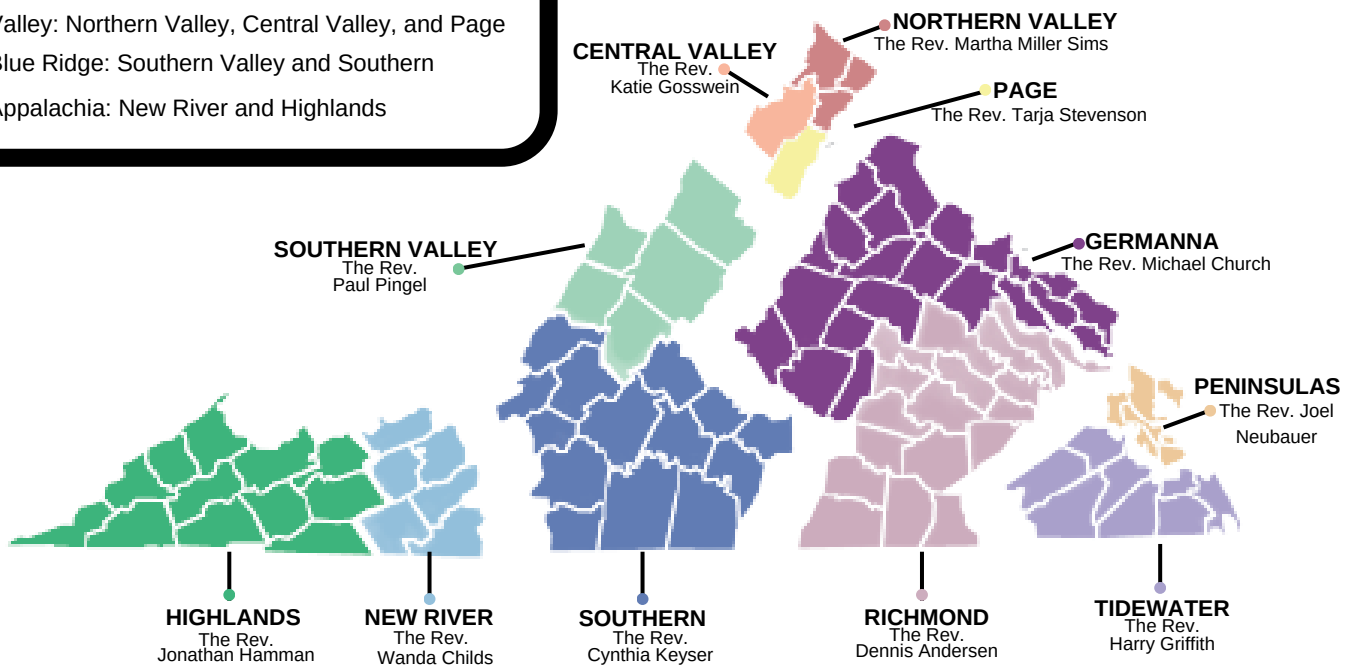
Virginia Synod Conferences and Abbreviation Map

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

CONFERENCE PARTNERSHIPS

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



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

Intertwining
Hope**Nomination Form for 2025 Synod Assembly****Nominee For:** Virginia Synod Council**Virginia Synod Council****Nominee For:** Synod Council: Class of 2029-Lay Member at-large (any partnership), any gender**Gender** Female**Age at the time of the Synod Assembly** 31 or older**Do you Identify as a Person of Color and/or Language other than English** No**Nominee Contact Information****Name Preferred** Patricia Corliss**Pronouns** she/her/hers**Congregation/Parish Name and Location** St. Timothy, Norfolk**Conference** Tidewater**Conference Partnership** Coastal (Tidewater & Peninsulas)**Nominee Experience****Nominee Occupation** Retired Registered Nurse - Present/Church Secretary**List experiences or factors that you believe have prepared you for service in this position (up to three)**
Working/Volunteering with St. Timothy's Food Pantry
Working as a Registered Nurse
Congregational Representative to Virginia Synod



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

Sunday School Teacher Sunday School Superintendent
Church Council Member Church Council Secretary
Presently Church Secretary
Election Officer/Poll Worker
Substitute School Teacher

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

Volunteer with Thrivent to El Salvador and the Dominican Republic to assist with building shelters for families
This is a self-nomination

Will serve if elected

Submission

Name of person submitting the form

Patricia Corliss

Signature

Date Submitted:

Apr 30, 2025

Intertwining
Hope**Nomination Form for 2025 Synod Assembly****Nominee For:** Virginia Synod Council**Virginia Synod Council****Nominee For:** Synod Council: Class of 2029-Lay Member at-large
(any partnership), any gender**Gender** Female**Age at the time of the Synod
Assembly** 31 or older**Do you Identify as a Person of
Color and/or Language other than
English** No**Nominee Contact Information****Name** Karen Sutton**Preferred Pronouns** she, her**Congregation/Parish Name and
Location** St. John, Norfolk**Conference** Tidewater**Conference Partnership** Coastal (Tidewater & Peninsulas)**Nominee Experience****Nominee Occupation** Retired network engineer/software specialist, CHKD**List experiences or factors that
you believe have prepared you
for service in this position (up to
three)** Church Council member
synod assembly delegate, four times
call committee member



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

currently financial secretary
Communion Assistant/lector
past council secretary

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

Civic league delegate to state corporation commission
past president Tidewater Data Processing Management Association

Will serve if elected

Yes

Submission

Name of person submitting the form

Harry Griffith

Signature

H.G. NES

Date Submitted:

May 07, 2025



Intertwining
Hope



Nomination Form for 2025 Synod Assembly

Nominee For: Virginia Synod Council

Virginia Synod Council

Nominee For: Synod Council: Class of 2029-Lay Member, person of color or whose primary language is other than English, any gender

Gender Female

Age at the time of the Synod Assembly 31 or older

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

Nominee Contact Information

Name Sylvia A Eley

Congregation/Parish Name and Location St. Timothy, Norfolk

Conference Tidewater

Conference Partnership Coastal (Tidewater & Peninsulas)

**Nominee Experience****Nominee Occupation**

Insurance Agent

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

My gifts are used to the glory of God. For six years, I have served as a board member for the VSWO including two years as Vice President.

Currently, I am Tapestry Team member, serving as the Co-Chair for Women's Mission and Justice.

In addition these experiences, I have been appointed to serve on the Racial Justice Task Force for Women of the ELCA.

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

My commitment to God and the kingdom's work has led me to participate in Synod events, including conducting a workshop on Racism at Power in the Spirit and as a reader at Bishop Humphrey's installation. During the Tenth Triennial Convention (2017) in Minneapolis, MN, and the Twelfth Triennial Convention(2023) in Phoenix, AZ, I represented the state as a voting member.

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

I am a memeber of the Chesapeake Medical Reserve Corp.

Will serve if elected

Yes

Submission**Name of person submitting the form**

Sylvia Eley

Signature**Date Submitted:**

May 09, 2025

Intertwining
Hope**Nomination Form for 2025 Synod Assembly****Nominee For:** Virginia Synod Council**Virginia Synod Council****Nominee For:** Synod Council: Class of 2029-Lay Member, person of color or whose primary language is other than English, any gender**Gender** Male**Age at the time of the Synod Assembly** 31 or older**Do you Identify as a Person of Color and/or Language other than English** Yes**Nominee Contact Information****Name** Cedric Wilson**Congregation/Parish Name and Location** St. Philip, Roanoke**Conference** Southern**Conference Partnership** Blue Ridge (Southern & Southern Valley)**Nominee Experience****Nominee Occupation** Mental Health Therapist**List experiences or factors that you believe have prepared you for service in this position (up to three)** I bring a diverse and holistic background shaped by years of leadership in both professional and ministry settings. As the Founder of Seeking Wellness Counseling Services, I have cultivated a practice centered on emotional healing, resilience, and culturally safe spaces-values that deeply align with the inclusive and compassionate mission of the Virginia Synod. My work involves supervising a team of clinicians, facilitating community engagement, and supporting individual and group wellness.

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

Beyond my professional role, I have maintained a consistent and active presence in church ministry throughout my life. My ministry journey began in youth leadership during high school, extended through college and post-college years as a young-adult, during which I regularly facilitated group discussions, planned retreats, and supported worship and fellowship programming. My combined experience in mental health leadership and congregational ministry has helped me develop a collaborative leadership style rooted in discernment, empathy, and the belief that the Spirit moves most freely when we create brave, inclusive, and relational spaces.

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

I have served the church in various capacities, including youth ministry leadership from high school through post-college, and as a Church Council member from 2015 to 2018.

In addition, I have served as a member of the ELCA's Churchwide Young Adult Steering Committee from 2023-2024

Finally, I currently serve as a member of Caroline Furnace Camp and Retreat Center's DEI committee.

I have consistently engaged in community service that bridges mental health, advocacy, and justice. I currently serve on the

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

Roanoke City Human Services Advisory Board, where I help evaluate and guide funding priorities for local social service initiatives. I also serve on the Advocacy Committee of the Virginia Counselors Association, where I contribute to statewide efforts to shape policy and promote mental health access and equity.

In addition to these formal roles, I have participated as a panel expert at Virginia's Conference on Race, offering insights on racial trauma, systemic inequities, and paths to healing.

This is a self-nomination

Will serve if elected**Submission****Name of person submitting the form**

Cedric Wilson

Signature**Date Submitted:**

May 09, 2025

Intertwining
Hope**Nomination Form for 2025 Synod Assembly****Nominee For:** Virginia Synod Council**Virginia Synod Council****Nominee For:** Synod Council: Class of 2029-Rostered Minister from Coastal Partnership, woman**Gender** Female**Age at the time of the Synod Assembly** 31 or older**Do you Identify as a Person of Color and/or Language other than English** No**Nominee Contact Information****Name** Elizabeth (Liz) Brendle Fox**Congregation/Parish Name and Location** Gloria Dei, Hampton**Conference** Peninsulas**Conference Partnership** Coastal (Tidewater & Peninsulas)**Nominee Experience****Nominee Occupation** Deacon (Hampton Healthy Families)**List experiences or factors that you believe have prepared you for service in this position (up to three)**

- faithful service (in various public settings) to the call of Word and Service
- wide view and experience of ELCA (and full communion partner) systems and cultures in the Midwest and South/East Coast
- firsthand perspective of parenthood, community needs and clergy relationships and the needs/resources for comprehensive physical, mental, spiritual and social safety among all people



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

-As a deacon, works closely with fellow ordained colleagues (deacons and pastors) to preach and to provide care-filled leadership within congregations--bearing witness to the valid and vital overlap between service inside and outside the specific lives of congregations. -active ministry in several synods in the northern Plains and South/East Coast (and as called previously with partners in the United Methodist Church) provide a wider cope of experience and exposure to innovative ways for the church to live in our local expressions -raising an adolescent child, sharing a homelife that yokes a pastor's perspective with a deacon's experience, working with Hampton Healthy Families to provide appropriate access to resources for all people: these are skills that could speak well to the comprehensive needs of our synod today.

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

-creative work with sewing and openness to help others build creative confidence and self-supporting skillsets
-panelist for "All In A Day's Work: Deacons, The Duct Tape That Holds The Church Together" with 2024 Mid-Winter Power in the Spirit Yes

Will serve if elected

Submission

Name of person submitting the form

Joel Neubauer

Signature

Date Submitted:

May 05, 2025

Intertwining
Hope**Nomination Form for 2025 Synod Assembly****Nominee For:** Virginia Synod Council**Virginia Synod Council****Nominee For:** Synod Council: Class of 2029-Rostered Minister from Coastal Partnership, woman**Gender** Female**Age at the time of the Synod Assembly** 31 or older**Do you Identify as a Person of Color and/or Language other than English** No**Nominee Contact Information****Name** Deacon Lisa J Geiger**Congregation/Parish Name and Location** Emmanuel, Virginia Beach**Conference** Tidewater**Conference Partnership** Coastal (Tidewater & Peninsulas)**Nominee Experience****Nominee Occupation** Director of Continuing Education; Instructional Technologist, Virginia Wesleyan University**List experiences or factors that you believe have prepared you for service in this position (up to three)** I have more than thirty years' corporate experience in managerial, administrative, technical, educational, and customer support work.

As a Deacon, my specialization area is Church Administration. I was the Church Operations Manager for First Lutheran, Norfolk. The key strengths that I possess that I feel are beneficial for serving on Synod Council include an ability to work on multiple tasks, strong communication skills, and process and detailed-oriented.



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

Since 2018, I have been serving as the Candidacy Committee Process Administrator where my responsibilities include working with new and continuing candidates to ensure they have submitted all of the required forms and information for each phase of the candidacy process.
I have also been serving as Secretary of the Assembly for Synod Assembly since 2018.
I have served on Congregation Councils as a lay member, including Council President, and as a rostered leader when I served in the parish.

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

Food Pantry coordinator/volunteer at St. Michael, Virginia Beach.

Birdneck Elementary Outreach - food bags for 50+ students during their Thanksgiving and Spring breaks, as well as a school supply drive in the summer.

Support the People in Need (PIN) Ministry partnership and food pantry work at my current congregation.

Will serve if elected

This is a self-nomination

Submission

Name of person submitting the form

Lisa Geiger

Signature

Date Submitted:

May 10, 2025

Intertwining
Hope**Nomination Form for 2025 Synod Assembly****Nominee For:** Virginia Synod Council**Virginia Synod Council****Nominee For:** Synod Council: Class of 2029-Rostered Minister from Coastal Partnership, woman**Gender** Female**Age at the time of the Synod Assembly** 31 or older**Do you Identify as a Person of Color and/or Language other than English** No**Nominee Contact Information****Name** Tina Melusky**Congregation/Parish Name and Location** Trinity, Newport News**Conference****Conference Partnership** Peninsulas

Coastal (Tidewater & Peninsulas)

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

- faithful service in call to Word and Sacrament (as parish pastor and to parochial school [preK-8])
- active and continued commitment to peace and justice, locally and globally
- experience of working on a synodical level for clergy and lay ministry needs

**Nominee Experience**

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

-As pastor to a congregation and school, administrative tasks have been well used alongside pastoral skills--especially helpful in times of personnel transition (e.g. church musicians, school leaders and teachers) and pastoral ministry (e.g. extending gospel care in times of grief, crisis). -Peace and justice as gospel ministry have been seen in the leadership for the congregation to be explicitly Reconciling in Christ, to host emergency shelters for unhoused neighbors, and to take part internationally in medical service in Central America. -On a regional level for clergy and lay ministry, has served on our First Call Theological Education team for three years, as well as the youth planning committee for three years; active in local synod conference and with ecumenical partners.

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

-life of joy and compassion as guardian of a beloved dog, through puppyhood and health concerns of older age
-continued education through United Lutheran Seminary to stay connected and to grow in relationship with peers and current theological understandings

Will serve if elected

Yes

Submission

Name of person submitting the form

Joel Neubauer

Signature

Date Submitted:

May 05, 2025

Intertwining
Hope**Nomination Form for 2025 Synod Assembly****Nominee For:** Virginia Synod Council**Virginia Synod Council****Nominee For:** Synod Council: Class of 2029-Rostered Minister from Coastal Partnership, woman**Gender** Female**Age at the time of the Synod Assembly** 31 or older**Do you Identify as a Person of Color and/or Language other than English** No**Nominee Contact Information****Name** Jennifer Osheim-Owen**Congregation/Parish Name and Location** First, Norfolk**Conference** Peninsulas**Conference Partnership** Coastal (Tidewater & Peninsulas)**Nominee Experience****Nominee Occupation** Chaplain at Williamsburg Landing (Pastor)**List experiences or factors that you believe have prepared you for service in this position (up to three)**

- faithful ministry to Word and Sacrament in congregational and specialized settings
- the unique experience as a pastor in an ecumenical chaplaincy position for a non-church community
- experience of ELCA synods and cultures across the midwest and in coastal south



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

-Knowledge of the pastoral role and experience in congregational settings AND in residential, non-congregational settings provides a bridge understanding of the gospel in various circumstances
-Current work with an ecumenical partner in chaplaincy, and caring for the varied spiritual needs of ecumenical/inter-religious, provides a wide framework of adaptability to meet people where they are.
-Wide experiences of church life and culture across various ELCA regions helps to offer fresh perspectives of ministry possibilities in our synod

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

-Board Certified Chaplain, demonstrating a focused program of graduate semester hours or equivalent credits to provide accountable care for others
-In a 2017 profile by Chad Thompson, Pastor Osheim-Owen shared: "My mission statement, so to speak, is that I really feel that people want to be seen, heard, and valued, and my goal is to provide a venue for that.... I do a lot of listening,' ... 'Listening to what's going on. I am not necessarily here to fix something, but to provide that listening ear to provide that assurance that God is in our midst."

Will serve if elected

Yes

Submission

Name of person submitting the form

Joel Neubauer

Signature

Date Submitted:

May 05, 2025

Intertwining
Hope**Nomination Form for 2025 Synod Assembly****Nominee For:** Virginia Synod Council**Virginia Synod Council****Nominee For:** Synod Council: Class of 2029-Rostered Minister from Valley Partnership, woman**Gender** female**Age at the time of the Synod Assembly** 31 or older**Do you Identify as a Person of Color and/or Language other than English** No**Nominee Contact Information****Name** Rev. Kristen E Van Stee**Preferred Pronouns** she/her/hers**Congregation/Parish Name and Location** Mt. Zion, New Market**Conference** Central Valley**Conference Partnership** Valley (Central Valley, Northern Valley, & Page)



Nominee Experience

Nominee Occupation

Ordained Pastor

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

As I consider one of the overarching themes of my ministry the past ten years, a spiritual thread that runs through it all is that of discernment. I have served as a pastor to small rural congregations in the cornfields of Nebraska, and I have also served on synod staff and on churchwide staff. While the settings and the scope of the ministry was all very different, I felt myself to be part of a faithful group of people who were striving to discern signs of Christ's Kingdom breaking into this world and how the Holy Spirit was inviting us to be a part of it.

While I have sat in on many positive ministry meetings over the years, the difficult meetings were perhaps where I felt the hard work of discernment the most. We struggled as a group to find common ground, maintain the peace of Christ, and discern God's truth somewhere in mess.

1)I served a two point parish as my first call and walked with one of the congregations as they finally discerned it was time to close as a congregation.

2)With the bishop and the NE Synod Consultation Committee we accompanied a congregation through the constitutional consultation process.

3)I met with several Nebraska synod congregations that were discerning disaffiliating with the ELCA and accompanied them through the constitutional process while also providing pastoral care.



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

1) Served as half-time Assistant to the Bishop of the Nebraska Synod 2017-2024

- Regularly attended NE Synod council meetings and made reports to that body
- Regularly attended/lead synod staff meetings and synod committee meetings
- Was responsible with other Assistants for the synod call process, first call education, lay leadership academy, pastoral care for communities and leaders, synod relations with congregations and leaders, and discipline
- Visited the many congregations of Nebraska, listened to peoples' joys and concerns, engaged in discernment with them as we prayerfully looked for signs of the Holy Spirit at work.

2) Served as half-time Candidacy and Leadership Manager for Region 4 of the ELCA through the Churchwide Office 2020-2024

- Regularly attended candidacy meetings for synods in Region 4. Provided leadership and expertise in ELCA candidacy guidelines and requirements.
- Regularly attended Churchwide Office all-staff meetings and candidacy and leadership team meetings. Learned more about the workings of the Churchwide Office.
- Regularly met with leaders and professors of various seminaries as part of candidate panels.
- Occasionally helped lead ELCA candidacy seminars
- Met often with candidates to listen empathetically and provide counsel. Also advised chairs of synod candidacy committees on navigating difficult task of accompanying candidates faithfully.

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

- Accompany the wonderful people of Mt. Zion Lutheran in New Market as they continue their own community outreach ministry "A Shepherd's Hand" providing emergency gift cards, bill coverage, household goods or supplies, etc. We also partner with Shenandoah Valley Local Ministries and provide bags of food for the students of Minnick School in Harrisonburg to take home.

- I currently volunteer once a month at New Market Food Pantry and serve as a Spanish language interpreter.

- My husband and I currently sponsor and co-lead a small Dungeons and Dragons campaign at the county library for a group of middle-school boys. It's so much fun!



Will serve if elected

This is a self-nomination

Submission

Name of person submitting the form

Kristen Van Stee

Signature

Date Submitted:

Apr 29, 2025

Intertwining
Hope**Nomination Form for 2025 Synod Assembly****Nominee For:** Committee on Discipline**Committee on Discipline****Nominee For:** Committee on Discipline: Lay Member-Woman**Gender** Female**Age at the time of the Synod Assembly** 31 or older**Do you Identify as a Person of Color and/or Language other than English** No**Nominee Contact Information****Name** Erin Hagar**Preferred Pronouns** she/her**Congregation/Parish Name and Location** Trinity, Pulaski**Conference** New River**Conference Partnership** Appalachia (Highlands & New River)**Nominee Experience****Nominee Occupation** Elementary Teacher - I have taught fifth grade for 24 years**List experiences or factors that you believe have prepared you for service in this position (up to three)**

- I am a lifelong Lutheran and have been active in various conference, synodical, and churchwide events.
- I have held several leadership roles within my own congregation



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

-Congregational Call Committee Chair (2022 - 2023)
-Congregational Council Vice-President and Secretary (Have served in the past and am also currently serving)
-Virginia Synodical Women's Organization Parliamentarian (Past)

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

-Randolph House Foundation Board Member and Secretary (2022 -Current) (Foundation provides grants to local non-profit organizations)
-GO Pulaski County Day of Service Project Leader (Past and Current)
-Participate in a variety of community service projects through the Circle of Ruth, our Women of the ELCA congregational unit (Past and Current)

Will serve if elected

Yes

Submission

Name of person submitting the form

Erin Hagar

Signature

Date Submitted:

May 14, 2025

Intertwining
Hope**Nomination Form for 2025 Synod Assembly****Nominee For:** Committee on Discipline**Committee on Discipline****Nominee For:** Committee on Discipline: Rostered Minister: Any Gender**Gender** Male**Age at the time of the Synod Assembly** 31 or older**Do you Identify as a Person of Color and/or Language other than English** No**Nominee Contact Information****Name** Joel S Neubauer**Preferred Pronouns** he/him**Congregation/Parish Name and Location** St. Mark, Yorktown**Conference** Peninsulas**Conference Partnership** Coastal (Tidewater & Peninsulas)**Nominee Experience****Nominee Occupation** Pastor**List experiences or factors that you believe have prepared you for service in this position (up to three)**

-Active service within the ELCA since 2007, in part- and full-time ministry with four congregations of various sizes (New England Synod, 2007-2011; Virginia Synod, 2012-present)

-Senior pastor of my current call since 2014, which has included staff supervision of an associate pastor, a seminary intern and lay ministers

-Skills in pastoral listening and attention to procedural detail (and trusting Christ to be wiser than I).



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

-Dean of Peninsulas Conference (2016-present)
-Board of Caroline Furnace Lutheran Camp & Retreat (2019-present)
-Visitor to Lutheran World Federation assemblies (Windhoek, Namibia 2017; Krakow, Poland 2023)

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

-Special Education Para-educator/Substitute Teacher (2011-2012, while vice pastor in VA Synod)
-Active member of York County Ministers ecumenical association (2014-present)
-Assistant Precinct Chief /Deputy Registrar, York County Voter Registration (2015-present)

Will serve if elected

This is a self-nomination

Submission

Name of person submitting the form

Joel Neubauer

Signature



Date Submitted:

May 14, 2025



REPORTS FROM REFERENCE AND COUNSEL

**Report from the Committee of Reference and Counsel**

There were no resolutions submitted for consideration at the 2025 Synod Assembly. The Virginia Synod Office of the Bishop thanks those who volunteered to serve on this committee.



REPORTS FROM TEAMS AND COMMITTEES



Report from 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.

We are pleased to report that in 2024 Chantal Branker, Elisabeth Sanger, and Andrew Thomas received positive Endorsement decisions. Chad Crowley will seek Endorsement this summer. In 2025 Andy Taminger was approved for ordination in the ministry of Word and Sacrament. Jayme Kokkenen is scheduled for an Approval interview shortly before the Assembly.

There are approximately twenty inquirers, individuals who are actively discerning their call to ministry. Two of these inquirers are expected to have an Entrance interview and begin candidacy this summer.

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 Gary Kinder and James Ingraham who completed their term on the committee, and the Rev. Luke Swanson who accepted a call outside Virginia. Thank you, gentlemen, your service on the committee supporting our ministry candidates is very much appreciated.



Report from the Candidacy Committee

Since our last assembly, we have welcomed three new members to the Candidacy Committee. Joining the committee are Deacon Elizabeth Brendle Fox (Hampton Healthy Families, Hampton), Kris McClellan (St. Andrew, Portsmouth), and Carol McGuire McCue (First English, Richmond).

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, participating in interviewing them, and using understanding, patience, and compassion in supporting these candidates on their ministry journey. Welcome!

Robert Quandahl, Chair



Report from the Companion Synod Team

A delegation from the Virginia Synod journeyed to Papua New Guinea in August of 2024 to visit and build relationships with our companion synod in the New Guinea Islands (NGI) District of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Papua New Guinea. It was a fruitful trip focused on ways to continue walking together as sisters and brothers in Christ. Those who traveled from the Virginia Synod were: the Rev. Kelly Bayer Derrick, the Rev. Wanda Childs, the Rev. Michael Church, and the Rev. Derek Boggs.

Other highlights from the year:

- We are working on an update to our Virginia Synod/PNG-NGI covenant.
- Congregations in the NGI District are looking into the possibility of a brass band music ministry for youth. Once we have more details on this new venture, we may discuss ways we can support this ministry.
- The Virginia Synod continues to support the education of NGI pastors' children through prayer and through scholarships.
- The Committee supported prayerfully and financially a PNG graduate student at JMU.
- We joined our partners of the Central States Synod's PNG Companion Team on a Zoom meeting with folks from PNG concerning care for creation in PNG and the challenges and opportunities involved with these issues.



Report from the Ecumenical Relations Committee

In the words of the newly-elected Pope Leo XIV, "Peace be with you all."

At the writing of this report from the Ecumenical Relations Committee, we share the joy and celebration of our Roman Catholic siblings in Christ as they prepare to be shepherded by their new ecclesiastical leader, a citizen of both North and South America, Pope Leo XIV. We pray for our all-wise and loving triune God to bless the worldwide communion of Roman Catholic members in their devotion to Jesus' mission and expression of divine love in the world.

As committee chair and Ecumenical Representative of the Virginia Synod, I would like to thank Bishop Phyllis Milton and our synod's faithful committee members for their engagement in the work of deepening our full communion partnership with the Episcopal Church, especially, and for their spirit of ecumenism with which they carry out their local parish ministry and the work of the Virginia Council of Churches: Pastors Lou Florio, Eric Moehring, Bill Nabers, Viktoria Parvin, and Libby Pfaff. Bishop Milton embodies ecumenism at its deepest level by her commitment to ecumenical partners' welcome at synod events and her participation in the Virginia Council of Churches meetings and events. For information on the ELCA's commitment to ecumenism, go to:

www.elca.org/faith/ecumenical-and-inter-religious-relations/full-communion.

Virginia Lutheran-Episcopal Joint Committee – This group formed soon after the Full Communion Agreement between the ELCA and the Episcopal Church USA was completed in 1999 for the sake of helping the congregations making up the Virginia and Metro-D.C. Synods and three Dioceses of the Episcopal Church live out the agreement, "Called to Common Mission." This committee is still going strong and meets monthly, mostly via Zoom, with a few in-person meetings held at Christ Lutheran Church in Fredericksburg. Most recently, the group has discussed ways in which we can offer an observance of the 1700th Anniversary of the Council of Nicaea and the formulation of the Nicene Creed, and we are developing training tools to assist pastors of one tradition to lead worship in a congregation of the partner tradition. This experience has been enriching for Lutheran members to learn the depth and practices of the Episcopal Church's liturgy from the Book of Common Prayer used in a Eucharist service. At this point, the Lutheran members will walk our Episcopal colleagues through the Holy Communion liturgy in Evangelical Lutheran Worship. Training videos will be made available later in 2025.

Virginia Council of Churches – (background from the VCC's website: "On July 6, 1944, thirty-one representatives from fourteen denominations gathered in the Washington Room of the John Marshall Hotel in Richmond, Virginia. Their purpose was clear—to declare



publicly their commitment to Christian unity by formalizing their relationship with one another. As representative after representative voted yes for the formation of the Virginia Council of Churches, each agreed to join together to strengthen each others' ministry and purpose. The goal of this coming together was not simply for unity itself, but rather that, through the coming together of the body of Christ, the mission of Christ could be fully lived out in Virginia.") The Virginia Synod is and has always been a stalwart supporter of the Virginia Council of Churches (VCC) by our synod bishops' participation on the Coordinating Council as well as our ecumenical representative's attendance at meetings and events.

In November, 2024, Rev. Terrie Sternberg attended the VCC's 80th Annual Day event, held in Charlottesville. Dr. Charles Marsh gave a stirring keynote address, "The Beloved Community," which both convicted and inspired us in matters of racial justice in the history of the church in Virginia and the U.S. and where we go from here.

Rural Family Development (RFD) is a program under the aegis of the VCC and the chair of this program is Rev. Eric Moehring of the Virginia Synod. Pastor Sternberg is also on the board of RFD along with members of many other denominations. The current work of this board is to create out-of-school educational enrichment programs for children and families in under-served areas of Virginia.

LARCUM (Lutheran-Anglican-Roman Catholic-United Methodist) – A covenant with these church bodies was signed in 2006 with the addition of the United Methodist Church. Even farther back than 2006, a covenant among the Lutheran/Episcopal/Roman Catholic churches in Virginia (LARC) has existed and has offered a yearly conference until 2022, when the loss of key leaders created a brief hiatus from annual meetings. However, LARCUM was on its way back into action! On January 22, 2025, during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Bishop Phyllis Milton was one of four Bishops who led the evening prayer worship service along with Metro-D.C. Synod Bishop, Leila Ortiz, Bishop Michael Burbidge of the Catholic Diocese of Arlington, and Elder Eric Baxter of the Church of Jesus Christ Latter-day Saints. Ecumenical officers from the four traditions were also present to assist in the service, including Pastor Sternberg, Virginia Synod. This year's theme from the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity was "Do You Believe?," based on Jesus' encounter with Mary and Martha at the death of Lazarus, their brother. John 11:26 was the key scripture verse. Before the service, held at St. Bernadette Catholic Church in Springfield, VA, key leaders were convened by Father Don Rooney, including Bishop Milton, to discuss plans for getting LARCUM back into full swing beginning in 2025. Approximately 250 people attended this LARCUM event.

The Ecumenical Relations Committee always welcomes rostered leaders and lay members who have a passion for making connections across denominational lines into our work. If



you've read to this point of the report, you might well be one of those people! Please feel free to contact the Rev. Terrie Sternberg (terriesternberg@gmail.com) or one of the committee members for more information and to see how you can be a part of this mission-fulfilling work of Jesus Christ.

Let us pray: Blessed Trinity, you show us the beauty of community and relationship by your love within the Godhead. Inspire us to live out Jesus' prayer of unity and community that he prayed before his death. Jesus, your church on earth is indeed "one, holy, worldwide, and apostolic" – show us how to manifest the truth of our unity in partnering with other churches where we serve. In your Holy Name we pray. Amen.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Terrie Sternberg, Chair/Ecumenical Representative

Committee Members:

- Rev. Lou Florio – Christ, Fredericksburg
- Rev. Eric Moehring – retired, Richmond
- Rev. Bill Nabers – retired, Bayse
- Rev. Viktoria Parvin – St. Mark, Charlottesville
- Rev. Libby Pfaff – Nineveh Lutheran Justice Ministry



Report for the 2024-2025 Lay Ministry Academy of the Virginia Synod

The Virginia Synod kicked off the Lay Ministry Academy (LMA) in 2022 to equip lay people who are discerning a call to commissioned lay ministry. As we began this labor of love, the metaphor “we’re building the plane as we fly it” was a common reference to our work. Working without a fully detailed plan in place has required trust, openness to the Holy Spirit, creativity, humility and a lot of good old-fashioned elbow grease. The LMA continues to evolve, grow and flourish.

This exciting and dynamic project has led to unexpected opportunities and growth. From the beginning, we have shared planning, coursework, retreats and resources with the North Carolina Synod. This fall we will also be participating with United Lutheran Seminary and Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary in their new lay ministry formation program: Equipping the Saints (ETS).

The Virginia Synod has approximately 31 commissioned lay ministers - including those serving as synod authorized ministers (SAMs) or lay preachers and those who are current participants in the Academy. Our 2025 Cohort has 8 students taking classes in Lutheran Theology, Hebrew Bible, New Testament, Worship and Sacraments, Preaching, Leadership and Pastoral Care. We will be commissioning the 2024 Cohort of 5 people at this Synod Assembly. We invite you to hold all of these gifted leaders in your prayers.

Lay preachers and SAMs are moving us in the direction found in the ancient church, in our roots in North America and in Lutheranism around the world. As we continue to grow, we are living into our heritage of always reforming!

I am honored and grateful to serve with these dedicated and faithful LMA leaders: Assistant to the Bishop Kelly Bayer Derrick, Pastor Chris Flohr, Marty Holliday, Pastor Marty Wagner, Pastor Kristen Van Stee and Pastor Alex Zuber.

In Christ+

Pastor Wanda Childs



Report from the Ministerium Team



The Ministerium Team of the Virginia Synod exists to lift up, strengthen, support, and care for all rostered ministers throughout the synod. 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 that we can lead in connected ways with the people of the Virginia Synod that intertwine hope. During the past year, the Ministerium Team lived into its mission in several key ways highlighted below.

Orientation for rostered ministers, interns, and seminarians new to the Virginia Synod was held in Virginia Beach on September 30, 2024.

The Gathering of the Ministerium (GOM) was held at Virginia Beach from September 30-October 2, 2024. The GOM is the annual gathering of rostered ministers for professional development, fellowship, worship, and renewal. Our theme was “Called to Lead in an Age of Anxiety: the Vocation of Baptized Children of God” presented by the Reverend Danielle Denise, Director of Evangelical Mission for the North Carolina Synod, ELCA.

Extending professional development and collegial support to actively serving synod authorized ministers (SAMS). Actively serving SAMS were invited to attend, participate, and facilitate a workshop at the Gathering of the Ministerium.

We expanded the Ministerium Team to better represent the geographic diversity of the Synod and the variety of ministry settings rostered ministers are called to serve. We thanked Pastor Laura Swanson and Pastor Timothy Crummitt for their leadership on the Ministerium Team as they accepted new calls in other synods. We rejoiced to welcome Deacon Liz Brendle Fox, Pastor Meredith Williams, and Pastor James Henricks to the Ministerium Team.

Importantly, the Ministerium Team considered new ways the Team might live into its purpose in 2025 and articulated a plan for actively praying for colleagues.

The Ministerium Team Members include: Deacon Liz Brendle Fox, Pastor James Henricks, Pastor Anne Jones Martin, Pastor Scott Mimms, and Pastor Meredith Williams.

Respectfully submitted,

The Reverend Anne Jones Martin
Chairperson of the Virginia Synod Ministerium Team



Report from the Power in the Spirit Team



Power in the Spirit conducted two programs in 2024, with the overarching theme being Biblical Women. Donna Gum of Grace Lutheran, Waynesboro, the Rev. Wesley Smith, pastor of Zion Lutheran Church, and Edith Blake of St. Andrews Lutheran Church in Portsmouth were excited to tri-chair this committee for another year.

The **Midwinter event, *Witness Like the Women*** was held February 5-7, 2024 on Zoom. The event commemorated Lydia (Acts 16.11-15), Dorcas (Acts 9.36-43), and Phoebe (Romans 16.1-16), celebrating ministries of business/philanthropy, compassion for others, and servant leadership. Each morning, registrants received a morning email featuring a poem by Edith Blake, artwork of icons for the woman studied that night and a message from Kristie Trumbo, Norma Frederickson, and Kathy Thompson, all Virginia Synod commissioned lay preachers. Each night featured one of the women beginning with Bible study, followed by a choice of two workshops, and ending with evening prayer. The Bible studies were led by the Rev. Phyllis Diamond, the Rev. Jessica Darty, and Sylvia Miles, (Virginia Synod commissioned lay preacher). Workshops were provided by the Rev. Leslie Weber-*Let's Talk About Money!*, Susie Faries-*The Intersection of Faith, Business, and Ethics*, Patty Franz-*Sacred Threads*, Ellasen Spangler-*The One Campus Pantry at Roanoke College*, Dr. Bob Kolodinsky-*The Unique Power of Servant Leadership* and Deacon Lisa Geiger, Sister Phyllis Cox, Deacon Emily Edmonds, Deacon Liz Brendle Fox, and Deacon Lavelva Stevens—*All in a Day's Work: Deacons, the Duct Tape that Holds the Church Together*. Evening Prayer concluded each evening led by Synod staff members-Bishop Phyllis Milton, the Rev. Colleen Montgomery, the Rev. Liz Radtke, and the Rev. Kelly Bayer Derrick. Online offering was received for the One Campus Pantry at Roanoke College.

The **Summer event, *Esther the Risk Taker***, was held at Roanoke College, June 13-15, 2024. The theme lifted up the book of Esther in the Old Testament as the story of Esther is one of God's faithful presence, deliverance from oppression, and bold service to the neighbor. God calls Esther - a Jewish queen in a foreign land - to join in God's plan to save God's people.

The Keynote Speaker was the Rev. CeCee Mills, formerly from the Virginia Synod, who serves as an Assistant to the Bishop of the North Carolina Synod. The Bible Study Leader was the Rev. Heidi Neumark from New York. These two women, along with the biblical story tellers led by Kathy Thompson and Judy Wilfong brought Esther to life these three days as Esther is not a Bible chapter included in the three-year lectionary.

Back by popular demand was Michael Benshish from Chicago and Virginia Beach area



led the worship music and provided music for the special events, Beer and Hymns on Thursday night and the reception on Friday night after worship. Michael conducted a chimes choir during Morning Prayer Worship as well as a Taize Service, his Jazz Mass Service and Sending Service on Saturday that included commissioning the synod authorized ministers and Office of the Bishop Staff.

The 140 attendees, staff and workshop presenters had the opportunity to choose from about six workshop sessions, one on Friday morning including the Rev. Paul Hendrickson leading a group to a Habitat work site, and two workshop sessions on Friday afternoon. Workshop presenters were: Betsy Liljberg—*Responding to the Call Feed the Hungry*; the Rev. Heidi Neumark—*Luther and the Jews—Continuing Esther's Life Saving Legacy*; the Rev. Libby Pfaff—*Where Do We Go from Here?*; Lily Pingel—*A Look at the Virginia Synod of the ELCA—One of the Whitest Christian Denominations in the United States*; the Rev. John Wertz Jr. —*Ten Keys to Understanding the New Normal*; Michael Benshish—*Worship Music and the Liturgical Church Year*; the Rev. Robert McCarty—*Literary Letters of Faith*; The Rev. CeCee Mills—*Digging Deeper: Modeling Esthers' Risk Taking*; Bishop Phyllis Blair Milton—*Strong Connections Conversation*; the Rev. Liz Radtke—*This Fall Is Going to be E.P.I.C.*; Sister Phyllis Cox & George Donovan—*Discover Virginia Synod Tapestry Ministry*; The Rev. Kelly Bayer Derrick—*The Reign of God-Right Here! Right Now*; Maribeth Ocock—*Decoupage Project*; and the Rev. Colleen Montgomery—*Embodying Inclusion in the Community*. Other features were One Pantry at Roanoke College Service Project, offerings split between Caroline Furnace and Hungry Mother Lutheran Church Camps, Little Free Library, Children's Program lead by Ashley Saunders, four golf carts provided by Virginia Lutheran Homes, the Mediation Chapel created by The Rev. Terrie Sternberg, Morning emails with a poem from Edith Blake and residents from Brandon Oaks attended the day sessions. Lay preachers Bill Franz and Alli Beck blessed us with their thought-provoking sermons to respectively open and close the event.

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

Come and join us this summer for Wings of Hope, July 17-19, 2025 at Roanoke College. The Keynote Speaker will be Maryn Olson Lutheran Disaster Relief Director. The Bible Study Leader will be The Rev. Bobby Morris, Professor at Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary. Michael Benshish of Chicago and Virginia Beach area will return as the musician.

Respectfully Submitted,
Donna Gum, Rev. Wesley Smith, and Edith Blake



Synodical Youth and Young Adult Ministries in 2024-2025

Event participation continues to be small compared to pre-pandemic numbers, but our energy and enthusiasm remains strong, and we have learned that our model, which includes a careful youth-centered planning process, participant-centered large groups, and faith-sharing small groups, works just as well no matter what the size of the event. We continue to give thanks to God for raising up both youth and adult leaders in this important ministry.

Our events included:

- Kairos - June 23-28, 2024
- ELCA MYLE and Youth Gathering - July 13-20, 2024
- Lost and Found - Nov. 22-24, 2024
- Winter Celebration - Jan 24-26, 2025
- Seventh Day - March 3-4, 2025
- Youth Assembly - June 13-15, 2025
- Kairos - June 22-27, 2025
- LAUNCH - July, 2025
- Water's Edge - July 27-Aug. 1, 2025

Special thanks goes to:

- Youth Ministry Committee chair Pastor Joseph Bolick (Epiphany, Richmond)
- Event Chaplains Meredith Williams, Joseph Bolick, Jonathan Boynton, Chris Carr, Bryan Katz, and Becca Ajer Frantz.
- Youth and adult Planning Group members from 16 different congregations
- Numerous other adults who served as small group leaders, musicians, first-aid and other caregivers, and congregational youth advisors from 43 congregations.

As we prepare to conclude the 2024-2025 program year, we look forward to new growth in our synod events as well as our congregations.



Report from the Tapestry Team

The Tapestry Team has been busily weaving over the past year. The overarching committee, co-chaired by Lay Preacher George Donovan, who is completing his service to the people of Bethel Lutheran in Winchester, and Sister Phyllis Cox, ELCA Deacon, provides support and encouragement to the Team's threads. There are currently four primary threads (justice emphases), which are:

- Racial Justice: chairs Pastor Paul Pingel, Pastor Harry Griffith, and Maurice Gallimore of enCircle;
- Gender Justice: chairs Pastor Colleen Hetrick and George Donovan, Commissioned Lay Preacher;
- Creation Justice: Dr. William Franz, retired professor from Randolph Macon College, and Sister Phyllis Cox, Deaconess with the Deaconess Community of the ELCA; and
- Women's Justice Issues: Co-chairs Sylvia Vick-Ely and Pr. Kayla Keilholtz.

We are in the process of adding a thread to the Justice areas for Disability Ministries.

Tapestry activities (may not be complete) from May 2024 through April 2025 included:

- May 2024- "Welcoming and Affirming" book study with Pastor Colleen Hetrick and George Donovan; PRIDE worship
- June 2024- Power in the Spirit at Roanoke College, Tapestry Presentations
- July 2024- month off
- August-September 2024- Season of Creation- Congregations encouraged to use liturgical settings provided by Northern Illinois Synod's Creation Ministry
- October 2024- "Not Too Late" book discussion by Dr. Bill Franz and Sister Phyllis Cox
- November and December 2024- Healthcare for Women- concentrating on ELCA Social Statements on Abortion and Faith, Sexism, and Justice
- January 2025- Viewing of film "The American Society of Magical Negroes" and Discussion with Thread chairs on February 24.
- March 2025- VA Synod congregations given access to Lenten Creation Care calendar compiled by Virginia Interfaith Power & Light; EPIC gathering with presentation by Pastor Colleen Hetrick and Pastor Harry Griffith.
- April 2025- "Living Lutheran" published on Earth Day an article about Sister Phyllis Cox's Sacred Action Project for her certificate in Creation Justice and Faith.

We are sure that we left things out of this report. For that, we apologize. We appreciate every single minute one of our committee members spent thinking of ways in which we can lift up justice issues in the Virginia Synod. This report is respectfully submitted,

George Donovan, Commissioned Lay Preacher, co-chair
Sr. Phyllis Cox, ELCA Deacon, co-chair



Report from the Virginia Synod Hunger Team

The Virginia Synod Hunger Team is composed of a handful of dedicated volunteers, as well as some occasional input from hunger workers across the synod who meet monthly to brainstorm ideas for keeping the congregations of Virginia abreast of hunger and food insecurity issues across the state, country, and world.

This past year, we have worked on promoting ideas for celebrating the 50th Anniversary of Lutheran World Hunger. We created resources related to “the feeding of the 500”. Congregations were encouraged to give above and beyond their normal hunger giving in thanksgiving for this vital ministry. Pastor Kelly wrapped up the campaign with a synod wide Bible study.

The team has been promoting advocacy and has made some connections with ELCA Advocacy as well as the Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy. Several members attended the advocacy day in Richmond.

This year, we would like to bring people’s attention to our regional food banks, which are in dire need of support. Federal cutbacks have already begun to affect the food banks' abilities to serve their clients fully.

Our chair is working with the ELCA to create a networking site for all interested in addressing hunger issues around the synod and beyond. The site will link us to Virginia ministries as well as to other synods and Chicago.

We continue to have an important role in reviewing the Domestic Hunger grant applications.

The team would like to welcome any individuals with a passion for ending hunger to our monthly Zoom meetings. Or if you would just like to keep up with the team’s activities, you can be added to the hunger contact list.

Until all are fed,

Betsy Liljeberg
Virginia Synod Hunger Team Chair



Report from the 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 26 and 27, 2024, at Our Saviour's Lutheran in Norge.

Our convention chaplain was the Rev. Jennifer Osheim-Owen, Chaplain at Williamsburg Landing, who led our worship, and our churchwide representative was Gwen Edwards, Secretary of our Churchwide Executive Board, who resides in Omaha, Nebraska. We had wonderful presenters who led us in Awareness Sessions: Alejandra Upton, representing enCircle; Heidi Wallace, a Certified Trauma Support Specialist from Latisha's House; and our own VSWO Board Member, Nicole Ocheltree, whose session was titled *Healthier Minds*. We were privileged to hear from our newly elected bishop, the Rev. Dr. Phyllis Milton, who preached at our opening worship service and attended our entire convention.

We elected the following board officers: Pat Seelenbinder (Emmanuel, Virginia Beach) was elected as Vice-President and JoAnn Fawley (All Places Together, Online) as Secretary, both to 2-year terms. We also elected four board members: Diane Priestley (Our Saviour's, Norge), Anne Putnam (St. James, Fishersville), Dona Jenkins (St. John, Abingdon) and Nicole Ocheltree (Salem, Mt. Sydney); they joined Teresa Bowers (Christ, Fredericksburg) and Ashley Saunders (Muhlenberg, Harrisonburg) to make a complete board of 4 officers and 6 board members.

Our other officers are Lavelva Stevens (Holy Trinity, Wytheville), President, and Jody Smiley (St. Michael, Blacksburg), Treasurer. Jody Smiley is also our Circulation Manager, which includes serving as the Editor of our newsletter, *Visions*, and the weekly Happy Monday emails.

**Virginia Synodical Women's Organization (VSWO)**

This year's VSWO convention will be held at Christ Lutheran in Fredericksburg on July 25-26, with the theme "Guardians of Creation". Our chaplain will be the Rev. Anne Jones Martin. We will hear from a representative of Mended Women Lifestyle Recovery, a residential facility that helps women learn to navigate lifelong recovery skills, and from Jody Smiley, retired analytical environmental chemist, who will discuss our care of creation.

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



REPORTS FROM MISSION PARTNERS



Caroline Furnace Camp and Retreat Center - Annual Report 2025



God is Near....Trusting, Blessing, Listening, Serving & Following

We thank you for your renewed and increased commitment to Caroline Furnace in 2024! You met and exceeded our giving goals for 2024 that provided resources for 2,070 people throughout the year. Fulfilling our mission, we were able to provide unforgettable experiences by educating 891 students and scouts, renewing and retreating with 1261 adult guests, and faith building with 586 campers and youth aged guests. Donors - over 350 individual donors and 37 congregations and businesses. Volunteers - over 348 individual volunteers providing 3,776 volunteer hours.

Building in 2024 - We installed the pavilion solar panels, fans, and lighting fixtures to provide a completely off grid outdoor meeting space to gather large groups and summer campers. We built a new archery range shelter/storage area, built privacy stalls in the sukkah bathhouse, and installed a shower and water heater in Cabin 7. We also provided portable air conditioning in all of our cabins during the summer and warm fall days for all of our guests.

Summer Camp in 2024 - With 300+ campers and volunteers and only eight domestic staff and four international staff we could not have done it without the help of many volunteers! Our community really stepped up and took great care of our campers and their families. We introduced tree climbing and ascending at Oak Ridge, continued our two week adventure camp for older campers, and continued the other specialty camps such as acoustic, culinary, and horse camp.

Retreats in 2024 - We had 96 events this year with small and large retreat groups, schools, and outdoor enthusiasts. We had our largest group ever this year with over 220 people gathering under the pavilion to experience the beauty and welcoming pace of life. New and returning retreat groups are currently booking events quickly. Bring your family, friends, nonprofit, or church groups and experience the comfortable adult space available in the Apartment/Loft, Farmhouse, and Cabins 7 and 8.



Faith in 2024 - So many faith moments again this year and, as always, they are fully integrated into all that we do with our programs, guests, and campers. The theme “Created to Be” celebrated throughout the year helped us all to be free, authentic, and brave disciples while spending time together in the great outdoors celebrating our Lutheran values and love of Christ.

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 68 years that are now involved in mission work and leading congregational teams.

Expenses: \$513,438 (45% staffing, 22% Operations, 15% programs, 14% Maintenance, 4% Other)

Revenue: \$530,667 (40% donations, 26% programs, 24% rental, 2% Grants, 8% Synod Support)

These are just a few examples that demonstrate 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 mission is to make the world a more loving place. Rooted in faith and shaped by over 130 years of service, we remain focused on the present, plan carefully for the future, and proudly honor our past. Since 1888, we have adapted to meet the evolving needs of children, families, and adults in our communities. We believe every person deserves an abundant life full of meaning, purpose, and belonging.

Our History and Mission

Founded by a Lutheran pastor as an orphanage in Salem, VA, enCircle began serving children from across the South who needed a home. Guided by the values of the Lutheran Church and sustained through decades of growth, we have widened our circle to include people of all backgrounds, faiths, and abilities. As a proud mission partner of the Virginia ELCA, we are grateful for our strong ties to the faith community.

Today, enCircle provides life-changing services across Virginia, supporting over 1,000 people each year. With 650 dedicated staff and caregivers, when we find a new way to support people in our communities, we simply enlarge our circle.

Our Core Programs and Services

Minnick Schools – Educating Students with Special Needs

Our Minnick Schools serve students ages 5 to 22 who face challenges in traditional public school settings. Licensed by the Virginia Department of Education, Minnick Schools operate in Harrisonburg, Roanoke, Wytheville, Wise, Bristol, Grundy and Lynchburg. We work with 30 local school districts as partners in educating students.

Through individualized support, specialized instruction, and a trauma-informed approach, our staff supports more than 200 students in developing academic, behavioral, and social skills. The goal is to prepare them to return to their home public school or successfully transition to life after school.

Immigration Services – Welcoming Immigrants

In partnership with Global Refuge (formerly Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services), enCircle supports unaccompanied children who arrive at the border reunite with family or sponsors already in the U.S. Our bilingual staff provide critical services—such as background checks, home visits, and case management—to ensure children's safety, health, and well-being. We connect families to vital resources including healthcare, legal assistance, and education.

Developmental Services – Supporting People with Disabilities

EnCircle provides community-based supports throughout Virginia for adults with developmental disabilities through Group Homes, Family Care Homes, and In-Home



Services. We also offer Day Support and Community Engagement programs to encourage inclusion and independence. Our staff act as mentors, focusing on building meaningful relationships while supporting each person's health, safety, and life goals.

Counseling – Strengthening Mental Health and Well-being

Our trauma-informed counseling services help children, teens, adults, and families navigate emotional and behavioral challenges. With both telehealth and in-person options, our licensed counselors offer therapies across Virginia to promote healing and resilience.

Foster Care – Wrapping Kids in Support

EnCircle recruits and supports foster parents from all backgrounds—including LGBTQ families—to care for children and teens in need. We offer three types of foster care:

- **Treatment Foster Care** for children in Virginia's child welfare system who have experienced trauma.
- **Transitional Foster Care** for unaccompanied immigrant children awaiting reunification with family or sponsors.
- **Long-term Foster Care** for immigrant teens who are unlikely to be placed or reunited before age 18.

All foster families receive extensive training and 24/7 support to ensure children find stability, healing, and hope.

Our circle is wide, and all are included.



Global Refugee Lutheran Immigration & Refugee Service

New name, same mission. Welcoming newcomers since 1939 | www.globalrefugee.org

Dear Partners in Ministry,

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

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

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

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

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

- Welcome 18,622+ refugees from countries across the world.
- Empower and support **116 clients** and **67 Businesses** through personal and business loans.



Global Refugee Lutheran Immigration & Refugee Service

New name, same mission. Welcoming newcomers since 1939 | www.globalrefugee.org

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

In a political season rife with anti-immigrant rhetoric and messages that villainize newcomers, we have a unique opportunity to change this narrative and refocus on all the gifts newcomers bring to community. We invite you to join us in this work!

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

Thank you for your continued support. The many ways Lutheran communities embody Jesus' ministry through the work of welcome is truly inspiring. Go in peace. Welcome the stranger.

Deacon Sarah Kretschmann | Congregational Engagement Specialist
outreach@globalrefugee.org



2828 Emerywood Parkway
Henrico, VA 23294

For 7 years I was known as “Chaplain Meyer,” and I had the tremendous privilege of serving as a Chaplain and Pastor at Coffeewood Correctional Center. I am humbled by the recent invitation to begin serving as the Executive Director for GraceInside, now in its 105th year, and I look forward to building on the long partnership with the Virginia Synod of ELCA.

During my time at Coffeewood, I have seen many wonderful, vibrant, life-changing ministers and teams serve the 1,000 men of Coffeewood. Whether they bring a message of repentance, revival, music ministry, teaching, or mentoring, churches and Christian volunteers are making a profound impact within prisons around the Commonwealth. So what makes GraceInside unique among all the other prison ministries? In one word: Access. Our Chaplains have the sacred privilege of access to every inmate, in every prison in Virginia, and it has been this way since Lutherans were among our 7 founding denominations in 1920.

GraceInside is the only prison ministry in Virginia with this day to day, week to week, year in and year out access. During lockdowns, doing rounds in the infirmary, visiting inmates on hospice care, going to the segregation units to visit through the glass, being present with them in a moment of life-changing news of death, divorce, or pardon turn-downs: our Chaplains become an integral part of the fabric of the prison environment. Over time, we earn respect, we become trusted, and we serve in this mission field on behalf of the wider church.

GraceInside contracts with the VADOC, and we receive about 2/3 of our budget from our contract services. The remainder comes from contributions from private donors, churches, and judicatories such as ELCA. The strong majority of our budget is direct support of 32 Chaplains serving 23,000 men and women across 40 prisons. In 2025, we project that we will be able to supplement contract hours with around 600 extra ministry hours each month, all of which is funded by GraceInside fundraising efforts.

In 2025 and beyond, I hope to add several additional, self-funded assistant Chaplains who can serve as “special assignment” Chaplains to support a specific need. One example is a bilingual Peruvian man who has been volunteering at Coffeewood for several years, effectively serving as the Spanish Church Pastor. He is pursuing qualifications to be a GraceInside Chaplain, and we are pushing forward for him to begin at Coffeewood and Haynesville Correctional Centers as a special assignment Chaplain to the Spanish-speaking



population (some of whom are the most vulnerable, most under-served, most-forgotten men in the entire system).

Our Mission Statement at GraceInside is “Sent by the Church to nurture faith and hope in Virginia’s prisons.” As a Chaplain, I understood my work to be an expression of the wider church’s call to remember those in prison. As the Executive Director, my work has shifted to reminding the churches of Virginia that all of us have a stake in a vibrant, well supported GraceInside prison ministry. We thank you for your financial and prayerful support of our Chaplains, which demonstrates your faithfulness in our shared call to remember those in prison.

To Him be glory in the church forever!

Chaplain Nick Meyer
Executive Director, GraceInside



Hungry Mother Lutheran Retreat Center - Annual Report 2025



“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 2024/2025:

- A Visioning Committee was started and met to determine how we want to focus our efforts for 2024 and the future.
- Summer Bible Camp 2025 will have different programming to provide a new look and feel to camp. Canoeing, Environmental Educations, Stream Biology, and Nature Walks/Journaling will be added.
- Camp Noah is in the works for 2026. Much planning and organizing is required for this special camp meant for Hurricane Helene flood victim kids.
- A grant was approved in 2025 for paying for camp registrations for up to 20 summer campers from financially burdened Smyth County families by Smyth County Community Foundation.
- The annual Corn Roast was a huge success. This is the main Highlands Conference event of the year at camp, combining worship, fellowship, food, and a fundraiser.

Thank you to everyone for your support and prayers for HMLRC - this is very much appreciated.

In His Service,
Dona Jenkins



James R. Crumley Jr. Archives - 2025 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, digital archivist; Ashley Ragland, assistant archivist; and Laura Hendrickson, 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 South Carolina and Southeastern 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 archivist@crumleyarchives.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, SC and will honor the Rev. Dr. Bill and Mrs. Karla Trexler; St. Mark’s Lutheran Church (Jacksonville, FL), and the Florida-Bahamas Synod. It will be held Friday, Sept. 12. Details will follow. Please contact Shannon Smith at archivist@crumleyarchives.com for more information.

Shannon L. Smith

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

² Crumley Archives: www.crumleyarchives.com



2024 ANNUAL REPORT

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

—Romans 15:13

We abound in hope here at Luther Seminary because we see around us the goodness of God's redeeming love at work in and through our students.

In a changing world, Luther Seminary is relentless in following the Spirit's prompting to listen closely, trust deeply, and innovate boldly for the sake of our mission. While the breadth and depth of this work in fiscal year 2023–24 cannot be fully captured in a few pages, we hope these stories and data inspire your own curiosity about where God is leading.

In a changing world, Luther Seminary continues to remove financial barriers to theological education. With 100% of student tuition and fees covered by the Jubilee Scholarship, student borrowing continues to decline. Total loan volumes reached their lowest point in 25 years in 2023–24, with 62% of our students graduating free of student loan debt. As the profile of students pursuing graduate theological education shifts from predominantly full-time, in-person study toward a greater percentage of part-time, distance-based learning, the Board of Directors voted to move from a per-credit to a flat-rate tuition structure in February. This change will allow the seminary to fully utilize endowed scholarships and cover even more actual student costs going forward, supported by a strong endowment valuation.

In a changing world, Luther Seminary meets Christian leaders where they are—and accompanies them where they are going. The seminary is adapting the academic program to deliver a rigorous theological education in modalities that serve today's students and tomorrow's leaders. In Fall 2023, we implemented a refreshed curriculum with defined full-time and part-time pathways that lower the cost to develop Christian leaders without sacrificing academic rigor, theological depth, or leadership formation—the hallmarks of a Luther Seminary

education. In partnership with Region 3 bishops, we began offering eight-course graduate certificate programs for lay leaders—all fully covered by the Jubilee Scholarship. And our digital offerings for disciples and pastors continue to grow, with more than 300 individuals exploring the Faith+Lead membership and 700 learners taking advantage of a growing library of on-demand Faith+Lead Academy courses.

In a changing world, Luther Seminary is a global leader.

From our home base in St. Paul, the seminary maintains vital connections to our siblings in Christ throughout the global communion. Our digital offerings—including God Pause, Enter the Bible, Working Preacher, and Faith+Lead—reached 7.8 million users worldwide in the past year, an increase of 37% from the previous year. From the Festival of Homiletics to on-campus lectures with renowned scholars Amy-Jill Levine and Tripp Fuller, Luther Seminary leads faithful conversation on the most pressing theological issues of our time.

In a changing world, your support matters. As we reflect on the past year, we are filled with gratitude for your generous, faithful support of our students, our mission, and the future of the church. Thanks be to God for the great blessing of your prayers and partnership!



Peace and blessings,

Robin J. Steinke

Robin J. Steinke
President





2024 ANNUAL REPORT

AT A GLANCE

- The seminary awarded 388 scholarships in 2023–24.
- Master of Arts students like Michelle made up 55% of enrolled students.
- As scholarship recipients, Michelle and Erik received part of the \$4.71 million awarded during the 2023–24 academic year. On average, students received \$11,617 in scholarships and grants from Luther Seminary.
- Erik was among the 32% of students who pursued a Master of Divinity degree in 2023–24.
- Financial aid covered 100% of the cost of tuition for qualified incoming M.A. and M.Div. students.

Originally a licensed mental health therapist, **Michelle S. Spencer '26 M.A.** experienced God's call to pursue ministry as a pastor or missionary. Wanting to deepen her understanding of the historical background of her Christian faith and equip herself with the education she needed to pursue her call, she began exploring seminaries. She landed on Luther Seminary because of its reputation as a scholarly, gospel-centered community, and the Jubilee Scholarship made her education affordable. "Words cannot fully express my gratitude for an answered prayer to be awarded financial support to pursue an M.A. in Christian ministry," she said.





DURING THE 2023–24 FISCAL YEAR

36 international students enrolled from 18 countries.

74 students graduated May 26.

Donor sources made up 95% of Luther Seminary's operating revenue, including individual donor support, the endowment, and church and synod appropriations.

62% of students graduated without seminary debt. For the others, median debt was \$2,774.

BY THE NUMBERS

- 348 students enrolled at Luther Seminary during the 2023–24 academic year.
- ELCA members accounted for 68% of the student body. 36 denominations made up the remaining 32% of students.
- Tuition, student fees, books, and on-campus living expenses cost approximately \$40,538 for full-time students.

As a pastor's kid, **Erik Nelson '26 M.Div.** witnessed the privilege of serving God's people from childhood onward. His love for the ELCA and its people led him to decide that he, too, wanted to serve as a pastor. He chose Luther Seminary for its location, its reputation, and the Jubilee Scholarship. "Money has never been something I've had an abundance of," he said. "It's important that cost is not a barrier to people's call to ministry. The church is better off when we can hear the voice of working-class and middle-class people doing theology and preaching."





Finances 2023–24

Luther Seminary and Foundation consolidated balance sheets
as of June 30, 2024 and June 30, 2023.

ASSETS

	2024	2023
Current Assets		
Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$11,951,995	\$12,999,656
Other Current Assets	648,317	355,911
Total Current Assets	\$12,600,312	\$13,355,567
Non-Current Assets		
Other Assets	\$1,996,675	\$2,007,730
Investments	135,495,744	123,277,429
Student Notes Receivable, Net	1,887,948	2,038,013
Land, Buildings, and Equipment, Net	7,751,070	8,019,197
Total Other Assets	\$147,131,437	\$135,342,369
Total Assets	\$159,731,749	\$148,697,936

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

Current Liabilities		
Other Current Liabilities	\$3,774,453	\$4,598,779
Notes Payable, Current Portion	159,726	153,473
Total Current Liabilities	\$3,934,179	\$4,752,252
Long-Term Liabilities		
Other Long-Term Liabilities	\$6,453,499	\$7,604,991
Notes Payable, Net of Current Portion	4,072,014	4,231,740
Total Long-Term Liabilities	\$10,525,513	\$11,836,731
Total Liabilities	\$14,459,692	\$16,588,983
Net Assets		
Without Donor Restrictions	\$4,626,230	\$5,354,872
With Donor Restrictions	140,645,827	126,754,081
Total Net Assets	\$145,272,057	\$132,108,953
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$159,731,749	\$148,697,936

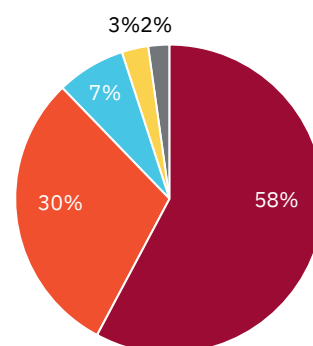
ENDOWMENT

Total Market Value (as of June 30, 2024)	\$133 million
Investment Returns	
1-year	11.5%
3-year	2.0%
5-year	20.7%

Luther Seminary's annual report numbers are also available at luthersem.edu/annual-report.
Learn more about giving to support future church leaders at luthersem.edu/giving.

On the cover: Last summer, 93 pastors spent five days together in the first-ever Working Preacher retreat at Ghost Ranch. More than 12,000 people tune into the weekly sermon preparation podcast hosted by Luther Seminary professors **Joy Moore**, **Matt Skinner**, and **Karoline Lewis**. "We have a widespread virtual community of working preachers. We wanted to try to create an actual community this week at Ghost Ranch," Skinner said. "We thought maybe 30 or 40 people would register. We more than doubled that number!" Participants came from Presbyterian, Lutheran, Methodist, Episcopalian, and United Church of Christ congregations across the United States. An Anglican rector from New Zealand also participated.

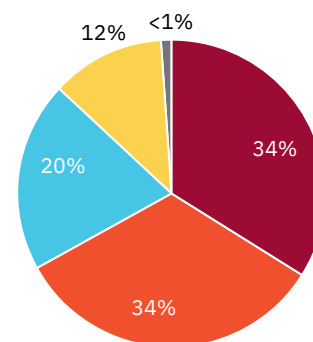
ANNUAL REPORT



Unrestricted Operating Income

Donor Support	\$10,432,790
Endowment Draw	5,500,017
Churchwide and Synod Support	1,343,289
Net Tuition and Fees	528,461
Auxiliary Enterprises and Other Income	307,711

Total Unrestricted Operating Income **\$18,112,268**



Unrestricted Operating Expenses

Institutional Support	\$6,734,837
Student Instruction and Support	6,684,376
Faith+Lead	3,891,516
Physical Plant and Maintenance	2,370,209
Auxiliary Enterprises and Other Expenses	120,606

Total Expenses* **\$19,801,544**

*Includes depreciation



2025 Report to the Synod Assemblies of Region 9



Greetings from Hickory, in the name of the Holy Trinity!

Since my last report to Synod Assemblies, Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary has had a truly historical year. There is far too much to recount in one Synod Assembly report, but I will summarize it with a simple word of gratitude. Thank you. I give thanks for the students who are now enjoying **vibrant formation** on campus in Hickory, for the faculty who are creating new rhythms for **innovative teaching and learning**, for university colleagues helping establish **dynamic partnerships**, and to the Advisory Council, Alumni Board, alumni and friends across Region 9 for helping to **tell our story** in a new era of theological education for LTSS.

While a few decisions remain related to the sale of the Columbia property and the relocation of the Flentrop organ, the move has been as successful as one could have hoped. The Lineberger collection is installed and operating in Rudisill Library, faculty, staff and students are at home in the Russell House at the heart of our beautiful campus, Grace chapel hosts worship every day in person and online, and we look forward to welcoming a new class of students in the fall. In the light of God's grace, the future of theological education for LTSS and the Lutheran tradition of higher education at Lenoir-Rhyne university is full of promise.

First Week Formation

This semester marked the seventh First Week gathering and the first in Hickory. We enjoyed fellowship among the student body, faculty and staff in venues across campus, including President Whitt's home, the new Rectory, Bear's Club Pavillion, Cromer Center, and Moretz Stadium. We worshipped, learned, and convened a community workshop and faculty panel focused on the historical and theological interpretation of Christian Scripture and traditions. We are grateful to local congregations in Conferences of the North Carolina Synod for providing meals and coming to build relationships with LTSS!

LTSS benefits from a grant from the Bolick Foundation that covers the costs of First Week. We welcome more financial support from those who would like to sustain this significant experience of vibrant formation.



Curriculum

Already this year we have two curricular revisions working their way through university committees. One is a new Accelerated Masters Program by which students can complete the requirements for a BA in Religious Studies and the MDiv in six years. This innovation is made possible through our collaboration with the LRU college of Humanities and Social Sciences and will open new pipelines for undergraduates who have already discerned a vocation to Ministry, and mature students who do not yet have an undergraduate degree. The second establishes a research project component for our Master in Theological Studies that strengthens the academic requirements of our MTS program.

We continue to offer Explore courses that allow students and alumni to take one-hour interdisciplinary courses. We are encouraged by the partnership with the Region 9 Stewardship Council that created a nine module Explore course on Stewardship. This course is led by experts from across the ELCA who engage students and alumni in a sustained study of our faithful relationship to money, management, use of church property, care for creation, mutual aid and partnerships for ministry. This Region 9 Partnership is a significant upgrade to the stewardship symposium and will be a gift to the wider church for years to come.

This year, LTSS partnered with the LRU Lutheran Student Movement, and drew on the Marple Funds to host a Spring Break immersion in international ecumenism. We led a group of 10 undergraduate students and seminarians to Geneva, Switzerland to encounter the programs and staff the Lutheran World Federation, the World Council of Churches, worship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Geneva, tour United Nations organizations, and spent an ecotheologically focused day immersed in the beauty of the Swiss Alps. And yes, we ate a significant portion of fondue.

We are expanding our Lifelong Learning Program in the areas of continuing education and formation events for alumni and the general public. We are continuing our Public Safety Chaplaincy, our Spiritual Direction Certification Program, launching an eight week training for Synodically Authorized Lay Ministers in collaboration with United Lutheran Seminary as the Eastern Cluster of Lutheran Seminaries, and building our online offerings through the ELCA Womanist Initiative and the Richard Stewart Lifelong Learning Certificate in cooperation with the Conference of International Black Lutherans (CIBL). In these and other ways, we 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.



Special Events

By the time you receive this report, LTSS will have hosted our annual Alumni Day and Yost Lecture. It was a time for Alumni and the entire church to gather for the Yost Lecture, which welcomed Ms Savanna Sullivan, Program Executive for Youth of the Lutheran World Federation on the theme of Intergenerational Justice. The day included a faculty led session of Theological Jazz, campus tours, a barbecue lunch on the quad, and a town hall forum on the future of theological education, hosted by Dr. Rimmer and Bishop Eaton.

Gratitude for the past, present and future

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 the faithful to consider their vocation to public ministry.

We invite you to visit your seminary in our new home on the beautiful campus of Lenoir-Rhyne University. And now that this part of our pilgrimage is complete, we turn our faces towards 2030, which will be the 200th anniversary of LTSS and the 500th anniversary of the Augsburg Confession. Embedded on this campus with a rich history of Lutheran higher education, LTSS is positioned to be a flagship in the future of theological education, as we continue to nurture, educate and form leaders for public ministry for generations to come.

Peace be yours,

Chad M. Rimmer



Mission Investment Fund

The Mission Investment Fund: Empowering communities with financial services



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

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

By the Numbers:

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

Why Is MIF the Right Choice?

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

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

MIF at work in the Virginia Synod (as of December 31, 2024):

- 14 Mission Investment Fund loans, with a balance of \$6,286,722
- \$6,800,011 in Mission Investment Fund investment obligations

For more information about MIF capabilities, please visit our website, mif.elca.org
or contact your Regional Manager, Jerry Johnson: 773-380-1722 jerry.johnson@elca.org



National Lutheran
Communities & Services

2025 Update for Synod Assemblies

5275 Westview Drive, Suite 110 | Frederick, Maryland | 21703

www.nationallutheran.org

*National Lutheran Communities & Services (NLCS) honors, inspires and supports
choice and opportunity in partnership with older adults.*

NLCS President & CEO Cyndi Walters

Communities

The Village at Rockville | Rockville, Maryland

Executive Director Felicia Anthony

Chaplain Charlene Curtis

301-424-9560

www.thevillageatrockville.org

The Legacy at North Augusta | Staunton, Virginia

Executive Director Denise Kozlowski

Chaplain The Rev. Daniel Hess, M.Div.

540-885-5454

www.thelegacyatnorthaugusta.org

The Village at Orchard Ridge | Winchester, Virginia

Executive Director Steven Nastasi

Chaplain The Rev. Heather Bumstead, M.Div., BCC

540-431-2800

www.thevillageatorchardridge.org

The Village at Providence Point | Annapolis, Maryland

Pending final approval from the Maryland Department of Aging

443-782-3050

www.thevillageatprovidencepoint.org

Services

myPotential at Home

Operates home care for The Village at Rockville and The Village at Orchard Ridge

Follow the communities and myPotential at Home on Facebook and NLCS on LinkedIn

2023 NLCS Annual Report

The 2024 Annual Report will be published in August 2025 and available on the NLCS website



Click the image to view the 2023 annual report.

Our Mission at Work

In the last 130 years, National Lutheran Communities & Services (NLCS) has never had to ask a resident to leave if they have run out of funds through no fault of their own. Guided by our mission to serve and drawing from our faith-filled history, we view stewardship as a heartfelt way to assist older adults. We practice this stewardship through our benevolent care program, which is the core of our organization's vision of helping those in need.



National Lutheran
Communities & Services

Even with careful planning, unexpected circumstances can lead to older adults outliving their financial resources. As life expectancy and cost of care increases, benevolent care provides peace of mind to residents and their families — particularly in the face of emergencies and extenuating circumstances.

In 2024, National Lutheran distributed over \$882,000 in benevolent care to 20 residents. In the last three years, nearly \$2.5MM in benevolent care has been distributed to residents. In addition to benevolent care, our communities are providing for the future through environmental stewardship and team member education.

Sustainability

NLCS instituted an organizational imperative to pursue 100% clean, renewable solar energy wherever possible across the National Lutheran family.

In 2022, we completed our solar field at The Village at Orchard Ridge.

The carbon sequestered from the seven acres of our solar field is equivalent to the carbon sequestered by over 2,400 acres of forest each year. It also will provide approximately 85% of The Village at Orchard Ridge's round-the-clock energy needs for its 400-plus residents and 100-plus team members.



Service for The Village at Orchard Ridge's seven-acre solar array was initiated in February 2023.

Additionally, NLCS has committed to putting our mission of sustainability in action through conversion to LED lighting products, installation of EV

charging stations and expanding our recycling programs. Currently, Orchard Ridge has more than 150 geothermal wells, and their cottages were built to LEED Silver certification requirements. At The Village at Rockville and our proposed community at The Village at Providence Point, we have used environmental site design features such as green roofs, rain gardens, micro bioretention systems and porous pavement hard surfaces that will reduce, filter and manage water runoff.



An aerial view of The Village at Orchard Ridge with the solar array showing to the north.

Watch a three-minute [video on the Orchard Ridge solar array](#).



Education

"This education will allow me to show my family how important continuous learning is for everyone. For my future, my education will enable me to grow and learn more about myself. It has been a gift."

— Anonymous NLCS Team Member

Thanks to the employee scholarship fund, 13 team members are continuing their education to reach their career goals and aspirations. We are proud to offer tuition reimbursement for team members who have been with NLCS for a year and are thankful to the donors who are helping to support this program.

What inspired you to continue your education?	What was your biggest takeaway from the class or degree program you participated in?	What impact has your education had on you, your family, and/or your future?	Care to share any other comments about your experience taking classes that were covered under the Tuition Reimbursement Program?
Wanting to grow in my education and advance professionally.	Learning about the different theorists in nursing and how their contributions have helped shape nursing into the field it is today.	I'm the first one in my family to graduate from college and continue to work on advancement in their career and education.	It's a great support and program that TVOR offers their employees. Thank you so much for having this in place to allow us to better ourselves financially, educationally, and professionally.

Social Ministry

Beyond financial support, our mission extends to our social responsibility to offer our support to the congregations within the Synods on a variety of older adult care topics, sharing the expertise gained through 135 years of experience.

Please do not hesitate to contact us for trusted answers to your questions. Zach Heeter would love to join your worship for a temple talk as well as have conversations with your pastor, social groups and individual congregation members who want more information. We also have team members available to provide older adult-topic education to your senior ministry groups. (i.e. Understanding Senior Living Options, Medication Management, Mental Health and Cognitive Wellness, Fall Prevention and Safety.)

Milestones and Recognitions

The Legacy at North Augusta (Staunton) has expanded its available services to include independent living. With this enhancement, residents are able to move into the community sooner before "assistance" is needed, which also allows couples to remain together if one spouse needs more care than the other. Respite care stays are also available at The Legacy. With a minimum two week stay, respite stays offer a great relief to caregivers who need support – whether for an extended time out of town or for their own personal wellness.

In February 2025, Pastor Dan Hess joined The Legacy as Chaplain, bringing a heart for walking with people in their faith and a deep love for their stories. He finds great joy in building meaningful connections within the community and offering spiritual care to those he serves. He holds a Bachelor of Science from Bridgewater College and a



Pastor Dan Hess joined The Legacy at North Augusta in Staunton, Virginia in February 2025



Master of Divinity from United Lutheran Seminary in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Before coming to The Legacy, he served as a pastor at Trinity Ecumenical Parish near Smith Mountain Lake.

The Village at Rockville celebrates its 135th year of serving older adults in 2025. Established in 1890 as the National Lutheran Home and known as The Village at Rockville since 2010, the community continues to evolve to meet the needs of its current and future residents.

Renovations of existing triplex cottages to duplex villas began in 2023 and continue today, as residences become available. Rockville introduced a new future residency initiative – The Village Explorer program. As a Village Explorer, future residents have the opportunity to participate in community events while they wait for their preferred apartment, cottage or villa to become available. This is a great opportunity to *explore, evolve and thrive* with current residents.

The Village at Rockville continues its annual tradition of greater community-wide Easter celebrations and Halloween costume and trick-or-treat events.

In March 2023, retired rostered ministers with a combined total of 544 years of ministry experience gathered at The Village at Rockville for a time of fellowship and learning. We look forward to continuing this tradition.

**Craig is currently serving as the interim executive director, as he was promoted to NLCS vice president of operations in March 2023.*



An example floor plan for the new villa duplexes at The Village at Rockville.

Construction is expected to begin late summer 2023, with move-ins expected in early 2024.



The Rev. Phyllis Blair Milton (left), Bishop of the ELCA Virginia Synod spoke at Orchard Ridge's Gratitude Brunch. Pictured with her are the Rev. Jonathan Boyton and the Rev. John Wertz.

The Village at Orchard Ridge (Winchester) celebrates its 10th anniversary in 2023! A community-wide celebration will be held in June. Thank you to all who joined our Virginia Gratitude Brunch in November 2024, with featured speaker The Rev. Phyllis Blair Milton, Bishop, on "Oh the Places You'll Go" to give our thanks to give our thanks to our donors, residents, and church community!

In August 2022, Orchard Ridge opened its Assisted Living Neighborhood on the third floor of the Clocktower and Proclamation Place buildings. Designed to offer independence with a helping hand, these spacious one-bedroom apartments include a kitchen, bath and living room and plenty of storage, while the care team provides the perfect balance of freedom and support and robust ConnectedLiving programming.



The Village at Providence Point (Annapolis) received approval from the City of Annapolis Planning Commission in February 2022, which was followed by the grand opening of the Sales Center in the Annapolis Exchange building. Pre-sales (reservation) efforts continue during this pre-construction phase. We continue to work through the remainder of the necessary approvals, one of which includes clearing an appeal of the Planning Commission's approval from a local environmental conservancy group. In the meantime, future residents, known as Charter Club members, gather monthly to create community and relationships prior to the community opening. Additionally, the Sales team hosts regular informational events to share the future of retirement living in Annapolis and at The Village at Providence Point. Currently, more than 135 of the cottages and apartments have been reserved.



In April 2024,

Thank you

From 135 years ago to now, National Lutheran has remained committed to the Church as partners in mission. Thank you for your support and generosity in helping those in need!

National Lutheran was born from a donation of 27 acres of land in Washington D.C. by Sarah Utermehle of Reformation Lutheran Church in 1890. Today, as the world and our church continue to change and evolve, we reflect on our shared history and look to ways we can continue to grow in our shared mission and ministry.



The Impact of Our Benefits

Portico Benefit Services' Report to 2025 Synod Assemblies

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

52,067
*Members
served by
Portico*



2,998

Text/Virtual Health Care Visits

To 98point6p and 699 of these were ELCA-Primary plan members new to our text-based primary care service.



198

Births & Adoptions

10th

Consecutive Year

Of our Customer Care Center being named a Center of Excellence by Benchmark Portal.



518

Changes of Call*

1,199

Sword Health Enrollments

And nearly 26K total sessions in their Thrive, Move, and Bloom digital physical therapy and mobility programs.

15.17%

of Member Income

Saved for retirement, on average, by members sponsored in the Traditional Benefits Program, thanks to employer and member contributions.*

\$199K

Debt Paid Off

By members via LSS of Minnesota Financial Counseling, with over \$2.4M paid off since 2008.

16K

Members and Employers Invited to Participate

In our Benefits reExamined surveys, with more than 4,100 responses.*



39

Beginning Disability Benefits**

\$209M

Made in Annuity Payments

And 515 retirements.



Nearly 10% of Our 10K ELCA Medicare-Primary Plan Members

Participated in the SilverSneakers fitness program with an average of 8 visits to a fitness center per month.*

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

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

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



ROANOKE COLLEGE®

God is good! Greetings to the congregations and members of the Virginia Synod, ELCA. We give thanks for the blessings we have enjoyed this past year. One of the greatest is to be your partner in the Commonwealth for over 183 years now. Education for the sake of vocation, so that all may flourish, came with German Lutheran immigrants in the 1800s to Virginia and continues to guide our work in educating the next generation here at dear old Roanoke.

The core principles of Lutheran Higher Education, expressed in the ELCA's "Rooted and Open" document, (<https://resources.elca.org/colleges-universities-and-seminaries/rooted-and-open/>) have helped us to shape our new strategic plan, "Imagine Roanoke" (https://www.roanoke.edu/about/office_of_the_president/strategic_plan). Two great reads if you want to catch the vision for Lutheran Higher Education in the 21st century here in Virginia. You will see the Board of Trustees and Dr. Shushok remain deeply committed to the vital partnership between the ELCA and the College.

So, here are a handful of highlights from the 2024-2025 Academic year:

- Last fall, football returned to campus for the first time since 1942 along with a new competitive cheerleading team and marching band. Over 10,000 people filled Salem Stadium to catch a glimpse of the Maroons hitting the gridiron for the first time. Only four years after its founding of the Maroons wrestling team, we celebrated our first ever National Champion, Mark Samuel, '26. In May, Bill Pilat, '85, our Lacrosse Coach of 37 years and member of Christ Lutheran, Roanoke announced his retirement. He holds the record for wins in the Old Dominion Athletic Conference.
- Our first-year students built and dedicated the 19th Annual R House in partnership with Habitat for Humanity.
- The Shaun McConnon Discovery Center construction is currently underway. A new central building, which will stand in place of Massengill Hall, is rising from the ground as I write. It will provide much-needed teaching and learning spaces for Roanoke's growing student population. Three of Roanoke's 10 most popular majors will be housed in the McConnon Center, and 33% of all courses on campus will be taught there. While you are with us for the Synod Assembly, a major renovation of Crawford Hall gets underway and check out the new Temporary Housing available this fall at the north end of Hawthorne Parking Lot.
- Our faculty has been busy innovating. Last fall, Explore@RC opened to high school students in grades 10-12. They can earn up to 12 free college courses through



ROANOKE COLLEGE®

Roanoke College's new dual enrollment lab school. There is NO COST to students or their families. As a state-supported lab school, Explore@RC is open to all students in the commonwealth of Virginia. Also, we are thrilled to launch two new Master's degrees in Education and Psychology. Their first cohorts will begin this fall. They join our first program, our Master's of Business Administration, which now enters its third year. Our new Army ROTC program will launch this fall and as part of our expanded educational vision, we are reorganizing our academic disciplines into four new schools that will promote interdisciplinary collaboration and holistically prepare students for a rapidly changing world. The schools will be: School of Communication, Culture and the Arts, School of Business, Economics and Analytics, School of Education, Government and Society, and School of Health, Science and Sustainability.

- The new Rapid Maroons program is designed for students at partner community colleges who are interested in continuing their education and earning a bachelor's degree at Roanoke College. With access to joint advising and student activities, along with a streamlined application process, Rapid Maroons can save time and confidently take the next step in their journey toward a well-rounded and successful future. The program is currently available to students at the following partner schools: Virginia Western Community College, New River Community College and Mountain Gateway Community College.
- In April, the college unveiled a new memorial, "Authors and Architects" dedicated to recognizing and honoring the role enslaved people in the college's history. The sculpture was created by Sandy Williams IV who is a professor at the University of Richmond. It is found next to Bittle Hall on Maxey Way.
- At commencement in May we celebrated 370 – Undergraduates & 12 – MBAs. This raised the number of Maroons in the world to nearly 19,000 alumni. They are spread around the world today with one of our most recent, Tim Hostetter, '24, in Cambodia with the ELCA's Young Adults in Global Mission.

We give thanks for the leadership that Bishop Phyllis Milton, the Rev. Harry Griffith and the Rev. Dr. Ted Schneider, Bishop Emeritus, Metro DC Synod bring to our Board of Trustees. This spring, Bishop Emeritus Schneider retired from the Board and was honored for his decades of service. Blessings as you meet for the gathering of the synod to celebrate all that God has done, is doing and is yet to do in and through you.



2024 ANNUAL REPORT

HIGHLIGHTS seafarers International House

MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: We cannot wait till the world is sane

Dear friends of Seafarers International House (SIH).

Thanks to your support we assisted 19,066 people, over 1,000 more than last year! We had many reasons to rejoice as we journeyed together with seafarers and immigrants legally seeking asylum, even though the year itself can be described as "unsteady". In January, Houthis fired upon two US-flagged container ships, putting seafarers in danger. From November 2023 until their release on January 22, 2025, 17 Filipinos, 3 Ukrainians, 2 Bulgarians, 2 Mexicans, and 1 Romanian of the MV Galaxy Leader, a vehicle carrier, were held hostage. Since November 2023, over 90 vessels have been attacked, sinking at least two ships, and killing four mariners. Add the "normal" isolation of contracts lasting for 6-9 months and you understand that seafarers continue to make great sacrifices.

Thanks to your support, our Port Chaplains can bring a ministry of presence, essentials, and transportation to seafarers. Last February, we celebrated the official start of our Ukrainian-born Port Chaplain Pastor Vitalii Guz, who serves with our partners at the Baltimore International Seafarers Center (BISC). We also welcomed our ship visitor, Tim Marzik, who has big shoes to fill with the retirement of our beloved Ruth Setaro after 27 years of service. We reignited our partnership with the Deutsche Seemannsmission e.V., which traces its roots to 1907, when the son of the director of the German Emigrant House (a predecessor of SIH), helped found the German Seamen's Mission in the Port of New York, a service we continue to this day.

Tragically, on March 26, the Francis Scott Key Bridge in Baltimore was struck by a container ship. The accident killed six construction workers, all of whom were immigrants. In the aftermath, 7 ships operated by 120 seafarers were temporarily trapped, and to this day many of the crew members on the accident-causing ship continue to be held in the US as litigation progresses. With Baltimore International Seafarers Center (BISC), and Chaplain Vitalii and – returning from retirement – Chaplain Rev. K. Robert "Bob" Schmitt, SIH was able to provide relief to those affected.

In April, it was party time! Thanks to our honorees Katie Higginbottom, Randi Ciszewski, and Tim Nolan and the support of their friends, the Setting the Course Reception was a success! 180 attendees ensured through their contributions that we would be able to serve 13,556 seafarers in the Ports of Albany, Baltimore, Duluth, New Haven, and New York & New Jersey, and with accommodations in NYC. Then in

August, we bid fair seas and following winds to two SIH icons: Arthur William Clark (1944), a long-time SIH board member and treasurer for over 20 years; and Port Chaplain Rev. William C. Fensterer (1930), who for over 50 years provided unparalleled service to mariners.

We exulted, when, in September, the Ghanaian family, who we supported at the Lighthouse, found their own home. All four miraculously survived the dangerous journey through the Darian Gap and almost drowned before legally applying for asylum and working hard to become self-sufficient. Throughout 2024, we assisted 33 asylees and provided them with a safe place for a

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 the Ports of Albany, Baltimore, Duluth, New Haven, and New York & New Jersey, and in New York City.

combined 1,508 lodging nights.

After the November elections, we pray that legal immigration will remain possible and vow to stand with people who are persecuted or experience violence elsewhere.

At Christmastime we rejoiced! With the help of all those listed on page 5, we delivered a record setting 3,507 satchels to seafarers out at sea spreading love around the globe.

With this bittersweet year in mind, I would like to close this report with excerpts from Madeleine L'Engle's poem *First Coming*:

*He did not wait till the world was ready,
till men and nations were at peace
He came when the Heavens were
unsteady
and prisoners cried out for release. ...*

*... We cannot wait till the world is sane
to raise our songs with joyful voice,
for to share our grief, to touch our pain,
He came with Love: Rejoice! Rejoice!
Peace,*



Marsh Luther Drage
Pastor and Executive Director



2024 Program Impact

19,066 immigrants and seafarers directly benefited from SIH services (up from 18,004).

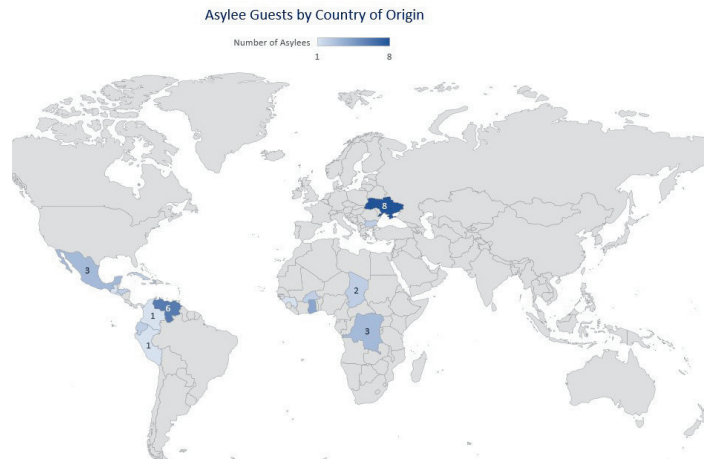
2,225 lodging nights provided to 140 seafarers in Manhattan.

13,556 seafarers were visited and counseled on 1,232 ships, receiving essentials they requested.

1,830 seafarers were transported to a mall or medical facilities.

3,507 seafarers, regardless of faith, received Christmas-at-Sea satchels filled with warm clothing and holiday greetings prepared by volunteers to recognize their sacrifices. Up from 3,216 last year!

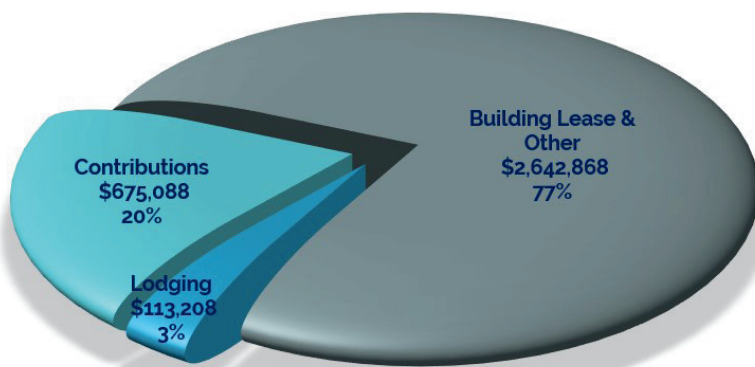
33 asylum seekers received lodging for a total of 1,508 nights. They hailed from Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Chad, Colombia, Cuba, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, El Salvador, Gambia, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Peru, Ukraine, and Venezuela.



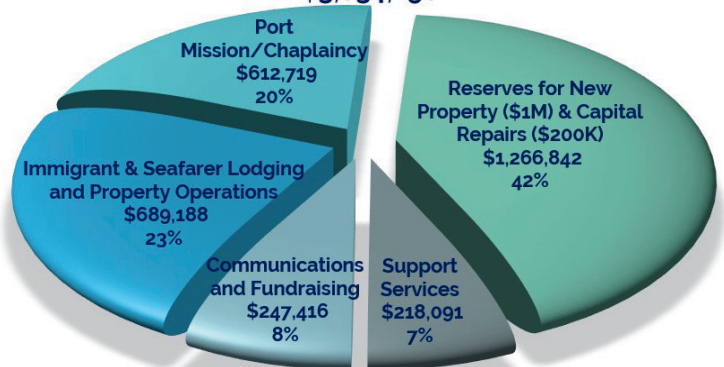
2024 FINANCIAL REPORT

In accordance with our 2024 - 2028 strategic plan, operating gains continue to help to build reserves for a new property (\$1M) with mission-based guest rooms and offices. These gains also allow for capital repairs on the guesthouse (\$200,000), which is leased to Breaking Ground, a NYC-based non-profit which provides transitional housing to the community. Lease revenue provides only a portion of necessary means to support 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 85% of expenses with only 15% spent on support services and fundraising. These figures reflect *unaudited revenue and expenses and are subject to change*. To request the audited 2024 financial statements please send an email to henryk@sihnyc.org.

Operating Revenue 2024 (pre-audit) \$3,431,164



Operating Expenses & Reserves for New Property 2024 (pre-audit) \$3,034,256



**Report to the ELCA Synod Assemblies -March 2025**

Founded in 1874, the mission of St. Olaf College is to challenge students to excel in the liberal arts, examine faith and values, and explore meaningful vocation in an inclusive, globally engaged community nourished by Lutheran tradition. St. Olaf's current student population of approximately 3050 degree-seeking undergraduates represents 49 states and 102 countries. 20% are first-generation college students, 23% identify as domestic students of color, 10% are international students, and 24% are income-eligible for Pell grants. St. Olaf continues to be one of only a handful of higher education institutions nation-wide that meets the full demonstrated need of all admitted students through a variety of financial assistance programs, including a new Indigenous Affordability Commitment to be launched in Fall 2025. Approximately half of our students indicate that they are affiliated with a Christian denomination, with 16% self-identifying as Lutheran and another 5% as members of a denomination in full communion with the ELCA.

St. Olaf's core curriculum engages students with the full array of liberal arts disciplines, including one required course examining Religion, Faith, and Values, one on Christian Theology in Dialogue, and one on Ethical Reasoning in Context. Among our Class of 2024 graduates, 94% had participated in a "high-impact educational practice," such as a mentored research experience, a learning community, study abroad/away, or an academic civic engagement course. Over the past three years, an average of 95% of our recent graduates were working, pursuing further education, or engaged in full-time military or other service program within seven months of graduation.

In Summer 2023, St. Olaf welcomed Dr. Susan Rundell Singer as its twelfth president, succeeding President David R. Anderson '74. A national leader in the improvement of undergraduate teaching and learning, Dr. Singer previously served as vice president for academic affairs and provost at Rollins College in Winter Park, Florida; as the director of the Division of Undergraduate Education at the National Science Foundation (NSF); and as the Laurence McKinley Gould Professor of Biology at Carleton College. Under her leadership, the college is now implementing a new six-year strategic plan, focused on elevating vocation, expanding innovation, and sustaining community. The plan includes a commitment to developing and implementing a strategy for college-wide inclusion, belonging, cultural competence, and engagement across differences, supported by a new Division of Community and Belonging. Vice President Eduardo Pazos joined President Singer's executive team on August 1 to lead this vital work, having previously served as assistant dean of student affairs for identity and culture, director of the Center for Multicultural Life, and director of the Rachel Lord Center for Religious and Spiritual Life. This year also marks the commemoration of the college's 150th anniversary with a wide



variety of exhibits and events, including a two-day St. Olaf Music Festival at Orchestra Hall that will feature the St. Olaf Band and the St. Olaf Jazz Band on Friday, April 18 and the St. Olaf Orchestra and St. Olaf Choir on Saturday, April 19.

St. Olaf continues to offer daily Chapel services and Sunday worship throughout the academic year, led by its two ELCA pastors and featuring members and friends of the St. Olaf community as speakers and musicians. Consistent with St. Olaf's identity as a "rooted and open" ELCA institution, the College Ministry team also includes an Associate Chaplain for Jewish Life and an Associate Chaplain for Muslim Life (currently an open position, with a search underway). The college continues its weekly streamed Sing For Joy® radio program, built around the Revised Common Lectionary for the church year, and integrating the best in sacred choral music with thoughtful commentary by the program host Rev. Alexandra Jacob '16. The biannual St. Olaf Conference on Worship, Theology, and the Arts returned in July 2024, providing professional development, spiritual nourishment and networking opportunities for more than 225 pastors, church musicians, and lay leaders serving congregations from across the country. Featured speakers included Jason DeRose '97, Religion Correspondent for National Public Radio.

The Lutheran Center for Faith, Values, and Community continues to advance a compelling vision for Lutheranism in the 21st century, foster interreligious engagement, nurture vocational discernment, and provide national and global thought leadership. A key part of the Lutheran Center's work is to help all the college's constituencies understand the role of Lutheran tradition in supporting the things they value most about St. Olaf. The Center offers professional development for faculty and staff, fellowships and internships for students, and programming and events for all members and friends of the St. Olaf community on a wide range of topics, such as Lutheran values in pedagogical practice, interreligious engagement in the workplace, the intersection of Native American spirituality and Christian faith, and vocational discernment post-retirement. The Lutheran Center is also home to a new St. Olaf Sacred Texts Initiative, launched in Spring 2024 with the gift of a Saint John's Bible Heritage Edition, one of only 299 state-of-the-art reproductions of the original hand-written, hand-illuminated seven-volume Saint John's Bible. Through partnerships with College Ministry and other offices and academic departments across the campus, the gift will also support the acquisition of a Torah Scroll and an illuminated Qur'an to support teaching and learning, spiritual practice, and artistic enrichment in both the curriculum and co-curriculum.

Supported by two significant grants from Lilly Endowment Inc., the Lutheran Center also provides programming and resources for education, worship, and leadership development to congregations of the ELCA and other denominations. The Nourishing Vocation Project helps individuals and faith communities thrive through life-giving accompaniment and



spiritual renewal that supports them in aligning their values and actions with God's call. The [Nourishing Vocation with Children Project](#) supports congregations and their leaders in integrating music, theater, movement, poetry, and visual arts into congregational worship in ways that engage children and adults alike. Both projects provide individual and congregational coaching; resources for study and reflection, prayer and meditation, and arts-enriched worship; and connection with other congregations and congregational leaders through learning communities, webinars, and other gatherings. The projects also engage St. Olaf students as interns, project Fellows, and researchers. A number of the Nourishing Vocation resources are available at no cost on the project websites linked above, such as [Sing Vocare](#), a playlist of musical selections to accompany the [Vocare Spiritual Practice](#); a [Resource Corner](#) with devotional resources, sample liturgies, and teaching materials; and the [Near and Now](#) series of biblical reflections and guided meditation for vocational discernment. To date, more than 800 congregations and 5000 rostered and lay leaders have engaged with the programming or resources of one or both of these projects.

We encourage you to take advantage of the many opportunities and resources St. Olaf provides for education, artistic engagement, and spiritual enrichment. We look forward to welcoming you to campus, and to welcoming the prospective students you introduce to St. Olaf.



Virginia Council of Churches Report

Grace and peace to you from God our Creator and the Lord Jesus Christ! The Virginia Council of Churches has been engaging various denominations in trainings and expanding ecumenical participation in VCC Ministries.

First, I commend and thank the Virginia Synod of the ELCA Church as the leading denomination in VCC ministry participation and partnership giving. For every event VCC has sponsored, ELCA members are present, fully participate, and lead. First, the Rev. Eric Moehring, a retired pastor of the Virginia Synod, ELCA, is the chairperson of the Rural Family Development Program (RFD). This ministry is the outgrowth of one of VCC's first ministries from the late 1950s, Migrant Ministries of the Eastern Shore. The RFD Program is transitioning from Head Start to after school and youth summer programs in various locations, with the target start date of 2026. The Rev. Terrie Sternberg serves on RFD's Board and VCC's Coordinating Cabinet.

Additionally, the Virginia Council of Churches Anti-racism Pro-reconciliation (ARPR) Team presented its first training in May 2024, the Virginia Synod had three persons present and actively participating: Rev. Kelly Bayer Derrick, Rev. Paul Pingel, and Rev. Terrie Sternberg; Pastor Bayer Derrick and Pingel are active participants with the VCC ARPR Team; Rev. Bayer Derrick is trifacilitating the Christian Nationalism sub-team which sponsored two workshops, one in the eastern and one in the western areas of Virginia in 2024. The ELCA is fully leading in the Virginia Council of Churches ministries.

Bishop Phyllis Milton was the kick-off keynote preacher for the Annual Judicatory Retreat; the retreat's focus was on "Change". Bishop Milton established the tone for the 2025 retreat with her opening sermon.

Now, the Virginia Council of Churches Annual Day is Thursday, November 6, 2025 at the Wesley Memorial United Methodist Church, 1720 Mechanicsville Turnpike, Richmond, VA 23223. The keynote speaker is the Rev. Dr. Cynthia L. Hale (native of Roanoke, VA), Founder and Senior Pastor of the Ray of Hope Christian Church, Decatur, GA. This year will be focused on "Engaging, Equipping, Empowering and Envisioning" . . . for the Ecumenical Journey. The scripture foundation is 1 Thessalonians 5:11: "Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, as indeed you are doing." All are encouraged to attend this life-giving day event. There will be "help shops," good food, and great ecumenical fellowship! Hope to see you there!



Below are brief summaries of events from the Virginia Council of Churches 2024 events

Anti-racism Pro-reconciliation Training in Richmond, VA

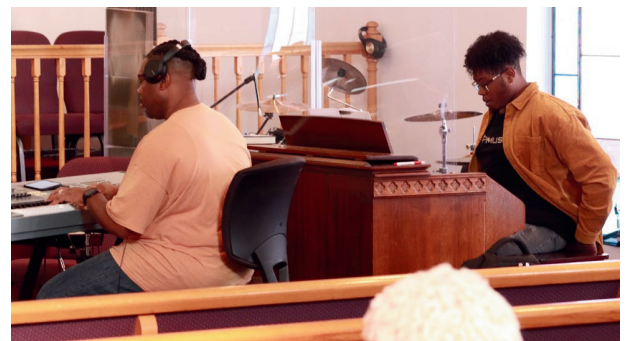


Christian Nationalism Workshops in Virginia Beach and Lynchburg:





Annual Day in Charlottesville:





Virginia Council of Churches Report

I am excited about God using the VA Synod of the ELCA Church members in the Virginia Council of Churches; you are leaders of leaders! It is a blessing to be ecumenical sisters and brothers on this journey together, manifesting more fully God's vision of unity on earth now! To God, I am thankful and grateful for you!

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



The Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy is the official ELCA advocacy arm in the state, and partners with the Virginia Synod on ensuring Lutheran concerns are elevated to our policy-makers. In the last year, VICPP has seen some important progress. Rev. Dr. LaKeisha Cook was named the first Black Executive Director of the organization in April. In addition, legislative victories ranged from protecting rural access to maternal health care to ending youth shacking. The organization offers a concrete way to put our faith into action at a systemic level, through action alerts, local events, and educational opportunities. VICPP is always looking to expand our connections through our congregational liaisons and congregational partnerships.

VICPP's mission is to engage people of faith and goodwill in advancing racial, social, and economic justice through Virginia's policies and practices.

VICPP Priorities

Civic Engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 100% Voting Congregations• Supporting meetings with legislators (both local and in Richmond)• Voter education and candidate forums	Racial Equity <ul style="list-style-type: none">• This lens shapes all issue work• Elevating voices of Black, Indigenous, Immigrant, and other people of color in both faith and advocacy spaces
Health Equity <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Requiring unconscious bias training to reduce health disparities• Expanding access to maternal health care	Higher Education in Prison <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Building relationships across sectors to provide degree paths for people who are incarcerated• More information at www.vchep.org.
Affordable Housing <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Making it easier for congregations to develop affordable housing on their land• Supporting funding for affordable housing and protections for renters• Congregations & Housing toolkit, book and events	Supporting Working Families <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increasing funding for child care• Working to guarantee all workers access to paid sick days• Offering Know Your Rights support on Child Labor and Wage Theft
Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Congregational toolkits and sample interfaith prayer vigils• Guides for book and film studies on different topics	Criminal Justice Reform <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Automating restoration of voting rights• Reducing solitary confinement and prison profiteering

Interested in learning more?

Sign up for alerts and emails at tinyurl.com/vicppsignup

Email VICPP's Director of Faith Organizing: sheila@virginiainterfaithcenter.org
www.virginiainterfaithcenter.org



Virginia Lutheran Homes, Inc. Synod Report 2025

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.

In 2024 and continuing into 2025, Virginia Lutheran Homes is in a season of growth. The Corporate office in Roanoke, Virginia is going through a much-needed update that will create a space for the entire Board of Trustees to have their quarterly meetings within the Virginia Lutheran Homes corporate space. In addition, Brandon Oaks Life Care Community in Roanoke is expanding. Two new buildings are being built that will add 28 units at the community. Currently, Brandon Oaks Life Care Community is fully occupied with a lengthy waiting list. The addition of the 28 units will allow for crucial additional offerings to the seniors we serve. Also, to accommodate this growth, Brandon Oaks is renovating the interior area of the building to expand our auditorium, clinic space and dining capacity. Our Chaplains offer a Vesper service every Wednesday, and the additional auditorium space will allow more residents to attend. This planned growth will allow Virginia Lutheran Homes to increase its senior living services and continue the tradition of offering senior living opportunities at our award-winning community in Roanoke.

As in years past, Our Brandon Oaks Nursing and Rehabilitation Center 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. Our residents and families continue to take advantage of all our nursing facility has to offer, 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, including a summer picnic and Christmas party with shrimp and grilled chicken 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 America, we are pleased to offer Chaplain services in all of our communities. We were blessed to have both Pastor Meredith Williams and Pastor Keith Olivier, offering valuable spiritual care to all of our residents. 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 update items in our skilled nursing facility, landscaping at Luther Crest and continue our tradition of partnering with the Roanoke Symphony Orchestra to offer musical program to our communities. Virginia Lutheran Homes is blessed to have monetary donations from 100% of our Board of Trustees. 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.



2024 Annual Report to the Synods

Wartburg College is dedicated to challenging and nurturing students for lives of leadership and service as a spirited expression of their faith and learning.

Guided by our vision, we are answering the call to prepare resilient leaders of positive change for service in a complex world. This will be realized by building on our distinctives and embracing new opportunities to be the leading institution in educating the whole person.

Enrollment and Student Success

- Fall 2024 undergraduate enrollment was 1,452 students from 38 U.S. states and 39 countries, which includes 184 U.S. students of color and 70 international students. More than 20 Christian denominations and several world religions are represented. Twenty-one students are enrolled in the online Master of Arts in Leadership.
- The five majors with the highest enrollment are business administration, biology, exercise science, elementary education, and music education.
- To amplify focus on the first-year experience as a key indicator in student persistence and success, Wartburg partnered with Credo, a higher education consulting firm, to participate in a five-year initiative called Moving the Needle. With the support and guidance of the Credo team, Wartburg faculty and staff will identify, further develop, and implement impactful practices to improve student retention.
- Alumni & Career Connections, a new partnership between Wartburg's Advancement and Student Life divisions, will optimize alumni engagement toward student success. Ignited by a \$1 million gift from Mike and Marge McCoy, the initiative includes a new mentoring platform, Knight Nation, and intentional programming to help students explore opportunities for their future while leveraging our alumni base.

Strategic Positioning

- Starting in fall 2024, the college launched the Wartburg Commitment, a new pricing model and value proposition designed to help students consider, afford, and experience Wartburg College. The comprehensive program includes a new competitive price, reduced financial barriers for lower- and middle-income families, and funding to increase access to immersive experiences.
- Wartburg received a \$2.3 million gift from the John Sauer '78 estate to grow the Knight's Experience Fund, a new endowed fund that helps offset the cost of experiential learning opportunities for all Wartburg students.



Academic and Co-Curricular Programs

- Wartburg was one of 25 schools and the only one in Iowa to earn a Carnegie Elective Classification for Leadership for Public Purpose. The classification acknowledges colleges and universities that have committed to campuswide efforts to advance leadership in pursuit of public goods such as justice, equity, diversity, and liberty. The designation is presented by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, the American Council on Education, and the Doerr Institute for New Leaders at Rice University.
- Wartburg announced two new online graduate programs in health and human performance – a Master of Science in sport science and data analytics and a Master of Science in high performance – beginning fall 2025. The programs, which build on the college’s reputation for excellence in undergraduate health sciences programs and athletic dominance, will produce students ready to lead and serve in athletic and nonathletic venues.
- Wartburg received a \$185,000 grant from the Roy J. Carver Charitable Trust to help transform technology in more than 60 classrooms and advance the college’s vision of becoming a fully wireless campus by 2030. The five-year initiative will begin in 2025 and will equip faculty with advanced tools for effective teaching, promoting innovation and creativity in addition to creating a more engaging and interactive learning environment.
- In fall 2024, Wartburg faculty implemented a new General Education curriculum – THRIVE – which stands for Thinking Critically, Human Culture, Reasoning, Information Fluency, Vocation, and Effective Communication.
- The Wartburg-Waverly Sports & Wellness Center (The W) was renamed in honor of former president Jack Ohle and his wife, Kris. The Board of Regents approved the change in spring 2024, and the rededication of the Ohle Wartburg-Waverly Sports & Wellness Center (The W) was held during Homecoming 2024 festivities.

Spiritual Life and Campus Ministry

- Spiritual Life and Campus Ministry supports students in their journey to find connection, presence, and purpose in their life at college. We seek to meet the spiritual and religious needs of our diverse campus community while also building bridges of compassion and understanding through interfaith/ecumenical engagement. Spiritual Life and Campus Ministry oversees over 19 student groups and programs.
- Wartburg College received an \$8,100 Northeastern Iowa Synod Community Engagement Grant to help engage religiously diverse students, employees, and community members as well as grow religious literacy on campus. This grant supplements funding for our Bridge program, which equips students with skills in bridge building across differences, and is executed by our Interfaith and Religious Diversity Council.
- Kelly Sherman-Conroy, an indigenous educator, church leader, and scholar, received the 2024 Graven Award. The annual award for Christian vocation highlights the powerful and



- positive effect of a strong sense of Christian vocation as it interfaces with service to the community, the church, and the world.
- Nathaniel Knutson '24 received the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's Fund for Leaders Direct Full-Tuition Scholarship, which will help him continue his education at Wartburg Theological Seminary.
- Dr. Caryn Riswold, professor of religion and the McCoy Family Distinguished Chair in Lutheran Heritage and Mission, published her fourth book, "ReEngaging ELCA Social Teaching on Abortion."

Recognition

- Kirk Kleckner '81, Mike Mallaro, Matthew Petersen '06, and Gordon Sween '89 were elected to the Board of Regents. Kleckner of Bradenton, Fla., is founder and former president of ValuationUSA; Mallaro of Cedar Falls, Iowa, is executive chairman of the board for VGM Group; Petersen of Denver, Colo., is a partner at Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner LLP; and Sween of Minneapolis, Minn., is a retired health care executive.
- The Wartburg Medal was presented to professor emeriti Gloria Campbell and Dr. Lynn Olson in December 2024. The Wartburg Medal recognizes individuals who have provided significant service to the college over a sustained period and who have a personal commitment to the college's mission, quality, and character.
- Boboya Gabu '26, a Davis United World College Scholar from South Sudan, received a \$10,000 Projects for Peace grant to carry out a summer humanitarian effort empowering individuals living with HIV/AIDS with marketable skills.
- Georgia Nissen '24 received the prestigious R.J. McElroy Graduate Fellowship, designed to encourage persons of accomplishment, intelligence, integrity, and leadership ability to pursue challenging academic careers.
- Dr. Mike Bechtel '94, associate professor of science education, received the Engaged Campus Award for Emerging Innovation from the Seed Coalition, formerly Iowa and Minnesota Campus Compact, for his work with sustainable agriculture. Also honored were Bethany Christians '24, who received the Presidents' Student Leadership Award, and Krystal Madlock, associate dean for inclusive community, who received the Presidents' Civic Engagement Leadership Award.
- Dr. Rebecca Nederhiser, conductor of the Wartburg Community Symphony, was a finalist for the American Prize's Vytautas Marijosius Memorial Award in Orchestral Programming.

Wartburg continues to find focus in a vibrant mission that transforms the entire college community as we learn, work, and serve together. Thank you for your prayers and support as we share in the work of strengthening the Lutheran traditions of higher education and Christian vocation.

Dr. Rebecca Ehretsman, President