



Allegheny Synod  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

# *God is Doing a New Thing!*

**SECTION THREE**  
**SYNOD REPORTS**



Allegheny Synod  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

# *God is Doing a New Thing!*

**REPORTS OF  
THE BISHOP & STAFF**

# Report of the Bishop

Rev. Kevin Shock

Grace and peace to you in the name of our risen Savior!

Our theme for the 2026 Allegheny Synod Assembly is “God is doing a new thing!” Maybe like me, you have wondered what the new thing is that God is doing. The thing about new things is that we rarely recognize them until they’ve already been happening for a while. That’s another way of saying that, by the time we recognize the new thing, it may already feel like the old thing or the normal thing. If that’s the case, I’m going to pray that some of the new things I notice around the Allegheny Synod become the norm.

**In my congregational visits I notice that people are participating in worship.** You take leadership roles in the worship service. It’s rare that the pastor or the bishop is doing everything in front of the gathered people. In some places I’m asked to do little more than preach and preside at the sacraments. It is a joy to witness people utilizing their gifts to lead one another in ministry. In many of our congregations such leadership does not happen just because the bishop is visiting. It may happen because a pastor or deacon lifts up people and their gifts. Sometimes people take on leadership roles because they wonder who will do it if they don’t. Whatever the reasons, congregational participation and leadership in worship brings life to the faith communities in our Synod.

**There are some Sunday morning when I notice surprise at how many people are gathered for worship.** You have told me stories about how formerly active members of their congregation are becoming active again. You have told me that there are people in the wider community who have visited and keep coming back. You tell me stories about inviting people to worship with you, who then end up staying around because of the welcome they receive. You also have told me how you pray for people to come and discover the hope you have found in being a part of Jesus’ family in your congregation. There have been reports from other church traditions this year that people are beginning to seek God in established congregations again. Although we haven’t yet received evidence of growing numbers from last year’s congregational reports, you have given me anecdotal evidence. It’s not yet happening in every congregation, but many of you are telling me about some new people, and in most of our congregations, even a small increase is a significant one.

**When you tell me about your ministry, I notice that you’re not doing it all alone.** We have traditionally had congregations that form multi-point parishes. In some situations it means that congregations primarily share a pastor; however, in a growing number of instances it means that congregations are uniting to participate in ministry together. Sometimes it looks like a pastor joining two smaller confirmation classes into one larger one. Sometimes it looks like people attending programs at each other’s congregations. Sometimes it may even result in congregations volunteering at one another’s outreach ministries, and it may even go as far as sitting down with one another to talk about mission and vision for a shared future. One thing I notice for sure is that when congregations decide that it is worthwhile to share some financial resources or join in some form of cooperative ministry, what we can accomplish multiplies. Cooperative ministry doesn’t mean that a congregation has to sacrifice its building or its history or its identity. Rather, a congregation may even grow in those ways when they are engaged in ministry with other congregations. Not doing it alone means doing it together, exactly how Jesus has called us into ministry.

**In all of our shared meetings and gatherings I notice how connections are being made.** I have noticed how our new staff structure has allowed us to make more intentional contact with individuals, both lay and ordained, and congregations. Someone asked me before I started serving in this role what the difference is between having one full-time assistant and four quarter-time assistants. I remember answering something about how much time and effort it takes some weeks to sift through all of the requests and duties and needs to discern what is priority.

# Report of the Bishop

Rev. Kevin Shock

Our new Assistant to the Bishop for Formation, Deacon Alicia Anderson, articulated it better for me in a conversation one day: with a bishop and four assistants, there can be five top priorities at any given time. Not only do I feel like we are responding to people in a more intentional way, I've noticed how we can make connections with new people. Beyond how the staff is connecting with our clergy and congregations, I'm interested in seeing how we can build relationships and connections with one another in the Synod. As I alluded to in the previous paragraph, the more connected we are, the stronger we become in community and in ministry. As much as we in the Office of the Bishop have encouraged you to sign up for Synod Connections and the Lutheran Letter and to fill out the Life Together Survey, you can also invite people to do the same. That's how we can learn about one another's ministries and one another's gifts.

**Finally, I want to hear about what new things you are noticing.** At our spring conference meetings our Director for Evangelical Mission, Deacon Sue Ellen Spotts, asked people to write down the new things they are noticing on an index card. Those cards will be on display at Synod Assembly, and I encourage you to look at them. If you didn't get the chance to fill out a card at your conference meeting, then send me an email or a text message about the new things you are noticing. I want to hear about them.

God is indeed doing a new thing. I'm not even sure what to name it yet, but I am noticing things all throughout our Synod that point to it. However we name the new thing, I pray that we keep growing together in Christ and growing together in ministry, so that God may grow all kinds of new things in and among us.

In the peace of Christ.  
+Bishop Kevin Shock

# Report of the Assistant to the Bishop for Communications

Rev. Marty Jo Irvin-Stellabotte

**"Great communication begins with connection."**

– Oprah Winfrey

In my role as your new quarter-time Assistant to the Bishop for Communications, I oversee a wide variety of communications efforts for the Synod — from managing our social media platforms (Facebook and our new Instagram page) and writing, editing, and publishing the monthly *Synod Connections* electronic newsletter, to contributing content for *The Lutheran Letter*, updating the website, serving as spokesperson to the news media, and collaborating with teammates to shape our messages, along with everything else that falls in between.

But all of those tasks remain simply that — tasks — without connection to drive them. Effective communication doesn't exist in a vacuum. It's a two-way process, involving both the senders and the receivers of a message. Communication without connection is just cranking out content and hoping something sticks.

Real communication is about building relationships and trust. It's about connection. It's about sharing the stories of the ways the Holy Spirit is at work in our Synod and in our congregations — the feeding ministries, the clothing giveaways, the hand-sewn quilts boxed and shipped around the world, the musicians and support groups and after-school programs and VBS projects, and the countless other ways our congregations are showing and sharing Christ's love with our neighbors and with one another. These are the moments where God continues to show up when we let the Spirit lead us, rather than be discouraged by scarcity or fear.

The best part of my work is meeting and hearing from you — because YOU are the Allegheny Synod. Together, we can keep building connections and sharing the good news happening right here among us, encouraging and lifting one another up. But to do that, I need your help. I want to hear your stories. I want to know how the Spirit is on the move in your congregations. Drop me an email at [alleghenysynodcommunications@gmail.com](mailto:alleghenysynodcommunications@gmail.com) and I'll follow up with you — and you just might find your story featured in a future issue of *The Lutheran Letter* or *Synod Connections*. The more we share our stories with one another, the more connected we become, and the more we discover possibilities for new ministries, new collaborations, and new ways of sharing Christ's love in a world that is hungry for good news.

It is a true honor to serve you as Assistant to the Bishop for Communications, and to work alongside a team of dedicated individuals who genuinely care — about each other and about every one of you — as we explore together where the Spirit is leading us and watch for the new thing God is doing.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor MJ

Pastor, Geeseytown-Newry Lutheran Parish

# Report of the Assistant to the Bishop for Formation

Rev. Dn. Alicia Anderson

While I am surprised to find myself serving as Assistant to the Bishop for Formation in the Allegheny Synod, I am pleased to be working in the areas of candidacy and learning which are so closely tied to the work I've been called to in campus ministry. I am grateful for this opportunity to serve the synod and the wider church in new ways while continuing to serve in campus ministry.

Through the years, I've worked with students discerning a variety of callings, including the call to public ministry. Now, in addition to helping students listen to the promptings of the spirit and sort out how they will use their gifts in their daily work, I am also assisting people as they sense God's call to pursue a role in public ministry in the ELCA (candidates) while they discern and make their way through the candidacy process, and also assisting people who are curious about public ministry and candidacy in the ELCA (inquirers).

In addition to my daily campus work supporting students as they learn through their university classes, I will help our synod offer relevant and meaningful education opportunities for laity and rostered leaders. These opportunities will help laity and leaders grow as people of faith and as leaders in the church. Also, I will also help keep leaders informed about continuing education opportunities available in our region and around the church,

In this new role, I am grateful to work alongside Pastor Sharon Erb, chair of the Allegheny Synod Candidacy Committee, and the members of the Candidacy Committee. As I continue to learn the process and become more conversant in the candidacy process, I am grateful I can rely on the expertise and experience of both Bishop Kevin Shock and Pastor Becky Resch, Candidacy and Leadership Manager for Region 8. As we move forward planning Bishop's Convocation and other educational opportunities, I am grateful for ideas and support from the other Assistants to the Bishop, Michelle Bossler, and Bishop Kevin.

Thank you to Bishop Kevin for this invitation. Thank you to the synod as a whole for your support as I navigate these two related, but separate parts of my call.

Please pray for all who are in the candidacy process and for the many, many people who are part of supporting, guiding, teaching and helping them learn, discern, and hear God's call.

Peace,

Deacon Alicia Anderson

[alicia.anderson@alleghenysynod.com](mailto:alicia.anderson@alleghenysynod.com)

# Report of the Assistant to the Bishop for Life Together

Rev. Traci Marriott

This February I joined the Office of the Bishop Team as the Assistant for Life Together. What does that mean? I do have a job description with specific responsibilities, but in general, I've come to describe it this way: I get to help our Synod creatively and gratefully recognize the gifts God has given us for mission and ministry together, so that we are not hiding our light under a bushel or leaving talents buried in the back yard when God intends us to put them to good use.

When we think of the gifts we can give to the church, either to our congregation or to the wider church—the Allegheny Synod or the ELCA—we often think first of financial gifts. We are certainly called to be wise and generous financial stewards, responsibly managing what God has first given us. We practice our faith in money matters every bit as much as in other aspects of our lives. I work with the Synod's Finance, Mission Endowment, and Audit committees to make sure we are spending, saving, and sharing with integrity the Mission Support dollars and other income that comes to us from individuals, congregations, and the ELCA.

Our financial resources are one of God's blessings; God has also given us skill, interest, experience, and passion for different types of service to the church and the world. We remember that at Pentecost the apostles received the power of the Spirit not for their own enjoyment but for the benefit of communities all over the world who would get to hear the story of Jesus through their words. I certainly haven't traveled the whole world, but as I made my way around our Synod for this year's spring conference meetings, I was reminded of how gifted a people we are and how much potential we have to fulfill Jesus' commandment to love one another, especially when we work together.

To that end, I hope I will be spending time in the upcoming weeks and months reviewing *your* responses to the Allegheny Synod Life Together Survey (available on the Synod Website under the Volunteer tab), which was written to help us make an organized accounting of who is passionate about and gifted for different aspects of Christian life and ministry. This is a tool that can help us both when we are looking for contributors to committees that already exist and when we are exploring the possibility of new ministries in the Synod. If you're reading this, chances are good that you are already involved in the church *and* willing to delve even deeper into the work we do together for the sake of the gospel; let us know how we can help you do that.

I look forward to working with you as we share this Life Together in the Allegheny Synod.

The Rev. Traci Marriott  
Pastor, St. Matthew Martinsburg  
Assistant to the Bishop for Life Together

# Report of the Assistant to the Bishop for Transition

Rev. Tyler Graham

I would like to begin by sharing a word of gratitude for the confidence and partnership of Bishop Shock to serve within this role and for the support that is received among the staff, synod council, and congregations of the Allegheny Synod. Though my engagement within this role is limited to a few months at this point, I am witnessing that we are journeying into this season of life together and ministry with renewed hope and trust grounded in prayer, active listening, and bold confidence in God's promises of guidance and new life.

To speak of the changing landscape of the life of the Church within the Allegheny Synod (and world) may be heard as a broken record to many; however, it is a reality that warrants our ongoing attention and discourse. Sharing in the tasks of reflection, questioning, and imagining affords us space for God to be present and inspire us to not only strive to be faithful in ministry and witness, but to encounter and experience the opportunities for enriched faith, relationships, and partnerships of the Gospel. I'll be the first to admit that this is not easy work and that it presents challenges to our notions of church structure, leadership, ministry partnerships, and the ways in which we gather for worship and share in serving our neighbors. This is true of every congregation within the Church regardless of location, size, and existing configuration.

As I accompany congregations experiencing transition, I am mindful that each situation is unique and that there is no single (or 'one-size-fits-all') way to navigate the journey or experience resolution aside from our faith in, and relationship with, Christ Jesus and our being united as members of the one body of Christ – the Church. With thanksgiving and assurance may we hear the words of God through the prophet Jeremiah:

“For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.”

And may we courageously pray:

*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.*

In Christ +

The Rev Tyler J Graham, *STS*

Assistant to the Bishop for Transition

# Report of the Director for Evangelical Mission

Dn. Sue Ellen Spots

God is doing a new thing.

This should not be a surprising statement. God has been doing new things from the very first story we have. Creation of an entire world out of chaos—that was certainly new. Abraham and Sarah having a child so late in life—that was a new thing. Leading the Israelites through parted waters—also a new thing. Coming to earth as Jesus—definitely a new thing. Many, if not most, of the faith stories we tell are about God doing a new thing.

And in many, if not most, of those stories, God's people are confused or hesitant or uncertain about the new thing. God's people tend to like the familiar, even when the familiar is not working out so well anymore. Remember how the Israelites traveling through the wilderness yearned to go back to Egypt?

The early Christian church was all about new things. Jesus' life and death and resurrection had really changed things for the people of God. As a result, they had to change how they gathered and how they related to the world. God was doing new things through them.

Much of the work I do with congregations involves discerning how God is calling you into mission. It involves recalling history but also exploring the present, being open to new ways to be Christ's disciples and share God's love. When I talk with you, you often share grief that things are not the way they were. These can feel like wilderness times. But we know that in the wilderness times God is calling us to a new place or a new way. And God is with us, guiding and providing as we discern what new thing we are being called to do.

At our conference caucuses we asked everyone present to identify one new thing they have noticed God is doing in their congregation. What resulted is a kaleidoscopic exclamation to God's continuing to do new things among us and through us. You shared stories of deepening relationships within the congregation and in the community. Of finding new ways to serve. Of merging or forming cooperatives. Of developing new skills for ministry. Of prayer and Bible study. These form an exclamation point to remind us that this is exciting. These are things to celebrate.

Take a moment to look at the display...and to add your own story of new thing God is doing in your congregation.

Join in the exclamation: God is doing a new thing!!

In Christ,  
Deacon Sue Ellen Spotts

# Report of the Director for Go Tell It IN The Mountains

Rev. John Kratz



## What is the “Go Tell It IN the Mountains Initiative”?

Allegheny, Northwest Pennsylvania, and Upper Susquehanna Synods of the ELCA were blessed to receive a \$1.25 million grant from the Lilly Endowment. This generous gift launched our tri-synod initiative, Go Tell It IN the Mountains (GTIITM). These funds will support our work through December 31, 2029, helping us strengthen preaching and proclamation across our region.

There are 3 primary goals of the Go Tell It Initiative. We are committed to helping both clergy and lay preachers become even more compelling proclaimers of the Gospel. Through regularly scheduled in-person and Zoom-based training events, preachers have access to high-quality learning right here in our region. Second, we’re also focused on the future—actively recruiting and training new preachers. If you (or someone you know) is feeling a call to preach, we would love to walk with you! Simply contact the Synod Office, and we’ll share clear next steps and resources. Third, preaching doesn’t end on Sunday morning. We want every worshipper to hear, reflect on, and respond to the Gospel in daily life. Two excellent study resources we recommend are: *I Will* by Thom Rainer and *Listeners Dare* by Will Willimon. Perfect for personal reflection or group study!

The Go Tell It IN the Mountains Initiative thrives because of dedicated volunteers who generously share their time and talents. The initiative is guided by a Steering Committee, chaired by Bishop Emeritus Greg Pile, along with representatives from each synod and several active task forces. Together, we are working toward a bold goal: making compelling preaching our shared standard of excellence.

Go Tell It IN the Mountains has fully funded the curriculum for our three synods’ Summer Camps for 2026. In addition: A Bible for Every Child: Each camper will receive a Bible—what a gift!

## Sponsored opportunities and events by the Go Tell It IN the Mountains Initiative include:

- Small Group Preachers Training Cohorts
- Authorized Lay Worship Leaders Fellowship Meetings:
- Preachers Training Event (August 9–13, 2026)
  - *Kindling Faith – Preaching the Paradox*
    - Receive \$100 off registration
- The Pastors Workshop
  - 100 Clergy/Lay Leaders received free access
- **Zeteo Lutheran Edition Search Engine**—our Bishops and Steering Committee thoughtfully curated Lutheran-specific resource content designed to support you in the daily work of ministry
  - Zeteo Lutheran Edition brings trusted, topic-specific Lutheran resources together in one easy place, saving you time and frustration. Whether you’re refreshing a passage, finding a verse, adapting content for your congregation, or juggling a packed week, Zeteo offers reliable, accessible support. Our hope is that it strengthens worship planning, lightens sermon prep, and supports your ongoing learning and leadership.
    - FREE to all via the GTIITM website

For full details, questions, or to stay up to date with GTIITM news and events, reach out to:

Rev. John Kratz

Director, Go Tell It IN the Mountains Initiative

Director@alleghensynod.com

We’d love to connect with you—come be part of what God is doing **IN the Mountains!**

# Report of the Director for Go Tell It IN The Mountains

Rev. John Kratz

This report was provided to the Lilly Endowment in March 2026 as an annual requirement of reporting relating to the Go Tell It IN The Mountains Initiative. Attached to this report was the full GTIITM financial report. This narrative summary is shared with Synod Assembly to enhance our open communications between the Initiative and our synods.

***Goal 1: Ordained and lay preachers will be equipped to utilize traditional and non-traditional techniques including different modes of delivery to develop skills and practices that will communicate the Gospel message in more compelling ways.***

## ACTIVITIES:

- 1) A large group format preaching cohort was established. Through zoom, Rev. Dilip Abayasekara has moved through the basics of compelling preaching and actively is working on using “brain mapping” as a tool to enhance preaching. This group meets one time per month for 10 sessions in one year. They have homework assignments each month to prepare for the next session. Slides of Rev. Abayasekara’s presentation are shared with the group following each session.
- 2) Seven small group format cohorts (8 people or less) are meeting on a monthly basis. Each cohort coach was specifically selected by their respective bishop and trained by Dilip Abayasekara. Each group has autonomy as to their studies. Each group meets once per month, reviews educational resources and has sermon evaluation built into their time together.
- 3) All three synods now have active Authorized Lay Ministry preaching options, a unified curriculum for training, an active synod supportive structure, and recurring meetings for training throughout the year. We are working on creating a common language model to use when referencing our ALWL ministries throughout our tri-synod area.
- 4) Our three bishops began newly recurring meetings to discuss common challenges among the rostered leaders in our region. In order for our rostered leaders to be open to adaptation, change, and growth, their emotional stressors, work and family life issues, and isolationism need to be addressed. We have approximately 89 active (non-retired) rostered leaders in our tri-synod area which gives a larger pool to work with as a group.
- 5) The Festival of Homiletics for 2025 was a major resource for clergy and lay training in the art of preaching. We organized groups of lay and clergy preachers to meet together for fellowship and the Festival of Homiletics training. In one setting this was so well received that they continued meeting from that point forward. This in turn led that group to do a “pulpit swap” in order to understand and support each other’s context for preaching.
- 6) With the cancellation of the 2026 Festival of Homiletics, the Go Tell It IN the Mountains Initiative encouraged the support of an alternative preaching festival. The Go Tell It Initiative is now a sponsor of the Kindling Faith Ministry of United Lutheran Seminary August 2026 Preaching Festival. All lay and clergy of the tri-synod area receive a \$100 discount on their registration for this event.
- 7) Kindling Faith of United Lutheran Seminary has also been contracted to host three preaching specific training options in our region based on our preachers’ stated needs. These preaching focused events occur within an appropriate structure of our synods so as to not overlap with holy days, convocation days or synod assembly dates.
- 8) In coordination with Zeteo, we reviewed all search options and created a “Zeteo: Lutheran Edition”. This online search engine helps our lay and clergy know that their search generates trusted sources for their sermon preparation. The link for this search engine has been placed onto our Go Tell It IN The Mountains website.
- 9) The Curriculum Task Force has been analyzing existing podcast and online tools to aid in sermon preparation.

# Report of the Director for Go Tell It IN The Mountains

Rev. John Kratz

- 10) The Pastors Workshop has been identified as an existing excellent resource to aid in sermon and worship preparation. We are negotiating a contract to make this available to all of our rostered leaders and many lay preachers free of charge.
- 11) Sundays and Seasons has been identified as a worship preparation tool. A few micro-grants were provided to new lay preachers to aid in their start up. Some congregations have now purchased this product in support of their local lay preacher.
- 12) An Upper Susquehanna Synod based zoom weekly pericope study has been affirmed and shared among all three synods for clergy and laity to have access to this locally managed, thoroughly Lutheran, reliable pericope study.
- 13) A contract was arranged with Rev. Dr. Allison DeForest of United Lutheran Seminary. She provides on site (Hollidaysburg area) quarterly pericope studies for all clergy and lay preachers.

## LEADERS:

- Rev. Dilip Abayasekara moderates our large group preaching cohort.
- Seven trained coaches care for our small group preaching cohorts. They are Rev. David Bowman, Rev. Shawn Clerkin, Rev. Regina Holliday, Rev. Julianna Holm, Rev. David Pencek, Rev. Gary Schaeffer, and Rev. Jim Vitale.
- Bishops Shock, Papson, and Miller are all active in our Steering Committee and the link between the Initiative and their respective Synod Councils.
- Bishop Emeritus Greg Pile chairs the Steering Committee.
- Rev. John Kratz is the Director of the Initiative and the one generating this report.

## COMMUNICATIONS:

- Written and verbal program reports are provided by the initiative Director to the Steering Committee each time that they meet (about 10 times per year).
- Financial reports suitable for distribution to all three synods are generated quarterly and upon request.
- In preparation for the Steering Committee meetings, Bishop Pile and Director Kratz meet to review each of the Initiative goals and progress/ideas for those goals.
- An Administrative Assistant position has been created and approved by the Steering Committee. This person's responsibilities will focus heavily on communications.
- A contract with Braden Social has been engaged. They handle all our social media campaigns and all our promotional work.

## IMPACT:

We have seen significant relationships formed among clergy and lay preachers who attended our joint gatherings for the Festival of Homiletics. This mixed group continued to meet under its own initiative and proceeded to have a "pulpit exchange" event in their area.

Over 60 lay and clergy preachers are actively engaged in cohorts generated through this Initiative.

We have seen Laity from all three synods actively engaging in all of the resources we have produced. There is a great desire for time-saving, reliable, common language resources. Each synod lay preachers have overwhelmingly engaged in this journey.

Rostered Leaders (clergy) have had mixed reactions. We have multiple reports of appreciation for all the resources generated. Our challenge is to overcome the stigma of "I am not good enough" or "they are trying to fix me" thoughts among some clergy. So, there are clergy who have not participated in this journey. We are aware of this challenge and actively working to address it.

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Rev. John Kratz

***Goal 2: Aspiring preachers will be recruited and engaged in a variety of compelling preaching strategies that educate, empower, and support competency in their ministry.***

- 1) Since the formation of an agreed upon 10 course training for Authorized Lay Worship Leaders, we entered into a contract with Faith+Lead of Luther Seminary. The 10 courses, and many others, have been made available to all of our Lay Worship Leaders for enter into the program and to meet their continuing education requirements. To date we have had over 24 laity utilize this free resource. We added in 2025 15 new laity into the Authorized Lay Worship Leader training program. In 2025 two laity completed their training and were added to the Authorized Lay Worship Leader list. In a surprise addition, two non-Lutheran clergy who are serving Lutheran congregations were added into that resource. This will allow them to take courses to help understand our Lutheran heritage, terminology, and theology.
- 2) Since the establishment of the unified Authorized Lay Worship Leader training, the Northwest PA and Allegheny synods have entered into a memorandum of understanding which allows lay preachers to cross synod borders in utilization of their preaching gifts.
- 3) We entered a contract with United Lutheran Seminary to organize 3 times per year training events specifically focused on preaching and specifically focused on time frames that suit lay schedules (weekends and weeknights are our preferences).
- 4) An evening-based pericope study was made available to all laity within all three synods. The quarterly pericope training with Dr. Allison DeForest is held during weekday hours and works for our retired laity, but we needed an option for our working laity.
- 5) An online tool to connect authorized lay worship leaders and retired preachers to congregations has been developed. This “Preachers to Pulpits” online tool will become an app once the beta test is done. This tool will have training in January 2026 with a launch date of March 1 2026. A lay person was recruited to oversee this app management.
- 6) All three synods reinvigorated or restarted their Lay Worship Leader fellowship and training programs. Allegheny Synod formed a Lay Ministry Task Force and created an operations manual for Authorized Lay Worship Leaders. They also transitioned to Lay leadership of their quarterly fellowship and training events. Northwest PA identified a person within the synod office to reinvigorate their lay preacher fellowship and training. The Upper Susquehanna Synod offered its Lay Ministry Institute program guide as a model for the other synods to mirror.

## LEADERS:

- Rev. Karla Leiby of Upper Susquehanna Synod, Rev. Sandra Jones of Northwest PA synod, and Gary Mickle and Spence Garvin of Allegheny Synod are leaders of the Authorized Lay Worship Leader ministries.
- Faithnetwork is the contracted agent for developing the Preachers to Pulpits online scheduling tool.
- Rev. Dr. Allison DeForest is the quarterly Pericope Study leader.

## COMMUNICATIONS:

- Each synod has updated their Authorized Lay Worship Leader contact information and email distribution platforms. The Initiative uses those platforms through the respective synod staff to promote all training, cohort, and fellowship options.
- An email distribution list has been created for the Go Tell It IN The Mountains Initiative covering all three synods. Many of their lay preachers and laity within congregations have engaged in this tool.
- A wide-ranging social media platform and social media publicity has begun through our contract with Braden Social. All our preacher training options are highlighted through these social media tools.

# Report of the Director for Go Tell It IN The Mountains

Rev. John Kratz

## IMPACT:

Seventeen lay people are newly enrolled into the ALWL training program and have begun the process toward lay preaching authorization.

Each synod office now has an active lay preaching component and emphasis throughout their region. The Go Tell It IN the Mountains Initiative Director has regularly attended (most are held monthly) synod staff meetings relating to lay preachers and clergy needs. There is direct communication from the Initiative direct to lay and clergy preachers due to this relationship.

***Goal 3: Existing members of congregations and new community audiences within our 3 Lutheran partner synods will respond to compelling preaching opportunities and content by integrating the gospel message into their attitudes, actions and ministries in daily life.***

- 1) Provided free to every congregation in our tri-synod region is the “Mission Insite” online demographic analysis tool. In 2025, we hired a person to run a 3-mile demographic analysis of every congregation. Each congregation received through USPS mail their specific analysis. They also received information on how to access the Mission Insite online database for more intensive or refined searches. Each synod Director of Evangelism an Mission received a digital copy of these analyses for their entire synod.
- 2) Each congregation received direct mail from their respective synod and the Go Tell It IN The Mountains Initiative. This included posters for display within congregations, flyers relating to the Authorized Lay Worship Leader free online training, and synod specific communications information.
- 3) Each congregation received a printed newsletter highlighting the Go Tell It IN The Mountains Initiative goals, resources, and connection opportunities.
- 4) Three Pilot Sites have been identified, and engagement has begun directly working on the “Listening” component of the Initiative. Each of the Pilot Sites’ leadership has been provided the “I Will” by Thom Rainer book for mutual review. Each congregation provides quarterly reports and findings related to that study.
- 5) “Ready for Worship” one-minute videos have been created by clergy within our three synods. These daily 90 second videos are reflections on the upcoming Sunday texts. These provide an opportunity for all lay people to reflect on the upcoming texts and come ready to hear the gospel. Since its inception, the number of full watch and likes has steadily increased.
- 6) Plans for a Go Tell It IN The Mountains Sunday have been drafted. The proposed Sunday is the first Sunday of February each year. A draft script will be given to all pulpit supply, Synod Authorized ministers, Authorized Lay Worship Leaders and clergy to connect each congregation into the resources of the Initiative.
- 7) Two book resources have been encouraged to all congregations for review. “I Will” by Thom Rainer and “Listeners Dare” by Will Willimon have been identified as helping congregants come ready to hear the gospel. The Steering Committee has been reviewing the “Listeners Dare” book at their meetings.
- 8) Go Tell IT IN The Mountains was provided time during each Synod Assembly to share and table display space at each assembly site.
- 9) Surveys were conducted relating to preacher needs throughout the tri-synod area. Over 70% of rostered leaders completed their survey, over 50% of Lay Worship Leaders completed their survey. Survey results were shared with each Task Force and the Steering Committee to aid in planning and implementation of our goals.

## LEADERS:

The three Pilot Sites are Faith Lutheran in Erie PA, 1<sup>st</sup> Lutheran in Warren PA, and Zion Lutheran in Williamsburg PA.

Faithnetwork is our website designer. And Braden Social is our Social Media coordinator.

# Report of the Director for Go Tell It IN The Mountains

Rev. John Kratz

## COMMUNICATIONS:

An all-congregation USPS mailing was completed in 2025. We discovered some congregations location mailing addresses were no longer used. Records were updated to get current USPS information for all congregations to their synod offices. (Our goal is to do this USPS mailing twice in 2026.)

All three synods have identified and engaged their synod communications worker into the Go Tell It IN The Mountains Communication Team.

## IMPACT:

Ready for Sunday videos views and likes have steadily increased.

Our primary video about the Initiative has had over 13,000 full views since its release.

Multiple smaller congregations have expressed appreciation for the direct mail.

Multiple congregations have engaged in reviewing the I Will or Listeners Dare books.

## 2024 Discoveries that impacted 2025 projects:

In 2024, we discovered that there is a wide variety and too numerous to count digital resources related to preaching content. Our 2025 response was to spend significant time on the creation of “Zeteo: Lutheran Edition” to help reduce that challenge for our preachers. This tool allows them time saving, trusted resources at their fingertips.

In 2024, we discovered there is an air of scarcity which flows through our congregations and synods. In 2025, we worked diligently to use our group purchasing power to provide free or significantly reduced cost resources to our preachers and congregations. This ranged from buying 10 “I Will” books for a smaller congregation to review to seeking a contract with The Pastors Workshop to provide this resource free of charge to all our clergy.

## **OTHER:**

- Discussions are underway about having an in-person meeting of all the Steering Committee and Task Forces in 2026 to review our mid-point effectiveness and vision work.
- New Task Forces specifically on Listening and Sustainability are being created and should begin in 2026.
- The hiring process for an Administrative Assistant has begun. This person should be hired early 2026.
- We celebrate that the co-payment goal of \$121,000.00 has been achieved for the Initiative. All future revenue has been dedicated by the Steering Committee and tri-synod bishops to be used for the perpetuation of the Initiative beyond our grant end date of 12/31/29.
- Though 2 of our 3 synods experienced bishop turnover in 2025, we continue to have strong cooperation and communication among all three synods.
- Conversations have begun with the West Virginia/Western Maryland Synod ELCA for inclusion into the Go Tell It IN The Mountains Initiative. Their demographics, ethos, and connections to the tri-synod are all affirmations that this would be a helpful addition
- All 89 Goal Specific steps are reviewed annually by the Steering Committee to maintain course and intentional focus on the Initiative direction.



Allegheny Synod  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

# *God is Doing a New Thing!*

**REPORTS OF  
SYNOD COUNCIL &  
COMMITTEES**

# Report of the Vice President of the Allegheny Synod

Mrs. Ann Ferry

Greetings from your Vice President of the Allegheny synod.

Every year I think I do not have much to write in this report, and then the memories of the past 8 months start to form on the page!

First, I am very grateful to Bishop Collins for having the wisdom to listen to us and advise us to slow down and take some time to gather our thoughts and dreams. Then move on and elect a new bishop. The time to breathe was exactly what was needed.

Time to listen to our lay and rostered members. Time to take what was learned and how to use it to serve each other.

A time of grace.

The transition team that was led by Michele Peese and me was a wonderful collection of knowledge and humor that allowed us to ask you what you wanted in a bishop. With your answers, we made a plan of how to proceed with the election. From this process, Bishop Shock was elected and installed in the middle of the winter in the Laurel Highlands. For sure not in our plans, but the transition team, the lay leaders from Mt. Calvary, Johnstown and the synod team pulled it off! Bishop and Mrs. Curry were able to fly into Pittsburgh and home again. Plus, the cookie bakers from all over the synod showed their abilities and we had cookies to share to firefighters, police, nursing homes and feeding the homeless. Thank you to all who helped make Bishop Shack's installation spirit filled and joyful!

The synod council has continued to work with Bishop Shock and his four assistants. It has been a time of learning how to share the heavy yoke of a bishop. How to step up and outward to walk with the congregations in the synod. It has been a time of discernment of our goals and vision for the future.

I may say this every year, but I will continue to say thank you to every one of the members of the Allegheny hills and valleys! Your value of serving our God through worship and service to our neighbors continues to grow. And it always amazes me how you use your imagination and resources to take care of each other and people throughout the world. Come Holy Spirit, come!!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ann Ferry". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored background.

# Report of the Secretary of the Allegheny Synod Council

Rev. Rebecca Horn

Siblings in Christ,

Grace and peace to you in the name of Jesus Christ. Since the last Synod Assembly in October/November 2025, the Synod Council and synod staff have continued the important work of strengthening the ministry and organizational life of the Allegheny Synod. Much of this work has focused on reviewing and updating policies, assessing the health and activity of established committees, and rebuilding support structures so that we can better equip congregations, rostered ministers, and ministry partners across our synod.

As Secretary of Synod Council, I have seen firsthand the dedication of council members and staff as they work collaboratively to ensure that our structures are not only functional, but also responsive to the current realities and future needs of the church. While much of this work happens behind the scenes, it is essential work that helps provide clarity, accountability, and support for the ministries we share together.

One area of focus has been the rebuilding and strengthening of synod committees. Several committees are in various stages of discernment, reorganization, and recruitment as we seek to ensure that they are equipped to carry out their responsibilities faithfully and effectively. We continue to identify ways to encourage participation from across the synod so that the gifts and perspectives of our congregations and leaders are represented in this shared work. One way to help with this endeavor is to fill out the Allegheny Synod Life Together Survey, found with the QR code:



One committee currently being revitalized is the Constitution Committee. This committee serves an important role in the life of the synod by helping congregations maintain constitutions that are current with constitutional updates adopted by the churchwide organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The committee also reviews the Synod Constitution and may bring recommendations to Synod Council and future Synod Assemblies as needed.

Congregational constitutions are foundational documents that help guide governance, leadership transitions, and congregational life. Keeping them current helps ensure alignment with churchwide constitutional requirements and can provide clarity during times of transition or decision-making. Congregations considering constitutional updates are encouraged to begin with the 2025 ELCA Model Constitution for Congregations, available through the [ELCA Office of the Secretary](#).

As we continue this work together, I remain grateful for the partnership we share across the synod. The work of governance and administration may not always be the most visible part of ministry, but it is work that supports and sustains the proclamation of the Gospel in our congregations and communities. Thank you for your faithfulness, your leadership, and your continued prayers for the ministry of the Allegheny Synod and all who serve within it.

God's peace be with you,

Rev. Rebecca Horn

Secretary, Allegheny Synod Council

Pastor, St. Luke Lutheran Church, Centre Hall

# Roster Changes 2025-2026

January 1, 2025 – May 18, 2026

## General Changes and Updates

The Rev. Jeffery Bassette resigned from roster effective September 26, 2025.

The Rev. Sharon Erb moved from active roster to the retired roster effective April 30, 2025.

The Rev. Barry Folmar moved from active roster to the retired roster effective January 21, 2026.

The Rev. Tyler Graham called to Living Waters Parish (Greenville Evangelical Lutheran Church, Meyersdale and St. John Lutheran Church, Salisbury) effective July 1, 2025.

The Rev. Regina Holliday is a Designated Term Pastor at Amity United Church of Christ, serving parttime, in addition to her call to serve Horner Lutheran Church, Stoystown, PA, accepted May 16, 2026.

## Ordinations

The Rev. Christy Harford - Benscreek Lutheran Church, with a pastoral relationship with First Lutheran Church, Johnstown, PA, effective November 29, 2025. Interim Bishop Barbara Collins officiated.

The Rev. Steven Koths - Shiloh Lutheran Church, State College, PA effective December 13, 2025. Interim Bishop Barbara Collins officiated.

## Installations

The Rev. Kevin T. Shock - Bishop of the Allegheny Synod on February 7, 2026, effective February 1, 2026. Presiding Bishop Yehiel Curry officiated.

## Deaths of Rostered Leaders

The Rev. Jaime Olson – October 18, 2025

The Rev. Rebecca West – December 13, 2025

The Rev. Donna Wolfinger – October 12, 2025

# Congregation Changes 2025-2026

January 1, 2025 – May 16, 2026

## Congregations Consolidated, Disbanded, Merged, Removed, or Withdrawn from ELCA

Christ Lutheran Church, Claysburg, PA – Withdrawn May 16, 2026

Graef's Lutheran Church, Cairnbrook, PA – Withdrawn October 3, 2025

St. John Lutheran Church, Rockton, PA – Withdrawn July 19, 2025

St. John Lutheran Church, Tyrone, PA – Withdrawn July 27, 2025

St. Peter Lutheran Church, Luthersburg, PA – Withdrawn July 19, 2025

## Statistics from ELCA – as of 12/31/2024

Congregational Statistics by Synod – Allegheny Synod 8C

Congs.	Baptized	Received	Removed	Confirmed	Receipts	Disbursements	Indebtedness
102	23,052	501	945	18,130	\$11,929,688	\$11,832,451	\$2,659,203

As of May 16, 2026 – Allegheny Synod 8C had 96 congregations.

# Actions of the Allegheny Synod Council & the Allegheny Synod Council Executive Committee

November 2025 – May 2026



Allegheny Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

916 Hickory Street, 1<sup>st</sup> Fl., Hollidaysburg, PA 16648  
814-942-1042

## November 2025

**SC25.11.01** – Motion to adopt and approve the Consent Agenda as presented, motion made by Michele Peese, seconded by Tim Albright, motion carried.

**SC25.11.02** – Motion to request that the GTIITM Lilly grant cover \$500 toward the cost of the audit due to the needed extra time that was required to establish the grant into the Synod audit. Motion made by Paula Nihoff, seconded by Peggy Thatcher, motion carried. (youth abstention)

**SC25.11.03** – Motion to accept the Treasurer’s report as presented. Motion made by Paula Nihoff, seconded by Terry Koch, motion carried.

**SC25.11.04** – Motion to approve the appointment of Rev. Traci Marriott as the Finance Committee Chair. Motion made by Interim Bishop Barb Collins, seconded by Rev. MJ Irvin-Stellabotte, motion carried.

**SC25.11.05** – Motion to amend the budget for one-year to allow for 5% of the premium of the Bishop’s salary to be designated to the Leadership Support line item on the budget for fiscal year 2026-2027. Motion made by Rev. Ralph Hamer, seconded by Gretel Kaltenbaugh, motion carried. (youth abstention)

**SC25.10.06** – Motion to amend the previous motion, SC25.09.09, to account for 5 seminarians instead of 6. Distribution will now be in the amount of \$5232 per seminarian to the institution or loan company as determined by each seminarian. Motion Rev. Ralph Hamer, seconded by Michele Peese, motion carried.

## January 2026

**SC26.01.01**– Motion to adopt and approve the Consent Agenda as presented, motion made by Rev. Tyler Graham, seconded by Peggy Thatcher, motion carried.

**SC26.01.02**– Motion to approve the presented structure of four part-time Assistants to the Bishop, with the working designations of Assistant to the Bishop of Communications, Assistant to the Bishop of Formation, Assistant to the Bishop of Transitions, and Assistant to the Bishop of “Engagement.” Motion made by Rev. Ralph Hamer, and seconded by Rev. Nathan Pile, motion carried.

**SC26.01.03** – Motion to approve the new wording of Continuing Resolution S7.27.A25 to “S7.27.A26 All ministers of Word and Sacrament on the roster of a church body with which the Churchwide Assembly has declared a relationship of full communion, serving under a Letter of Invitation to Extended Service in a congregation of this synod, shall be given voice and vote as voting members of the Allegheny Synod Assembly.” Motion made by Rev. Ralph Hamer, seconded by Rev. Marty Jo Irvin-Stellabotte, motion carried.

**SC26.01.04** – Motion to remove Interim-Bishop Barb Collins from and to add Bishop-elect Kevin Shock as a signer to the following accounts: Lily Fund, Reserve Account at First Summit, Investment Account, Checking Account, and the Bishop’s Discretionary Account. The Lily Account signers, requiring two signatures, are Bishop-elect Kevin Shock, Treasurer Paula Nihoff, and Rev. John Kratz, Director of Go Tell It IN The Mountains. The signers for the Reserve Account at First Summit, Investment Account and Checking Account, all requiring two signatures, are Bishop-elect Kevin Shock, Treasurer Paula Nihoff, and Vice President Ann Ferry. The signer for the Discretionary Account is Bishop-elect Kevin Shock. Motion made by Rev. Nathan Pile, seconded by Tim Albright, motion carried.

**SC26.01.05** – Motion to designate the former DYD Account Funds of \$78.86 to a new dedicated account designated as DED Lay Worship Ministry Expenses. Motion made by Rev. Nathan Pile, seconded by Gretel Kaltenbaugh, motion carried.

# **Actions of the Allegheny Synod Council & the Allegheny Synod Council Executive Committee**

November 2025 – May 2026

*SC26.01.06* – Motion to keep the Startzel Fund money in the Reserve Account at First Summit. Starting January 1, 2026 to attribute the proportional amount of interest that is earned by the Startzel Fund in the Reserve Account to the dedicated account for the Startzel Fund. Motion made by Rev. Ralph Hamer, seconded by Rev. Marty Jo Irvin-Stellabotte, motion carried.

*SC26.01.07* – Motion to approve the Operating Principles for Authorized Lay Worship Leaders of the Allegheny Synod as presented from the Lay Ministries Task Force. Motion made by Rev. Ralph Hamer, seconded by Rev. Tyler Graham, motion carried.

## **February 2026**

*SC26.02.01* – Motion to adopt the titles and job descriptions of the four Assistants to the Bishop as follows. Motion made by Bishop Kevin Shock, seconded by Rev. Rebecca Horn, motion carried.

1. Assistant to the Bishop for Formation
  - a. Staff liaison to Candidacy Committee
    - i. Consult with Candidacy Chair, as they shape an agenda for each meeting
    - ii. Serve as administrator of the ELCA database for our candidates
    - iii. Serve as Contact for ELCA Candidacy and Seminaries
    - iv. Secure mentors and supervisors in cooperation with Bishop and other staff
    - v. Plan annual Candidacy retreat with Candidacy Chair
  - b. Work with inquirers for professional ministry and, as appropriate, Authorized Lay Worship Leader (ALWL) ministry
    - i. Conduct initial interviews with inquirers
    - ii. Compile and develop discernment tools
    - iii. Develop and lead discernment programs, as appropriate
  - c. Plan educational events for laity and rostered leaders, in cooperation with Bishop and other staff
  - d. Compile continuing education opportunities for rostered leaders and ALWLs
    - i. Boundaries and Anti-Racism Training
    - ii. Bishop's Convocation
  - e. Represent the Bishop and their Office at meetings, visits, and events
  - f. Attend meetings of the Synod, as requested, with voice and no vote.
2. Assistant to the Bishop for Life Together
  - a. Staff liaison to Finance Committee
    - i. Consult with Finance Chair, as they shape an agenda for each meeting
    - ii. Communicate information to Synod Treasurer and Synod Office Manager
  - b. Staff liaison to Stewardship Team
    - i. Rebuild Team with interested and gifted people
    - ii. Produce and deliver annual Mission Support reports to congregations, in cooperation with Team and Synod Office Manager
    - iii. Develop and utilize ongoing plan to promote Mission Support to congregations, in cooperation with Team and Assistant for Communications
    - iv. Encourage planned giving throughout the Synod, in cooperation with Team and ELCA Foundation Representative
  - c. Staff liaison to Nominations Committee
    - i. Rebuild Committee with interested and gifted people

# **Actions of the Allegheny Synod Council & the Allegheny Synod Council Executive Committee**

November 2025 – May 2026

- ii. Revisit Committee and Team structure and descriptions, in cooperation with Synod Secretary and Committee
      - iii. Compile a list of willing people for Committee and Team ministry
      - iv. Utilize gift assessments to engage people according to their skills and passion
    - d. Represent the Bishop and their Office at meetings, visits, and events
    - e. Attend meetings of the Synod, as requested, with voice and no vote.
- 3. Assistant to the Bishop for Transition
  - a. Administer Synod Mobility Database
    - i. Review and activate Rostered Minister Profiles (RMP)
    - ii. Review and activate Ministry Site Profiles (MSP)
    - iii. Search for potential candidates, in cooperation with Bishop
  - b. Oversee transitions with congregations
    - i. Meet with Call Committees and Councils, as requested
    - ii. Guide development of MSPs and covenants
    - iii. Secure interim and vacancy pastors, in cooperation with Deans and Synod staff
    - iv. Make regular contact to congregations in transition
  - c. Oversee transitions with rostered leaders
    - i. Conduct exit interviews, in cooperation with Deans
    - ii. Coordinate matching with vacant congregations
    - iii. Assist with coordinating installations and farewell services
  - d. Consult with Synod staff on supply preaching needs
  - e. Coordinate strategic ministry discussions with Director of Evangelical Mission (DEM)
  - f. Represent the Bishop and their Office at meetings, visits, and events
  - g. Attend meetings of the Synod, as requested, with voice and no vote.
- 4. Assistant to the Bishop for Communications
  - a. Oversee official Synod Communications
    - i. Write, edit, and produce the synod's electronic newsletter
    - ii. Update information on the synod's website and social media and continue to upload new resources
      - 1. Train others, if necessary, to upload resources to the Synod website, when appropriate and consistent with Synod policy
    - iii. Monitor Social Media interactions
  - b. Serve as Communications liaison
    - i. Encourage congregations, rostered leaders and synodical ministries to provide information to be included in synodical publications, including e-newsletters and The Lutheran Letter
    - ii. Act as spokesperson for Bishop's Office to news media representatives
      - 1. Arrange interviews with the Bishop as desired and needed
      - 2. Discern newsworthy events occurring on Synod territory and prepare press releases
    - iii. Interpret ELCA Communications for Synod use
  - c. Maintain email and mailing distribution lists for Synod publications, in consultation with Synod Office Manager

# Actions of the Allegheny Synod Council & the Allegheny Synod Council Executive Committee

November 2025 – May 2026

- d. May provide consultation on educational opportunities to congregations and others in the use of communications and technologies
- e. Represent the Bishop and their Office at meetings, visits, and events
- f. Attend meetings of the Synod, as requested, with voice and no vote.

**SC26.02.02** – Motion to approve the following appointments for Assistants to the Bishop. Motion made by Bishop Kevin Shock, seconded by Rev. Rebecca Horn, motion carried.

- Assistant to the Bishop for Formation: The Rev. Deacon Alicia Anderson
- Assistant to the Bishop for Transition: The Rev. Tyler Graham
- Assistant to the Bishop for Communications: The Rev. Marty Jo Irvin-Stellabotte
- Assistant to the Bishop for Life Together: The Rev. Traci Marriott

**SC26.02.03** – Motion to approve the purchase of a recurring month subscription to MailChimp to better facilitate communication with subscribers and publish the monthly newsletter, Synod Connections. Motion made by Bishop Kevin Shock, seconded by Rev. Rebecca Horn, motion carried.

## **March 2026**

**SCEC26.03.01** - Motion to refer the request from GTIITM to explore ways to maximize the return on the GTIITM monies without increasing risk to the Mission Endowment Fund Committee. Motion made by Bishop Kevin, seconded by Ann Ferry, motion carried.

**SC26.03.01** – Motion to adopt and approve the Consent Agenda as amended, motion made by Michele Peese, seconded by Rev. Ralph Hamer, motion carried.

**SC26.03.02** – Motion to adopt the Continuing Resolution S7.21.A26 regarding lay voting members to Synod Assembly, with recommended changes from the ELCA Office of the Secretary as follows. Motion made by Rev. Rebecca Horn, seconded by Rev. Ralph Hamer, motion carried.

- **S7.21.A26** Pursuant to †S7.21. b. of the Synod Constitution, the Synod Council establishes the following formula to determine the number of lay voting members from each congregation of the Allegheny Synod on the basis of the number of baptized members in the congregation is as follows:
  - Using the most current Annual Congregation Report to the ELCA for the number of baptized members per congregation:
    - Congregations up to 499 baptized members shall elect two voting members, typically one of whom shall be a man and one of who shall be a woman
    - Congregations 500-899 baptized members shall elect three voting members, typically one of whom shall be a man, one of whom shall be a woman, and one of whom may be of any gender expression
    - Congregations 900 or more baptized members shall elect four voting members, striving for balanced gender representation
  - In addition, each congregation may elect one additional voting member who is a youth or young adult at the time of the election and one additional voting member who is a person of color or whose primary language is other than English. The term “youth” means a voting member of a congregation who has not reached the age of 18 at the time of election or appointment for service. The term “young adult” means a voting member of a congregation between the ages of 18 and 30 at the time of election or appointment for service.
  - Each congregation is strongly encouraged to have balanced representation of gender expressions and members of historically underrepresented groups among its voting members.

**SC26.03.03** – Motion to accept the submitted reports as provided by the Treasurer, Paula Nihoff. Motion made by Margaret Thatcher, seconded by Timothy Albright, motion carried.

# **Actions of the Allegheny Synod Council & the Allegheny Synod Council Executive Committee**

November 2025 – May 2026

*SC26.03.04* – Motion to move a total of \$160,000 out of fixed income assets in our Investment Fund into the Reserve Fund in the following allocation: \$6,000 equities; \$77,000 each in cash and fixed income assets. Motion made by Terry Koch, seconded by Rev. Ralph Hamer, motion carried.

*SC26.03.05* – Motion to recommend the 2027 Compensation and Benefits Manual for adoption to the Synod Assembly, motion made by Timothy Albright, seconded by Gretel Kaltenbaugh, motion carried.

*SC26.03.06* – Motion to recommend the Proposed Budget FYE 2028 to Synod Assembly made by Rev. Ralph Hamer, seconded by Terry Koch, motion carried.

*SC26.03.07* – Motion to reimburse the Office Manager for work cell phone usage, at a rate of 90% of the total cell phone bill or individual's portion thereof, whichever is less. Motion made by Gretel Kaltenbaugh seconded by Michele Peese, motion carried.

*SC26.03.08* – Motion to add the following to the Employee Handbook, motion made by Rev. Ralph Hamer, seconded by Rev. Rebecca Horn, motion carried.

1. Cyber Safety Protocols as an Addendum at the end of the Internet/Email section – attached document
  - A. “When the Altoona/Hollidaysburg School Districts announce a closure due to inclement weather or” to section I-16 just before the phrase about a state emergency.
  - B. To allow two (2) weeks of vacation to carry over from one year to the next, rather than just one week.

*SC26.03.09* – Motion to encourage Bishop Kevin Shock to pursue attending the Consecration of Bishop-elect Catherine Musau Ngina and Deputy Bishop-elect Dominic Onsongo Nyambisa on May 24, 2026, as an opportunity to rebuild relationship with our global partner, the Kenya Evangelical Lutheran Church, and be affirm that we are part of global community, with the Allegheny Synod covering travel and accommodation expenses, contingent upon appropriate safety considerations. Motion made by Rev. Ralph Hamer, seconded by Michele Peese, motion carried.

## **April 2026**

*SC26.04.01* – Motion to appoint Terry Koch to the Allegheny Synod Candidacy Committee for a term of no more than six years. Motion made by Bishop Kevin Shock, seconded by Rev. Rebecca Horn, motion carried with one abstention.

## **May 2026**

*SC26.05.01* – Motion to adopt and approve the Consent Agenda, motion made by Paula Nihoff, seconded by Peggy Thatcher, motion carried.

*SC26.05.02* – Motion to accept the submitted reports as provided by the Treasurer, Paula Nihoff. Motion made by Rev. Rebecca Horn, seconded by Terry Koch, motion carried.

*SC26.05.03* – Motion to approve the creation of an Allegheny Synod Guest Wi-fi and to start with the free 100mbps option. Motion made by Terry Koch, seconded by Gretel Kaltenbaugh, motion carried.

# Minutes of the 37<sup>th</sup> Allegheny Synod Assembly

October 31 – November 1, 2025



## Allegheny Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

916 Hickory Street, 1<sup>st</sup> Fl., Hollidaysburg, PA 16648

814-942-1042

**MISSION:** *Inviting people to love each other.*

**VISION:** *All creation living in harmony with Christ.*

### Minutes of the 37<sup>th</sup> Allegheny Synod Assembly

October 31 – November 1, 2025

Blair County Convention Center

On The Way Together with “A Renewing Spirit”

1. Worship & Opening of Assembly
  - A. The Assembly gathered for a service of Word and Holy Communion. Interim Bishop Barb Collins opened the 37<sup>th</sup> Allegheny Synod Assembly at 9:51 am.
2. Plenary I opened at 10:13 am.
3. Interim Bishop Barb Collins welcomed and introduced guests to the Assembly:
  - A. Churchwide Rep. Lori Fedyk, Treasurer of the ELCA
  - B. Sister Marianne Brock, serving as our Chaplain
  - C. Bishop colleagues, Bp. Matt Riegel (will be joining us later today), Bp. Michael Lozano, Bp. Craig Miller,
  - D. Rev. Dr. Guy Erwin and Conor Brooks from United Lutheran Seminary
  - E. Rev. Tara Lynn, Portico
  - F. Tracey DePasquale, Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in PA
  - G. Our Parliamentarian, Mark Persun, Election Chair Rev. Glenn Foster, Reference and Counsel Members: Rev. Rebecca Horn, Rev. Ron Miller, Rev. Kathy Popp and Carol Harding
  - H. Recognized Synod Council Officers Vice President Ann Ferry and Treasurer Paula Nihoff.
  - I. On the dais – Interim Bishop Barb Collins, and Synod Secretary Rev. Rebecca Horn.
  - J. Recognized Assembly Planning Committee, Doug Rhoads for musical accompaniment, Synod Transition Team, Synod Council members, and Synod Staff.
4. The assembly practiced with VPoll, from Vista Com, the electric voting application
5. We have a quorum and can proceed to the adoption of the 2024 Minutes, the Agenda & the Rules and Procedures
  - A. **SA25.10.01** – motion to adopt the agenda as modified and presented, with permission to adjust time as necessary for the 37<sup>th</sup> Allegheny Synod Assembly. Motion made by Vicar Christy Harford, seconded by Rev. Laura Waltermire. The motion carried.
  - B. **SA25.10.02** – Motion to accept the 2024 Allegheny Synod Assembly Minutes as presented. Motion made by Rev. Claudia Powell, seconded by Rev. Carolyn Hetrick. The motion carried.
  - C. Rules of Procedure – before adoption of Rules of Procedure, Allegheny Synod Constitution Bylaws and Resolutions to be considered:
    - 1.) **S.7.27.A25** All Ministers of Word and Sacrament on the roster of a church body with which the ELCA has declared a Full-Communion partnership (relationship), serving calls and/or interims to congregations of this synod, shall be given voice and vote as voting members of the Allegheny Synod Assembly.
    - 2.) **S7.27.B25**. All Vicars (Interns, TEEM Candidates, etc.) serving in ELCA congregations of the Allegheny Synod shall be given voice and vote as voting members of the Allegheny Synod Assembly.

# Minutes of the 37<sup>th</sup> Allegheny Synod Assembly

October 31 – November 1, 2025

- 3.) **S7.22.01.** All Ministers of Word and Sacrament retired, disabled, or on leave from call, on the roster of this synod shall be given voice and vote as voting members of the Allegheny Synod Assembly.
- 4.) **S7.22.02.** All Ministers of Word and Service retired, disabled, or on leave from call, on the roster of this synod shall be given voice and vote as voting members of the Allegheny Synod Assembly.
  - a) **SA25.10.03** – Motion to adopt the above listed and Bylaws and Resolutions to the Allegheny Synod Constitution as presented and recommended by the Allegheny Synod Council (SC25.10.02 and SC25.10.03). Motion comes from Synod Council, therefore only needs a vote. Motion carried.
- 5.) **SA25.10.04** – Motion to adopt the Rules and Procedures as presented with the above provisions to the Allegheny Synod Constitution. Motion made by Rev. Ralph Hamer, seconded by Paula Nihoff. The motion carried.

## 6. Report of Registration and Quorum

A. There were 169 voting members registered as of 10:15 am.

Ministers of Word and Sacrament	50
Ministers of Word and Service	2
Vicars	4
Laity Representatives (total)	107
Young Adult	2
Youth	2
Synod Council Members	6
Total Delegate Count <sup>1</sup>	169
Visitors	28
Total Present	197

## 7. Introduction of the Bishop Election Process, presented by Lori Fedyk, ELCA Treasurer.

- A. Lori Fedyk explained the process of the election for the office of Bishop, found in the Allegheny Synod Constitution S9.04. – Ecclesiastical Ballot for Bishop to nominate one rostered minister of Word and Sacrament. Only legal ballots will be counted. This is a prayerful time and a call process in which we listen to the Holy Spirit to guide our votes. Lori Fedyk led us in prayer following her explanation of the role of the bishop.
- B. Rev. Glen Foster, Elections Chair, gave the instructions to cast a vote on ballot one.
- C. Sister Marianne Brock led the assembly in prayer and song, *Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying*.
- D. First Ballot (Ecclesiastical Ballot) for Bishop is cast. The First Ballot for Bishop is closed at 11:09 am by Lori Fedyk and she turned the chair back over to Interim Bishop Barb Collins.

## 8. Report of Nominations given by Paula Nihoff, Nominations Chair; slate is presented as listed below:

- A. Vice President: Ann Ferry
- B. Synod Council Clergy: Rev. Regina Holliday, Rev. Nathan Pile, and Rev. Paul Tomkiel
- C. Synod Council Female: Gretel Kaltenbaugh
- D. Synod Council Male: Kenneth Weschler
- E. Synod Council Young Adult: Burton Peese
- F. Synod Council Youth: Manetta Horn
- G. Consultation Committee: Rev. Rebecca West for the one clergy position; Gretel Kaltenbaugh and Terry Kock for the one lay position.
- H. Committee on Discipline: Tracey Naugle, Michele Peese, and Peggy Thatcher

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<sup>1</sup> In accordance with provision **S7.14** of the Allegheny Synod Constitution, one-third of the members of the Synod Assembly shall constitute a quorum.

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- 1.) Positions will fill staggered terms: highest legal votes serve full term (2025-2031); next runner up serve partial term (2025-2030); second runner up serve partial term (2025-2027), in case of ties the terms will be determined in conversation with individuals and the Office of the Bishop.
- I. Rev. Glen Foster offered prayer and opened the voting for the slate of ballots for Council and Committees. He closed the balloting at 11:45 am.
9. Report of Reference and Counsel given by Rev. Ron Miller
  - A. There are two Resolutions to consider, found on pages 144 and 145-146. These resolutions were available to the Assembly to read ahead of time; no recitation was needed.
    - 1.) **Resolution** – To Continue the Collaborative Work of the Allegheny Synod Begun During the 2024 – 2025 Transition (page 144)
    - 2.) **Resolution** – on Rural Life and Ministry (pages 145-146)
  - B. **SA25.10.05** – Motion to adopt the Resolution to Continue the Collaborative Work of the Allegheny Synod Begun During the 2024-2025 Transition. Motion made by Benjamin Hoffman, seconded by Vicar Christy Harford. Motion carried.
  - C. **SA25.10.06** – Motion to adopt the Resolution on Rural Life and Ministry as recommended by Reference and Counsel and Synod Council. Motion made by Rev. Vicki Beilfuss, seconded by Rev. Paul Tomkiel, motion carried.
10. Recognition of Rostered Leaders' Anniversaries, those with 50-years or more were invited to speak.
  - A. Ministers of Word and Sacrament: 5-years Rev. Tyler Graham; 10-years Rev. Paul Tomkiel; 15-years Rev. Lois Ryan; 25-years Rev. Jamie Olson; 30-years Rev. Katherine Douglass, Rev. Suzanne Morelli, Rev. Michael VanDyke; 45-years Rev. Judith Simonson; Combined total of 45-years as Deacon and now Pastor Rev. Ruth Jensen
  - B. 50-years of Ministry: Deacon Pernelle DeVore, Bishop Emeritus Greogory Pile – each was given five minutes to speak.
  - C. Unable to be present but celebrating 55-years of ordained ministry Rev. Russell Sauerwein.
11. Break for Lunch – The assembly sang the Doxology and Interim Bishop Barb Collins led us in grace.
  - A. At the end of lunch Interim Bishop Barb Collins and VP Ann Ferry recognized and handed out plaques for congregations with significant anniversaries. Celebrating 175: Mount Zion, Huntingdon, St. John, Clearfield, and St. Paul, Rockwood. Celebrating 200 years: St. Mark Snyderstown and Zion, Boalsburg.
12. Plenary II began at 1:00 pm.
13. Report of the First Ballot for Bishop was given by Interim Bishop Barb Collins and Rev. Glenn Foster
  - A. List names of ecclesiastical ballot. There were 166 votes cast, of which 163 were legal votes. For election 123 needed, no election.
    - 1.) Rev. Kevin Shock – 72
    - 2.) Rev. Ralph Hamer – 27
    - 3.) Rev. Scott Schul – 20
    - 4.) Rev. Tyler Graham – 11
    - 5.) Rev. Nathan Pile – 9
    - 6.) Rev. Rebecca Horn – 7
    - 7.) Rev. Barb Collins – 3
    - 8.) Rev. Mark Fischer – 2
    - 9.) Rev. Robert Way – 2
    - 10.) Rev. Vicki Beilfuss – 1
    - 11.) Rev Scott Custead – 1
    - 12.) Rev. Ed Devore – 1
    - 13.) Rev. Ronald Miller – 1
    - 14.) Rev. Elisa Osman – 1

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- 15.) David Pencek – 1
  - 16.) Rev. Paul Tomkiel – 1
  - 17.) Rev. Rebecca West – 1
  - 18.) Rev. William Williams – 1
  - 19.) Rev. Susan Winger – 1
- B. Withdrawals from the ballot must be received by 1:30 pm, forms to do so are available from the Synod Secretary, Rev. Rebecca Horn.
- C. Biological information for those leaving their name on the ballot must be received by 1:30 pm – give or email to Michelle Bossler, secretary for the Office of the Bishop.
14. Rev. Glen Foster reported on the first Ballots for Vice President, Synod Council, Consultation Committee, and Committee on Discipline to the Assembly. Results are as follows:
- A. Synod Council Vice President, 4-year term, elect 1
    - 1.) 167 votes cast, 84 votes needed to elect
    - 2.) Ann Ferry is elected to a 4-year term as the Synod Council Vice President.
  - B. Synod Council Clergy, 3-year term, elect 1
    - 1.) 166 votes cast, 83 votes needed to elect
      - a) Rev. Nathan Pile – 122
      - b) Rev. Regina Holliday – 28
      - c) Rev. Paul Tomkiel – 16
    - 2.) Rev. Nathan Pile is elected to a 3-year term to Synod Council.
  - C. Synod Council Female, 3-year term, elect 1
    - 1.) 167 votes cast, 84 votes needed to elect
      - a) Gretel Kaltenbaugh – 167
    - 2.) Gretel Kaltenbaugh is elected to a 3-year term to Synod Council.
  - D. Synod Council Male, 3-year term, elect 1
    - 1.) 168 votes cast, 85 votes needed to elect
      - a) Kenneth Weschler – 168
    - 2.) Kenneth Weschler is elected to a 3-year term to Synod Council.
  - E. Synod Council Young Adult, 3-year term, elect 1
    - 1.) 167 votes cast, 84 votes needed to elect
      - a) Burton Peese – 167
    - 2.) Burton Peese is elected to a 3-year term to Synod Council.
  - F. Synod Council Youth, 2-year term, elect 1
    - 1.) 162 votes cast, 82 votes needed to elect
      - a) Manetta Horn – 162
    - 2.) Manetta Horn is elected to a 2-year term to Synod Council.
  - G. Consultation Committee Clergy, 6-year term, elect 1
    - 1.) 161 votes cast, 81 votes needed to elect
      - a) Rev. Rebecca West – 161
    - 2.) Rev. Rebecca West is elected to a 6-year term to the Consultation Committee.
  - H. Consultation Committee Lay Position, 6-year term, elect 1
    - 1.) 163 votes cast, 82 votes needed to elect
      - a) Gretel Kaltenbaugh – 99
      - b) Terry Koch – 54
    - 2.) Gretel Kaltenbaugh is elected to a 6-year term on the Consultation Committee.
  - I. Committee on Discipline Lay Positions, 6-year term, elect 1; 5-year term, elect 1; 2-year term, elect 1
    - 1.) 165 votes cast, 83 votes needed to elect
      - a) Tracey Naugle – 165

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- b) Michele Peese – 165
- c) Peggy Thatcher – 165

2.) Tracey Naugle, Michele Peese, and Peggy Thatcher are elected to the Committee on Discipline. Term lengths will be determined in conversation.

15. Report of the Synod Secretary, Rev. Rebecca Horn

- A. There are several required changes to the Synod Constitution and Congregation Constitutions – these are to be entered immediately and are referred to as ‘daggered’ provisions.
- B. There were also several recommended changes to the Model Synod Constitution. The full recommendations can be found on pages 48 and following. These recommendations from Churchwide have been recommended for adoption by the Synod Council.
- C. **SA25.10.07** Motion for adoption of the recommended changes to the Allegheny Synod Constitution from the ELCA Churchwide Assembly 2025. The motion comes from Synod Council and does not need a motion and second. Motion carried.

16. Ministry Partner Presentation from Rev. Tara Lynn – referenced her written report in the Bulletin of Reports (page 119) and talked about how Portico still encourages and strives for wholeness and wellness of leaders.

17. Report of Vice President, Ann Ferry

- A. Offered appreciation and thanks for all who participate. Written report can be found on page 46 of the Bulletin of Reports.

18. Report from the ELCA given by Lori Fedyk

- A. Ezekiel scripture read, offered appreciation from churchwide and shared stories of how we partner together throughout the ELCA.
- B. Please take time to watch the video regarding Mission Support found at: [elca.org/missionsupportvideo](http://elca.org/missionsupportvideo)
- C. At Churchwide Assembly the Social Statement on Faith and Civic Life was adopted.
- D. Video from Bishop Yehiel Curry filmed for Allegheny Synod was shown.

19. The Second Ballot for Bishop – Lori Fedyk explained the process for the Second Ballot for Bishop, Rev. Glen Foster further explained the instructions.

- A. At 1:30 pm registration for credentials for the second ballot for bishop were closed. Debbie Garritano gave the report of credentials. There were 171 voting members registered at this time.

Ministers of Word and Sacrament	50
Ministers of Word and Service	2
Vicars	4
Laity Representatives (total)	109
Young Adult	2
Youth	2
Synod Council Members	6
Total Delegate Count	171
Visitors	31
Total Present	202

- B. Sister Marianne Brock led the assembly in song and prayer in preparation for the Second Ballot for Bishop. A reading from Philippians. *Seeking First the Kingdom of God* was sung.

C. At 1:54 pm the Second Ballot for Bishop was opened: The Nominees remaining on the Second Ballot for Bishop are:

- 1.) Rev. Kevin Shock
- 2.) Rev. Ralph Hamer
- 3.) Rev. Scott Schul
- 4.) Rev. Rebecca Horn

D. The Second Ballot for the Bishop closed at 1:57 pm.

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20. A short break was observed and the assembly resumed at 2:14 pm.
21. Report for the Second Ballot for Bishop was given. 75% of votes are needed to elect. 171 legal votes, 129 needed to elect
  - A. Rev. Kevin Shock – 90
  - B. Rev. Ralph Hamer – 36
  - C. Rev. Scott Schul – 33
  - D. Rev. Rebecca Horn – 12
22. Report of the Director for Evangelical Mission Sue Ellen Spotts was presented. Sue Ellen referenced her written report, found on pages 43 and 93 of the Bulletin of Reports. She spoke about what it means to be sustainable. We have a lot of hunger in our communities; how can we work together? A Synod Hunger Team was started, with Rev. Ted Williams as the chair.
  - A. If you have questions or comments, please send an email to: [alleghenysynodhungerteam@gmail.com](mailto:alleghenysynodhungerteam@gmail.com)
  - B. As you live as God’s people, what scripture renews your spirit for the mission of the gospel now? Two minutes for conversation around tables was given.
    - 1.) Be still and know that I am God. Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Be strong and courageous. My (God’s) grace is sufficient.
23. Report of the Director of Go Tell It IN The Mountains Pr. John Kratz was presented. The written report can be found on pages 44-45 of the Bulletin of Reports.
  - A. We are blessed to be a blessing – central underpinning of this ministry.
  - B. Rev. John Kratz summarized the offerings available through the program.
  - C. Two listening sessions to offer opportunity for folks to express what they need.
  - D. Mission Insight for every congregation being mailed in November. Will be able to go on the site to get additional information.
  - E. We have received an extension for the Lilly Endowment to go through Dec. 21, 2029 – but we must engage and read. This is a gift for us to use – will we use it?
24. The top four nominees for bishop will address the Assembly. (There were only 4 nominees instead of the allowable 7.) Each candidate gave remarks in the following order as determined by number-based draw.
  - A. Rev. Kevin Shock
  - B. Rev. Rebecca Horn
  - C. Rev. Ralph Hamer
  - D. Rev. Scott Schul
25. The Assembly observed quiet discernment before the Third Ballot for Bishop. Lori Fedyk returned to the podium to explain and lead the Third Ballot. In the third ballot 2/3 of the legal votes cast are needed for an election. If no election, the top three persons will go on to the Fourth Ballot. Debbie Garritano gave the credentials report as of 3:00 pm. There are 170 voting members present at this time.

Ministers of Word and Sacrament	49
Ministers of Word and Service	2
Vicars	4
Laity Representatives (total)	109
Young Adult	2
Youth	2
Synod Council Members	6
Total Delegate Count	170
Visitors	30
Total Present	200

- A. Sister Marianne Brock led the assembly in song, *Spirit of the Living God* and prayer before the Assembly voted.

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- B. Lori Fedyk opened the vote at 3:14 pm. At 3:17 pm the Third Ballot for Bishop was closed.
26. Ministry Partner Report from Tracey DePasquale from Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Pennsylvania was presented. The written report is found on pages 102-103 and a brief verbal report was given.
- A. LAMPa celebrated 46 years of ministry and the first advocacy ministry for Lutherans
- B. The immediate needs of our current culture – hunger, violence, racism, hate, etc. – and how LAMPa is a presence to help us advocate for those in need and share stories to enact and live our call as God’s people. We are called into relationship and care.
27. Reports of the Synod Treasurer Paula Nihoff and the Finance Team, Rev. Traci Marriott were presented.
- A. The Budget for Fiscal Year 2026-27, found on pages 71-72, was presented by Rev. Traci Marriott.
- 1.) There are two types of Mission Support – Restricted and Unrestricted Mission Support. We give 35% of the Unrestricted Mission Support to the ELCA Churchwide. Restricted funds must remain in the Allegheny Synod.
- 2.) Rev. Marriott explained specific entries on the proposed budget.
- 3.) Rev. Marriott said purpose of our budget can be summarized as, “Converting financial investments into ministry investments,” as stated by Rev. Kevin Shock in a previous meeting.
- B. **SA25.10.08** – Motion to adopt the presented Budget for Fiscal Year 2026-27. Motion made by Rev. Will Osman, seconded by Tim Albright. Motion carried.
- C. Compensation and Benefit Guidelines has been updated for 2026. The baseline salary was increased by 3%, ordination year 2025 and the update on health benefits were the only other changes to the packet from previous approved editions.
- D. **SA25.10.09** – Motion to adopt the Compensation and Benefit Guidelines as presented. Motion made by Sally Shaulis, seconded by Rev. Rebecca West. Motion carried.
- E. Paula Nihoff gave a brief report regarding our investments and the gifts for Seminarians from the Seminarian Fund. She also asked for folks to be willing to be on the Nominations Committee – we would like one per conference. Also, the Synod is looking for people to serve on the Finance Committee and the Investment Committee.
28. Report of the Third Ballot for Bishop – Lori Fedyk and Rev. Glen Foster gave the results of the Third Ballot for Bishop at 3:50 pm. 170 legal votes cast – 114 votes needed to elect
- A. Rev. Kevin Shock - 82
- B. Rev. Ralph Hamer - 42
- C. Rev. Scott Schul – 40
- D. Rev. Rebecca Horn - 6
- E. There is no election for Bishop. Rev. Kevin Shock, Rev. Ralph Hamer and Rev. Scott Schul will go forward to the Fourth Ballot for Bishop.
29. The Assembly was led in evening prayer by Rev. Tyler Graham and Sister Marianne Brock.
30. The Assembly recessed at 4:00 pm and will reconvene at 9:00 am on Saturday, November 1, 2025.
31. The Assembly reconvened at 9:00 am on Saturday, November 1, 2025, with the Interim Bishop Barb Collins presiding. After a service of morning prayer, Plenary III resumed at 9:19 am.
32. Ministry Partner Report from Sister Marianne Brock, ELCA Foundation was presented. The written report can be found on page 106 of the Bulletin of Reports.
- A. Sister Marianne Brock emphasized the the ELCA Foundation is available to partner with the congregations and people of the Allegheny Synod to steward the resources we have been blessed with.
33. Ministry Partner Report from Deacon Alicia Anderson, Lutheran Campus Ministry at Penn State was presented.
- A. Deacon Alicia Anderson shared appreciation for the continued support of this vital ministry and showed a short video that allowed students to express why they are grateful for this ministry.

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34. Report of the Interim Bishop Barb Collins was presented. The written report can be found on page 39 of the Bulletin of Reports.
- A. Gave a reflection on her walking stick – “Walk with God.” She has been walking with the Allegheny Synod for the past year – it is the place she was raised, the place she has come back to fifty years later, the place she called home. It has been a heartfelt journey – grateful and thankful for the people, the openness, and the faith of the people here in the Allegheny Synod.
  - B. The Interim Bishop Barb Collins will finish her interim on January 31, 2026. The Bishop-elect will start February 1, 2026.
  - C. Installation of the new bishop is scheduled for February 7, 2026, at Mount Calvary Lutheran Church, Johnstown. More details will be available as we get closer to the date.
35. In place of the report from the Assistant to the Bishop, Rev. Kevin Shock, the Assembly received a Ministry Partner presentation from the United Lutheran Seminary President Rev. Dr. Guy Erwin. The written report for ULS is found on pages 136-136 in the Bulletin of Reports. The written report for the Assistant to the Bishop can be found on pages 41-42 of the Bulletin of Reports.
- A. Rev. Dr. Guy Erwin expressed thanks to the Allegheny Synod and talked about the coming bicentennial of the Gettysburg Campus of ULS, which was established in 1826 as the first Lutheran Seminary in the United States. He gave a short history of the seminary and shared the current vision of ULS.
36. Lori Fedyk returned to the podium to explain and lead the Fourth Ballot for Bishop. In the fourth ballot, 2/3 of the legal votes cast are needed for an election.
- A. The top three nominees for bishop addressed the Assembly. The nominees spoke in the following order as determined by number-based draw: Rev. Kevin Shock, Rev. Scott Schul, and Rev. Ralph Hamer. Each nominee had up to ten minutes to answer the following three questions.
    - 1.) How do you envision using your gifts in the Office of the Bishop?
    - 2.) How would you go about discerning what you would set as your initial priorities – and what might they be?
    - 3.) As you consider being in the role of bishop, what is your favorite Bible verse and why?
  - B. The Credential report as of 10:45 am was given by Debbie Garritano.

Ministers of Word and Sacrament	49
Ministers of Word and Service	2
Vicars	4
Laity Representatives (total)	109
Young Adult	2
Youth	2
Synod Council Members	6
Total Delegate Count	171
Visitors	20
Total Present	186

- C. Lori Fedyk reminded the assembly of the procedures for the Fourth Ballot for Bishop. Sixty percent (60%) of the legal votes cast are required for an election. Sister Marriane Brock led the Assembly in scripture, song *Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God*, and prayer. The fourth ballot was cast at 10:57 am. Lori Fedyk closed the fourth ballot at 11:03 am.

37. Ministry Partner Report from Rev. Nathan Pile, Sequanota Lutheran Conference Center and Camp was presented. The written report can be found on pages 124-134 of the Bulletin of Reports.
- A. Rev. Nathan Pile gave a very brief history and express gratitude for all the support. 1946 a group of pastors came together with \$80 and a prayer. We are on the Way Together – then and now. 734 kids had a faith experience this past summer alone.

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38. The Report of the Fourth Ballot for Bishop was given. 167 votes were cast, 101 votes needed to elect.
  - A. Rev. Kevin Shock – 95
  - B. Rev. Ralph Hamer – 45
  - C. Rev. Scott Schul – 27
  - D. There is no election at this time. The top two nominees go to the Fifth Ballot for Bishop. The nominees are Rev. Kevin Shock and Rev. Ralph Hamer.
39. Lori Fedyk explained the Fifth Ballot for Bishop. Election is by a simple majority of the legal votes cast. Sister Marianne Brock led the Assembly in song, *Spirit of the Living God*, and prayer. The fifth ballot was cast at 11:28 am. Lori Fedyk closed the fifth ballot for bishop at 11:30 am.
40. The Report of the Fifth Ballot for Bishop was given. 165 votes were cast, 83 votes needed to elect.
  - A. Rev. Kevin Shock – 118
  - B. Rev. Ralph Hamer – 47
  - C. It was declared that the Rev. Kevin Shock is the Bishop-elect of the Allegheny Synod.
41. The Bishop-elect Rev. Kevin Shock offered remarks to the Assembly.
  - A. He expressed gratitude and called on us to live as disciples of Jesus, embodying the theme *On the Way Together*.
42. Rev. Ron Miller, from Reference and Counsel, was invited to share a Resolution of Appreciation. The Resolution of Appreciation is attached below and was recited to the Assembly.
  - A. The Assembly accepted the resolution of gratitude as it was recommended by Reference and Counsel.
43. The Assembly held the closing worship which included the installation of Conference Deans, Remembrance of Faithful Departed and the closing of the 37<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the Allegheny Synod.
  - A. As of last count, \$1167 offerings were collected for the Lutheran Student Community at Penn State and Lutheran Disaster Response–flood response.
  - B. Interim Bishop Barb Collins closed the Assembly at 11:56 am. Worship concluded at 11:58 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Rebecca L. Horn

Allegheny Synod Council Secretary

# Minutes of the 37<sup>th</sup> Allegheny Synod Assembly

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## Resolution of Appreciation Allegheny Synod Assembly 2025

WHEREAS, the Allegheny Synod has met in Assembly and fulfilled its business; and,

WHEREAS, the Holy Spirit has enabled the Assembly in its action to fulfill its theme to be “On the Way Together with a Renewing Spirit” in our Allegheny Synod and in all of the world; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Allegheny Synod Assembly convening on October 31 and November 1, 2025 express its gratitude:

- to the synod assembly planning for planning the agenda to address items of business, along with education, and worship;
- to Interim Bishop Collins for her leadership throughout her interim tenure and for focusing on the importance of how the Spirit Renews us as we follow the Way of Jesus;
- to Bishop Eaton for appointing Interim Bishop Collins to fill the Office of the Bishop for our synod, along with our prayers and best wishes for her in retirement;
- to our synod partners for their ministries among us and for fulfilling the work of the Gospel on a daily basis;
- to Ann Ferry, our synod vice-president, and the members of synod council for their leadership, especially during this time of transition;
- to Rev. Rebecca Horn, our synod secretary, for keeping our records organizes;
- to Paula Niuhoff, our synod treasurer, for her financial expertise;
- to the technology crew for their attentiveness to detail and fixing the challenges to make sure all present can see and hear clearly to attend to the business of the synod assembly;
- to the synod officers and voting members to the Churchwide Assembly for their leadership;
- to our candidates as they seek to discern their call and grow in wisdom and knowledge through our church’s seminaries;
- to the rostered persons who celebrated anniversaries of ordination;
- to the retired rostered persons for their many years of ministry and witness among us;
- to the congregations who celebrated anniversaries, may the Holy Spirit continue to renew them in mission and ministry;
- to all the bishop candidates who were nominated and their willingness to serve our beloved Church;
- to all our Deans for their work and support during this time of transition and their continued leadership as we moved forward *On Our Way Together with a Renewing Spirit* along with both our new churchwide Bishop Yehiel Curry and our new synod Bishop-elect;
- to the Bishop-elect for your willingness to serve as our synodical leader, we pledge to work with you to be the Church *On the Way Together with a Renewing Spirit* for the sake of the Church in service to the world.

This Assembly called upon us to remember that we are called to recognize the talents of all people, through which we are all *Renewed by the Spirit*. May we share the promise of Christ with all believers as we continue to fulfill our mission to serve the world *On Our Way Together* with Christ our Lord.

# **Report of the Treasurer of the Allegheny Synod**

Ms. Paula Nihoff

The year February 2025 to January 2026 was overall a good year! If you look at the financial reports you will see that we ended the year with more income than expense. That is always a very good outcome! Our external auditors, Beer Ream Company of Somerset, presented to Synod Council a very clean audit report. There were a few exceptions that primarily dealt with the accounting for the Go Tell It In the Mountain initiative. With it being our first full year with these accounting entries, they felt there was a better way to record the accounting. There were no errors with the entries, just a clearer way, in their opinion. I believe they were correct and going forward all entries are being made using their suggestions. They were also highly satisfied that we use an external accounting firm that processes all accounting entries. This further supports full separation of duties. The work of and assistance from our CPA firm, CPA Associates, has been highly beneficial.

With the new Assistants to the Bishop, Rev. Traci Merriott, has coordinated the financial committees nicely and has created regularly working committees to watch over and review all areas of the financial health of your Synod. She has become a welcome addition to the financial health of the Synod.

I am always available to answer any questions that you may have concerning the financial condition of your Synod. Please do not hesitate to contact me anytime. I am honored to hold this position of trust within our Synod.

In Christ!

Paula Nihoff  
Treasurer, Allegheny Synod

**Allegheny Synod, ELCA**  
**Analysis of Revenues & Expenses - Detail**  
**February 2025 to January 2026**

Accounts	YTD Actual (This Year)	YTD Budget (This Year)	YTD Budget Remaining (This Year)	Last Year Yearly Actual
<b>Revenues</b>				
<b>Synod Operations</b>				
<b>Synod Mission General &amp; Admin</b>				
<b>Income, Mission Support</b>				
052.4000.I - Mission Support	\$477,338.83	\$532,056.00	\$54,717.17	\$461,387.49
052.4050.I - Designated Mission Support	\$64,771.16	\$64,302.00	(\$469.16)	\$72,257.43
052.4051.I - Lilly Fees/Subscriptions	\$5,736.35	\$0.00	(\$5,736.35)	\$0.00
052.4055.I - Lilly Endowment Funds Used	\$264,526.73	\$0.00	(\$264,526.73)	\$103,970.37
<b>Total Income, Mission Support</b>	<b>\$812,373.07</b>	<b>\$596,358.00</b>	<b>(\$216,015.07)</b>	<b>\$637,615.29</b>
<b>Income Interest</b>				
052.6500.I - Interest & Dividend Income	\$57,853.39	\$33,000.00	(\$24,853.39)	\$112,628.72
052.6502.I - Unrealized Loss/Gain on Invest	\$54,025.86	\$0.00	(\$54,025.86)	(\$27,557.12)
052.6504.I - Realized Loss/Gain on Invest	\$88,182.05	\$0.00	(\$88,182.05)	\$233,910.88
052.6506.I - Gain on Sale of Equipment	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$13,487.70
052.6510.I - Lilly Grant - Investment Income	\$55,815.83	\$0.00	(\$55,815.83)	\$0.00
052.6511.I - Unrealized Loss/Gain - Lilly Grant	(\$1,496.13)	\$0.00	\$1,496.13	\$0.00
<b>Total Income Interest</b>	<b>\$254,381.00</b>	<b>\$33,000.00</b>	<b>(\$221,381.00)</b>	<b>\$332,470.18</b>
<b>Designated Gifts, Synodical</b>				
052.4101.I - General Income Undesignated	\$1,271.00	\$0.00	(\$1,271.00)	\$2,450.26
052.4107.I - Disaster Relief - Domestic	\$26,736.50	\$0.00	(\$26,736.50)	\$33,737.50
052.4108.I - Disaster Relief - International	\$683.00	\$0.00	(\$683.00)	\$905.00
052.4109.I - World Hunger	\$33,774.83	\$0.00	(\$33,774.83)	\$34,627.91
052.4112.I - Missionary Support	\$1,396.00	\$0.00	(\$1,396.00)	\$3,561.00
052.4200.I - Seminarian Support	\$2,285.00	\$0.00	(\$2,285.00)	\$8,126.70
052.4500.I - Other Designated Gifts	\$13.00	\$0.00	(\$13.00)	\$13.00
052.4501.I - Bishop Transition	\$3,380.00	\$0.00	(\$3,380.00)	\$0.00
052.9107.I - Lampa	\$295.00	\$0.00	(\$295.00)	\$262.00
052.9109.I - United Lutheran Seminary	\$3,238.50	\$0.00	(\$3,238.50)	\$2,842.00
052.9110.I - ALSM Designated Gifts	\$10,232.00	\$0.00	(\$10,232.00)	\$10,213.00
052.9111.I - Global Msn & Blkt Sun Desig Gift	\$8,935.00	\$0.00	(\$8,935.00)	\$8,394.75
052.9112.I - Kenya Ministries	\$810.00	\$0.00	(\$810.00)	\$1,777.00
052.9114.I - Penn State Designated Gifts	\$1,918.50	\$0.00	(\$1,918.50)	\$700.00
052.9115.I - Lutheran World Relief Designated	\$7,975.00	\$0.00	(\$7,975.00)	\$12,819.01
052.9117.I - Sequanota Center Designated Gifts	\$9,733.00	\$0.00	(\$9,733.00)	\$4,468.50
<b>Total Designated Gifts, Synodical</b>	<b>\$112,676.33</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>(\$112,676.33)</b>	<b>\$124,897.63</b>
<b>Mission&amp;Ministry Development</b>				
052.4105.I - ELCA Funds - DEM	\$15,668.50	\$8,000.00	(\$7,668.50)	\$10,000.00
052.4304.I - Bishop Discretionary Fund	\$2,882.29	\$0.00	(\$2,882.29)	\$2,200.00
052.8600.I - Lutheran Letter Income	\$740.00	\$2,500.00	\$1,760.00	\$856.41
052.9431.I - Startzel Estate Funds	\$9,365.00	\$0.00	(\$9,365.00)	\$113,757.47
052.9450.I - Synod Leadership Team Income	\$83.00	\$0.00	(\$83.00)	\$0.00

**Allegheny Synod, ELCA**  
**Analysis of Revenues & Expenses - Detail**  
**February 2025 to January 2026**

<b>Accounts</b>	<b>YTD Actual (This Year)</b>	<b>YTD Budget (This Year)</b>	<b>YTD Budget Remaining (This Year)</b>	<b>Last Year Yearly Actual</b>
<b>Total Mission&amp;Ministry Developement</b>	\$28,738.79	\$10,500.00	(\$18,238.79)	\$126,813.88
<b>Events, Synodical</b>				
052.4201.I - Synod Assembly Registration/Fees	\$23,485.98	\$15,000.00	(\$8,485.98)	\$11,872.76
052.4202.I - Lutheran Day - Lakemont Regist/Fees	\$5,616.25	\$0.00	(\$5,616.25)	\$544.25
052.4204.I - Bishops Convo - Leaders Regist/Fee	\$345.17	\$6,000.00	\$5,654.83	\$5,726.19
052.4205.I - Youth Events Register/Fees	\$370.00	\$0.00	(\$370.00)	\$12,947.30
052.4207.I - Lay Worship Ministry - Reg/Fees	\$0.00	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$1,022.00
<b>Total Events, Synodical</b>	<u>\$29,817.40</u>	<u>\$22,000.00</u>	<u>(\$7,817.40)</u>	<u>\$32,112.50</u>
<b>Total Synod Mission General &amp; Admin</b>	<u>\$1,237,986.59</u>	<u>\$661,858.00</u>	<u>(\$576,128.59)</u>	<u>\$1,253,909.48</u>
<b>Total Synod Operations</b>	<u>\$1,237,986.59</u>	<u>\$661,858.00</u>	<u>(\$576,128.59)</u>	<u>\$1,253,909.48</u>
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<u>\$1,237,986.59</u>	<u>\$661,858.00</u>	<u>(\$576,128.59)</u>	<u>\$1,253,909.48</u>

**Allegheny Synod, ELCA**  
**Analysis of Revenues & Expenses - Detail**  
**February 2025 to January 2026**

Accounts	YTD Actual (This Year)	YTD Budget (This Year)	YTD Budget Remaining (This Year)	Last Year Yearly Actual
<b>Expenses</b>				
<b>Synod Operations</b>				
<b>ELCA Churchwide Mission Support</b>				
<b>Partner Ministry Support</b>				
001.9100.E - Mission Support - ELCA	\$167,068.59	\$186,220.00	\$19,151.41	\$164,229.78
<b>Total Partner Ministry Support</b>	<b>\$167,068.59</b>	<b>\$186,220.00</b>	<b>\$19,151.41</b>	<b>\$164,229.78</b>
<b>Partners</b>				
<b>Partner Ministry Support</b>				
054.9101.E - ALSM - Allegheny Luth Soc Mini	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$0.00	\$8,000.00
054.9102.E - United Lutheran Seminary	\$13,000.00	\$13,000.00	\$0.00	\$13,500.00
054.9103.E - Sequanota Center	\$38,900.00	\$35,000.00	(\$3,900.00)	\$34,500.00
054.9104.E - Penn State Campus Ministry	\$12,000.00	\$12,000.00	\$0.00	\$11,000.00
054.9106.E - Camp Mount Luther	\$4,250.00	\$0.00	(\$4,250.00)	\$1,000.00
054.9107.E - LAMPA: Luth Advocacy Min Pa	\$2,295.00	\$2,000.00	(\$295.00)	\$1,340.00
<b>Total Partner Ministry Support</b>	<b>\$75,445.00</b>	<b>\$67,000.00</b>	<b>(\$8,445.00)</b>	<b>\$69,340.00</b>
<b>Designated Gifts - Synodical</b>				
052.4101.E - General Expense Undesignated	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$697.02
052.4107.E - Disaster Relief - Domestic	\$26,736.50	\$0.00	(\$26,736.50)	\$33,737.50
052.4108.E - Disaster Relief - International	\$683.00	\$0.00	(\$683.00)	\$905.00
052.4109.E - World Hunger	\$33,774.83	\$0.00	(\$33,774.83)	\$34,627.91
052.4111.E - Lutheran Women of the Allegheny Syn	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$577.55
052.4112.E - Missionary Support	\$1,396.00	\$0.00	(\$1,396.00)	\$4,561.00
052.4200.E - Seminarian Support	\$22,075.00	\$0.00	(\$22,075.00)	\$22,220.00
052.4500.E - Other Designated Gifts	\$13.00	\$0.00	(\$13.00)	\$13.00
052.4501.E - Bishop Transition	\$4,383.13	\$0.00	(\$4,383.13)	\$0.00
052.9109.E - United Lutheran Seminary Design Gift	\$3,238.50	\$0.00	(\$3,238.50)	\$2,842.00
052.9110.E - ALSM Designated Gifts	\$10,232.00	\$0.00	(\$10,232.00)	\$10,213.00
052.9111.E - Global Msn & Blkt Su Desig Gift	\$8,935.00	\$0.00	(\$8,935.00)	\$8,394.75
052.9112.E - Kenya Ministries	\$810.00	\$0.00	(\$810.00)	\$1,777.00
052.9113.E - Other Designated - Design Gift	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	(\$305.00)
052.9114.E - Penn State Designated Gifts	\$1,918.50	\$0.00	(\$1,918.50)	\$700.00
052.9115.E - Lutheran World Relief Desig Gift	\$7,975.00	\$0.00	(\$7,975.00)	\$12,819.01
052.9117.E - Sequanota Centre Design Gift	\$9,733.00	\$0.00	(\$9,733.00)	\$4,468.50
<b>Total Designated Gifts - Synodical</b>	<b>\$131,903.46</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>(\$131,903.46)</b>	<b>\$138,248.24</b>
<b>Total Partners</b>	<b>\$207,348.46</b>	<b>\$67,000.00</b>	<b>(\$140,348.46)</b>	<b>\$207,588.24</b>
<b>Total ELCA Churchwide Mission Support</b>	<b>\$374,417.05</b>	<b>\$253,220.00</b>	<b>(\$121,197.05)</b>	<b>\$371,818.02</b>
<b>Synod Mission General &amp; Admin</b>				
<b>Salaries, Ordained</b>				
052.7000.E - Salary - Bishop	\$46,013.53	\$81,548.00	\$35,534.47	\$74,875.80
052.7020.E - Salary - Ordained Asst	\$72,409.10	\$72,405.00	(\$4.10)	\$70,056.35
052.7021.E - Salary - DEM	\$0.00	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$0.00

**Allegheny Synod, ELCA**  
**Analysis of Revenues & Expenses - Detail**  
**February 2025 to January 2026**

Accounts	YTD Actual (This Year)	YTD Budget (This Year)	YTD Budget Remaining (This Year)	Last Year Yearly Actual
052.7025.E - Salary - Lilly Program Manager	\$82,163.90	\$0.00	(\$82,163.90)	\$33,945.60
052.7050.E - Salary Bishop S.S. Offset	\$3,508.63	\$6,238.00	\$2,729.37	\$5,633.25
052.7051.E - Salary - Ordained Asst S.S. Offset	\$5,534.74	\$5,539.00	\$4.26	\$5,312.67
052.7053.E - Salary - Lilly Prg Mgr S.S. Offset	\$6,353.83	\$0.00	(\$6,353.83)	\$2,469.92
<b>Total Salaries, Ordained</b>	<b>\$215,983.73</b>	<b>\$170,730.00</b>	<b>(\$45,253.73)</b>	<b>\$192,293.59</b>
<b>Salaries &amp; Wages, Non Ordained</b>				
052.7060.E - Salary - Office Manager	\$49,207.08	\$49,207.00	(\$0.08)	\$47,677.98
052.7061.E - Hourly - Communications Coordinator	\$4,021.80	\$0.00	(\$4,021.80)	\$0.00
052.7063.E - Hourly - Lilly Grant	\$2,123.71	\$0.00	(\$2,123.71)	\$0.00
052.7080.E - Hourly - Synod Secretary	\$3,600.00	\$3,600.00	\$0.00	(\$1,214.76)
052.7084.E - Hourly - Synod Treasurer	\$3,600.00	\$3,600.00	\$0.00	\$3,600.00
052.7085.E - Salary - Accrued PTO	(\$7,458.11)	\$0.00	\$7,458.11	\$17,370.45
<b>Total Salaries &amp; Wages, Non Ordained</b>	<b>\$55,094.48</b>	<b>\$56,407.00</b>	<b>\$1,312.52</b>	<b>\$67,433.67</b>
<b>Employee Benefits</b>				
052.7100.E - Pension	\$15,318.08	\$28,371.00	\$13,052.92	\$22,323.72
052.7110.E - Employee Health & Other Benefits	\$13,902.79	\$31,339.00	\$17,436.21	\$27,163.41
052.7115.E - Lilly Program Manager Benefits	\$23,790.23	\$0.00	(\$23,790.23)	\$7,476.21
052.7131.E - Continuing Education	\$189.95	\$1,400.00	\$1,210.05	\$90.00
<b>Total Employee Benefits</b>	<b>\$53,201.05</b>	<b>\$61,110.00</b>	<b>\$7,908.95</b>	<b>\$57,053.34</b>
<b>Employer Expenses</b>				
052.7200.E - FICA	\$3,973.15	\$3,764.00	(\$209.15)	\$3,647.55
052.7201.E - Lilly - FICA	\$162.47	\$0.00	(\$162.47)	\$0.00
<b>Total Employer Expenses</b>	<b>\$4,135.62</b>	<b>\$3,764.00</b>	<b>(\$371.62)</b>	<b>\$3,647.55</b>
<b>General Expenses</b>				
052.8102.E - Office Supplies	\$954.28	\$1,000.00	\$45.72	\$411.07
052.8105.E - Lilly Equipment & Office Supplies	\$12,606.12	\$0.00	(\$12,606.12)	\$9,280.98
052.8106.E - Lilly Miscellaneous	\$29.86	\$0.00	(\$29.86)	\$0.00
052.8300.E - Postage	\$1,220.71	\$1,400.00	\$179.29	\$1,488.58
052.9801.E - Memorials/Floral Tributes	\$0.00	\$100.00	\$100.00	\$0.00
052.9802.E - Hospitality	\$905.96	\$500.00	(\$405.96)	\$830.60
<b>Total General Expenses</b>	<b>\$15,716.93</b>	<b>\$3,000.00</b>	<b>(\$12,716.93)</b>	<b>\$12,011.23</b>
<b>General Exp.-Personnel Related</b>				
052.8650.E - Ministry Resources	\$0.00	\$500.00	\$500.00	\$146.40
052.8710.E - Staff Travel - Gas/Milea/Hotel&Toll	\$5,571.94	\$7,500.00	\$1,928.06	\$6,545.93
052.8712.E - Lilly Travel	\$9,176.58	\$0.00	(\$9,176.58)	\$1,736.67
052.8715.E - Non-Staff Travel - Gas/Mile/Hotel&T	\$0.00	\$500.00	\$500.00	\$0.00
052.8800.E - Vehicle Costs - Ins/Maint Only	\$0.00	\$500.00	\$500.00	\$375.00
052.9401.E - Memberships/Dues/Subscriptions	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$0.00	\$5,000.00
<b>Total General Exp.-Personnel Related</b>	<b>\$19,748.52</b>	<b>\$14,000.00</b>	<b>(\$5,748.52)</b>	<b>\$13,804.00</b>
<b>Expenses, Council &amp; Financial</b>				
052.8005.E - Accounting Software	\$5,749.44	\$5,650.00	(\$99.44)	\$5,899.76

**Allegheny Synod, ELCA**  
**Analysis of Revenues & Expenses - Detail**  
**February 2025 to January 2026**

<b>Accounts</b>	<b>YTD Actual (This Year)</b>	<b>YTD Budget (This Year)</b>	<b>YTD Budget Remaining (This Year)</b>	<b>Last Year Yearly Actual</b>
052.8006.E - Bank and CC Fees	\$14,247.79	\$8,000.00	(\$6,247.79)	\$16,738.51
052.8010.E - Lilly Investment Expenses	\$2,614.17	\$0.00	(\$2,614.17)	\$0.00
052.8020.E - Audit Expense	\$4,500.00	\$4,500.00	\$0.00	\$4,800.00
052.9440.E - Synod Council Expenses (retreat Etc.)	\$1,129.00	\$1,750.00	\$621.00	\$1,410.00
052.9590.E - Depreciation & Amortization - Allowable	\$482.16	\$3,400.00	\$2,917.84	\$333.79
<b>Total Expenses, Council &amp; Financial</b>	<b>\$28,722.56</b>	<b>\$23,300.00</b>	<b>(\$5,422.56)</b>	<b>\$29,182.06</b>
<b>Administrative &amp; Technology</b>				
052.8001.E - Software & Computer Maintenance	\$2,885.85	\$2,500.00	(\$385.85)	\$1,993.13
052.8025.E - Accounting Services	\$8,360.00	\$8,700.00	\$340.00	\$8,820.00
052.8201.E - Utilities: Network Services Web	\$1,800.00	\$0.00	(\$1,800.00)	\$2,202.65
052.8500.E - Office Equipment (Copier Lease)	\$2,357.00	\$2,400.00	\$43.00	\$2,473.89
<b>Total Administrative &amp; Technology</b>	<b>\$15,402.85</b>	<b>\$13,600.00</b>	<b>(\$1,802.85)</b>	<b>\$15,489.67</b>
<b>Facility Expenses</b>				
052.8103.E - General Supplies Facility	\$479.09	\$200.00	(\$279.09)	(\$165.63)
052.8200.E - Telephone & Cell Phone	\$804.72	\$2,600.00	\$1,795.28	\$2,502.48
052.8400.E - Electricity	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$750.00
052.8410.E - Heat	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$360.00
052.8420.E - Sewer & Water	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$390.00
052.8430.E - Rent	\$15,200.00	\$12,600.00	(\$2,600.00)	\$14,526.00
052.8431.E - Lilly Grant Rent	\$1,000.00	\$0.00	(\$1,000.00)	\$0.00
052.9300.E - Professional Insurance	\$5,554.64	\$5,500.00	(\$54.64)	\$4,996.01
<b>Total Facility Expenses</b>	<b>\$23,038.45</b>	<b>\$20,900.00</b>	<b>(\$2,138.45)</b>	<b>\$23,358.86</b>
<b>Congregational &amp; Ministry Supp</b>				
052.4304.E - Bishop Discretionary	\$4,157.29	\$0.00	(\$4,157.29)	\$3,065.00
052.8110.E - Lilly Program Activities	\$77,565.74	\$0.00	(\$77,565.74)	\$1,509.56
052.9400.E - Lilly Resource Library	\$2,589.70	\$0.00	(\$2,589.70)	\$765.11
052.9420.E - Leadership Support	\$0.00	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00	\$0.00
052.9430.E - Global Ministry Synod Team Expense	\$0.00	\$50.00	\$50.00	\$0.00
<b>Total Congregational &amp; Ministry Supp</b>	<b>\$84,312.73</b>	<b>\$3,050.00</b>	<b>(\$81,262.73)</b>	<b>\$5,339.67</b>
<b>Other Ministry Teams Expenses</b>				
052.9431.E - Startzel Grants	\$37,953.99	\$0.00	(\$37,953.99)	\$0.00
052.9432.E - Joint Regional Ministries	\$3,600.00	\$0.00	(\$3,600.00)	\$0.00
052.9433.E - Region 8	\$0.00	\$3,500.00	\$3,500.00	\$0.00
<b>Total Other Ministry Teams Expenses</b>	<b>\$41,553.99</b>	<b>\$3,500.00</b>	<b>(\$38,053.99)</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>
<b>Mission &amp; Ministry Development</b>				
052.4105.E - ELCA Funds - DEM	\$5,454.66	\$0.00	(\$5,454.66)	\$1,312.86
052.8600.E - The Lutheran Letter	\$4,500.00	\$4,500.00	\$0.00	\$4,500.00
052.8801.E - Rostered Leaders Day Events	\$200.00	\$500.00	\$300.00	\$4,020.00
052.9180.E - Candidacy Expenses	\$1,966.16	\$2,400.00	\$433.84	\$0.00
052.9185.E - Seminarian Grants	\$0.00	\$9,000.00	\$9,000.00	\$0.00
052.9210.E - First Call Theological Education	\$314.37	\$500.00	\$185.63	\$241.34

**Allegheny Synod, ELCA**  
**Analysis of Revenues & Expenses - Detail**  
**February 2025 to January 2026**

<b>Accounts</b>	<b>YTD Actual (This Year)</b>	<b>YTD Budget (This Year)</b>	<b>YTD Budget Remaining (This Year)</b>	<b>Last Year Yearly Actual</b>
052.9214.E - Vitality and Innovation Grants	\$500.00	\$5,000.00	\$4,500.00	\$0.00
052.9450.E - Synod Leadership Team Expenses	\$1,129.58	\$3,000.00	\$1,870.42	\$2,100.00
052.9464.E - DEM Expenes	\$0.00	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$524.34
052.9500.E - Lilly Program Consultants	\$44,472.27	\$0.00	(\$44,472.27)	\$43,652.60
<b>Total Mission &amp; Ministry Development</b>	<b>\$58,537.04</b>	<b>\$25,900.00</b>	<b>(\$32,637.04)</b>	<b>\$56,351.14</b>
<b>Events, Synodical</b>				
052.4201.E - Synod Assemble Expenses	\$20,997.69	\$3,500.00	(\$17,497.69)	\$11,893.11
052.4202.E - Lutheran Day - Lakemont Expenses	\$7,680.00	\$200.00	(\$7,480.00)	\$189.00
052.4204.E - Bishops Convo - Leaders Exp	\$0.00	\$5,500.00	\$5,500.00	\$15,388.97
052.4205.E - Youth Events Expense	\$0.00	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$9,054.87
052.4207.E - Lay Worship Ministry Expenses	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$900.00
<b>Total Events, Synodical</b>	<b>\$28,677.69</b>	<b>\$10,200.00</b>	<b>(\$18,477.69)</b>	<b>\$37,425.95</b>
<b>Total Synod Mission General &amp; Admin</b>	<b>\$644,125.64</b>	<b>\$409,461.00</b>	<b>(\$234,664.64)</b>	<b>\$513,390.73</b>
<b>Total Synod Operations</b>	<b>\$1,018,542.69</b>	<b>\$662,681.00</b>	<b>(\$355,861.69)</b>	<b>\$885,208.75</b>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$1,018,542.69</b>	<b>\$662,681.00</b>	<b>(\$355,861.69)</b>	<b>\$885,208.75</b>
<b>Net Total</b>	<b>\$219,443.90</b>	<b>(\$823.00)</b>	<b>(\$220,266.90)</b>	<b>\$368,700.73</b>

Accounts	Current Balance (Last Year)	Current Balance (This Year)
<b>Assets</b>		
<b>Synod Operations</b>		
<b>Synod Mission General &amp; Admin</b>		
<b>Checking Accounts</b>		
052.1001.0 - 1st Summit Checking Account	\$168,710.75	\$55,579.88
052.1020.0 - Bishop Discre Fund Acct - M & T	\$5,834.95	\$0.00
052.1021.0 - Bishop Discre Fund Acct - 1st St	\$0.00	\$4,569.95
052.1051.0 - Lay Worship Checking - Northwe	\$7,835.65	\$7,781.37
<b>Total Checking Accounts</b>	<b>\$182,381.35</b>	<b>\$67,931.20</b>
<b>Pre-Paid Expenses</b>		
052.1300.0 - Prepaid Expense Insurance	\$5,788.04	\$2,006.88
<b>Total Pre-Paid Expenses</b>	<b>\$5,788.04</b>	<b>\$2,006.88</b>
<b>Fixed Assets</b>		
052.1800.0 - Furniture	\$10,124.29	\$10,124.29
052.1801.0 - Office Equipment	\$11,688.38	\$11,688.38
052.1805.0 - Other Fixed Assets	\$2,743.00	\$2,743.00
052.1820.0 - Accum. Depreciation Furniture	(\$8,322.66)	(\$8,616.14)
052.1821.0 - Accum. Depreciation Office Equi	(\$11,299.38)	(\$11,488.06)
052.1825.0 - Accum. Depreciation Other	(\$2,743.00)	(\$2,743.00)
<b>Total Fixed Assets</b>	<b>\$2,190.63</b>	<b>\$1,708.47</b>
<b>Investment Accounts</b>		
052.1126.0 - Invest - 1st Summ AC 0344 Exp	\$225,600.18	\$341,933.99
<b>Total Investment Accounts</b>	<b>\$225,600.18</b>	<b>\$341,933.99</b>
<b>Other Assets</b>		
052.1901.0 - ROU Asset - Office Lease	\$72,977.21	\$72,977.21
052.1902.0 - ROU Asset - Copier Lease	\$8,673.56	\$8,673.56
<b>Total Other Assets</b>	<b>\$81,650.77</b>	<b>\$81,650.77</b>
<b>Total Synod Mission General &amp; Admin</b>	<b>\$497,610.97</b>	<b>\$495,231.31</b>
<b>Designated Gifts, Synodical</b>		
<b>Mission&amp;Ministry Development</b>		
056.9125.0 - Seminarian Support (Ameriserv)	\$498,444.34	\$540,505.62
056.9126.0 - Lilly Endowment Grant (3432 - 1	\$1,247,776.61	\$1,035,100.41
056.9127.0 - Investment Fund (1st Summit 03	\$1,332,116.83	\$1,440,041.05
<b>Total Mission&amp;Ministry Development</b>	<b>\$3,078,337.78</b>	<b>\$3,015,647.08</b>
<b>Total Designated Gifts, Synodical</b>	<b>\$3,078,337.78</b>	<b>\$3,015,647.08</b>
<b>Total Synod Operations</b>	<b>\$3,575,948.75</b>	<b>\$3,510,878.39</b>
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$3,575,948.75</b>	<b>\$3,510,878.39</b>

**Liabilities, Fund Principal, & Restricted Funds**

<b>Liabilities</b>		
<b>Synod Operations</b>		
<b>Synod Mission General &amp; Admin</b>		
<b>Current Liabilities</b>		
052.2102.0 - Federal Fica Employer - Withhel	\$69.61	\$72.39
052.2105.0 - Local Tax - Withheld	\$482.10	\$352.22
052.2106.0 - LST Tax - Withheld	\$6.00	\$4.00
052.2110.0 - Accrued Payroll	\$4,950.46	\$3,591.43
052.2115.0 - Accrued PTO	\$60,317.70	\$52,859.59
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>	<b>\$65,825.87</b>	<b>\$56,879.63</b>
<b>Accounts Payable</b>		
052.2000.0 - Accounts Payable	\$51,695.05	\$40,508.76
<b>Total Accounts Payable</b>	<b>\$51,695.05</b>	<b>\$40,508.76</b>
<b>Deferred Revenue</b>		
052.2100.0 - Lilly Grant Deferred Revenue	\$1,146,029.63	\$881,647.90
<b>Total Deferred Revenue</b>	<b>\$1,146,029.63</b>	<b>\$881,647.90</b>
<b>Long Term Liabilities</b>		
052.2901.0 - Lease Liability - Office Lease	\$73,607.21	\$73,607.21

**Allegheny Synod, ELCA  
 Balance Sheet Analysis  
 January 2026**

<b>Accounts</b>	<b>Current Balance (Last Year)</b>	<b>Current Balance (This Year)</b>	
052.2902.0 - Lease Liability - Copier Lease	\$8,673.56	\$8,673.56	
<b>Total Long Term Liabilities</b>	<u>\$82,280.77</u>	<u>\$82,280.77</u>	
<b>Total Synod Mission General &amp; Admin</b>	<u>\$1,345,831.32</u>	<u>\$1,061,317.06</u>	
<b>Total Synod Operations</b>	<u>\$1,345,831.32</u>		<u>\$1,061,317.06</u>
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<u>\$1,345,831.32</u>		<u>\$1,061,317.06</u>
<b>Fund Principal</b>			
<b>Net Asset</b>			
<b>Synod Operations</b>			
<b>Synod Mission General &amp; Admin</b>			
<b>Net Assets</b>			
052.3000.0 - Synod Operating Equity - Unrest	\$79,328.94	\$742,588.72	
<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<u>\$79,328.94</u>	<u>\$742,588.72</u>	
<b>Total Synod Mission General &amp; Admin</b>	<u>\$79,328.94</u>	<u>\$742,588.72</u>	
<b>Total Synod Operations</b>	<u>\$79,328.94</u>	<u>\$742,588.72</u>	
<b>Total Net Asset</b>	<u>\$79,328.94</u>	<u>\$742,588.72</u>	
Excess Cash Received	\$368,700.73	\$219,443.90	
<b>Total Fund Principal and Excess Cash Received</b>		<u>\$448,029.67</u>	<u>\$962,032.62</u>
<b>Restricted Funds</b>			
Total Temporary Restricted	\$1,677,087.76	\$1,382,528.71	
Total Permanent Restricted	\$105,000.00	\$105,000.00	
<b>Total Restricted Funds</b>	<u>\$1,782,087.76</u>		<u>\$1,487,528.71</u>
<b>Total Liabilities, Fund Principal, &amp; Restricted Funds</b>	<u>\$3,575,948.75</u>		<u>\$3,510,878.39</u>



		56%	50%	42%	37%	42%	35%	33%	
<b>Programmatic Expenditures</b>									
052.4204.E	Bishop's Convocation Leaders Expenses	\$ 1,986	\$ 3,735	\$ 13,052	\$ 15,388	\$ -	\$ 5,000	\$ 4,000	5 staff + presenter \$ & miles
052.9180.E	Candidacy Expenses	\$ 2,691	\$ -	\$ 2,012	\$ -	\$ 1,666	\$ -	\$ 2,500	
052.9420.E	Leadership Support	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,581	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 3,000	\$ 3,000	
052.9450.E	Synod Leadership Team	\$ 75	\$ 24	\$ 5,000	\$ 2,100	\$ 1,130	\$ 3,000	\$ -	Committee currently inactive
052.4105.E	DEM Expenses	\$ -	\$ 1,823	\$ 1,074	\$ 524	\$ 5,382	\$ 1,000	\$ 9,500	
052.9210.E	First Call Theological Education	\$ 82	\$ -	\$ 243	\$ 241	\$ 314	\$ 500	\$ 500	
052.9430.E	Global Ministry Team	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 2,000	
0.52.9802.E	Hospitality	\$ 976	\$ 477	\$ 746	\$ 830	\$ 879	\$ 2,000	\$ 1,000	
052.4207.E	Ignite/DYD Expenses	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,050	\$ 900	\$ -	\$ 1,000	\$ -	Covered by GTIM
052.9433.E	Region 8 Support - Archives	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 3,230	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 5,000	
052.4202.E	Lutheran Day Lakemont Curve	\$ -	\$ 14	\$ 525	\$ 189	\$ 7,680	\$ 200	\$ 7,500	
0.52.9801.E	Memorials/Floral Tributes	\$ 50	\$ 60	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 100	\$ 100	
052.8650.E	Ministry Resources	\$ 2,836	\$ 602	\$ 402	\$ 146	\$ -	\$ 500	\$ 500	
052.8715.E	Non-Synod Staff Travel	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 500	\$ 500	
052.8801.E	Rostered Leader Events	\$ 200	\$ 648	\$ 100	\$ 4,020	\$ 200	\$ 500	\$ 500	
052.4201.E	Synod Assembly Expenses	\$ 2,629	\$ 3,598	\$ 11,890	\$ 11,893	\$ 20,998	\$ 16,000	\$ 14,000	
052.9440.E	Synod Council Expenses	\$ -	\$ 816	\$ 1,404	\$ 1,410	\$ 1,129	\$ 2,000	\$ 1,800	
052.8600.E	The Lutheran Letter	\$ 504	\$ 1,357	\$ 4,500	\$ 4,500	\$ 4,500	\$ 4,500	\$ 4,500	
052.9214.E	Vitality and Innovation Grants	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 10,175	\$ -	\$ 500	\$ 5,000	\$ 1,000	
052.9200.E	Worship Team	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,000	\$ 500	
052.4205.E	Youth Team	\$ -	\$ 226	\$ 26,873	\$ 9,054	\$ -	\$ 14,000	\$ 14,000	
	<b>Total Programmatic Expenditures</b>	\$ <b>12,029</b>	\$ <b>13,381</b>	\$ <b>83,858</b>	\$ <b>51,195</b>	\$ <b>44,378</b>	\$ <b>59,800</b>	\$ <b>72,400</b>	
		2%	2%	12%	8%	8%	9%	11%	
	<b>Total Expenditures</b>	\$ <b>681,900</b>	\$ <b>663,615</b>	\$ <b>719,486</b>	\$ <b>623,722</b>	\$ <b>579,825</b>	\$ <b>695,398</b>	\$ <b>688,952</b>	
	<b>Mission Supported (Deficit)/Surplus</b> (Mission Support Income - Expenses)	\$ <b>(6,733)</b>	\$ <b>(26,715)</b>	\$ <b>(125,055)</b>	\$ <b>(90,078)</b>	\$ <b>(37,715)</b>	\$ <b>(170,398)</b>	\$ <b>(194,154)</b>	
<b>Supplemental Income Sources</b>									
052.4105.I	ELCA DEM Grant	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 9,500	
052.4106.I	ELCA DEM Reimbursement Salary and B	\$ 27,169	\$ 24,281	\$ 25,314	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
052.8103.I	General Supplies Facility				\$ 407	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
052.4201.I	Synod Assembly Registration				\$ 11,872	\$ 23,486	\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000	
052.4202.I	Lutheran Day-Lakemont Curve				\$ 544	\$ 5,616	\$ -	\$ 7,000	
052.4204.I	Bishop's Convo Registration				\$ 5,726	\$ 345	\$ 6,000	\$ -	Registration thru Sequanota
052.4207.I	DYD Registration/Fees				\$ 1,022	\$ -	\$ 1,000	\$ -	Covered by GTIM
052.4205.I	Youth Event Registration/Fees			\$ 30,144	\$ 12,947	\$ 370	\$ 13,000	\$ 14,000	
052.8600.I	Lutheran Letter Income			\$ 2,931	\$ 856	\$ 740	\$ -	\$ 800	
052.6506.I	Gain on Sale of Equipment				\$ 13,487	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
	PPP Loan	\$ 60,562	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
	<b>Total Supplemental Income</b>	\$ <b>97,731</b>	\$ <b>34,281</b>	\$ <b>68,389</b>	\$ <b>56,861</b>	\$ <b>40,557</b>	\$ <b>45,000</b>	\$ <b>46,300</b>	
	<b>Operational (Deficit)/Surplus</b> (Mission Support + Supplemental Income - Expenses)	\$ <b>90,998</b>	\$ <b>7,566</b>	\$ <b>(56,666)</b>	\$ <b>(33,217)</b>	\$ <b>2,842</b>	\$ <b>(125,398)</b>	\$ <b>(147,854)</b>	
<b>Interest Income</b>									
052.6500.I	Interest Income	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 48,024	\$ 43,988	\$ 54,891	\$ 45,000	\$ 40,500	
	<b>Adjusted (Deficit)/Surplus</b> (Mission Support + Supplemental Income + Interest - Expenses)	\$ <b>90,998</b>	\$ <b>7,566</b>	\$ <b>(8,642)</b>	\$ <b>10,771</b>	\$ <b>57,733</b>	\$ <b>(80,398)</b>	\$ <b>(107,354)</b>	
	<b>Synod Mission Support to ELCA %</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>35%</b>	
<b>Additional Financial Information</b>									
<b>Year End Balance of Accounts</b>									
		<b>FYE 2022 Actual</b>	<b>FYE 2023 Actual</b>	<b>FYE 2024 Actual</b>	<b>FYE 2025 Actual</b>	<b>FYE 2026 Actual</b>			
052.1120.0	Reserve Investment Fund	\$ 4,682	\$ 4,701	\$ 4,720	<i>Closed and moved to Reserve 1126</i>				
052.1126.0	Reserve Fund	\$ 163,075	\$ 154,461	\$ 151,879	\$ 232,998	\$ 341,934	(\$84,580 is Dedicated, Startzel)		
056.9127.0	Investment Fund	\$ 1,067,293	\$ 1,064,134	\$ 1,175,418	\$ 1,365,975	\$ 1,440,041	(Of this, \$123,088 is Dedicated)		
056.9125.0	Seminarian Support Fund	\$ 456,008	\$ 398,027	\$ 429,901	\$ 498,444	\$ 540,505	(Restricted)		
DED.9431.0	Startzel Bequest: \$84,580 —this money is part of the restricted Reserve Fund total								

# 2027 Compensation and Benefits Manual

## A Tool for Ministry Budgeting in the Allegheny Synod, ELCA

This manual is intended as a tool for ministry sites and their ministers of Word and Sacrament or ministers of Word and Service to mutually plan and budget for the minister's compensation and benefits.

Predominantly we think of ministry in terms of a minister's efforts for members of the ministry on behalf of Jesus Christ. In the same way, the ministry of the laity includes care of the minister and the minister's family on behalf of Jesus Christ.

In many ministry settings, a specific team is tasked with primary concern for care of the minister and their family. One of the key tasks of such a team is to discuss annually with the minister a fair and equitable compensation package. Since the minister depends on the ministry employer to make ample provision for their financial needs, the minister should have the opportunity to discuss those needs in an open and supportive forum. This team is in a position to provide such a forum. The team can gather data from the minister about their financial needs and subsequently make recommendations to the Finance Committee, Council or Board, and/or Congregation for fair and equitable compensation.

There are reasons for the varieties of financial compensation packages within this Synod and the ELCA. Some ministries have full-time ministers while others have less than full-time ministerial service. Some have multiple ministers on staff. Some cooperatives have one minister serving multiple locations. Some ministers have additional education, training, or work experience prior to entering the ministry that benefits their ministry. It is the intention of the Synod to affirm the reality of different ministry arrangements while at the same time ensuring adequate and fair compensation.

This document attempts to provide flexibility in determining base salary by only specifying *minimum* amounts, in negotiating housing arrangements, and in providing components for some other benefits. Primary in all that is recommended here is the need for the minister and team members to discuss openly and honestly the subject of money and the minister's responsibilities and needs.

***This document is not intended to serve as financial or tax advice. Ministry employers are responsible for following legal employment practices regarding compensation and taxation. Ministers are strongly encouraged to employ a qualified tax accountant and/or financial advisor to review their compensation and ensure compliance with tax codes.***



**A. Annual Base Salary Compensation**

Listed below are recommended *minimum* guidelines for use in developing the compensation package for Ministers of Word and Sacrament and Ministers of Word and Service. Each ministry setting requires unique responsibilities; adequate compensation is related but not limited to the expectations of the minister and the ministry they are serving. Ministry employers may choose to compensate ministers beyond the minimum guidelines for additional degrees, certifications, years of other relevant professional experience, or where the cost of living is higher than average for the Synod.

- 1) Each year the Synod Finance Committee reviews current economic indicators to determine an appropriate starting salary. Starting salary for ministers ordained in 2027 increased 3% from 2026.
- 2) Salary is increased for each year of experience by \$500.

To Calculate years of experience, subtract the minister’s year of ordination from 2027.

2027- \_\_\_\_\_ (Year of Ordination) = \_\_\_\_\_ Years of Experience

Base Salary with a Parsonage		\$44,983
Add Years of Experience x \$500	+	_____
Minimum Salary with a Parsonage	=	_____

OR

Base Salary without a Parsonage		\$63,078
Add Years of Experience x \$500	+	_____
Minimum Salary without a Parsonage	=	_____

AND

Compensation for additional degrees, certifications, years of other relevant professional experience	+	_____
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Base Salary A. \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**B. Housing & Furnishing Allowance**

A minister whose compensation does not include a parsonage may designate as housing allowance an amount of compensation which is excluded from their Federal taxable income up to the fair rental value of a furnished home plus utilities to the extent that the allowance is actually expended for housing. Qualifying Housing Allowance expenses include rent payments, principal and interest payments on mortgages, taxes, utilities, maintenance, insurance, furnishing, and landscaping. The IRS provides information on housing allowance:

<https://www.irs.gov/faqs/interest-dividends-other-types-of-income/ministers-compensation-housing-allowance/ministers-compensation-housing-allowance>

For the purpose of including a housing allowance in calculating the Total Defined Compensation, Portico will add 30% to Base Salary for a minister whose compensation includes a parsonage.

A minister may receive a Furnishing Allowance. The Furnishing Allowance is excluded from Federal Income Tax to the extent that the allowance is actually expended for furnishing; however, the amount used is subject to Social Security Tax. The Furnishing Allowance is paid directly to the minister and is in addition to any maintenance and repair costs paid directly or reimbursed by the ministry employer.

Congregations that provide a parsonage for the called rostered minister pay the parsonage’s utilities in full each month. Utilities include electric, gas, oil, water, sewer, trash, internet, telephone (if a landline exists). If the rostered minister uses their personal cell phone for church business, a negotiated amount of reimbursement should be paid in addition to the parsonage utility costs. Billing for utilities for the parsonage are registered in the name of the congregation and directed to the congregation’s treasurer.

Furnishing Allowance B. \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**C. Social Security Allowance**

For Social Security purposes, ministers are taxed as if they are self-employed. The current combined Social Security and Medicare tax is 15.3%. The Synod policy requires the ministry site to assume at least 50% of the combined Social Security and Medicare tax that the minister is required to pay or an equivalent amount if the minister had previously opted out of Social Security.

To calculate the compensation subject to Social Security Tax, add the Base Salary (A), 30% of Base Salary *for ministers with a parsonage only*, Furnishing Allowance (B), and any other allowances paid directly to the minister, excluding reimbursed expenses.

A. Base Salary	_____	
30% of A.	+ _____	<i>(for ministers with a parsonage only)</i>
B. Furnishing Allowance	+ _____	<i>(if utilized)</i>
Other Allowances	+ _____	

= \_\_\_\_\_ (C1) Compensation Subject to SS Tax

To calculate the Social Security Tax, multiply the minister's compensation (C1) x 15.3%.

C1 \_\_\_\_\_ x .153 = \_\_\_\_\_ (C2) Social Security Tax

To calculate the Social Security Allowance paid by the ministry employer, multiply the minister's Social Security Tax (C2) x at least 50% (more if the ministry employer chooses).

C2 \_\_\_\_\_ x .5 (or more) = \_\_\_\_\_ (C) Social Security Allowance

Social Security Allowance C. \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**D. Portico Pension Contribution**

Portico Benefits Services administrates pension benefits for the ELCA. The Synod policy encourages the ministry employer to contribute to the minister's pension fund at a rate of 12% of the Defined Compensation.

To calculate the Portico Defined Compensation, add the Base Salary (A), 30% of the Base Salary *for ministers with a parsonage only*, the Furnishing Allowance (B), and the Social Security Allowance (C).

A. Base Salary \_\_\_\_\_

30% of A + \_\_\_\_\_ (*for ministers with a parsonage only*)

B. Furnishing Allowance + \_\_\_\_\_

C. Social Security Allowance + \_\_\_\_\_

= \_\_\_\_\_ (D1) Portico Defined Compensation

To calculate the Pension Contribution paid by the ministry employer, multiply the minister's Portico Defined Compensation (D1) x 12%.

D1. \_\_\_\_\_ x .12 = \_\_\_\_\_ (D) Pension Contribution

Pension Contribution D. \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**E. Other Portico-ELCA Benefits Contribution**

Portico Benefit Services, the nonprofit benefit ministry of the ELCA, provides the benefit program for rostered ministers, lay employees, and their families. Portico provides health, dental, prescription drug, retirement, disability, and group life insurance benefits in one bundled program.\* This program is designed to address the needs of rostered ministers and provide seamless benefits during change of call, leave from call, and other events unique to ministry. A bundled approach helps ensure rostered ministers and lay employees are protected against significant financial loss from a variety of risks. Through Portico, ministries in this synod and across the country pool their collective purchasing power to provide benefits in a cost-effective manner. For more information, see the ELCA Philosophy of Benefits at [PorticoBenefits.org/philosophy](https://PorticoBenefits.org/philosophy).

Congregations and plan members share the cost of benefits. Congregations are expected to support the well-being of their covered plan members by paying 100% of the cost of non-elective benefits. Plan members are expected to participate in the cost of utilizing the benefits (e.g., deductibles, coinsurance, and copays).

\*A plan member may waive health coverage if they have access to valid medical insurance coverage through their spouse or another employer.

Current contribution rates for benefits are available at [EmployerLink.PorticoBenefits.org](https://EmployerLink.PorticoBenefits.org) or from calling Portico at 800.352.2876.

#### ELCA Survivor Benefit

Basic group life insurance is offered through Securian and is paid for by the congregation. Rostered ministers may pay for additional coverage through Securian or other supplemental insurance.

#### ELCA Disability Benefits

When approved, the ELCA disability trust provides monthly income, retirement plan contribution, and health coverage. There are two types of disability benefits: short term and long term. Short term (60 days) compensation and benefits are paid by the congregation. Long term (over 60 days) disability benefits are paid by the ELCA's disability trust.

#### ELCA Retirement

The ELCA maintains a defined contribution retirement plan for rostered ministers. The Allegheny Synod encourages congregations to contribute a minimum of 12% of the rostered minister's defined compensation to the retirement plan. Members in the plan can also contribute pre-tax contributions through payroll deduction.

#### ELCA Health Benefit

The ELCA's health benefit plans cover the following areas: medical, dental, prescription coverage, tax advantage accounts (Flexible Spending and Health Savings Accounts) and wellness support. The ELCA Church Council has approved a balance of cost-sharing between congregations and plan members. Portico offers a choice of ELCA-Primary health benefit options that fit this approved balance: ~~Gold+, and Silver+ with either Level A or B employer HSA contribution.~~ Each fall, congregations should engage in conversation with their sponsored plan members to determine the option that best fits their needs, and then make their selection during annual enrollment. In 2026 the Allegheny synod council voted to recommend the Select HDHP 2000 or Select Copay 2000 plans.

Plan Choice \_\_\_\_\_

Cost of Plan \_\_\_\_\_

Portico Benefits E. \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**F. Housing Equity Allowance**      *(For Ministers with a Parsonage Only)*

When a parsonage is furnished as part of the minister's compensation, the minister does not have the opportunity to build equity as a homeowner. The ministry employer may compensate for this lack of equity with a Housing Equity Allowance. Recommended Housing Equity Allowance Provisions:

1. The Housing Equity Allowance equals 3% of the minister's Defined Compensation.
2. The ministry employer pays this amount in monthly installments to a depository agreed to by the ministry employer and the minister.
3. Use of the funds is limited to the provision of housing whenever it is needed, specifically at the time of retirement, disability, or death, or when a congregation disposes of its parsonage.
4. Provisions are to be made for changing the depository when required by relocation of the minister, provided that the original contractual limitations for the use of the funds are maintained.

To calculate the Housing Equity Allowance paid by the ministry employer, multiply the Defined Compensation (D1) x 3%.

D1. \_\_\_\_\_ x .03      = \_\_\_\_\_ (F) Housing Equity Allowance

Housing Equity Allowance F. \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Professional Expenses**

The IRS has made it difficult to itemize and deduct professional expenses. Therefore, it is recommended that the ministry employer reimburse professional expenses in full and budget accordingly for these anticipated costs, reviewing these allowances frequently. Professional expenses include:

- G. Synod Assembly and Conference Expenses
- H. Automobile Expenses
- I. Continuing Education, Book, Periodical, and Digital Resource Expenses
- J. Ministry-Related Business and Attire Expenses
- K. Leadership Development

Additional Professional Expenses unique to a ministry may be incurred and compensated.

**G. Synod Assembly and Conference Expenses**

All ministers are required to attend the annual Synod Assembly and Bishop’s Convocation, for which the ministry employer is required to pay registration, lodging, and meals for the minister while attending these events. Further, ministers may be expected to attend other Synod conferences or trainings, and the ministry employer is expected to pay those registration fees and expenses as well. Expenses for Synod Assembly, Convocation, and other Synod conferences or trainings are to be covered in addition to Continuing Education expenses.

Typical expenses for Synod Assembly and Bishop’s Convocation are \$300 each (\$600 total).

Ministers in the first three years of their first call after graduation/ordination are required to attend First Call Theological Education (FCTE). FCTE incurs a fee of \$200/year for three years.

Synod Assembly & Conference Expenses G. \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**H. Automobile Expenses**

In most ministry settings, the minister will incur transportation costs that include fuel, repairs, insurance, tolls, etc. The IRS allows reimbursement of a specific amount per mile when a car is used for business purposes. American Automobile Association (AAA) and Department of Transportation studies indicate that the cost of operating automobiles is greater than the mileage reimbursement allowed by the IRS. The ministry employer should provide to the minister a travel allowance adequate to cover all costs. The Synod recommends three possible arrangements (in order of preference):

1. An employer-owned or leased car. The ministry employer owns or leases a car for the minister to use in the course of their duties; the employer pays the cost of fuel, maintenance, and repairs.
2. Reimbursement to the minister for actual miles driven. The employer pays the leader for the use of their car based on an agreed upon amount per mile and in accordance with IRS regulations. The IRS rate for 2026 is 72.5 cents per mile; this may change in 2027. Amounts up to the IRS rate are not taxable; any amount paid in excess of the IRS rate is taxable compensation.
3. Pay the leader a flat rate for transportation. Having budgeted an amount for travel, the ministry employer pays the minister a regular amount, regardless of the miles driven by the leader. A flat rate travel compensation is considered taxable income, so an additional 15%-20% should be added to the allowance to account for the additional tax obligation of the minister.

The IRS clarifies allowable mileage reimbursement guidelines: <https://www.irs.gov/publications/p463>  
 Some rostered ministers may work from home; it is the responsibility of the congregation's council to clearly state from where mileage is calculated for reimbursement. When an agreement is reached, it should be included on the Definitions for Compensation worksheet, Section C.

Automobile Expense H. \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**I. Continuing Education, Book, Periodical, and Digital Resource Expenses**

In order to update their skills and strengthen their ministry, the ELCA expects ministers to participate in at least 50 contact hours of Continuing Education (Life-Long Learning/Professional Development) annually. Such activities are not vacations, and ministry employers shall provide both time and money to facilitate these learning opportunities. For the minister to keep abreast of developments in theology and ministry, expenses for books, periodicals, and digital resources are included with Continuing Education.

Like the Housing Equity Allowance, an account with a depository agreed to by the minister and the ministry employer should be established for Continuing Education. The Synod recommends the employer contribute at least \$800 and the minister at least \$300 annually. Two weeks study leave, or its equivalent, is to be provided over and above vacation.

Continuing Education, Book, Periodical, Digital Resource Expenses I. \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**J. Ministry Related Business and Attire Expenses**

The IRS has made it difficult to itemize and deduct professional expenses. Therefore the Synod recommends the ministry employer reimburse in full professional expenses including, but not limited to, professional attire such as vestments and clerics, ministry use of personal technical resources (i.e. cell phone, computer), professional organization dues, and business entertainment.

Ministry Related Business and Attire Expense J. \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**K. Leadership Development**

Leadership Development is different than Continuing Education or vacation, which benefit the ministry but are for the minister’s personal development, rest, and renewal. Leadership development benefits the ministry’s well-being and growth. The Synod recommends that the ministry employer offer at least \$500 for Leadership Development which may include retreats, resources, coaching, or other education for the minister’s development and growth.

Leadership Development Expense K. \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**L. Flexible Spending Accounts/Medical Expense Reimbursement**

(Premiums for Medical and Dental Benefits are not to be included here. See p. 5-6)

**Health Flexible Spending Account (FSA)**

A minister with Copay plans may set aside an amount, pretax, to pay for eligible out of pocket health care expenses. The minister has access to the full amount of the FSA election starting January 1, even though contributions will be withheld from each paycheck throughout the plan year.

**Health Savings Account (HSA)**

A minister with High Deductible plans may set aside pretax money to pay for eligible out of pocket health care expenses. The minister and employer can contribute and any earned wellness dollars are deposited here. (Check allowed amounts for 2027 when available.)

**Dependent (Day) Care Flexible Spending Account**

A minister may set aside an amount, pretax, to pay for day care expenses incurred for the care of the minister’s child(ren) or other eligible dependent to enable the minister to work.

Flexible Spending Accounts can be established through Portico Benefit Services.

Flexible Spending Designation \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (made by the minister; not an additional budgeted item)

*FSA, HSA, and Depend Care Account contributions are capped; check current allowed amounts.*

**Medical Expense Reimbursement**

The leader may be reimbursed for copays or medical expenses not otherwise covered by insurance.

Medical Expense Reimbursement L. \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Pre-Tax Contribution**

Contributions up to the amount permissible by the IRS are made to Portico Benefit Services and/or other approved depositories. The minister should contact Portico for details on the IRS annual limits for retirement plan contributions.

Pre-Tax Contribution \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (made by the minister; not an additional budgeted item)

**Related Items**

**Vacation**

Sabbath is a commandment of God; therefore weekly time off and annual vacation are necessary for the minister’s personal physical, mental, and spiritual health as well as for their leadership by example. The Synod requires a minimum of four weeks annual vacation, which includes four Sundays, and a minimum of one day off each week. Coverage should be arranged so that the minister is not “on call” during scheduled vacation time. The ministry employer may grant additional vacation time based on the length of service in the ministry.

Vacation of \_\_\_\_\_ weeks per year (including Sundays)

The 2027 rate for Sunday supply worship leadership will be \$145 for one service, PLUS \$60 for each additional service on the same day, PLUS mileage reimbursement at the 2027 IRS rate.

To budget for supply coverage of the minister’s vacation, multiply the number of Sundays offered in vacation (minimum 4) x \$145 (+\$60 per additional service) + estimate of mileage reimbursement.

Estimated Supply Expense \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (to be paid to supply leaders)

**Leave of Absence**

A leave of absence should be negotiated between the minister and ministry employer (council or board) at least 14 days prior to the leave request. If emergency leave is required in which the 14 day notice is not possible, the Executive Committee may grant the leave with the approval of the full council or board.

**Sick Leave**

Rostered ministers and congregation employees shall receive ten (10) days of paid sick leave per year. Illness of longer than two (2) months should be referred to Portico Benefits. Sick leave may accrue up to

a maximum of thirty (30) working days. The decision to grant additional paid sick leave is at the discretion of the congregation council.

### **Family Leave**

In the event of an illness in the immediate family (spouse, children, parents, brother, sister, grandparent, grandchildren, mother-in-law, father-in-law, or legal guardian) that requires the rostered minister or employee's presence, accrued sick leave may be utilized for this purpose.

### **Maternity/Paternity/Adoptive Leave**

Leaves under this section are for the purpose of issues related to parenting, and may only be taken after six (6) months of full-time employment. Rostered ministers and employees who will be absent due to maternity/ paternity/adoptive leave are requested to provide as much advance notice as possible. Eight (8) weeks of paid maternity/paternity/adoptive leave are available to a rostered minister or an employee following the birth of a child or an adoption of a child less than one year old. Such leave must be taken within fifteen (15) weeks of the birth or adoption. If medically necessary, additional time may be requested. Rostered ministers and employees desiring additional leave, either prior to or following the birth of their child or adoption of their child less than one year old, may use accrued vacation or sick time to supplement time off with the approval of the congregation council. The rostered minister or employee agrees to return to work for a minimum of six (6) months after taking leave.

### **Vacation**

Rostered ministers are granted four (4) weeks of paid vacation time including four (4) Sundays each year as a minimum guideline. Rostered ministers should notify the congregation council at least thirty (30) days in advance of vacation and make arrangements for the proper pastoral coverage while out of town. Additional vacation time may be granted to rostered ministers by the congregation council. Unused vacation time will be paid to the rostered minister upon resignation of call or separation from call. Full benefits will be paid through the end of unused vacation time at time of resignation or separation. Congregational employees are granted paid vacation time according to congregational guidelines.

### **Compassionate and Emergency Leave**

In the event of a death in a rostered minister or employee's immediate family (spouse, children, parents, brother, sister, grandparent, grandchildren, mother-in-law, father-in-law, or legal guardian) five (5) days paid leave will be granted to attend the funeral and to deal with family affairs. Additional time may be granted by the congregation council.

## **Jury Duty**

This synod recognizes an employee's legal and civic duty to serve if called to jury duty or subpoenaed as a witness. A rostered minister or employee who is required to serve as such will be entitled to full pay and benefits during the period of such service. Rostered ministers and employees are required to report to work when not required to be present in court, and to call in daily to report their status on returning to work.

## **Leave Without Pay**

Leave without pay may be granted to a rostered minister or employee, for personal reasons, after due consideration has been given to the work requirements of the congregation. Leave without pay may be granted for a period of up to two (2) months. Such leaves of absence are granted by the congregation council only in consultation with the bishop and the Synod Council. The congregation will hold a rostered minister or employee's position open for the leave period, while on an approved leave without pay. If the rostered minister or employee is unable to return to work at the conclusion of the leave period, their position may or may not continue to be held open. This decision will be made, on a case-by-case basis, by the bishop in consultation with the congregation council. If the individual has been on a leave without pay for medical reasons, a medical release from their physician to return to work must be submitted.

## **Disability Leave**

This synod and its congregations are committed to accommodate qualified rostered ministers and employees with disabilities, to the extent it can do so without undue burden. If, for example, a qualified employee is temporarily disabled and provides the congregation a medical certification recommending leave, the congregation will provide unpaid leave as an accommodation to that employee if it can do so without undue burden. Requests for accommodation should be made in writing, and the rostered minister or employee will need to work with the bishop or his/her delegate to determine the appropriate accommodation and documentation needed. Longterm Disability claims are handled through Portico Benefit Services. See the Portico website for requirements for guidelines to apply. The ministry employer will pay full compensation for the eight week period until Portico Disability Benefits begin. Ministry employers may explore cost benefit of purchasing short-term disability insurance to cover that eight week period. The Office of the Bishop will work with the congregation council to secure pastoral coverage during the period of disability.

## **Military Leave**

Rostered ministers and regular full-time and regular part-time employees who perform military service will be granted leaves of absence for such service in compliance with state and federal laws. For purposes of this handbook, military service in the performance of duty on a voluntary or involuntary basis in the U.S. Armed forces, the Reserves, or the National Guard under competent authority, and

includes active duty for training, inactive duty training, and full-time National Guard duty. Vacation or accrued sick time is not to be used for this leave. Rostered ministers or employees who are called to military service will be paid during their leave at a rate of 50% of their normal wages and benefits will be paid in full. Rostered ministers are asked to notify the congregation council and bishop and submit copies of military orders as soon as they become aware of the military obligation. Employees are asked to notify the pastor and congregation council as soon as they become aware of the military obligation and submit copies of military orders. An employee's eligibility for reinstatement after completion of military service is determined in accordance with applicable federal and state laws.

## **Sabbatical Leave**

In January 2004, the Synod Council approved the following Sabbatical Guidelines:

Vision: Throughout Holy Scripture, from Genesis' beginnings to Jesus' ministry and the church's witness, accounts of holy activity are clearly set apart by rest, quiet places, and time for restoration. God has given us, God's people, the Sabbath pattern as a time of renewal, a time to be reminded of whose we are and what we are called to do, a time of rest that refreshes us for life.

In the lives of ministers of the Allegheny Synod, time apart from the regular responsibilities of ministry benefit both the ministry setting and the minister. Over an extended period, a Sabbatical, rest separate from the immediate expectations of congregational ministry, can renew a congregation and refresh a leader's sense of call for ministry. As the minister is released from the regular responsibilities of the call, it does not mean that congregational life is suspended. In fact, many congregations report that the Sabbatical was a time for growth and renewal.

Each Sabbatical will be unique. Sabbatical is clearly permission for a minister to be blessed by time away. In the church, as we discuss Sabbaticals for ministers, the challenge is for us to pursue its meaning for each Christian community. These guidelines are intended to help congregations and ministers create a mutual plan of rest and renewal for ministry.

### **Purpose, Rationale, and Expectations**

We are familiar with the Sabbath, the seventh day of creation, when God rested. The word "Sabbatical" is derived from Sabbath, and is defined as a time reserved for rest, research, renewal, enrichment, learning, spiritual growth, travel, and strengthening of ministry gifts. Sabbaticals provide opportunities to see new directions, renew relationships, to begin new pursuits. Nourishing one's soul and changing perspective requires a change in one's space and place. Jesus spent forty days in the wilderness, after which his ministry set off on a new course.

Preparation for a Sabbatical is important, and openness to the movement of God's Spirit in the life of people and minister is vital. A Sabbatical is arranged in consideration of the congregation's ministry. It can be expected that while a minister is on Sabbatical, congregational life –worship, education, outreach, evangelism, etc., will continue. Sabbatical leave is not a vacation, nor is it only continuing education. While life-long learning and continuing education are vital for all, and ministers are expected to participate in regular opportunities to grow and be strengthened, the Sabbatical is an enriching

component of ministry, which may include particular continuing education opportunities, but most likely will encompass more. Necessarily, the plans for a Sabbatical will be mutually detailed well in advance of departure.

Many congregations reflect that while their minister was away they learned new things about themselves and the ministry they share with one another. Thus, renewal of God's people and minister occurs. Sabbaticals provide a means by which the congregation can minister to their leader. The Sabbatical may also bring into being a Sabbatical for the congregation, a time to rethink the "busyness" of congregational life, a time to reevaluate the congregation's relationship with God, a time for the Holy Spirit to lead their ministry in new ways. Most importantly, the congregation gains a minister who returns to God's calling with renewed vigor, insight, appreciation, and vision.

Ministers of the church in the Allegheny Synod need Sabbath time to break away from the stress and strain and the 24/7 nature of ministry. A Sabbatical gives a minister more than a time to study, learn, and rest. To keep the Sabbath is to renew one's trust in God to provide by abstaining from those activities that provide material resources. A Sabbatical provides ministers time to be nurtured by God, reflect on their relationship with God. A Sabbatical gives the minister an opportunity to reflect on God's call and discover the importance of who they are in the light of who God wants them to be.

#### Benefits of Sabbaticals

Sabbaticals provide a means for the congregation to gain new insight into mission and ministry and to minister to their called leader. A Sabbatical leave will benefit the congregation, the church leadership, and their shared ministry. A few of these benefits are listed below.

#### For the Ministry

An opportunity to show support for the minister and their family; a time to develop lay leadership by assuming some of the minister's responsibilities; an opportunity for learning new ideas to enhance their ministry; renewed congregational leadership; opportunities for spiritual growth; leadership stability, while not losing an effective and respected minister to burnout or a new call.

#### For the Ministry Leadership

A time to renew their energy and rediscover their zeal for ministry; an opportunity for learning new ideas to enhance their ministry; a time for prayer, rest, and renewing their relationship with God; a time to spend with family and friends to renew and strengthen relationships; an extended time for focused study and spiritual growth.

#### Mutual Benefits

Renewal of the covenant between the leader and the congregation; improved understanding of each other's perspective: the leader will experience more of life in the pew during the Sabbatical, and the lay leadership will come to a greater understating of how the congregation's ministry is renewed, revitalized, and stimulated; an opportunity for learning new ideas to enhance their ministry

#### Suggested Sabbatical Guidelines

A Sabbatical is encouraged for ministers of the Allegheny Synod after 5-7 years of service in the same setting, beginning after three years of First Call Theological Education.

The length of Sabbatical is encouraged to be a minimum of 3 months, though each Sabbatical may vary in length, depending on the covenant agreed upon by the congregation's council and the minister. It is strongly encouraged that the entire Sabbatical be taken continuously to allow for disengagement from pastoral responsibilities and duties.

Sabbatical time is not considered vacation time or continuing education time for the minister but a separate experience of renewal for continued ministry.

Planning for a Sabbatical can begin anytime. When possible, it is suggested that the discussion begin early in a ministry.

Final preparations are encouraged at least 6 months to a year in advance, including the writing of a covenant, which provides full compensation and benefits for the minister and outlines the vision and practical details of the Sabbatical.

A covenant designed by the congregation's council, or its designated representatives, and the minister is encouraged. The congregation's leadership usually does the final affirmation of the covenant. The time of planning of Sabbatical should focus on the vision and hopes for the Sabbatical time as well as practical arrangements regarding pastoral coverage and financial considerations for the congregation. Conversation with the synod can help facilitate this planning and implementation so that it is intentional and mutually beneficial for both the congregation and the minister.

As Sabbatical coverage for a congregation is discussed, there are resources within the synod to help in planning for pastoral coverage. Possibilities for Sundays include utilizing the gifts of retired pastors, worship led by authorized lay leaders of the synod, youth led worship services, hymn sings, etc. Coverage for pastoral care may be arranged in a variety of ways, including support from area pastors.

It is expected that a minister will return to their call from the congregation after their Sabbatical. It is suggested that in the Sabbatical covenant this expectation is discerned between the congregation council and the minister, with at least one to two years of continued service after the Sabbatical being the norm.

Upon return from Sabbatical, the minister is encouraged to provide a reflection or report to the congregation about the Sabbatical experience. This can be flexible and creative in its form, yet, provide an opportunity for congregation and minister to learn from and explore the benefits of the Sabbatical time.

**\*\*A comprehensive list of sabbatical resources, ideas, retreat centers, etc. are available at [www.alleghenysynod.org](http://www.alleghenysynod.org) or by contacting [office@alleghenysynod.com](mailto:office@alleghenysynod.com) or 814-942-1042\*\***

**Worksheet: Estimate of Household Expenses**

*To calculate the percentage of salary to be designated as Housing Allowance for tax purposes*

Housing Allowance for year extending from \_\_\_\_\_ 20 \_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ 20 \_\_

Estimated expenses:

- A. Rent for leased property or payments on home purchase  
(down payments, acquisition costs, mortgage payments of principal) \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- B. Garage rental (if not included in A) \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- C. Utilities (gas, electricity, water, sewer, oil, telephone, trash removal,  
cable, internet, firewood or other heating fuel) \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- D. Insurance (homeowner’s, fire, extended coverage, liability, contents, flood) \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- E. Repairs and maintenance \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- F. Furnishings and improvements \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- G. Interest and taxes (may want to itemize these separately) \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- H. Other housing expenses (list in detail)

*If the minister is living in a parsonage and there is no landline, the congregation may pay a monthly stipend to help cover the cost of cell phone usage related to the church.*

*The congregation may provide internet at a parsonage.* \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Congregational Council Action on Housing Allowance**

*To provide a record of Housing Allowance designation for tax and audit purposes*

The \_\_\_\_\_ Committee advised the Council that under the tax laws an ordained minister of the gospel is not subject to Federal Income Tax with respect to the “rental allowance paid as part of compensation to the pastor used to rent or provide a home.” Where the minister owns a home, the amount of the Housing Allowance will be an amount equal to the fair rental value of the home, including furnishings and appliances, plus the cost of utilities.

The Council, after considering the statement of the Rev. \_\_\_\_\_ setting forth estimates of the amount expected to be spent to rent or otherwise provide a home during the period of \_\_\_\_\_ 20 \_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ 20 \_\_ and in light of the Federal Income Tax law and of the established salary level, on motion duly made and seconded, adopted the following resolution:

Resolved that the Rev. \_\_\_\_\_ receive a Salary of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ and a Housing Allowance of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for the period \_\_\_\_\_ 20 \_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ 20 \_\_, to be so designated in the official records.

Respectfully submitted,

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Secretary of Council*

**Notification of Housing Allowance by Congregation**

*To provide a record for the minister of the Housing Allowance designation for tax and audit purposes*

Dear Rev. \_\_\_\_\_:

This is to advise you that at a meeting of the Congregation Council, held on \_\_\_\_\_ 20 \_\_, your Housing Allowance for the period \_\_\_\_\_ 20 \_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ 20 \_\_ was officially designated and fixed in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Secretary of Council*

*Note: Retain the original of this page in the congregation files, provide a copy to the pastor, and send a copy to the Allegheny Synod Office, 918 Hickory Street, Hollidaysburg, PA 16686.*

# Definition of Compensation, Benefits and Responsibilities of the Rostered Minister

Prepared by: \_\_\_\_\_

For: \_\_\_\_\_

For the period of: \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

## A. COMPENSATION

The congregation will provide the following annual compensation:

1. Base cash salary

Parsonage included \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Parsonage NOT included \$ \_\_\_\_\_

2. Social Security Allowance (1/2 of 15.3%) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

3. If parsonage is included:

Furnishing allowance \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Housing equity allowance \$ \_\_\_\_\_

## B. PENSION AND OTHER BENEFITS

The congregation will sponsor the pastor in the pension and other benefits program through Portico Benefit Services. *(Sponsorship includes health, pension, disability and life insurance. Health insurance is expected to be provided in full by the congregation for the pastor, spouse and family where applicable. If the health coverage is waived, a certificate of insurance must be provided to the Allegheny Synod Office. Full cost coverage is expected for this option.)*

ELCA Pension at \_\_\_\_\_ % (12% recommended) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

ELCA Health, Disability and Life Insurance \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Other insurance benefits \$ \_\_\_\_\_

## C. EXPENSES

The congregation will provide the following expenses related to this pastor's ministry.

1. Automobile/travel/mileage allowance \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
*(IRS guideline for mileage recommended)*

2. Other professional expenses \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
*(See Compensation and Benefits manual)*

3. Official meetings of the Synod \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
*(i.e. Bishop's Convocation, Synod Assembly, Synodical Committee meetings, etc.; at least \$600)*

4. Leadership Development Expenses *(at least \$500)* \$ \_\_\_\_\_

5. Continuing Education *(Minimum of \$800 from the congregation)* \$ \_\_\_\_\_

6. Moving expenses \$ \_\_\_\_\_

7. Other expenses \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please list: \_\_\_\_\_



# Report of the Startzel Grant

Pastor Walter Startzel, a long-time Minister of Word and Sacrament in the Allegheny Synod, entered the Church Triumphant in 2022, but he made provisions in his will for the benefit of the Allegheny Synod, leaving a substantial bequest. Rev. Startzel was known for his love of music and worship.

The synod council decided to honor his legacy through the establishment of the Startzel Music and Technology Grant, which is available to each congregation of the Allegheny Synod in amounts of \$250 to \$2,500, so long as funds remain.

What have congregations that already received grants used them for? Uses are widely varied. Some have applied for funds to purchase music, whether sheet music for a special program, or in another case, a “digital hymnal” to provide accompaniment for hymns/liturgy in the congregation in the event a pianist is not available. Other congregations have used their grant to purchase a computer, a Smart Board, make sound system upgrades or video/audio equipment to broadcast their worship services online. Another parish decided to create a website. These evangelism tools prove beneficial to both those who are unable to attend worship in person and to enhance the experience of those who attend in person.

Congregations can find the application form for the grant on the synod website: [alleghenysynod.org](http://alleghenysynod.org) by using the search function and searching for “Startzel Grant.” The form to apply can be downloaded as a pdf. Full criteria for the grant can be found on the form. Please send your completed grant application by email to [office@alleghenysynod.com](mailto:office@alleghenysynod.com) with “Startzel Grant” in the subject line or via mail to: Allegheny Synod 916 Hickory St., Hollidaysburg, PA 16648. Applications are reviewed as they are received.

# Report of the Startzel Grant

Rev. Walter Startzel, a long-time Minister of Word and Sacrament in the Allegheny Synod, entered the Church Triumphant in 2022, but he made provisions in his will for the benefit of the Allegheny Synod, leaving a substantial bequest. Rev. Startzell was known for his love of music and worship.

The synod council decided to honor his legacy through the establishment of the Startzel Music and Technology Grant, which is available to each congregation of the Allegheny Synod in amounts of \$250 to \$2,500, so long as funds remain.

Amount of money gifted to the Startzel Account \$147,880.48 as of 5/15/2026.

Grant Awarded to:	Purpose and explanation of how Grant will be used:
St. John's Lutheran Church, Millheim	Church Laptop to live stream Sunday Worship Services
First Evangelical Lutheran Church, Altoona	Subscripition for Sundays and Sessions digital content offerengs to help with Worship Services
St. John Lutheran Church, Clearfield	Hand Chimes, to extend worship services with special music and extend community outreach
Trinity Lutheran Church, Sidman	equipment to produce and distribut podcasts for live streaming
Moxhma and Christ Lutheran Church, Johnstown	To advance parish structure with a website
Olanta Lutheran Church, Olanta	wireless microphone system to be heard during woshrup and special meetings
Duncansville Evangelical Lutheran Church, Duncansville	Interactive Smart Board with a mobile cart to allow bringing Bible study and Children's ministry into the 21st century by making lessons and activities more engaging and collaborative.
St. David's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Davidsville	Purchase an audio/visual system to live stream services to expand the reach and share God's word with our larger community
St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Johnstown	Upgrade current sound system and wifi access by adding access points and wireless microphones to be used to enhance worship experience, and attract new visitors, along with enableing growth in music, worship, drama and youth programs.
Faith Lutheran Church, Somerset	Grow Congregational Sound system by adding microphones for worship in sanctuary and fellowship hall; screen in classroom for growing technical ability/offereing in classroom this will assist in lifting voices of ministry; along with providing opportunities to engage learning using videos, etc.
St. Mark Lutheran Church, Howard	The Christians With Rhythm chorus, a group of singers from church choirs throughout the Nittany Valley in Central PA would like to present a Christmas Cantata to the residents of the entire Valley. This would require the purchase of cantata song books for the current 25 members of the Chorus, in addition to practice tapes, both singing and instrumental. The outcome of this project would be the presentation of the cantata a number of times at St. Mark Lutheran Church in
Zion Lutheran Evangelical Church, Everett	A sound system to enhance the hearing impaired in the sanctuary for worship services. Total installation is above the requested amount of money.
Laurel Trinity Lutheran Church, Jennerstown	Purchase of two computers for church and preschool. By purchasing the hopes are to increase speed and capatability with new computers, along with new technolgy with a sound system and upgrade to worship.

# Report of the Startzel Grant

Grant Awarded to:	Purpose and explanation of how Grant will be used:
Benscreek Lutheran Church, Hollsopple	Purchase a sound amplicaifcation that is appropriate to the size and shape of the sanctuary that will allow all members/visitors to hear no matter where they are seated. This will help to clearly share the message of the Gosepl in the sanctuary and replace outdated equiptment, some that no longer function.
Mt Calvary Lutheran Church, Johnstown	Provide all current and prospective members the ability to worship together with audio video equipment to develop and share the gosepl and to cultivate a strong online community and to grow membership
Trinity Lutheran Church, Somerset	Technology to upgrade equipment for broadcasting of services online, over 100 people who are tuning in weekly.
Greenville Evangelical Lutheran Church, Meyersdale	Technology, Purchase of a Digital Hymnal system to replace outdated Synthia PC technology. This system will provide accompaniment when musician is not available .
St. John's Lutheran Church, Salisbury	Technology, replacment/upgrade of sound system to improve quality and user-interface. Inc. mics, speakers, and re-configuration.
Moxham Lutheran Church, Johnstown	Music, New Altar Cloths for Sanctuary Altar; to brighten and renew and update the altar
St. Mark Evangelical Lutheran Church, Shanksville	Technology, Purchase Two Wireless Mics to Better Serve our elderly congregation.
Christ Casebeer Lutheran Church, Somerset	Music/Technology: Purchasing a portable electronic keyboard, amplifier, and accessories to enhance worhsip services. This will help with outdoor services at Casebeer's Grove.
Faith United Lutheran Church, Houtzdale	Technology - To install a 4 ft x fft led Welcome/message sign on the outside handicap/elevator addition. The sign will display changing messages regarding our service times, fellowship activities and community projects.
St. Mark Lutheran Church, Howard	Technology - To grow and sustain online outreach for aging members who are homebound with a streaming setup that wireless and provides a better quality for members and community.
Grace Lutheran Church, Johnstown	Music and Technology Grant for fixing the Organ so that it can be used again for services to share music in the congregation
Zion Lutheran Evangelical Church, Everett	Technology for a large screen monitor to continue presentations with in an already started program
Zion Lutheran Church, Williamsburg	Technology for a TV stand, TV, and Conference Audio/visual system to support participation in Bible Sutdy through Zoom and on site.

# Report of the Allegheny Synod Hunger Team

Part of the Advocacy Team

**JUNE 2026**

The Synod Hunger Team has been assembled with Pastor W. Ted Williams as chair. There are currently 13 volunteers from across the synod. We have not had a meeting to date, but we are planning on a zoom meeting in the future.

The initial focus of the Hunger Team is to identify current food availability in our communities to include non-church related programs.

As we gather this information, we will begin to see where our churches are able to support the different food ministries. We are doing some experimentation in the Nittany Conference in connecting churches with food ministries that need support.

Moving forward, the team will be looking at ways to do hunger mapping in our communities. The USDA has stopped providing food insecurity numbers in our communities and we will look at identifying needs in our communities and connecting resources.

As grocery and fuel prices rise, it will put a strain on families that are already struggling. Hunger mapping will enable us to identify those with food insecurity and help meet their needs.

We continue to look for volunteers for our team across the synod. We hope to have representatives from each conference and county on the team.

Blessings,

Pastor W. Ted Williams



Allegheny Synod  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

# *God is Doing a New Thing!*

**REPORTS OF  
SYNOD CONFERENCES**

# Report of the Bedford Conference

Rev. Kathy Popp

**The St. Clairsville Lutheran Parish** is comprised of **St. Peter's Lutheran Church Osterburg** and **Messiah Lutheran Church Bedford**. They are served by the **Rev. David Wright**. The two congregations enjoy a close relationship and do a number of things jointly such as midweek Lenten services, several joint Worship services throughout the year, and a joint Outdoor Worship and picnic in August.

From September through March, joint Soup Socials are held on a monthly basis with the congregations taking turns hosting them. Offerings received at the Soup Socials are designated for various outreach opportunities in the community. These have included the Bedford County Humane Society, Abby's Angels, the Parish's Outreach Fund, and Lutheran Disaster Response. Both congregations participate in a Secret Santa program through Bedford County Children and Youth. In Spring and Fall, St. Peter's hosts cornhole tournaments. St. Peter's Women's Group coordinates an annual "Indie Sunday" or "Sweats for Vets" where items are collected for the Veterans Home in Hollidaysburg. On a rotating three year basis, the Women's Group also conducts a new and gently worn shoe drive for Funds2Orgs. Beginning at the Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper and through Easter, St. Peter's "sells" various farm animals through the ELCA Good Gifts. Twice each year, St. Peter's Women bake pies for the monthly birthday parties at Pennknoll Village nursing home. They also contribute for Christmas gifts for the residents.

**Zion Lutheran Church in Everett** holds an 11AM service every Sunday led by **Rev. Kathy Popp**. Every second Sunday of the month an Open Door Service is also offered at 9:30AM. This service is somewhat shorter and a combination of traditional and contemporary liturgy and music. Two weekly Bible Studies are offered, an evening one and a morning one. Bible Studies are attended by a mixture of people from a variety of denominations. Members provide a Bingo afternoon for the Personal Care Home in Everett multiple times of the year. Plenty of laughter and warmth are shared by all.

The congregation selected an ELCA church in the urban part of Johnstown where the needs of the local youth in the community are most evident. Five hundred dollars is yearly budgeted to provide church-led activities, materials, and transportation for these youth who are less fortunate. Zion members feel that this has been a privilege to participate as a partner with them in this project.

The congregation is pleased that 4 individuals have been accepted to participate in the Authorized Lay Worship Leadership program under the Go Tell It IN the Mountain Grant.

Two registered nurses in the congregation have recently completed certification in their Faith Community Nursing from West Virginia State University and are actively engaged in creating a non-profit local ministry to bring local churches together and offer these newly honed skills throughout the Everett-Bedford communities with health clinics and presentations.

**Mount Olive Lutheran Church in Buffalo Mills**, services are led by congregation members. Mt. Olive Lutheran Church is located along Dividing Ridge Road, Fairhope in Somerset County. On September 8, 2024, they recognized their 200th year of ministry. Mount Olive is a small country church with attendance averaging 15-25 members per Sunday. Some Sundays the congregation plays bells as part of our worship service, enjoyed by all.

# Report of the Bedford Conference

Rev. Kathy Popp

Other church activities include: monthly Coffee and Conversation, Ice Cream and Dessert Social, a summer picnic at Shawnee State Park, a picnic with dessert auction in our own pavilion, a fall harvest party and a Thanksgiving Fellowship Luncheon with a silent auction. Although a small congregation in numbers, they still see the importance of serving neighbors. Some of the projects they support are: Breezewood Trucker and Traveler Ministry - weekly, ELCA Good Gifts during the Advent season, Somerset Intouch Hospice, S.A.M. Van, flowers for the shut in, donations to ELCA World Hunger, Blanket Sunday and Harvest Home, backpack school kits, money for local families in need, Christmas Coat Project and they support two girls through Children's International. If you are interested, come and worship with us. Sunday School begins at 9AM and Church worship service begins at 10AM. Who knows you might pick a Sunday that they are playing bells and you can join in the fun!

**Christ Lutheran Church of Madley** holds worship service every Sunday at :00 am. Sunday school during the school year begins at 9:45. Worship service is led by **Aaron Browning** and Communion is given on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays of the month. They have done multiple food drives for the Hyndman food bank and have started making monthly donations to local outreach initiatives within the county in addition to just sending it to the synod. They hold Vacation Bible School. Members have prepared and served 2 meals at the Mission homeless shelter in Cumberland MD and in process of planning to do it again. They have recently had a baptism, 2 members confirmed, and 3 new members join their church this year. Aaron Browning is also currently taking classes with the Go Tell It In The Mountains initiative to become a ALWL. They have two members who have been trained in home communion and who have been visiting shut ins and members of the community who do not attend church.

**Mount Zion Lutheran Church in Breezewood** holds worship services every Sunday at 9 a.m. led by **Rev. Judy Simonson**. It is one of only two congregations remaining in the town of Breezewood. The congregation cooperates with the 6nited Methodist Church. They worshipped at Mt. Zion for a time when they were locked out of their building when the congregation split. Mt. Zion's main ministry is done by supporting the Breezewood Trucker or Traveler ministry. In addition to monetary support, a member of the congregation serves on the board of directors. In past years that was done by member **Vera Wilt**. The present vacancy pastor, **Judith Simonson**, is now serving a second term on the board. The congregation also gives financial support to the synod on a regular basis.

Respectfully submitted by Rev. Kathy Popp  
Dean of the Bedford Conference

# Report of the Blair-Huntingdon Conference

Rev. Marty Jo Irvin-Stellabotte

The Blair-Huntingdon Conference consists of 25 churches in Blair and Huntingdon Counties in the Allegheny Synod, with 19 of these functioning as single-point parishes and six as part of two-point parishes. Because a number of these congregations are vacant, the seven full-time clergy in our conference serve in their respective ministries and as vacancy pastors at other churches in our conference.

Our conference is also fortunate to be served by the leadership and support from retired clergy, part-time clergy, and authorized lay worship leaders. With their help, these vacant congregations are still able to worship and receive Holy Communion.

Our current and retired clergy gathered regularly for coffee and conversation during the year as we enjoyed fellowship and sharing updates at area coffee shops throughout our region. We also met most months at different locations for prayer, reflection, support, and sharing news from the synod and from our respective ministries.

A few highlights from this past year include:

-This past year, we bid farewell to the Rev. Dr. Barry Folmar, who retired from full-time ministry at First Lutheran, Altoona. He is currently residing in the region of the Clearfield conference and occasionally supply preaching.

-As of this writing, Bethany Lutheran, Altoona, and First, Altoona, both have begun the call process in seeking their next pastor, with both vacancies posted to the ELCA website.

-Bethany, Altoona, is in conversation with St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Altoona, on shared ministry opportunities. They are excited for how the Holy Spirit is moving!

-Our conference was pleased to once again partner with Allegheny Lutheran Social Ministries for the Halloween party for residents at the Lutheran Home at Hollidaysburg. This is a fun annual event for our youth and the residents to enjoy refreshments, music, games and laughs together.

-Several of our congregations also partnered with the Lutheran Home during the Christmas season for their Angel Tree project. Congregations "adopt" residents who list their holiday gift wishes on an angel tag for individuals to purchase and wrap.

-We are thankful to Trinity Lutheran, Altoona, for their hospitality in hosting the Bishop's Chrism Mass and vow renewal this year for rostered leaders, candidates, and authorized lay worship leaders.

After Synod Assembly, our conference will be gearing up for two major events -- we hope you'll join us! We are once again hosting **Lutheran Day at the Curve on Sunday, August 16**, at PNG Field in Altoona – come enjoy food, fun and fellowship at the ballpark. And The Weekend is back this year -- St. James Lutheran, Huntingdon, will once again host the **junior/senior high youth retreat December 11-13**. Watch for more details on both events at Synod Assembly.

I am grateful to serve as Dean of the conference and am thankful for the support received throughout our conference and synod.

Respectfully submitted,

The Rev. Marty Jo Irvin-Stellabotte, Dean  
Pastor, Geeseytown-Newry Lutheran Parish

# Report of the Clearfield Conference

Rev. Vicki Beilfuss

Sadly, last October, Pastor Jaime Olson died from pancreatic cancer, he is missed greatly by many. His death left First Faith United Cooperative (Philipsburg & Houtzdale) without pastoral leadership. Rev. Bob Way and Authorized Lay Worship Leader Ben Hoffman are sharing worship leadership. Pastor Way is giving guidance to their councils as needed.

St. John, Clearfield has formally called Rev. Mary Jo Bruinooge to a four-year term as their interim pastor.

Holy Trinity, Lanse and Shepherd of the Hills, Karthaus (served by Rev. Vicki Beilfuss), and Grace, Curwensville (served by retired Chaplain the Rev. Ed Roberts) have voted to form a new coalition. Articles of agreement were signed April 29, 2026 for "Abiding Faith Lutheran Coalition." It will be a process for the coming months to put everything in place. Councils have decided to intentionally take time to fellowship together, in order to foster friendships and new working relationships.

Pastor Vicki Beilfuss is planning to retire next year.

We look forward to forging new relationships and working together as we serve our communities in this place.

Respectfully submitted,  
The Rev. Vicki Beilfuss  
Clearfield Conference Dean

# Report of the Johnstown Conference

Rev. Nancy L. Hoover

The Johnstown Conference clergy and vicars meet on the second Thursday of each month to discuss our ministries and to share information about upcoming events. These meetings are times of good conversation among colleagues.

Much ministry has been happening in our Conference, and the following information was reported:

- Many and varied worship opportunities, including regular Sunday worship with Holy Communion, midweek services with Holy Communion and Healing, midweek Lenten Services and Holy Week services, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services with Holy Communion, and Ascension Day services.
- Adult Faith Formation classes, Children and Youth Faith Formation classes, Catechism classes, Confirmation classes, new member classes, Vacation Bible School, and a variety of educational programs for all age groups.
- Multiple Church Council meetings and meetings of various committees working together in the life of the Church.
- Various upgrades and repairs to the buildings.
- Creation of the *Living Waters Lutheran Parish* with sharing between Moxham Lutheran Church and Christ Lutheran Church.
- Monthly Conference meetings.
- Multiple Food Pantries and other sharing projects of clothing and household items, with outreach to neighborhoods.
- Baptisms, Weddings, Confirmations, and Funerals in many congregations.

Our congregations and leaders:

- |   |                               |
|---|-------------------------------|
| • First Lutheran Church                     | Pastor Christy Harford        |
| • Good Shepherd Lutheran Church             | Vicar Penny Koontz            |
| • Grace Lutheran Church                     | Pastor Nancy Hoover           |
| • Living Waters Lutheran Parish             | Pastor James West             |
| • Mount Calvary Lutheran Church             | Vacant                        |
| • St. David Lutheran Church                 | Pastor Mark Fischer (interim) |
| • St. Paul's Mundy's Corner Lutheran Church | Vicar Jennifer Bobolsky       |
| • St. John Summerhill Lutheran Churches     | Vicar Jennifer Bobolsky       |
| • Trinity Lutheran Church, Sidman           | Vicar Claudia Plows           |
| • Zion Lutheran Church                      | Pastor Michael VanDyke        |

In December of 2025, Pastor Rebecca West joined the Saints Triumphant. She was Pastor of Moxham and Christ Lutheran Churches, later *Living Waters Lutheran Parish*, which she helped to form. Her loss was grieved by our whole conference, and we give thanks for her ministry among us.

Thanks be to God for the many blessings the Johnstown Conference churches have shared in the past year. May we continue to serve our members and our communities as we follow the call of Jesus to follow him with the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the peace of God that passes all understanding.

The Rev. Nancy L. Hoover  
Dean, Johnstown Conference

# Report of the Laurel Highlands Conference

Rev. Tyler Graham

In the time since our last Assembly of the Allegheny Synod, the Laurel Highlands Conference continues to rejoice in the installation of The Rev Kevin Shock as Bishop and gives thanks for his leadership and service to the Church. Though we have witnessed to the presence and movement of the Holy Spirit within our lives and this place, we affirm that there has been a marked renewal within the relationships and ministry through Christ in these few months. Being rooted in prayer, worship, and the Sacraments, the people and congregations are not just engaged, but thriving within the grace of God as we are led into a new season of the Church and life together.

Within the Laurel Highlands Conference, the grace and inspiration of God through Christ and the Holy Spirit are revealed as the Church gathers and as she serves to proclaim the Gospel in ministry of word and deed. This ministry is reflected in the routine life of the Lord's people ... the sharing of a cup of coffee or the phone call / visit made to a family member or friend, grocery shopping, the daily tasks of employment and school, the creation of worship bulletins, meetings of Council and committees, the gathering of Sunday worship, and in fellowship during mid-week Bible study, Supper Church, and youth groups.

Ministry is also reflected in the non-routine events and situations of life ... the births and deaths of loved ones, baptisms and confirmations, weddings, ordinations (The Rev Christy Harford), pastoral departures (upcoming retirement of The Rev Ruth Jensen), and community events and partnerships.

A few examples of these forms of ministry include:

- the distribution of clothing at St Mark's Lutheran (Shanksville),
- providing bedding and personal hygiene items to personal care homes through Friedens Lutheran (Friedens),
- providing care bags for those transitioning to nursing and rehabilitation facilities through the *Heart Strings* ministry of Faith Lutheran (Somerset),
- creating space and time for those living with special needs to share in the joy of Christmas gatherings and Easter celebrations (Christ Trinity Parish – Somerset / Boswell),
- partnership with St Francis Caring & Sharing (Benscreek Lutheran, Hollsopple),
- hosting of the Casselman Valley Helpers Food Pantry (Zion Lutheran, Meyersdale),
- and service trips to accompany and support those affected by crisis and disaster (Christ Trinity Parish to West Virginia and Friedens Lutheran to North Carolina and Guatemala).

Worship is the center and foundation of our life together, yet it is through the living out of our baptismal vocation within our specific callings and lives that we come to share in the fullness of life more deeply and encounter the presence of God in ways that may be unusual and unexpected, yet, simple and profound. Experiencing this truth, the people and congregations of the Laurel Highlands Conference and Allegheny Synod are blessings to our communities and the world (and blessed themselves) through the many and various ministries we share. To God be the glory!

As the people and congregations of the Laurel Highlands Conference welcomes The Rev John Barichivich as Dean and strive to live out our faith for the sake of Christ and our neighbors, we look forward to witnessing to the ongoing work of God to bring joy, peace, and new life into us and the world.

With prayers for our Lord's continuing guidance and blessings of the partnership of the Gospel and ministries of the Church, I respectfully submit this report in the Peace of Christ +

The Rev Tyler J Graham, *STS*

Dean, Laurel Highlands Conference Pastor, Living  
Waters Lutheran Parish

# Report of the Nittany Conference

Rev. David Pencek

At the Allegheny Synod's 2025 assembly, Pastor David Pencek (St. Mark Lutheran, Howard) was installed as the new dean of the Nittany Conference. Here are some of the happenings around the Nittany Conference since the 2025 assembly:

- The conference's rostered leaders met each month in person on the second Tuesday of the month.
- Pastor Steve Koths was ordained on December 13. He is serving at Shiloh Lutheran.
- The conference has several lay members who are part of the Authorized Lay Worship Leader program.
- Pastor Ted Williams (Ferguson Township Lutheran Ministry) became chair of the Hunger Team for the Allegheny Synod.
- Deacon Alicia Anderson accepted a position to be the Assistant to the Bishop for Formation. She will continue to also serve as campus minister for Lutheran Campus Ministry at Penn State.
- In March, rostered leaders and lay members from the conference met at the Boalsburg Fire Hall to start conversations about doing ministry together and reenvisioning what it is to be the Church in the Nittany Conference. The meeting was led by Sue Ellen Spotts, Director of Evangelical Mission for the Allegheny Synod. The first meeting was mostly about getting to know one another and hearing about how much we have in common. All who attended had a positive reaction to the meeting and wanted to continue the discussions. As of May 1, a gathering in the summer was being planned.
- On June 14, Pastor Ron Miller of Trinity Lutheran in State College will be retiring. We are so thankful for his service — and excellent cooking and the food he made for whenever Trinity hosted a meeting! We wish Pastor Ron well in his retirement!

Yours in Christ,

Pastor David Pencek

St. Mark Lutheran, Howard



Allegheny Synod  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

*God is Doing a  
New Thing!*

**SECTION FOUR  
ELCA & PARTNER  
MINISTRY REPORTS**

# Report of Allegheny Lutheran Social Ministries (ALSM)



916 Hickory Street  
Hollidaysburg, PA 16648  
814.696.4500 • 800.400.2285  
www.alsm.org

*“To serve people through a ministry  
of love, compassion, and mercy  
in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ.”*

## 2026 Message to the Allegheny Synod, ELCA

Greetings and blessings to each of you from the ALSM TEAM!

ALSM is proud to serve as the only regional faith-based not-for-profit organization offering services that span the generations. ALSM has been responding to the needs of individuals and families for over 78 years.

As we reflect on the past year, we do so with hearts full of gratitude and hope. At ALSM, our mission to serve people through a ministry of love, compassion, and mercy in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ, is rooted in the belief that every life—at every age—has purpose, dignity, and value. In 2026, as we celebrate America’s 250th anniversary, we’re reminded that the strength of our nation has always come from the dedication, resilience, and heart of its people. ALSM is planning celebrations to celebrate our nation, those we serve and our dedicated team members.

Your generosity has enabled ALSM to continue our mission and provide benevolent care to too many we serve. In 2025, ALSM provided \$1.6 million in benevolent care.

At the heart of our mission are the dedicated team members and volunteers who are committed to those we serve. We welcome you to become an ALSM volunteer. If you are interested in learning more, contact Andrea Schurr at [andrea.schurr@alsm.org](mailto:andrea.schurr@alsm.org).

**We are truly blessed to be able to serve the needs of people throughout eight counties in Central PA with the following programs and services:**

- **Senior Communities** (The Lutheran Home at Hollidaysburg and The Oaks at Pleasant Gap)
- **Rental Assistance Senior Housing** (Lutheran Commons at Berlin Pike and Lutheran Commons at Pleasant Gap)
- **Children’s Services** (Head Start, Early Head Start, Family Center, Growing Years Early Learning Centers, Kid Stop before-and-after programs and PRE-K Counts programs)

### **The Lutheran Home at Hollidaysburg**

- Blairmont and Hickory Commons cottages offer residents a stress-free lifestyle. Exterior and interior maintenance is included in the cost, allowing residents the time to enjoy their favorite activities. The cottages are energy efficient and handicapped accessible so that residents may “age in place” in this secure neighborhood setting. These independent living residences attract individuals aged 55 and over. The waiting list for these cottages continues to grow.
- The bright and spacious apartments at Hillcrest were beautifully renovated last year. The updates include new stainless-steel appliances in kitchens, and new flooring and paint. The apartments are located in historic Hollidaysburg, overlooking ALSM’s Hickory Commons campus. Small pets are welcome. Meal plans are available with dining room and to-go options. Monthly housekeeping is provided. One and two-bedroom apartments are available but are filling quickly.

# Report of Allegheny Lutheran Social Ministries (ALSM)

- The Lutheran Home focuses on individuals who require short-term rehab. Many times, people who have suffered a stroke or are recovering from a broken limb or limb replacement surgery may benefit from therapy services in a nursing home setting. In addition, long-term care residents are also accepted.
- Short-term respite stays are available. Respite stays allow family caregivers to take a break from caregiving, tend to their own healthcare needs, go on vacation, or attend a family celebration such as a wedding or graduation.
- For more information or to schedule a tour, contact the administrator at 814-696-4527.

## The Oaks at Pleasant Gap

- The Oaks at Pleasant Gap campus serves older adults by providing personal care services and offers independent living apartments and cottage homes.
- For information or to schedule a tour of The Oaks, contact the administrator at 814.359.2782.
- The personal care neighborhood on campus was renovated with new paint and carpet in beautiful calming blue hues.
- Short-term respite stays are available in personal care. Respite stays allow family caregivers to take a break from caregiving, tend to their own healthcare, go on vacation or attend a family celebration, for example a wedding or graduation.

## Children's Services

- Growing Years Early Learning Center and Kid Stop managers completed educational courses through the Keystone STARS program for continuous quality improvement. The centers have a rating of 3 STAR or higher out of 4 STARS. Those centers include Bedford and Johnstown Kid Stops and Growing Years in Bedford and Johnstown. PRE-K Counts is offered through Growing Years in Bedford and Johnstown.
- Head Start continued partnerships with the Intermediate Units 08 and 11 to provide inclusive preschool programming to children in Bedford and Fulton counties.
- Head Start continued collaborations with the Chestnut Ridge, Northern Bedford, and Central Fulton school districts for preschool programming.
- The Family Center of Bedford County serves families through home visits, monthly playgroups, fathers' groups, and special events.

## Lutheran Commons at Berlin Pike

- For those seniors who meet income guidelines, there is also a 32-unit apartment building, Lutheran Commons at Berlin Pike. For information on Lutheran Commons, call 814.696.4500 or 800.400.2285.

## Lutheran Commons at Pleasant Gap

- For those seniors who meet income guidelines, there is also a 14-unit apartment building, Lutheran Commons at Pleasant Gap. For information on Lutheran Commons, call 814.696.4500 or 800.400.2285.

For more details on ALSM programs, I invite you to contact us by phone at 814-696-4500 or visit our website at [ALSM.org](http://ALSM.org).

Coming Together To Do Great Things!

Christopher Reighard  
President/CEO

# Report of the Breezewood Trucker Traveler Ministry

## NEWS FROM BREEZEWOOD TRUCKER TRAVELER

### THE YEAR IN REVIEW 2025

P.O. Box 286, Breezewood, PA 15533 (814) 977-6964

Greetings and grace to Allegheny Synod ELCA! We appreciate your partnership in this marketplace outreach. The Breezewood Trucker and Traveler Ministry is blessed to record the following:

(2022) (2023) (2024) (2025)

700	990	853	792 trucker contacts.
1014	1269	1499	1527 traveler contacts.
763	810	723	676 employee/staff contacts.
62	60	64	58 spiritual/emotional assistance for truckers.
104	155	159	126 spiritual/emotional assistance for employee/staff.
208	253	221	272 pastoral care calls in the community.
802	650	554	494 food resources provided.
191	159	115	76 nights of lodging provided.
46	33	25	24 persons assisted with gasoline.
35	44	41	25 persons provided with transportation(including bus).
40	75	86	70 camp gear, clothing, showers, gift cards, cash, car repair.
121	106	106	63 traveler's "Zip Lock" care packages given.
140	148	165	160 Bibles or New Testaments provided.
85	8	34	18 families/individuals served through Christmas food drive.
4	7	7	6 local church sponsored holiday hospitality tables.
21	21	28	26 ministry presentations/preaching/special services.
46	47	43	40 Bible studies.
2177	2092	2078	1812 professional staff hours worked.
1774	1639	1685	1603 hours served by volunteers.

#### Professional Chaplaincy: Membership(NIBIC): National Institute of Business & Industrial Chaplains Endorsed Chaplain, United Methodist Church

In 2025 the United States experienced natural disasters(flooding/fires), partisan politics, targeted shootings, and continued inflation amidst signs of a world weary of war and a world anxious to utilize the growing arsenal of technology (eg: Artificial Intelligence) to make the planet a better place to live. There is some progress: children living in poverty is at the lowest level in recent history, the number of girls in school or college is at the highest level in history, and the largest coral reef restoration project was completed in 2025. In the battle of big business in Breezewood, the traveler has been the one to benefit at the pump, as a gas price war has begun to entice locals back into Breezewood to fuel up. The PA Turnpike Commission has announced selection of "lead designer" of the Breezewood Interchange Project to link I-70 to the I-76 turnpike. A transient homeless population continues to live under the radar, yet often in plain sight- camping in a nearby woods, living in a vehicle, or resting/sleeping in a 24 hour business location. Movement, migration, and change are a fact of life. How can we be flexible of foot and mind and heart to respond when the Holy Spirit bids? Scriptures give us wisdom and prophecy from the ages, with Jesus teaching a way to live and serve in fulfillment of all the Law and Prophets. Whether offering hospitality in Breezewood, delivering goods & services over the road, or any other vocation, place or purpose we are blessed because of Christ. The healing presence of God in Christ is freely given – to all. The ministry continues to share Good News through compassion, hope, and fellowship among those we encounter off the highway.

We give thanks for Judy Simonson(Mt Zion, Breezewood) and David Wright(St. Clairsville Parish) for their service on the Management Committee- organizing and enabling a ministry of presence, prayer, counsel, hospitality, and food/lodging/gas/care kits in the Name of Jesus!

**He heals the brokenhearted  
and binds up their wounds. – Psalms 147:3**

# Report of the ELCA Candidacy and Leadership Regions 7 & 8



Candidacy and Leadership  
Regions 7 and 8  
2026 Annual Report to Synod Assembly

*Lord Jesus, you shall be my song as I journey; I'll tell everybody about you wherever I go:  
you alone are our life and our peace and our love. Lord Jesus, you shall be my song as I journey.*






Les Petites Soeurs de Jésus and L'Arche Community. "Lord Jesus, You Shall Be My Song." Evangelical Lutheran Worship, 2006, #808, v. 1

Dear Friends in Christ,  
Grace to you and peace as you meet in synod assembly. I write to you with greetings from my Candidacy Team Colleagues on Churchwide Staff and my home synod of New Jersey.

The ministry of Candidacy is one of accompanying, evaluating, and assessing the readiness of people who discern a call to pastoral or diaconal ministry. Each synod has a committee that does this confidential and prayerful work on behalf of the whole church. The committee includes clergy and lay members, a seminary representative, and synod staff or Bishop. Your synod has a committee that has met in the past year to do this work. You can read more about their ministry elsewhere in this bulletin of reports. I have the honor of working with these committees in the northeast and mid-Atlantic as they listen to candidates, ask questions, and consider how God is calling people to serve.

In 2022, a Candidacy Leadership Development Working Group (CLDWG) was convened to start reenvisioning candidacy ministry in the ELCA. Since my report to you a year ago, the work of this group has changed. After years of surveys, planning, and dreaming, the work has shifted from the CLDWG to churchwide staff to begin the rollout of a launch for a new candidacy process. Of the 65 synods in the ELCA, 10 are "candidacy launch synods" who will be working with applicants and candidates in these next few years under a newly proposed candidacy process. These launch synods will also provide valuable feedback so that a new candidacy process can be finalized for the whole church.

### Main elements of this new candidacy process include:

-  Accompanier with candidates throughout the process
-  Discernment as a more intentional and robust time prior to meeting for an Entrance Interview
-  Annual Reviews with candidates instead of an Endorsement
-  Competency based emphasis for meeting milestones throughout candidacy
-  Continuing to honor both MDiv and Certificate pathways for candidates

Synods that are not "candidacy launch synods" will continue with the current candidacy process until 2028 or 2029 when we anticipate a rollout of the new candidacy process across the ELCA.

While we continue in the ministry of accompanying and assessing potential deacons or pastors in the ELCA, we appreciate your prayers. The church needs leaders who are equipped, called, and prepared to serve the church. If *you* are sensing a call to serve as a deacon or pastor in the ELCA, please contact your synod staff person for candidacy for further conversation.

In Christ,  
The Rev. A. Rebecca Resch (she/her)  
Candidacy and Leadership Manager, Regions 7 & 8  
becky.resch@elca.org

Region 7: ~ New Jersey Synod ~ New England Synod ~ Metropolitan New York Synod ~ Upstate New York Synod ~  
~ Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod ~ Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod ~ Slovak Zion Synod ~

Region 8: ~ Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod ~ Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod ~ Allegheny Synod ~  
~ Lower Susquehanna Synod ~ Upper Susquehanna Synod ~ Delaware-Maryland Synod ~  
~ Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod ~ West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod ~

# Report of the ELCA Church Property Resource Hub

Dear Partners in Ministry,

Did you know there is a new project of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), the [Church Property Resource Hub](#)?

Developed in response to requests from synod and congregational leaders, the Church Property Resource Hub offers support in navigating the opportunities and challenges that buildings and land represent for congregational vitality and the wider mission of the church.



COURSES &  
RESOURCES



SUPPORT  
FORUM



SUCCESS  
STORIES

Find **resources** and expand your knowledge of church property management through templates, guides, explainers; and **courses**. Share advice and get support from colleagues with experience answering property management questions, all on our digital **forum** (forthcoming). Be inspired by **success stories** of faith communities using underutilized space in exciting new ways to fulfill their missions.

## The Church Property Resource Hub is ...

... an online platform that connects congregations and synod leaders to information, organizations and guidance on effective, faith-driven management of church property.

## The Church Property Resource Hub is NOT ...

... an attempt by the churchwide organization to take control of congregations' property. Local churches hold the title and deed to their property; their right to make independent decisions about the use, management and future of their property is codified in the ELCA constitution and churches' individual constitutions.

The Church Property Resource Hub is led by the Rev. Sarah Jones (program director), Deacon Sarah Kretschmann (digital communications manager) and the Rev. Tim Brown (director of congregational stewardship). This team is reaching out across the ELCA, our sibling denominations and the many organizations and businesses that focus on church property, to collect, curate and disseminate information that synods and congregations need.

# Report of the ELCA Church Property Resource Hub

In these first months of the project, the Church Property Resource Hub team has:

- Invited all 65 of the synods across the ELCA to connect with the new initiative
- Published 15+ new FREE church property resources for faith leaders
- Hosted monthly webinars featuring experts in church property
- Sent monthly newsletters to leaders throughout out the ELCA and beyond
- Gathered 12+ stories of congregations' innovative space and land projects
- Launched the new Church Property Resource Hub online Support Forum for resource sharing and support
- Developed eLearning courses for rostered and lay leaders to building their skills in managing church property

We encourage you to access the following resources as you navigate church property opportunities and challenges:

- [Join the Church Property Resource Hub Online Community on LeadNet!](#)
- [Explore resources available to you today.](#)
- [Sign up for e-newsletters to receive invitations to future webinars and the latest resources.](#)

We are grateful to do this work together. Please reach out to [CPRH@elca.org](mailto:CPRH@elca.org) with any questions or to set up an individualized meeting.

Grace and peace,



**The Rev. Sarah Lyn Jones, Deacon Sarah Kretschmann  
and the Rev. Tim Brown**

Church Property Resource Hub Team

[773.380.7443](tel:773.380.7443) | [CPRH@elca.org](mailto:CPRH@elca.org)



# CHURCH PROPERTY RESOURCE HUB

Resourcing Faith-driven Church Property Stewardship

A project of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), the **Church Property Resource Hub** was built in response to requests from synod and local church leaders, to support them in navigating the challenges and opportunities that buildings and land represent for both congregational vitality and the wider mission of the church.



## COURSES & RESOURCES

Find **resources** and expand your knowledge of church property management through templates, guides, explainers and **courses**.



## SUPPORT FORUM

Share advice and get support from colleagues with experience answering property management questions, all on our digital **forum** (forthcoming).



## SUCCESS STORIES

Be inspired by **success stories** of faith communities using underutilized space in exciting new ways to fulfill their mission.

## Why Is the Church Property Resource Hub Being Developed?

The Church Property Resource Hub (CPRH) was created **in response to questions and needs voiced by synods and congregations** regarding the use, management and support of church-held property. Our congregations find themselves with buildings and land that no longer fit their need for programming or their capacity to manage them. This has spurred urgent conversations at local and synod levels about the future of church property. There was no centralized hub collecting the information and wisdom congregations need to **faithfully steward buildings and land** for both congregational vitality and mission impact. The ELCA churchwide organization is addressing this need by equipping congregation and synod leaders with the expertise that will empower congregations to continue to steward their buildings and land as a witness to the gospel through the Church Property Resource Hub.

Sign up for **“Church Property Resource Hub Newsletter”** for the latest news and resources.



## The Church Property Resource Hub is ...

... an online platform that connects congregations and synod leaders to information, organizations and guidance on effective, faith-driven management of church property. It includes how-to lessons for the many aspects of property stewardship, stories of congregations that have found creative solutions to property challenges, and a network of professionals who can answer questions and partner with congregations and synods.

The resource hub is **built for synod and local church leaders, to help them navigate the challenges and opportunities that buildings and land represent**. The hub offers advice and experience for churches in a variety of contexts across the United States, from urban centers to suburban areas to rural and small-town communities. The Church Property Resource Hub is a growing initiative that will be completed by 2028, though the first, most basic version was launched in August 2025.

## The Church Property Resource Hub is NOT ...

... an attempt by the churchwide organization to take control of congregations' property. Local churches hold the title and deed to their property; their right to make independent decisions about the use, management and future of their property is codified in the ELCA constitution and churches' individual constitutions.

... an attempt by the churchwide organization to bypass synods' relationships with their congregations. The resource hub is being built **in collaboration with synod leaders** and equips them to **assist and guide congregations** that approach the synod with ideas, questions or concerns about property stewardship.

## Who leads the Church Property Resource Hub?

The Church Property Resource Hub is led by the **Rev. Sarah Jones** (program director), **Deacon Sarah Kretschmann** (digital communications manager) and the **Rev. Tim Brown** (director of congregational stewardship). This team is reaching out across the ELCA, our sibling denominations and the many organizations and businesses that focus on church property, to collect, curate and disseminate information that synods and congregations need. Please reach out with your questions!



## Report of the ELCA Federal Credit Union

### Faithful financial services for ELCA members and ministries



The ELCA Federal Credit Union (ELCA FCU) provides a full range of financial products and services to members, congregations and ministries of the ELCA. **As the first of the ELCA's financial ministries to offer loans to individuals**, the Credit Union offers savings and checking accounts, CDs, loans and lines of credit, credit cards, home mortgage loans for purchases or refinances, as well as home equity loans and lines of credit.

**The ELCA FCU serves ministries** through federally insured deposit accounts, a flexible corporate credit card program, auto loans and unsecured ministry loans up to \$100,000 to support smaller projects such as building repairs and purchases. In addition, the Workplace Banking program allows ministry organizations and congregations to offer ELCA FCU Credit Union products and services, along with other exclusive perks, to their employees.

A new cohort joined the ELCA's Resourceful Servants program, **designed to improve financial wellness and assist rostered leaders in building emergency savings funds**. Through this matching program, ELCA rostered leaders make ongoing deposits to their Credit Union emergency savings accounts. The Mission Investment Fund of the ELCA matches those deposits up to an established amount. Together, more **than 700 rostered ministers** have been served, collectively depositing more than \$1 million in emergency savings.

A **strong online presence** means members have access to funds with an ELCA Federal Credit Union Mastercard Debit Card at more than 30,000 surcharge-free ATMs. The ELCA FCU also offers account-to-account (A2A) transfers, person-to-person (P2P) payments (similar to Venmo and Zelle), remote deposit, bill pay and more.

#### Why choose the ELCA Federal Credit Union?

- **The ELCA Federal Credit Union supports the ELCA's mission of good stewardship.** We provide full services to all ELCA members, congregations and related ministries.
- **As a not-for-profit financial cooperative chartered to serve our church, we offer socially responsible banking solutions often priced more competitively** than traditional banks. We have demonstrated success in providing savings to our members.
- **With the church as our sponsor, we operate in ways that are consistent with the church's values.**

**Membership is open to every ELCA member, synod, congregation and ministry—and their employees.**

**For more information about the products and services of the ELCA Federal Credit Union, please visit our website, [elcafcu.org](http://elcafcu.org) or call us toll-free at 877-715-1111.**

Updates from the ELCA Foundation

# Synod Assemblies 2026



We are the ELCA Foundation, a financial ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. We walk alongside faithful people and organizations – helping them turn generosity into legacy, and legacy into ministry.

We believe generosity is more than a financial act; it is a testimony of faith, gratitude and hope. With \$1.5 billion in donor-designated gifts and invested assets entrusted to our care, we partner with individuals and organizations to thoughtfully steward these resources and maximize their impact.

We serve as a bridge between individual generosity and the shared mission of the ELCA – from congregations and synods to seminaries, outdoor ministries, and churchwide ministries such as ELCA World Hunger and Lutheran Disaster Response. Every planned gift we steward is an investment in the church's life – now and into the future.

## What we do

We offer guidance that is both spiritually grounded and financially sound, ensuring every gift reflects the heart of the giver and the needs of the church.

- **Gift Planning Services:** Our regional gift planners accompany individuals and families through faithful, personalized planning – helping them create charitable legacies through bequests, trusts, charitable gift annuities, real estate, retirement assets and more.
- **Ministry Growth Fund:** A socially responsible investment option that supports endowments and ministries across the ELCA, balancing fiduciary excellence with faithful stewardship.
- **Resources and Tools:** From our online Planning Library and free Personal Estate Planning Kit to our partnership with Giving Docs, we provide easy, trustworthy ways to start planning today.
- **Ministry Partnership:** We help ELCA ministry leaders grow a culture of generosity without adding more to their workload, offering training, templates and direct support to strengthen local ministry.



### Our vision

is to support and sustain ELCA ministries by enhancing gifting capacity and stewarding resources.

### Our mission

is to be a thriving ministry that develops a culture of intentional generosity and financial stewardship to expand the work of the ELCA.

Updates from the ELCA Foundation

# Synod Assemblies 2026



## 2025 At a Glance ✨

In 2025, the ELCA Foundation's gift planning network walked alongside **190 donors/families** in developing faith-focused gift plans that reflect their passion and purpose.

**\$79.9M**

in future planned-gift commitments

**\$6.9M**

in currently funded gifts

**\$34.4M**

in direct support to individual congregations

**\$105.4M**

in existing gifts to ministry stewarded

In total, the network generated **\$205.4 million** in gifts and investment assets, which includes **\$118.5 million** in new assets invested in the Ministry Growth Fund.

## Let's continue the conversation

The ELCA Foundation has gift planning tools for every situation and professional staff throughout the U.S. ready to walk with you every step of the way. All of our gift planning services are made available to individuals and congregations without obligation. Contact your gift planner to get started:

**Lisa Marie Higginbotham, CFRE**

Lisa.Higginbotham@elca.org

805-910-5048

# Report of the ELCA Mission Investment Fund



Mission Investment Fund

## The Mission Investment Fund: Helping ELCA congregations bring ministry to life



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 for more than 150 years. Through times of growth and uncertainty alike, MIF has remained committed to strengthening ELCA ministries and communities — delivering customer-first support backed by flexible financing solutions.

In 2025, MIF continued to support ministry growth across the ELCA. Your investments helped expand worship spaces, rebuild congregations after fires and natural disasters, provide spaces for people to age with dignity, start green projects and support accessibility remodeling for community spaces. Each project strengthens ELCA ministries, ensuring that they stay vibrant, inclusive and fully prepared to support the communities they serve.

### By the numbers:

- **Total Loans Outstanding:** \$614,967,000
- **Total Assets:** \$779,189,000
- **Total Investment Obligations:** \$551,452,000
- **Net Assets & Capital Ratio:** 27.4%

### What makes MIF unique?

- **Proven stability:** With more than 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.

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MIF continues to enhance our tools and financial services to better support ELCA ministries. And even as we look ahead with fresh vision and innovation, our foundation remains the same: enduring trust, time-tested stability and commitment woven through generations. In every chapter, we journey with ELCA members and ministries, united in faith — a steadfast partner supporting God’s work in the world.

### *MIF at work in the Allegheny Synod (as of December 31, 2025):*

- \$3,058,937 in Mission Investment Fund investment obligations.

**For more information about MIF capabilities, please visit our website, [mif.elca.org](http://mif.elca.org) or contact The Rev. Kent Peterson, Regional Manager: 276-698-7970 [kent.peterson@elca.org](mailto:kent.peterson@elca.org)**

# Report of the ELCA Presiding Bishop

Rev. Yehiel Curry



Evangelical  
Lutheran Church  
in America

*“I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).*

March 23, 2026

Dear siblings in Christ,

As you gather for your synod assembly, I want to express my gratitude for what you are doing — and have been doing — for this church, *our* church.

In the months since I was installed as presiding bishop, I have been focused on connection. Some of you have heard me talk about what it means to be a connected church. This vision of connectedness grows directly out of one of the three priorities we, as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, have named for this season of our life together.

When we lifted up these priorities, we committed ourselves to them not as abstract ideas but as guiding commitments for how we live and serve as church. As I reflected on them, the third priority stood out with particular clarity: to be a connected, sustainable church, raising the bar together.

That priority has been shaping my thinking and my leadership. It asks not just what we do but how we do it — together, across congregations, synods and the churchwide organization. Connectedness is not a program or a slogan; it is a way of being church that recognizes our shared calling and our shared responsibility. This is not my church. It is yours. It is ours, together. The ministries you carry out in your congregations and synods are not just yours — they are ours together.

Over the next several years, you will hear this priority expressed with greater focus and clarity. In 2026, our emphasis is on connection — strengthening relationships, listening deeply and recognizing how much we depend on one another.

In 2027, you will begin to hear me speak more intentionally about sustainability — how we steward our people, our resources and our structures so that our witness remains strong for generations to come. By 2028, connection and sustainability will come together in a shared language of togetherness, as we more fully live into who God is calling us to be as church.

So, when you hear language about being together, it is about living out the ELCA’s vision of a world experiencing the difference God’s grace and love in Christ make for all people and creation. It matters deeply to me that we know who we are, moving forward as one body, trusting God and one another.

I believe this is how connection is built — not by standing alone but by being church together.

With gratitude and hope,

The Rev. Yehiel Curry  
Presiding Bishop  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

# Report of Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Pennsylvania (LAMPa)



## Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Pennsylvania (LAMPa)

*Church Together in Pennsylvania for the sake of the world God loves*

In response to God’s love in Jesus Christ, we advocate for wise and just public policies in Pennsylvania that promote the common good. Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Pennsylvania is a shared ministry of seven Pennsylvania synods and ELCA Service and Justice. Through LAMPa, Lutherans called to be part of God’s healing and reconciling mission in the world are supported to voice their faith convictions in the public square with and on behalf of our most vulnerable neighbors and the world we share, while seeking to create a more just Commonwealth.

In 2025, LAMPa marked 46 years of ministry with gratitude for a legacy of community building and justice seeking. We worked together on state legislation addressing hunger and poverty, housing insecurity, health care, climate change, immigration and discrimination. We equipped people of faith to stand against hate, to bridge divides and work for peace. We trained and organized to prevent political violence and protect vulnerable neighbors – helping disciples act at the local, state and federal levels. We helped congregations and leaders stand together against attempted intimidation by white supremacist groups and threats to immigrant communities.

We published a study guide to accompany the newly approved ELCA social statement on Faith and Civic Life – now offered as an official resource for the whole ELCA.

As 2026 began, we partnered with United Lutheran Seminary to host our second program based on lessons from Dietrich Bonhoeffer – this time in companionship with the life and writings of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Our annual day in the Capitol saw another year of record attendance with more congregations sending teams to learn and return to inspire others and support one another as they act on behalf of neighbors near and far.

As marginalized communities are under attack and safeguards for human rights, religious liberty and human and environmental health are increasingly threatened, LAMPa is striving to connect and equip growing numbers of disciples seeking to respond faithfully in their communities and with state and federal policymakers.

I give thanks to God for you and for the support of Allegheny Synod Policy Council representatives Terry Koch and the Rev. Rebecca Horn.

With deep gratitude for all of the ways in which you support LAMPa’s ministry,

Tracey DePasquale  
LAMPa Director

# Report of Lutheran Campus Ministry at Penn State / Lutheran Student Community



*Every fall, as new students move into their residence halls for the first time and returning students make their way back to campus from summer internships, study abroad, and other time away, Lutheran Campus Ministry remembers clearly that God is always doing a new thing. A new academic year means starting over; rebuilding community with a mix of new and returning people, each at a different place on their college journey and their faith journey. God is truly the author of new beginnings for our student community.*

*On the first Thursday of classes this fall, Brady (first-year student majoring in microbiology) came to worship and dinner with Lutheran Campus Ministry. He was looking for an inclusive community, where everyone is welcome. It was even better than he expected. "I've only been coming for a little bit, but it's a close-knit group of people you can rely on. It feels authentic. Everyone is open and comfortable sharing. It feels like a family setting, without hierarchy and you don't find that much around campus."*

Student life is as complicated and challenging as any other chapter in life. Students face family concerns, academic demands, social and friendship challenges, and uncertainty about finances and their future. Within Lutheran Campus Ministry, students gather with others for worship, discussion, service, or meals together and there they encounter authentic community. Students are reminded that they are loved and embraced by God. In community, students discern the ways God will work through them in their careers and their whole lives to be part of bringing the Good News to the world around them.

**YOUR presence on campus.** We are at Penn State on behalf of the synod and the whole church. We walk with students through their years at the university, providing opportunities for them to encounter God and grow as people of faith, make connections with other Christians, and find opportunities to serve their neighbor. Lutheran Campus Ministry provides ongoing reminders of God's love and action in the world that touches individual students and the wider campus community as well.

**Worshipping Community** – Students gather weekly for worship on campus with Lutheran Campus Ministry at the interfaith Pasquerilla Spiritual Center. In the midst of their demanding and busy schedules, students set aside time for worship together, using the ancient rite of evening prayer. They sing, pray, share scripture and reflections; encountering God in the middle of the campus. On Sunday mornings, Deacon Alicia Anderson, Campus Minister, welcomes students at Grace Lutheran Church near campus, helping them know they are welcome and find connections within the multi-generational worshipping community.

**Community of Students** – Weekly group meals through LCM help students find authentic community within our campus ministry. As students spend time together over Thursday dinner, they talk about their week, sharing struggles as well as successes. Students also connect with each other and build friendships at volunteer events, through discussions, and in worship. They truly share the journey together, supporting and caring for each other in the highs and lows of university life and the years that follow. As students share challenges, laugh together, pray for each other, and learn, they embody the presence of God with and for one another.

# Report of Lutheran Campus Ministry at Penn State / Lutheran Student Community

**Service and Learning** – Students are eager to share their time and abilities to help others. Through service both on campus and off campus, they find the joy of helping while learning more about the complexities of need, generosity, and justice. They also learn about themselves while serving as God’s hands in the local community and wider world.

**Growing in Faith and Knowledge** – Students seek safe places to ask questions about life and faith, as well as places where they can share their thoughts and develop new understandings. Students explore questions and delve into the countless ways faith and daily life intersect through informal conversations, discussions, events, campus-wide speakers, and one-on-one conversations with our campus minister. They discern how God is calling them to serve the needs of the world through the work they are preparing for, as well as the activities, interests, and relationships in their lives.

**Congregational Partnerships** – Grace Lutheran Church continues as an important partner in ministry in State College. Students worship there on Sundays and are welcome to participate in the life of the congregation. Students are a vital part of vocal and instrumental music at Grace this year and help with anti-hunger food distributions in partnership with the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank. Throughout the region, LCM is striving to build more and deeper connections with congregations. The wide network of congregations in central Pennsylvania and Maryland that provides financial support helps offset cuts in synodical and churchwide funding. We are deeply grateful for the generous support from congregations, alumni, and friends of the ministry.

**Campus Partnerships** – Lutheran Campus Ministry and Lutheran Student Community maintain important connections with a variety of groups on campus. Our office in Pasquerilla Spiritual Center provides regular opportunities to work with the Center for Spiritual and Ethical Development in supporting students who are seeking pastoral care, and to partner on events and projects, including Interfaith Literacy Chats and hosting Labyrinth reflections during Advent and Lent. Opportunities to volunteer at the Penn State Arboretum allow students to serve the community while enjoying the beauty of God’s creation. We continue to explore ways to deepen partnerships with the Gender Equity Center and the Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity within Penn State Student Affairs.

Ecumenical and interfaith partnerships are valuable in our campus setting. We participate in a Ramadan Iftar with the Muslim community at Pasquerilla Spiritual Center, and continue to connect with the Hillel Jewish community at Penn State through the challenges of violence in the Middle East, knowing there are no easy answers to the complicated issues there. On Ash Wednesday, Campus Minister Alicia Anderson offers *Ashes to Go* for students between classes on the plaza outside Palmer Art Museum alongside the United Methodist campus minister. This year’s Alternative Spring Break to North Carolina for hurricane relief is a partnership with the United Methodist Campus Ministry and hosted by Luther Rock Camp and LDR in North Carolina. Through the Penn State Powwow, we experience Native American spiritual practice and learn more about native communities.

**Online Presence** – Lutheran Campus Ministry engages and informs people online through weekly listserv messages, Instagram and Facebook posts, and our website. Reflection and prayer resources, updates on events and opportunities, and ways to request prayers or one-on-one conversation are available for students, alumni, parents and supporters. This is our sixth year offering a Lenten program through social media, alongside year-round weekly reflections, prayers, and other posts. Through social media, we inform, offer resources for spiritual growth, and tell the story of how Lutheran Campus Ministry impacts students.

# Report of Lutheran Campus Ministry at Penn State / Lutheran Student Community

**Fundraising Efforts** – As Lutheran Campus Ministry continues adapting to decreased synodical and churchwide support, congregational gifts and individual donations are vitally important. Through social media for *LCM IMPACT*, *Campus Ministry Madness*, and *Giving Tuesday* campaigns have helped increase our ministry's visibility and provide opportunities to tell the story of Lutheran Campus Ministry. Your financial contributions, volunteer time, leadership skills, student referrals, regular prayers, and other forms of support help us continue to build our faith community and bring the good news of Jesus on campus.

**We are grateful** – We truly are grateful that the Allegheny Synod sees the vital need for Lutheran Campus Ministry at Penn State and our work on campus. Providing a community that is centered on the Gospel of Jesus where questions are welcome, diversity is celebrated, and God's love is truly lived, is both life-giving and life-altering. Reaching out to young adults to support and foster their faith is incredibly important for the life of the church.

We invite your continued prayers for campus ministry and for students as they face the unique challenges of university life and growing into adulthood. Please pray especially for those who will graduate this year and those who will arrive on campus for their first year this fall.

Thank you for the important partnership we share in this ministry.

Peace,  
Alicia Anderson, Campus Minister  
Minister of Word and Service (ELCA Deacon)

Website: [lutheranpennstate.org](http://lutheranpennstate.org)  
Social Media on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#): @lutheranpennstate

**Weekly listserv for students at Penn State:** [Sign Up Here](#)  
**Listserv messages for Friends of Lutheran Campus Ministry:** [Sign Up Here](#)

**Visit the LuMin Network website** to find information about campus ministry at other colleges and universities and connect students from your congregation: [luminelca.org/ministries/](http://luminelca.org/ministries/).

*Lutheran Campus Ministry at Penn State is the ELCA's presence on the Penn State campus, supported through grants from the Allegheny Synod, Lower Susquehanna Synod, Upper Susquehanna Synod, ELCA Churchwide, as well as individuals and congregations who are committed to fostering spiritual growth of students on campus, laying the groundwork for their lives as followers of Jesus in college and after graduation.*

# Report of the Lutheran Historical Society of the Mid-Atlantic

## Lutheran Historical Society of the Mid-Atlantic

*Preserving—and sharing—our Lutheran story*

### What we do

The Lutheran Historical Society of the Mid-Atlantic (LHSMA) helps people find, protect, and tell Lutheran stories. Our mission is simple: **preserve, document, and spark interest** in our rich Lutheran traditions across the Mid-Atlantic region. We connect congregations and researchers with the right repositories, offer programs, and lift up new voices in church history.

### Why this matters

Our congregations have deep roots worth celebrating and learning from. Good records help today's ministry—**confirm anniversary dates, ground mission plans, and share our witness with the next generation.** LHSMA makes it easier for Allegheny Synod's members, both lay and ordained, to start, organize, and share their work in church history.

### What we offer

- **Practical research help:** We point you to the right archives and collections so your time is well spent.
- **Workshops and events:** learn how to preserve and share your congregation's story.
- **The Abdel Ross Wentz Prize:** \$2,500 awarded for outstanding work in American Lutheran history, including an **Amateur Historian** category.

### How you can take part:

- **Congregations:** Tell us what you need—anniversary plans, records questions, or how to begin preserving today.
- **Amateur historians & students:** Submit your research for the Wentz Prize.
- **Everyone:** Follow us on Facebook, join as a member, and invite others to explore our shared story of faith.

### Find us online:

[Website: lutheranhistoricalsociety.com](http://lutheranhistoricalsociety.com) (programs, membership, Wentz Prize)

[Facebook: Lutheran Historical Society of the Mid-Atlantic](https://www.facebook.com/LutheranHistoricalSocietyoftheMidAtlantic) (updates and events)

Questions during Assembly? Speak with the Rev. Paul Tomkiel or message us on Facebook. Let's make sure today's ministry builds on yesterday's faithful witness—and that we hand the story on well into tomorrow.

## Your Calling + Our Benefits

### Portico Benefit Services' Report to 2026 Synod Assemblies

Your calling is to serve. Ours is to support you. As the ELCA's benefit ministry, Portico provides benefits that nurture holistic health, so you can live out your calling and serve with confidence and grace. Here's a visual recap of what our community of more than 52,000 plan members experienced in 2025.

**52K**  
Members  
Served by  
Portico



**2,829**

**Text/Virtual Health Care Visits**  
to 98point6®, with an estimated cost savings of \$263 per visit.



**205**  
Births &  
Adoptions

**11th**

**Consecutive Year**  
of our Customer Care Center being named a Center of Excellence by Benchmark Portal.



**619**  
Changes  
of Call\*

**1,702**

**Sword Health Enrollments**  
and nearly 42K total sessions in their Thrive, Move, and Bloom digital physical therapy and mobility programs.

**\$157K**  
**Debt Paid Off**  
by members via LSS of Minnesota Financial Counseling, with over \$2.6M paid off since 2008.

**16%**

**of Member Income**  
saved for retirement, on average, by members sponsored in the Traditional Benefits Program, thanks to employer and member contributions.\*

**\$232M**

**Made in Annuity Payments**  
and 533 retirements.

**4,214**

**Members Worked with a Portico Financial Planner,**  
with a cumulative 95.5% satisfaction rate.\*



**32**  
Beginning  
Disability Benefits

**\$232M**  
**Made in Annuity Payments**  
and 533 retirements.



**Nearly 10% of Our 10K ELCA Medicare-Primary Plan Members**  
participated in the SilverSneakers fitness program.\*

**1,927**  
**Members Made Roth After-tax Contributions**  
to their retirement plans.

We design our benefits to align with the needs of the church, pooling resources through a community benefits plan to deliver stable, sustainable support that enhances everyday life and brings value to those who serve. Follow us on social media @PorticoBenefits.

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



# Report of St. Olaf College



## Report to the ELCA Synod Assemblies - April 2026

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 100 countries. 21% are first-generation college students, 22% identify as domestic students of color, 11% are international students, and 22% 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 study abroad affordability commitment to be launched in 2027, thanks to the generosity of Louis and Mary Kay Smith](#). Approximately half of our students indicate that they are affiliated with a Christian denomination, with 15% 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 2025 graduates, 97% 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 94% of our recent graduates were working, pursuing further education, or engaged in full-time military or other service programs within seven months of graduation.

Under the leadership of president Dr. Susan Rundell Singer, the college is now implementing a six-year strategic plan, focused on elevating vocation, expanding innovation, and sustaining community. Leading the implementation of the strategic plan are three implementation teams and the President's Leadership Team, including our new vice president for academic affairs and provost Dr. Tarshia Stanley and chief of staff Kathryn Lohre '99. Dr. Stanley comes to St. Olaf from Wagner College on Staten Island where she served as Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. Ms. Lohre comes to St. Olaf after serving for fifteen years in the Presiding Bishop's Office as the Executive for Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations and Theological Discernment.

St. Olaf continues to offer [daily Chapel services and Sunday worship](#) throughout the academic year, led by College Pastor, the Rev. Dr. Matthew Marohl, 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. This year, St. Olaf was ranked #4 on Niche's [Best Christian Colleges in America](#) list, recognizing St. Olaf as an academically strong, faith-based institution.

In the fall of 2025, the College named [Dr. Kiara Jorgenson, Associate Professor of Religion and Environmental Studies, as the Martin E. Marty Chair in Religion and the Academy](#). The [Marty Chair](#) fosters ongoing dialogue that explores the intersection between significant religious and cultural issues and St. Olaf's role as a liberal arts college of the church.

The [Lutheran Center for Faith, Values, and Community](#) continues to advance a compelling vision for Lutheranism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, foster interreligious engagement, nurture vocational discernment, and provide thought leadership on campus and in the community. 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 has recently completed or is nearing completion on two projects

# Report of St. Olaf College

made possible by grants from the [Network for Vocation in Undergraduate Education](#). The Life on Purpose project infused vocational exploration in St. Olaf students' experiences by supporting shifts in advising, classroom projects, and faculty and staff capacity building around vocation. The Honest Storytelling project engaged twenty staff and faculty and one student to research and tell untold and undertold stories from the college's first 150 years, and will result in the publication of a volume in honor of the college's sesquicentennial due out through Fortress Press this fall.

In 2025, grants from [Lilly Endowment Inc.](#) continued to support two complementary initiatives—the [Nourishing Vocation Project](#) and the [Nourishing Vocation with Children Project](#)—advancing congregational leadership, vocational discernment, and intergenerational, arts-enriched worship. The Nourishing Vocation Project, part of the Thriving Congregations Initiative, strengthened congregations and ecclesiastical partners by fostering peer leadership, deepening vocational discernment, and expanding practical ministry tools. Pastoral coaching pilots and adaptable resources enhanced leaders' capacity for contextually grounded discernment, while integration with broader institutional and interfaith efforts extended the initiative's reach and sustainability.

The Nourishing Vocation with Children Project advanced child-attentive, arts-enriched worship through the Nurturing Children through Worship and Prayer Initiative. Resources were refined and expanded, engaging congregations across multiple states and denominational contexts. New liturgies and participatory art experiences nurtured children's faith while strengthening congregational life.

We look forward to an exciting summer 2026 at St. Olaf as we welcome back [Lutheran Summer Music](#) to campus for the first time since 1994 and the national conference of the [Association of Lutheran Church Musicians](#).

We invite lay, professional, and rostered church leaders to the [2026 Conference on Worship, Theology, and the Arts](#), July 20–22, 2026, at St. Olaf College, under the theme “Nourishing Vocation: Every Time + Every Age + Every Place.” 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.

# 2025 ANNUAL REPORT

## HIGHLIGHTS Seafarers International House

### MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: A Homecoming for Prisoners of Hope

*Return to your fortress, you prisoners of hope; even now I announce that I will restore twice as much to you.*

Zechariah 9:12

Dear friends of Seafarers International House (SIH):

In February 2024, a report released by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services found that refugees and asylees have generated tens of billions of dollars more in local, state, and federal tax revenues over the last 15 years than they have cost in direct government services — ultimately representing a net fiscal gain at all levels of government. (See text box for details.)\*

And yet, throughout 2025 and especially today, many refugees and asylum seekers are being threatened with deportation and imprisonment. As SIH board member Ralie Deffenbaugh reminds us, in September 2025, the Council of Churches in Namibia convened an event titled “we are prisoners of hope,” which drew parallels between Namibia’s historical struggle for liberation and the current plight of refugees and asylum seekers. The phrase is based on Zechariah 9:12 and has historically been used by leaders like Bishop Zephania Kameeta and Archbishop Desmond Tutu. What a powerful connotation.

Here at SIH, we have been charting a course toward a grand Homecoming — a return to a new home through the purchase of a property in downtown Manhattan. Just a stone’s throw from our original site in 1873, this new space will become a true home away from

home for asylum seekers and seafarers, many of whom are “prisoners of hope.” Within these walls, our guests will find safety, welcome, and the assurance that they have reached a secure harbor.

During 2026, we will begin renovating this right-sized mission building, creating 16 guest rooms and community space to accommodate both small asylum-seeking families and individuals, as well as visiting seafarers. With these improvements underway, we are looking ahead to opening our doors in early 2027, ready to offer refuge and rest to all who arrive.

Parallel, we will be launching a comprehensive campaign to pay for the renovations, reduce the burden of a loan for the new building, and strengthen our services to seafarers and asylum seekers. We will keep you posted in the months to come.

In April 2025, we had a most successful Setting the Course reception thanks to the generosity of our honorees Susan Winfree, Willie Barrere, and notably Robert Sappio, - and their friends. The boost in event support enabled us to expand our services through a partnership with the Houston International Seafarers Center with our port chaplain Pastor Tammy Sharp in that busy port in the Lone Star State.

Thus, we continued a robust port mission in now six ports with nine port chaplains and ship visitors, and a fleet of six vans that we use to visit ships and to transport seafarers. In the summer and fall, volunteers from the Propeller Club, congregations, board members,

#### 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, Houston, New Haven, and New York & New Jersey, and in New York City.**

and individuals helped us assemble satchels. These efforts paid off with 3,405 Christmas-at-Sea satchels delivered to seafarers connecting donors with seafaring “prisoners of hope” who experienced the joy of Christmas.

In 2025, we served 19,519 people including 19 asylum seekers we welcomed providing them with shelter, food, and social work assistance; a far cry from the 33 and 49 in 2024 and 2023 respectively because asylum seekers are fearful of coming out of the shadows. Obviously, the curtailment on asylum seekers has had its effect.

With these positive 2025 highlights in mind, perhaps we are all “prisoners of hope” in that as we are bound together in despair, we are also bound together in hope that will not leave us imprisoned.

*“For I know the plans I have for you” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”*

Jeremiah 29:11

Peace,



*Marsh Luther Drage*  
Pastor and Executive Director

\* From 2005 to 2019, refugees and asylees paid a total of \$123.8 billion more in taxes than they cost in government services, for a net fiscal gain of \$31.5 billion to the federal government and \$92.3 billion to state and local governments combined. Refugees and asylees paid an estimated \$363 billion to the federal government through payroll, income, and excise taxes, and \$218 billion to state and local governments through income, sales, and property taxes. Even when factoring in their spouses and children under 18, many of whom are U.S. citizens, refugees and asylees still provided a net fiscal gain, costing \$723.4 billion in government services yet paying \$739.4 billion in tax revenue, for a net gain of \$16 billion.

# 2025 Program Impact

**19,519** immigrants and seafarers directly benefited from SIH's services (up from 19,066)

**2,351** lodging nights (up from 2,225) provided to 139 seafarers in Manhattan.

**14,078** seafarers were visited and counseled (up from 13,556) on 1,347 vessels, receiving essentials they requested.

**1,878** seafarers were transported to a mall or medical facilities.

**3,405** seafarers, regardless of faith, received Christmas-at-Sea satchels filled with warm clothing and holiday greetings to spread joy beyond borders and oceans.

**19** asylum seekers received free lodging for a total of 1,328 nights. They hailed from Angola, Cameroon, Chile, Cuba (3), Haiti (5), Nigeria, Peru, Ukraine, and Venezuela (5). See map below.



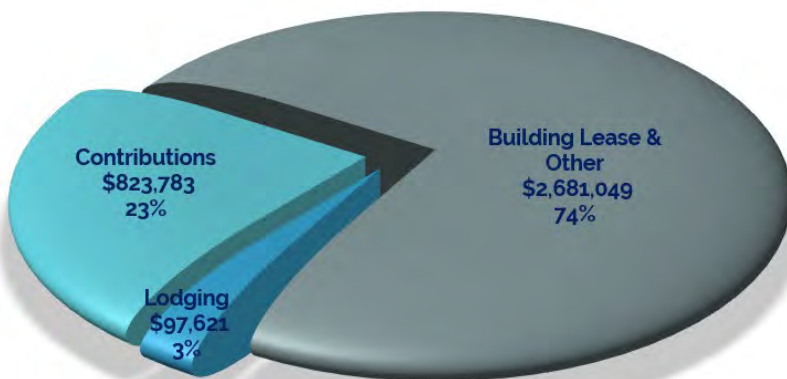
## 2025 FINANCIAL REPORT

In accordance with our 2024 - 2028 strategic plan, operating gains continued to help build reserves for the purchase of the new right-sized mission headquarters (\$1M). These gains also allow for capital repairs on the guesthouse (\$324,806), which is leased to Breaking Ground, a NYC-based non-profit which provides transitional housing to the community.

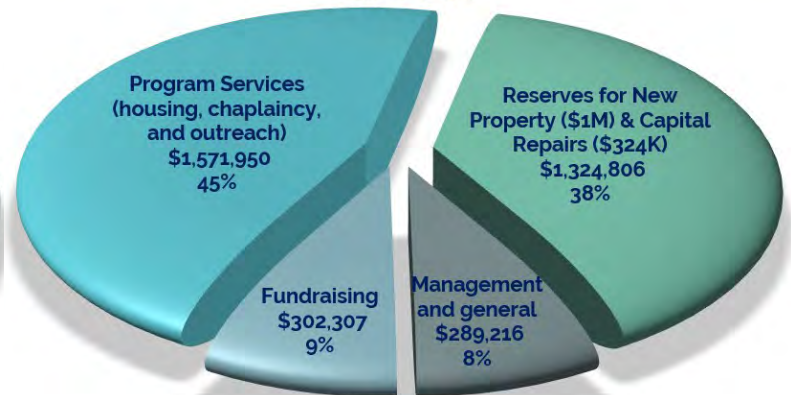
Lease revenue needs to be augmented by donations to support our services and the purchase and renovation of our new home starting in 2026. Program services and reserves accounted for 83% of expenses with only 17% spent on management and fundraising. These figures reflect unaudited revenue and expenses and are subject to change.

To request the audited 2025 financial statements please send an email to [henryk@sihnyc.org](mailto:henryk@sihnyc.org).

**Operating Revenue 2025 (pre-audit)**  
**\$3,602,453**



**Operating Expenses & Reserves for New Property 2025 (pre-audit)**  
**\$3,488,279**



# Report of the Sequanota Lutheran Conference Center & Camp

Rev. Nathan Pile, Director



## Sequanota

Lutheran Conference Center & Camp

PO Box 245, Jennerstown, PA 15547

(814) 629-6627

www.sequanota.com

### 2026 Allegheny Synod Assembly Report

The 2025 season was another exciting year. There were over 736 summer campers for our summer season. An additional 1,364 people slept under our roofs in 2025. Combined this is roughly the population of Geistown passing through Sequanota's facilities on an annual basis.



**13 Lutheran congregations supported 79 campers through additional scholarship programs.**

The 2025 season saw some significant year-round staff changes. Hanna Weimer has returned to teaching full-time. She is still working for camp during our summer season and on a very part-time basis year-round. We love Hanna and are delighted to still have her as a part of the

# Report of the Sequanota Lutheran Conference Center & Camp

Rev. Nathan Pile, Director

team. We have also been transitioning the front office registrar for over six months. So if you have called and missed us, I am sorry. We hope to have this office transition completed by the end of this year to better be able to serve the needs of all who call Sequanota.

Sequanota continues to grow our Hosted Ministries at the Bowersox Center and Main Camp. As you can see in the chart below this aspect of our ministry continues to expand especially after the pandemic. One of the true blessings was being able to host the Synod Rostered Leaders events in January and September last year. Thank you Bishop and Rostered Leaders for supporting camp!

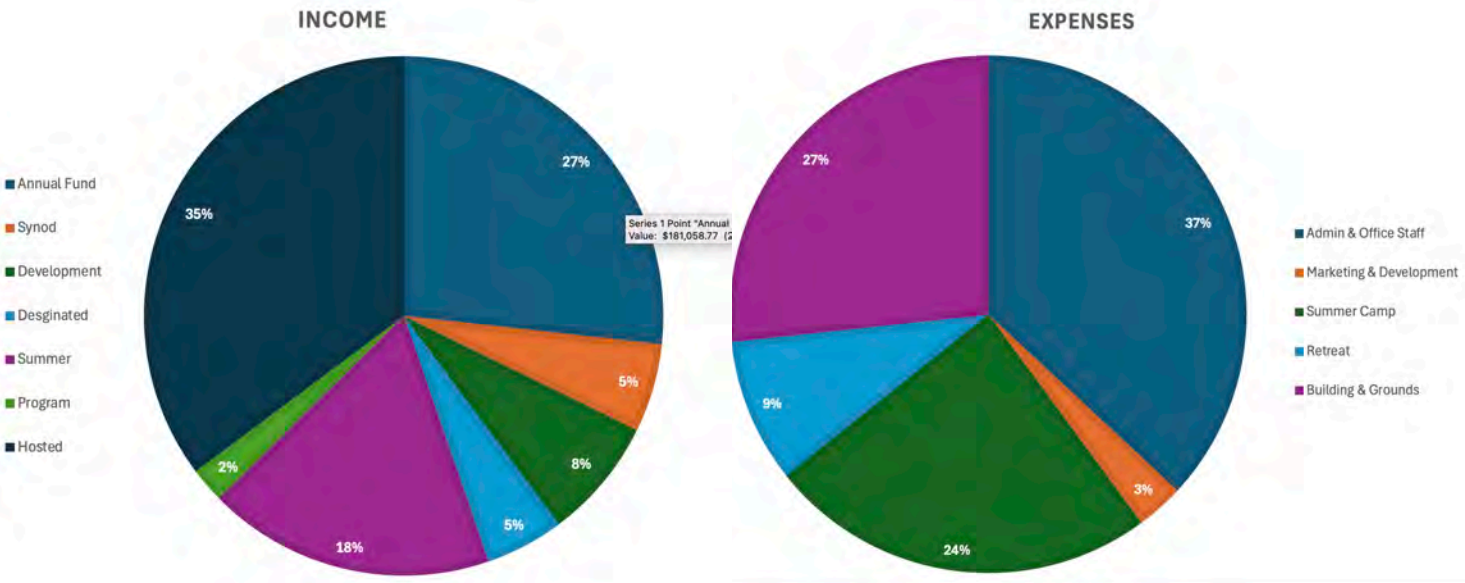
Hosted Ministry	2017	2019	2021	2025
Main Camp	\$84,557.33	\$76,234.00	\$25,274.60	\$146,642.50
Bowersox Center	\$83,032.65	\$84,999.80	\$46,896.84	\$104,406.30
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$167,589.98</b>	<b>\$161,233.80</b>	<b>\$72,171.44</b>	<b>\$251,048.80</b>

Along with Synod leaders and congregations like Zion Lutheran, Hollidaysburg who visit at least 4-5 times a year. We host groups from other Christian faith groups like the Johnstown/Altoona Roman Catholic Diocese. As well as a Muslim youth gathering, spiritual communities, family reunions, a mushroom group, a ski/dance group, and other ELCA organizations like LAMPA. Pastor Bowersox's dream of Sequanota being a place for all generations is certainly true today.

# Report of the Sequanota Lutheran Conference Center & Camp

Rev. Nathan Pile, Director

Here are the financials for 2025. **The total income for the year was \$681,851.79. The total expenses were \$631,600.92.** Here is a breakdown by ministry area to show how you helped accomplish Sequanota's goals this year.



## New and exciting information for the 2026 season.

Again we celebrate the improvements to Cabin #9 by Friedens Lutheran Church. St. David's Lutheran, Mt. Calvary Lutheran, and St. Paul's Lutheran (Mundy's Corner) churches are all sponsoring upgrades to their cabins as well. By mid June we will have 50% of our main camp cabins under a metal roof. Thank you to all who have helped to make this priority a reality.

This summer we will welcome international staff from Pakistan, Paraguay, Mexico and Spain. Two of the five staff are returning staff from last summer.

Also this summer we will be gifting a new age appropriate Bible for each camper thanks to a grant from the "Go Tell It IN the Mountains" proclaiming the gospel grant. Every camper at three regional camps across the three synods will receive a new Bible to help the engage the word of Christ. A BIG thank you to Pr. John Kratz and the grant steering committee to make this amazing gift happen. The reason behind this is that 60% of Sequanota's campers do not connect with a Lutheran church. We wanted to make sure all campers have a Bible to connect with God. Thank you for this gift to make this dream a reality.

Our hosted ministry calendar continues to fill up and we are continuing to take new registrations for summer camp. Though we have applied the first waiting list to a week of camp. If you know kids who will benefit from a week at camp please invite them. No camper is turned away from camp because of financial reasons. If your congregation has felt the desire to connect to each other in new and powerful ways we would invite you to consider a retreat at Sequanota. We will help you plan it! Coming to camp as a camper or a guest connects you to Christ, creation, and community. All are welcome!

# Report of Susquehanna University

The Rev. Kristina E Schaefer, Chaplain to the University

## Life of the University

The 2025-2026 academic year marks the 168th for Susquehanna University. The University continues to serve a religiously diverse student body, about 8% of whom self-identify as Lutheran and who originate from 32 states and 30 countries. Dr. Jonathan Green, Susquehanna's 15<sup>th</sup> president, is completing his ninth year of service.

## Campus Religious Activities

The past year has been a time of transition in the office of religious and spiritual life. Rev. Dr. Scott Kershner left in December 2024 to accept a new congregational call. The university is grateful to Rev. Vickie Brown for her pastoral leadership during the call process and the interim time. In December 2025, Rev. Stina House '04 Schaeffer was called as the University's 10<sup>th</sup> chaplain and director of religious and Spiritual life.

Religious and spiritual life, as part of the Center for Spirituality and meaning, continues in its mission to invite all students to explore life's big questions during their development as moral ethical global citizens.

Worship is held in Weber Chapel on Sunday mornings when classes are in session. We welcome students, faculty and staff as well as members of the local community. A group of student leaders is instrumental in leading worship and focusing on servant leadership in all parts of the worship experience.

Susquehanna's commitment to interfaith engagement remains at the core of our work in Religious and Spiritual life. Over ten religious clubs and organizations offer a wealth of opportunities for students to engage in religious life on campus. This year, as in years past, as part of our commemoration of Martin Luther King Jr and his legacy, an interfaith celebration was held and focused on the question, "What ties us together"?

## In Conclusion

Susquehanna University continues to be grateful for the support and encouragement we receive from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

# Report of the United Lutheran Seminary



Dear Partners in Ministry,

Grace and peace to you as you gather for your Synod Assembly. On behalf of United Lutheran Seminary, thank you for your faithful partnership in forming leaders for Christ's Church.

This is a remarkable year in the life of the seminary. In 2026, we mark our bicentennial, celebrating 200 years of preparing leaders to proclaim the Gospel, serve communities, and guide the Church through seasons of change. We give thanks for those who came before us, whose vision and faithfulness built the foundation we stand on today. At the same time, we look ahead with confidence, trusting that God continues to call new leaders for a new day in the life of the Church.

That sense of being grounded and moving forward at the same time is shaping everything we do. The needs of the Church are changing, and so the way we prepare leaders is changing as well. Across our campuses in Gettysburg and Philadelphia, and through our distributed learning model, students are engaging in theological education that is rigorous, flexible, and deeply connected to real ministry contexts. Many remain rooted in their home communities while they study, bringing what they learn directly into the places where they serve.

We are forming leaders not only for congregations, but also for chaplaincy, nonprofit leadership, campus ministry, and emerging forms of service that continue to take shape across the Church. The need for well-prepared pastors and deacons remains urgent, and we are responding by growing into that need with creativity and purpose.

At a time when many theological schools are facing uncertainty, United Lutheran Seminary is in a position of strength. Our recent ATS reports show an institution with significant financial stability and long-term sustainability, including strong reserves and consistent operating performance. At the same time, we continue to see encouraging signs in enrollment and student engagement across our programs. These are not simply institutional metrics. They are signs that we are equipped to carry this mission forward and to invest in the future of the Church.

One of the clearest ways that investment is felt is in the lives of our students. Because of the generosity of congregations and individuals across this Church, we have been able to remove many of the financial barriers that once stood in the way of theological education. Today, only a small percentage of our

# Report of the United Lutheran Seminary

students take on educational debt. That means our graduates are free to say yes to calls in congregations and ministries without hesitation, able to serve where they are needed most.

We see hope in these students every day. They come from a wide range of backgrounds and bring with them a deep commitment to the Gospel and to the communities they will serve. Some are answering a call they have carried for years. Others are stepping into ministry in places that have long been underserved. All of them are being formed in partnership with the wider Church.

That partnership matters more than ever. The seminary does not raise up leaders on its own. This is shared work. When you encourage someone to explore a call, when you support a student, when you pray for this ministry, you are part of forming the next generation of leaders for Christ's Church.

As we mark this bicentennial year, we are not simply looking back. We are making intentional investments in the future. We are strengthening our campuses to be more accessible and more welcoming. We are expanding programs that equip leaders for a rapidly changing world. We are building partnerships that extend our reach into new communities and new forms of ministry.

This is a moment of gratitude, but it is also a moment of commitment. We believe the Church will continue to need thoughtful, faithful, well-formed leaders in the years ahead, and we are committed to preparing them.

We ask for your prayers, that God would continue to call and sustain leaders for the Church. We ask for your encouragement, that you would help identify those who may be discerning a call. And we ask for your support, so that together we can ensure that financial barriers never stand in the way of formation.

Thank you for your faithfulness and for your partnership in this shared work. May God bless you, your bishop, and the congregations you represent, and strengthen you for the ministry you carry.

In Christ,

**Rev. R. Guy Erwin, Ph.D.**

President, United Lutheran Seminary