



SECTION

4

RESOLUTIONS & MEMORIALS



Allegheny Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Resolution SA24.06.01

A Resolution Concerning the Authorized Lay Worship Leader Program in the Allegheny Synod, ELCA

PROPONENT: Benjamin Hoffman, Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church, Karthaus, PA

WHEREAS

Whereas Lay Leadership serves a vital role in the life of the church, particularly as the number of ELCA pastoral vacancies continues to outpace the numbers of new rostered ministers available for call;

Whereas many congregations within the Allegheny Synod are without a rostered minister, and therefore call on Lay Leadership to fulfill weekly worship needs;

Whereas the Allegheny Synod has stressed the importance of Lay Leadership in new parish arrangements where individual congregations may not be able to financially support a full time call;

Whereas the Allegheny Synod is called to “provide for ministries to and with leaders of this synod” (S11.01.22, Synod Constitution), to include Lay Leadership;

Whereas the Allegheny Synod provides for the education and nurturing of Lay Leadership within the Synod through the Authorized Lay Worship Leaders program (IGNITE), and;

Whereas the Allegheny Synod Operating Principles for Authorized Lay Leaders for the administration of the Lay Leadership program requires updates to meet the current realities and address future needs.

RESOLVED

Be it resolved that the Allegheny Synod Assembly directs the Office of the Bishop and the Synod Council, either directly or through the establishment of a team or task force, to explore and establish the following:

- a. Conduct a current state analysis of the Lay Leadership program including current opportunities, challenges, and benchmarking with peer synods.
- b. Understand, forecast, and document the future state and needs of the Lay Leader program.
- c. Provide recommendations for the updating of the Operating Principles to include the following:
 - I. Addressing new or emerging opportunities and arrangements (as defined in the future state) in the Authorized Lay Leader’s service to congregations.
 - II. Updating and clarifying procedural items to reflect current realities and future needs.
 - III. Refining mentorship and continuing education opportunities for Authorized Lay Worship Leaders, including opportunities for gathering as a group.
 - IV. Refining guidelines and processes for rostered ministers and congregations to provide feedback to Lay Leaders on performance and other matters concerning their leadership.
 - V. Refining or defining guidelines and processes for consultation, discipline, and if necessary, revocation of the authorization of a Lay Leader who acts beyond their authority, teaches contrary to the doctrines of this church, are disruptive in their capacity as a Lay Leader, and/or for misconduct (in similar fashion to the guidelines and processes established for rostered ministers)

Be it further resolved that the Office of the Bishop and the Synod Council shall provide a report back to the Synod Assembly in 2025 with their findings and actions related to this resolution.

Memorial SA24.06.02

Memorialized by vote of St Paul Lutheran Church, Pine Grove Mills, PA at their annual meeting on January 28, 2024 to the Allegheny Synod,

To transmit the following memorial to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America:

WHEREAS

Whereas, The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (“ELCA”) states that “to participate in God’s mission, this church shall worship God in proclamation of the Word and administration of the sacraments” (4.02.d) and that to fulfill this purpose individuals are to oversee the ministries of Word and Sacrament, Word and Service, and such other forms (4.03.c); and,

Whereas, The ELCA “is committed to the principle that ‘healthy leaders enhance lives’” and that to implement this philosophy “the design and administration of [this church’s] benefit programs should respond to changing societal and economic realities,” and that benefits “should be administered efficiently in order to both enhance the well-being of rostered ministers and lay employees and capture value and savings where possible,” (ELCA Philosophy of Benefits); and,

Whereas, The overall price of health insurance is determined by the age and statistical health challenges of the individuals who are paying to pool their risk with the cost rising with age; and,

Whereas, The average and median age of a minister in the ELCA is higher than that of the general population; and,

Whereas, The Affordable Care Act (ACA) mandated health insurance plans to cover preexisting conditions; and,

Whereas, The ACA created a federal health insurance marketplace and encouraged the establishment state level marketplaces (ACA marketplaces) with premium tax credits of up to four (4) times the federal poverty line for families and individuals based on their Modified Adjusted Gross Income; and,

Whereas, Individual Coverage Health Reimbursement Arrangement (ICHRA) plans now exist to allow employers

to provide tax free money to their employees to pay for a health insurance plan on the ACA marketplaces; and,

Whereas, The current cost of insurance offered through Portico is a burden to many ELCA congregations by either preventing them from being able to call a rostered minister or eroding the congregation’s financial resources; and,

Whereas, Health insurance plans comparable to Portico’s Gold+ plan can frequently be found for lower prices on the ACA marketplaces before including the premium tax credit; therefore, be it

RESOLVED

Resolved, That the Allegheny Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly to direct the Portico Benefit Services Board of Trustees to review and potentially update the ELCA Philosophy of Benefits after a review of the levels of consistency and support provided by health insurance plans in the ACA marketplaces;

Resolved, That the Allegheny Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly to direct Portico Benefit Services to provide to signatories of the ELCA Philosophy of Benefits a numeric and statistical comparison between Portico’s offered health plans to those found on the ACA marketplaces factoring in expected premium tax credits;

Resolved, That the Allegheny Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly to direct the ELCA Office of the Secretary to provide signatories of the ELCA Philosophy of Benefits an estimation of ELCA congregations unable to call a rostered minister due to the price of Portico’s health insurance plans;

Resolved, That the Allegheny Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly to direct Portico Benefit Services to evaluate its ability to offer ELCA ministries ICHRA plans alongside supplemental, vision, and dental insurance plans as add-ons;

Resolved, That the Allegheny Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly to find a way for rostered ministers to have less expensive health insurance.

Photo Captions for photo pages 38–39

1. Bishop Paula and Pastor Kevin participated in an extraordinary service of rededication and unity at Brush Valley Fusion of Faith. Brush Valley Fusion of Faith is the merger of two UCC and one Lutheran congregation in the Nittany Conference. Three congregations have become one. This has been a journey of faithful discernment and prayer. These congregations now begin a new chapter in ministry together. We give thanks to God for their bold witness to unity and partnership.
2. Closing worship service for The Weekend Synod Youth Event. What an amazing time of singing, praying, and celebrating Jesus in Word and Sacrament! THANK YOU to Pastor Brandon Cian and the people of St. James in Huntingdon. They allowed us to take over their building, they changed their worship time so we could all worship together, they gave up their usual seats, and they did their best to sing different styles of music. They were incredibly gracious and hospitable to us and welcomed us as Jesus would. We are also extremely grateful to the planning team, the musicians, and the adult leaders for making a wonderful event for our youth.
3. Bishop Paula worshipped with the folks at Horner Lutheran Church this morning as they extended a call to Vicar Regina Holliday to be their next pastor. It was a good day for the Church. We congratulate Horner and Vicar Regina and look forward to her ordination (early March).
4. Pastor Mark Fischer, Interim at St. David's in Davidsville, has been leading Lutheran worship at FCI-Loretto for a few months. He coordinated a donation of 75 LBWs to replace the hymnals in poor condition at the prison. Thanks to Pastor Tyler Graham and Salisbury Lutheran Parish for the donation, and thanks to Pr. Fischer for his ministry among those in prison.
5. Pastor Kevin worshiped this morning at Redeemer Church in Chesapeake VA. His brother-in-law's brother, Eric, is the lead pastor there. This was Eric's last Sunday before taking a sabbatical over the summer.
6. Bishop Paula preached for the Easter Vigil at St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Altoona with Bishop Audrey Scanlan. It was a lovely evening of ecumenical partnership as we celebrated Christ's resurrection.
7. Josephine Marube being installed as deaconess at Kisii Lutheran mission. In attendance is KELC bishop, Diakonia Coordinator, Women coordinator and other invited guests.
8. Worship Gathering
9. Bishop Paula visited with Trinity, Sidman. It was a big day with a baptism and first communion celebration—glad to be with these folks for this happy day.
10. Bishop Paula celebrated Christmas Eve with the community at Mt. Calvary in Johnstown.
11. Congratulations to the ELCA's newest pastor, Regina Holliday. Regina was ordained at Horner Lutheran Church where she was called to serve as pastor. We give thanks to God for this new leader among us.
12. Pastor Traci Marriott, Pastor Brandon Cian and Pastor Drew McCaffrey participated in the 2024 Special Olympics Winter Games Polar Plunge today at Canoe Creek Star Park. Congratulations! Good work!
13. Trinity, Sidman, baptism and first communion celebration.
14. A good day for the church in our territory, Pastor Kevin and Bishop Paula were at Faith in Somerset to authorize five new lay worship leaders for our Synod. Front row from left: Rick Focht, Christine Frazier, Sally Shaulis, Marsha Hutzell, and Ben Hoffman. Pictured with these new leaders are their mentor/support pastors. We give thanks for the ways the gifts of these leaders will bless our Synod. If you or someone you know is interested in learning more about becoming a lay worship leader, contact the Allegheny Synod Office.
15. Pastor Kevin worshiped with the people of Zion Boalsburg, on their first Sunday after Pastor Brent Book retired. Pastor Kevin is grateful for their hospitality and eagerness to serve. Please pray for them and all of our congregations in transition.
16. Communion Celebration
17. Regina Holliday ordained at Horner Lutheran Church where she was called to serve as pastor.
- 18–19. April meeting: The Johnstown and Laurel Highlands Conferences met together for a combined conference meeting at St. David's Lutheran Church in Davidsville.
20. Your Allegheny Synod voting members to the Churchwide Assembly enjoying dinner out together.
21. The Weekend Synod Youth Event.