



## **Report from the Virginia Synod Assembly June 13-15, 2025**

Lutherans from all around the Virginia Synod gathered at Roanoke College for the 2025 Virginia Synod Assembly. The Synod welcomed **Jill Beverlin**, ELCA Program Director – Coaching Ministries, as our Churchwide Representative. **Bishop Dee Pederson** from our companion synod, Southwestern Minnesota Synod preached and brought greetings from her synod.

### **Theme**

The Assembly theme was **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). The theme was carried out throughout the assembly by hearing updates from various mission partners who were present.

Intertwining prayers were offered throughout the assembly. Congregations and ministry sites were invited to share information and pictures about their ministries. These pictures and stories were available on the tables at the assembly and attendees prayed for the congregations and ministry sites across the Synod.

A variety of Ecumenical leaders were present and introduced at the start of the assembly.

### **Elections**

Elected to serve on Synod Council are **River Smith** (St. Mark, Floyd-Willis Parish), **Jerry A. Hoke** (Our Saviour, Warrenton), **Nathaniel Porter** (Our Saviour, Christiansburg), **Patricia Corliss** (St. Timothy, Norfolk) **Cedric Wilson** (St. Philip, Roanoke), **Pastor Tina Melusky** (Trinity, Newport News), and **Pastor Deanna Boynton** (Grace, Winchester - serving as Chaplain at Valley Health).

Elected to serve on the Committee on Discipline are **Erin Hager** (Trinity, Pulaski), **Charles Page** (Good Shepherd, Lexington), **Erin Geoffrion** (Grace, Winchester), and **Pastor Joel Neubauer** (St. Mark, Yorktown).

### **Worship**

The Assembly opened with a service of Holy Communion. **Bishop Dee Pederson**, Southwestern Minnesota Synod, served as the preacher for worship and focused on the Assembly theme, 'Intertwining Hope.' On Saturday morning, **Bishop Phyllis Milton** presided at a service of remembrance for rostered ministers who had died since the last onsite assembly in 2023. The assembly also remembered congregations that had closed. Saturday's Assembly concluded with a Festival Service of Holy Communion that included commissioning four lay ministers, **Jim Ingraham**, **Erich Lantz**, **Debbie Mintiens**, and **Jennifer Partica**. The final day of the Assembly began with morning prayer and ended with a closing worship service featuring a sermon by **Vicar Andy Taminger** (Southside Partnership-Ascension, Danville and Holy Trinity, Martinsville) and the installation of those serving in leadership roles within the life of the

Virginia Synod. This year, the offerings were designated to support the Lutheran Disaster Response.

### **Celebrations**

The Assembly celebrated rostered minister ordination anniversaries, congregation anniversaries, and gave thanks to lay leaders, including those concluding terms on Synod Council. Five local lay leaders were recognized through the **2025 Serving Boldly Awards**. The award recipients were **Sandy Birch** (St. Michael, Blacksburg), **Scott Miller** (Lakeside, Lake Gaston), **Kelly Rummel** (Trinity, Newport News), **Linda Williams** (St. Paul, Strasburg), and **Rita Foringer** (Gloria Dei, Hampton), who received the lifetime achievement award. The Assembly celebrated and honored **Pastor Kelly Bayer Derrick** as she concludes her call.

### **CaSTLE Grant Announced**

The Lay Ministry Academy team was excited to announce that the Virginia Synod has received a \$50,000 grant from the CaSTLE project at Wartburg Seminary ([www.wartburgseminary.edu/the-castle-project/](http://www.wartburgseminary.edu/the-castle-project/)). The grant will assist the Virginia Synod in the development of support systems for synod authorized ministers and lay ministry leadership across the synod.

### **Assembly Business**

The Assembly approved the 2026 and 2027 Investment in Ministry Plans, the 2023 and 2024 Synod Audits, and the Compensation Guidelines for 2026. Bishop Milton and the Officers of the Synod shared their reports.

**Susanna Carr** (First English, Richmond), president of the Lutheran Youth Organization, presented the Youth Assembly report, focusing on the theme, "Shapes of Hope," based on Romans 5:1-5, and the images of hope that present themselves to us in our daily lives. Each of the speakers at the Youth Assembly echoed that theme in the work they do in their various callings, including campus and outdoor ministries, social services, and ministries of inclusion. Susanna also introduced the two LYO officers who were elected for next year's board: **Kat Kolodinsky** (Muhlenberg, Harrisonburg - 12th grade Representative and President), and **Caroline Griffin** (First, Norfolk - 11th grade Representative).

