



“A new creation is everything! As for those who will follow this rule - peace be upon them, and mercy.”
Galatians 6:15b-16a

Northeastern Minnesota Synod, ELCA 39th Synod Assembly April 24-26, 2026

Breezy Point Resort
Breezy Point, MN



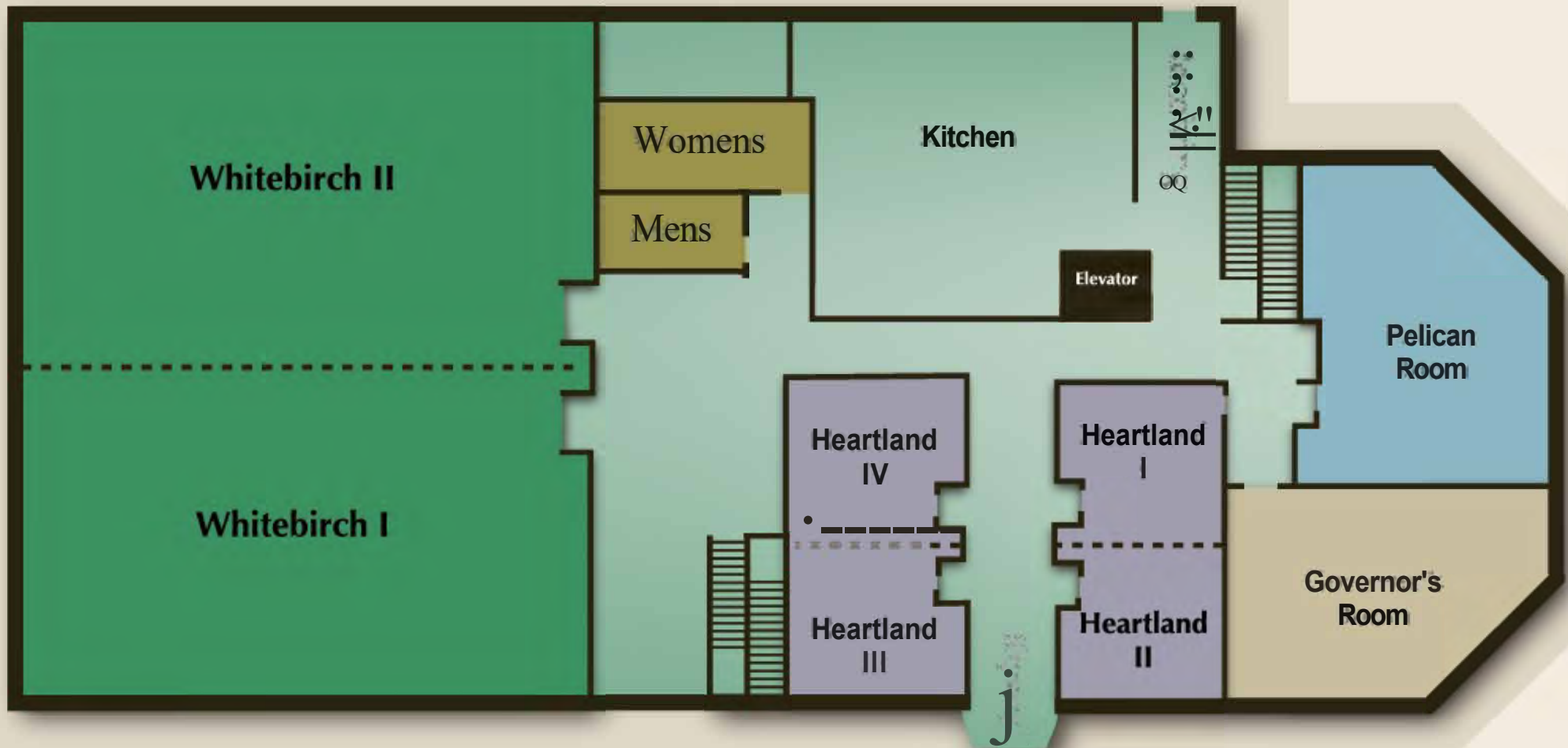


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"I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Yehiel Curry', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

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

“Yo soy la vid y ustedes las ramas. El que permanece en mí, como yo en él, dará mucho fruto; separados de mí no pueden ustedes hacer nada” (Juan 15:5). 850am-1005

23 de marzo de 2026

Estimados hermanos en Cristo:

Ahora que van a reunirse en su asamblea sinodal, quiero expresar mi gratitud por lo que están y han estado haciendo por esta iglesia, *nuestra* iglesia.

En los meses desde que fui instalado como obispo presidente, me he concentrado en la conexión. Algunos de ustedes me han oído hablar sobre lo que significa ser una iglesia conectada. Esta visión de conexión surge directamente de una de las tres prioridades que nosotros, como la Iglesia Evangélica Luterana en América, hemos nombrado para este período de nuestra vida juntos.

Cuando destacamos estas prioridades, nos comprometimos con ellas, no como ideas abstractas, sino como compromisos que nos guían en cómo vivir y servir como iglesia. Al reflexionar sobre aquellas, la tercera prioridad sobresalió con una claridad particular: ser una iglesia conectada y sostenible, elevando el estándar todos juntos.

Esa prioridad ha estado moldeando mi pensamiento y mi liderazgo. No solo pregunta qué hacemos, sino cómo lo hacemos — juntos, en todas las congregaciones, los sínodos y la organización nacional. La conexión no es un programa ni un eslogan; es una forma de ser iglesia que reconoce nuestro llamado y responsabilidad compartidos. Esta no es mi iglesia. Es de ustedes. Es nuestra, juntos. Los ministerios que llevan a cabo en sus congregaciones y sínodos no son solo suyos —son nuestros juntos.

Durante los próximos años van a escuchar esta prioridad expresada con mayor enfoque y claridad. En 2026, nuestro énfasis está en la conexión: fortalecer las relaciones, escuchar profundamente y reconocer cuánto dependemos unos de otros.

En 2027 comenzarán a oírme hablar con más intención sobre la sostenibilidad: cómo cuidamos a nuestra gente, nuestros recursos y nuestras estructuras para que nuestro testimonio siga siendo fuerte para las generaciones venideras. Para 2028, la conexión y la sostenibilidad se unirán en un lenguaje compartido de unidad, mientras vivimos más plenamente lo que Dios nos está llamando a ser como iglesia.

Entonces, cuando escuchen lenguaje sobre estar juntos, este tiene que ver con vivir la visión de la ELCA de un mundo que experimenta la diferencia que la gracia y el amor de Dios en Cristo marcan en todas las personas y la creación. Es sumamente importante para mí que sepamos quiénes somos, avanzando como un solo cuerpo, confiando en Dios y en los demás.

Creo que así es como se forja la conexión: no estando solos, sino siendo iglesia juntos.

Con gratitud y esperanza,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Yehiel Curry', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

El Rvdo. Yehiel Curry
Obispo Presidente
Iglesia Evangélica Luterana en América



**2026 Northeastern Minnesota
Synod Assembly**
April 24-26, 2026
Breezy Point Resort

PROPOSED AGENDA

Friday, April 24

4:00 – 6:00

Synod Registration Begins – outside Whitebirch rooms
6:00 – 9:00 in Heartland 4

5:00 pm

Check-in at Breezy Point – Lobby
Dinner on your own – several restaurants on site

7:00 pm

Welcome and Land Acknowledgement: Bishop Amy Odgren
Opening Devotion
Order for Opening of the Assembly

7:15 pm

FIRST PLENARY SESSION (Whitebirch I and II)

Introductions: Bishop Amy Odgren
Declaration of Quorum: Ms. Anne Laechel, registrar
Adoption of Assembly Agenda: Jon Moe
Adoption of Rules and Procedures: Rev. Tanner Howard, Parliamentarian
Acceptance of Minutes of the 2025 Assembly: Mr. Jon Moe

Introduction to Election of a Bishop
Secretary Rev. CeCee Mills & Deacon MaryAnn Schwabe
Credentials Report: Ms. Anne Laechel, registrar
First Ballot for Synod Bishop

Report of the Bishop: Bishop Amy Odgren
LYO Report: Mr. Trevor Ranisate
Gather YA Report: Mr. Colby Hubbel or Ms. Julia Gwash
Video: *What is the Role of a Bishop?*
2025 *Holy Cow!* Award:
Hunger, Justice Rural Life Concerns Committee Chair
Holden Evening Prayer – Whitebirch Rooms

9:00 pm

Report of the Bishop Election Ballot #1:

Announcements

Campfire with our Outdoor Ministries

Saturday, April 25

6:30–8:15 am Breakfast Buffet – Marina restaurant

8:30 am SECOND PLENARY SESSION (Whitebirch I & II)

DEADLINE: Bishop Nominee Withdrawals or Biographical Information at Bishop Election table near assembly office

Morning Worship

Welcome & Announcements

Report of the Conference Nominations: Rev. Kevin Olson

Report of Synod Wide Nominations: Rev. Kevin Olson

9:00 am Churchwide Report: Secretary Rev. CeCee Mills

9:45 am Break (All Nominee biographical forms available for review online or at Bishop Election table)

10:00 am Treasurer's Report & Budget Report: Ms. Theresa Jacobson

Credentials Report: Ms. Anne Laechel

Second Ballot for Synod Bishop

10:30 am Compensation Guidelines presentation: Mr. Andy Larson
Proposed Constitution amendments: Rev. Rollie Bockbrader
Portico Report: Rev. Tim Schroeder
Immersion Trip to El Paso, Texas video: Ms. Vicki Schmidt
Announcements

11:00 am Report of Second Ballot for Bishop (top seven)

Mental Health Moment: Ms. Joy Hensel

5-minute Statements by Bishop Nominees

Credentials Report: Ms. Anne Laechel

Third Ballot for Synod Bishop

12:30 pm Lunch – Minnesota Room

1:45 pm THIRD PLENARY SESSION (Whitebirch I and II)

Report of Third Ballot for Synod Bishop

Nominees: Question & Response (3 candidates)

Credentials Report: Ms. Anne Laechel

Fourth Ballot for Synod Bishop

2:45 pm	Synod Wide Ballot #1 (Synod Council & Synod Committees) Announcements
3:00 pm	Break with snacks
3:20 pm	Report of Ballot #4 for Bishop 3-minute statements by 2 remaining nominees
	Credentials Report: Ms. Anne Laechel Fifth Ballot for Synod Bishop
	Break
4:00	Mental Health Moment: Ms. Joy Hensel Reference, Counsel, and Memorial: Ms. Crystal Whitney
	Report of Synod Wide Ballot #1; Synod Wide Ballot #2 (if needed)
5:15 pm	Anniversary Recognition, In Memoriam
	Report of Fifth Ballot for Synod Bishop Remarks from the Bishop-Elect
	Announcements
6:30 pm	Emmaus Fund Gala (doors open at 5:45) Dinner – Minnesota Ballroom I & II Co-Hosted by Bishop Amy Odgren and Rev. Tim Ehling Speaker - Ms. Abby Hartog & slideshow Basket Auction and Live Auction

Sunday, April 26

6:30 – 8:15 a.m. Breakfast Buffet – Marina

8:30 a.m. FOURTH PLENARY SESSION (Whitebirch I and II)
Opening Devotion

Synod Vice President Ballot #1
LSS Report and Servant of Christ Award:

Report of Synod Wide Ballot #2 (if needed)

Report of VP Ballot #1
VP Ballot #2 if needed

Report of the Synod Council: Ms. Rachel Berry
*Recommendation 1: 2027 Compensation & Benefits
Guidelines*
Recommendation 2: 2027 Budget action
Recommendation 3: changes/updates to synod's constitution

*Possible Bylaw Amendment (allow additional Youth voting
member from a congregation)*

Announcements

Break

10 a.m. Closing Worship - Whitebirch Ballroom I & II
Offering recipient: Synod Seminary Fund (scholarship & debt relief)
Order for Closing of the Assembly
Preaching: Bishop Amy Odgren

12:00 noon Check out of rooms

Bishop Election Process Timeline at Assembly

Northeastern Minnesota Synod Assembly 2026

Friday, April 24

First Plenary Session 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm

Electronic voting process and practice session

Introduction to the Election of a Bishop

First Ballot for Bishop

Report of First Ballot for Bishop

Saturday, April 25

Second Plenary Session 8:30 am - 12:30 pm

Deadline for nominee withdrawals and nominee forms (8:30)

Biographical forms posted as soon as possible, with a goal of 9:45

Second Ballot for Bishop

Report of Second Ballot for Bishop

5-minute Statements by Bishop Nominees

Third Ballot for Bishop

Third Plenary Session 1:45 pm - 6:30 pm

Report of the Third Ballot for Bishop

Nominee Questions and Response

Fourth Ballot for Bishop

Report of the Fourth Ballot for Bishop

3-minute Statements by remaining Nominees

Fifth Ballot for Bishop

Report of the Fifth Ballot for Bishop



For Information on the Bishop Election Process
(names, bios, etc.) on the Synod Website:

www.nemnsynod.org/home/2026-bishop-election-committee-bec



Steps for Logging in and Voting in VPOLL

Login to VPOLL

- Go to VPOLL website
 - o <https://app.vpoll.mobi>
and enter the Access Code, **NEMN26**
 - o Click on the QR code.



- You will see the welcome screen.
 - o Enter your last name and your unique ID code,
 - o Select Polling Session from the drop-down menu
 - Friday evening (Plenary 1)
 - Saturday (Plenary 2 and 3)
 - Sunday morning (Plenary 4)
 - o Click submit.

A screenshot of a mobile application interface. At the top is a green header with a white logo. Below it is a teal background with white text: "Welcome to the 2026 Northeastern Minnesota Synod Assembly". There are three input fields: "Last Name", "ID Number", and "Select Polling Session" (a dropdown menu). At the bottom is an orange "Submit" button.

Your device is logged in and ready for the question.

You will see "Question will be broadcast shortly."

Voting on VPOLL

- When it is time to vote, the VPOLL operator will broadcast the appropriate question or ballot for your vote.
- Your device will show the question and possible answers. If there is an option for a write-in, the question will include that information.

IF YOU WRITE IN A NAME, use this format
Name (first and last) *COMMA*, City *COMMA*, Congregation/Ministry

- **NOTE REGARDING BALLOTS FOR SYNOD BISHOP:**
On ballots for synod bishop, you prompted for a “Question Code”. The code will be displayed on the big screens. This means that voting members will need to be present in the plenary hall.



- VOTE on your device.
- When you are sure of your vote (and before the chair announces, “Voting has ended”, click submit.
 - o You will see a message, “Answer is successfully saved.”

You will remain logged into VPOLL, unless you log out.
Should you be logged out, go to VPOLL, enter your last name and NEMN26; you will be logged in.

When it is the next time to vote, the VPOLL operator will broadcast the next question/, and you will repeat the voting process.





2026 Northeastern Minnesota Synod Assembly
April 24-26, 2026
Breezy Point Resort, Breezy Point, Minnesota

Proposed Rules and Procedures

Voting Member Credentials and Voting Privileges

1. Voting Members to the 2026 Northeastern Minnesota Synod Assembly shall be entitled to vote on all matters before the assembly. Voting Members shall include the following:
 - a. Voting members chosen by member congregations in accordance with the Synod Constitution (§S7.21.c.).
 - b. All ministers of Word and Sacrament under call and all retired ministers of Word and Sacrament on the roster of the synod (§S7.21.a.; S7.22.01).
 - c. All ministers of Word and Service under call on the roster of the synod and all retired ministers of Word and Service on the roster of the synod (§S7.21.b.; S7.22.01.).
 - d. All members of the Synod Council (§S7.21.d.; S7.28.).
 - e. In addition to the voting membership of the lay members of congregations provided in provision (§S7.21.c.), the Synod Council may authorize annually ELCA members serving as Synod Authorized Ministers (SAMs) within the synod to serve as voting lay members of the synod assembly (S7.21.03.).
2. Each Voting Member (rostered minister and lay) must register with the assembly registrar. No voting member shall be allowed to vote unless duly registered with the assembly registrar. The deadline for registration is April 15, 2026.
3. Voting Members shall be a minimum of one lay member elected by each congregation with fewer than 175 baptized members and a minimum of two (2) lay members elected by each congregation with 175 or more baptized members related to the synod, *normally* one of whom shall be male and one of whom shall be female. All congregations having more than 500 confirmed members shall be entitled to elect an additional Voting Member for each additional 500 confirmed members or major fraction thereof (S7.21.01).
4. Voting Members for each congregation shall be the same people for the two days of the Assembly. The vote is not transferable to an alternate or other person after the opening of the first plenary session Friday, April 24, 2026. An alternate not listed on the registration rolls must have a letter of authorization from their congregational officer or rostered minister/SAM to be registered as an official Voting Member.

Quorum and Assembly Business

5. Fifty percent (50%) of the registered voting members, as required by the constitution (S7.14.), shall constitute a quorum.
6. Advisory members (lay members of the synod staff) shall have equal privilege addressing the assembly. Others having voice but not vote are the ELCA representatives, regional staff, and the president of the NE MN Synod Women's Organization. Observers shall have the privilege to speak at the discretion of the Chair.
7. To the extent consistent with these Rules of Procedure, Robert's Rules of Order, latest edition, shall govern.
8. If a person wishes to speak to the assembly, she/he should come to a floor microphone, wait to be recognized: give their name, their congregational membership and the reason for addressing the assembly (i.e., to make a motion or second a motion, to speak for or against the motion on the

floor, to make a point of order, to move the previous question to end debate, etc.) You are asked to bring your green voting card or your red voting card, to indicate your speaking for or against the measure on the floor.

9. Except for the making of a motion, speeches shall be limited to three minutes. Speakers may speak a second time for two minutes, but only after all others have been given an opportunity to speak. Any person speaking to the assembly will speak to the Assembly Chair. The Chair will determine the order of the speakers and will rotate speaking privileges among the proponents and opponents of a measure.

Voting

10. The method of voting during the Synod Assembly is at the discretion of the Chair of the Assembly. All voting shall proceed by methods designated by the Chair of the Assembly, these Rules and Procedures, and Robert's Rules of Order, latest edition.
11. Voting methods may include, but are not limited to, the following: voice vote, show of hands, show of green cards/red cards, paper ballots, and electronic voting.
12. The assembly will be using VPOLL as our electronic voting method. Each voting member will need to have a digital device (smart phone, tablet, computer); each voting member will have a unique ID number that will be needed to log into VPOLL. More instructions are found elsewhere in the Bulletin of Reports.
13. At the discretion of the Chair, the Chair may use Unanimous Consent (also called General Consent) to adopt an action. The method of Unanimous Consent can be used to adopt a motion without the steps of putting the motion to a formal vote. After the Chair states, "If there is no objection to the [matter]", the Chair will pause to hear if there is any objection. If no one objects, the Chair announces, "Since there is no objection, the action is decided."
14. Each Voting Member may vote only once on a measure before the assembly.
15. Invalid ballots will not be counted. Invalid ballots are those ballots that:
 - a. Contain more marks than the ballot permits.
 - b. Contain a write-in vote, except where a write-in vote is specifically permitted.

Elections

16. A person placing any name in nomination must determine the willingness of the nominee to serve if elected and state their willingness on the nomination form.
17. Unless specified in the Synod Constitution and Robert's Rules, a majority of the votes cast are needed for an election. When there is not an election, the names of the people receiving the highest number of votes, but not elected by a majority of the votes cast, shall be entered on the next ballot to the number of two for each vacancy unfilled (S9.08.).

Election of the Synod Bishop

18. The ELCA representative shall preside over the assembly whenever the assembly is in session and considering business related to the election of the synod bishop and when the assembly is voting in this election. Upon conclusion of balloting or specific business related to the election of the synod bishop, the Bishop shall resume presiding over the assembly.
19. The first ballot for the Northeastern Minnesota Synod Bishop is a modified ecclesiastical ballot. It will contain the names of the four pastors who were nominated by conference elections in February. There will also be a space for adding a name of a pastor (write-in nomination). It is important that the name of any write-in be spelled correctly and have some identifying information (congregation or ministry, city, etc.).
20. Before you nominate a pastor, please check with the pastor to make sure that she or he is willing to continue in the election process for synod bishop. If she or he is not willing to continue in this process, please do not type in their name on the first ballot.
21. The first ballot for synod bishop is the only ballot when a write-in nomination will be allowed.
22. The results of the first ballot for bishop will be announced prior to adjournment on Friday night of the assembly.

23. As soon as the results of the first ballot for bishop are announced, any new nominee must immediately submit the following to the Bishop Election Committee (BEC): a contact phone number, a completed Nomination Biographical form, and a completed background check Authorization & Disclosure Form.
24. The Bishop Election Committee will electronically distribute the biographical forms to all voting members and initiate background checks. The second ballot for bishop on Saturday morning cannot proceed until this has been done.
25. Any nominee wishing to remove her or his name from the balloting prior to the second ballot must submit a notice to withdraw by emailing a completed Withdrawal Form to the Bishop Election Committee.
26. After the second ballot, a nominee is removed from future ballots by not attaining sufficient votes.
27. The second ballot for bishop will be on Saturday morning.
28. Prior to the third ballot, the seven nominees (plus ties) receiving the most votes on the second ballot will be asked to give a five-minute statement. If there is no election on the third ballot, the three nominees (plus ties) receiving the most votes on the third ballot will participate in a Question and Response before the assembly prior to the fourth ballot. If there is no election on the fourth ballot, the two nominees (plus ties) receiving the most votes on the fourth ballot will give a three-minute statement prior to the fifth ballot.”
29. The balloting for bishop will continue until we have an election.
30. The following is the percentage of votes necessary to achieve election for each ballot:

First Ballot	75% needed for election
Second Ballot (all nominees who have agreed to continue)	75% needed
Third Ballot (top seven plus ties from second ballot)	Two-thirds needed
Fourth Ballot (top three plus ties from third ballot)	60% needed
Fifth and subsequent Ballots (top two plus ties)	Majority
31. It is not known how many ballots will be needed to elect a synod bishop. Other synod business will take place between ballots for synod bishop. Please do not leave the assembly unless there is a break or until all business is concluded for that plenary session.

Resolutions

32. Resolutions, motions and amendments from the assembly floor shall be made in writing on official forms available at the Page Table.
33. All proposed resolutions are to be directed to the assembly through the Committee for Reference, Counsel and Memorial. They shall include the name, phone number and congregational membership of the author with an indication of any groups that have endorsed the resolution. Resolutions may be submitted by a congregation, a conference, synod committee, or twenty-five (25) voting members of the synod assembly (with congregational memberships noted).
34. Resolutions will be accepted by the Committee for Reference, Counsel, and Memorial until Wednesday, April 15. Resolutions received after April 15 must include 25 Voting Member’s signatures and will be dealt with only by specific approval of the Assembly. This action would require a two-thirds vote.
35. The order in which resolutions are presented to the assembly shall be the responsibility of the Committee for Reference, Counsel, and Memorial.
36. The Committee for Reference, Counsel, and Memorial may consult with the originator of any proposed resolution for clarification and/or to check factuality and documentation. The Committee may make grammatical changes.
37. The Committee for Reference, Counsel, and Memorial shall present resolutions to the assembly without recommendation. Resolutions received by the Committee, in accordance with the previous rules, are deemed to have been moved for adoption and require no second to become the business of the assembly.

Agenda

38. The business of the assembly shall be conducted during four (4) working sessions: the evening of Friday, April 24, 2026, the morning and afternoon of Saturday, April 25, 2026, and the morning of Sunday, April 26, 2026. The Chair shall have the authority to call items of business before the assembly in whatever order is most expedient for conducting assembly business. Resolutions not addressed by the assembly shall be forwarded to the Synod Council.
39. The agenda shall be presented and adopted at the first working session. If any voting member desires to add an item of new business to the agenda after the initial adoption of the agenda by the assembly, the voting member shall present such item of business to the Chair, who shall immediately refer it to the Committee for Reference, Counsel, and Memorial. The Committee shall report to the assembly its recommendation for the handling of such new business, which may include a recommendation that the matter is not considered. A majority vote of the assembly shall be required to add an item of new business to the agenda.

Miscellaneous

40. Anyone proposing an increase or decrease in any line item in the proposed 2027 budget shall indicate which line(s) the amount is to be taken from or added to, thereby keeping the budget in balance.

Parliamentary Procedure

To accomplish this:	You say:	Interrupt speaker?	Is a second necessary?	Is it debatable?	Can it be amended?	Necessary vote?	Can it be reconsidered?
Introduce business	<i>I move that ...</i>	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	Yes
Amend a motion	<i>I move to amend the motion by...</i>	No	Yes	Yes (if debatable)	Yes	Majority	Yes
Give further study	<i>I move to refer the matter to committee.</i>	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	Yes (unless it has gone to committee)
Postpone discussion for stated period of time	<i>I move to postpone discussion until...</i>	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	Yes
End debate and amendments	<i>I move the previous question.</i>	No	Yes	No	No	2/3	No (unless vote is not taken)
Suspend consideration of an issue temporarily	<i>I move to table the motion.</i>	No	Yes	No	No	Majority	No
Raise a question about noise, etc.	<i>I rise to a question of privilege.</i>	Yes	No	No	No	No vote	No (usually)
Call for an intermission	<i>I move we recess for...</i>	No	Yes	No	Yes	Majority	No
Adjourn the meeting	<i>I move that we adjourn.</i>	No	Yes	No	No	Majority	No
Request information	<i>Point of information</i>	Yes	No	No	No	No vote	No
Reconsider an action	<i>I move to reconsider the vote on...</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes (if motion to reconsider is debatable)	No	Majority	No
Take up a matter previously tabled	<i>I move to take from the table...</i>	No	Yes	No	No	Majority	No
Verify a voice vote by having members stand	<i>I call for a division.</i>	Yes	No	No	No	No vote	No
Vote on a ruling of the chair	<i>I appeal from the chair's decision.</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Majority	Yes
Protest breach of rules or conduct	<i>I rise to a point of order.</i>	Yes	No	No	No	No vote (unless is unclear)	No
Avoid considering an improper matter	<i>I object to consideration of this motion.</i>	Yes	No	No	No	2/3	Yes (if main motion was not considered)
Suspend rules temporarily	<i>I move to suspend the rules so that...</i>	No	Yes	No	No	2/3	No

Synod Assembly Rosters

ELCA Churchwide Representatives

Pastor CeCee Mills, ELCA Secretary
Deacon MaryAnn Schwabe, ELCA
Executive for Synod Relations

Synod Assembly Planning Committee

Rachel Berry, Chair & Synod V.P.
Anne Laechel, Registrar
Pastor Kim Sturtz, Displays
Bishop Amy Odgren
Deacon Susan Williams
Pastor Taryn Montgomery
Pastor Rollie Bockbrader
Joy Hensel

Assembly Worship Planning Team

Pastor Josh Blair
Rick Gabriel, SAM
Kristin Peterson, SAM
Pastor Sarah Stadler
Deacon Susan Williams

Bishop Election Committee

Deacon Brenda Tibbetts, chair
Pastor David Anderson
Carol Christenson
Rick Gabriel
Abby Hartog
Pastor Christina Johnson
Kali Kadelbach
Sari Kroeschel
Chuck Peterson
Pastor John Stiles
Deacon Susan Williams

Synod Mental Health Team

Deacon Kari Olson
Minister Dave Erdmann (SAM)
Jon Moe
Pastor Christie Manisto
Pastor Tim Ehling
Pastor Trish Jorgenson
Joy Hensel

Reference, Counsel & Memorial

Lake Superior Conference
Robert Jenko
Pastor Laura Berdahl
Laurentian Conference
Crystal Whitney
Pastor Kevin Olson
Living Waters Conference
Valerie Connor
Pastor Lori Gordon
Heartland Conference
Sue Lyback
Pastor Sarah Stadler
Kettle River Conference
Elaine Garaghty
Pastor John Stiles
Pastor Rollie Bockbrader

Synod Assembly AV Tech Team

The Slam Room (Bryan Menge, Jordan
Hines, Devin Hayes, and Keene Monahan)
Jonah Bockbrader
Pastor Rollie Bockbrader

Emmaus Fund Gala

Kate Pearce, Fladeboe Advancement
Kelly Conger, Auctioneer
Julia Gwash
Pastor Taryn Montgomery

Synod Quilt Team

Marybeth Jacob
Dory Pearson
Barb Murray
Bob Murray
Mary Jo Mettler
Elaine Jensen
Clarice Renschler

Parliamentarian

Pastor Tanner Howard

Synod Assembly Rosters

Synod Officers

Bishop Amy Odgren
Rachel Berry, Synod Vice President
Theresa Jacobson, Synod Treasurer
Jon Moe, Synod Secretary

Synod Council Members

Lake Superior Conference
Kristin Peterson
Pastor Kim Sturtz
Laurentian Conference
Bruce Garbish
Pastor Kevin Olson
Living Waters Conference
Mitch Jorgenson
Pastor Lori Gordon
Heartland Conference
Dr. Frederick Ness
Pastor Steve Rye
Kettle River Conference
Elaine Garaghty
Pastor Erik Rundquist
At Large
Abby Hartog, LYO President
Kali Kadelbach, Young Adult
Deacon Kari Olson
Pastor Seth Wynands
Pastor John Stiles

Conference Deans

Pastor Kim Sturtz, Lake Superior
Pastor Andy Berry, Laurentian
Pastor Lori Gordon, Living Waters
Pastor Josh Blair, Heartland
Pastor John Stiles, Kettle River

NE MN Synod Staff

Bishop Amy Odgren
Deacon Susan Williams
Pastor Taryn Montgomery
Pastor Rollie Bockbrader
Brother Matthew Cobb
Pastor Liz Davis
Joy Hensel





Bishop Amy Odgren's 2026 Synod Assembly Report

Friends, this is my final year as your synod bishop. This has been a remarkable call and a true privilege to serve in this capacity. I have nothing but gratitude in my heart and want to thank you for entrusting this ministry call to me. I also want to thank you for your diligence in embodying the true spirit of what the word “*synod*” means – “walking together.” We have journeyed through much in my term as your fourth synod bishop and the first female bishop in the Northeastern Minnesota

Synod. We have weathered a world-wide pandemic – gained zoom proficiency – learned what we needed to do for livestreaming worship services and participating in communion online – we’ve seen two presidential elections that have raised concerns in our homes, our communities, and our congregations – your synod office moved and we sold the Faith Lutheran property in Duluth along with a cell tower lease which led to a reparation to the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe – we participated in a new synod-wide Strategic Plan naming the values of **Welcome, Connect, Reform, and Support** - we experienced transitions on synod staff resulting in structural and ministry changes – together, grants were sought to reach out to young adults and ministry discernment – we kicked off the new Emmaus Fund which has already given support to leadership development, youth and young adult engagement, congregational vitality and outreach with micro-grants for new ministry initiatives – we continue to build upon the relationship of three companion synods, each being visited in the past year - congregations are exploring creative ways to share resources and strengthen their ministries through partnerships and cooperatives - and we’ve become a Reconciling in Christ synod.

This is a non-exhaustive list of ways that the power of the Holy Spirit is active and moving within our synod because of you. THANK YOU, friends, for being a part of this exciting and sometimes exhausting work in God’s kingdom here in Northeastern Minnesota and beyond. I have enjoyed working on your synod staff as a Director for Evangelical Mission, an Assistant to the Bishop, and as your Bishop. As I finish this term, it will be a total of ten years that I have served on your staff. All have been calls that I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to serve in and I will hold deep gratitude for all of you.

This is an exciting year in the life of the Northeastern Minnesota Synod. In the space of a few days at the 2026 Synod Assembly, your new bishop, the fifth bishop to serve this synod will be elected. In advance of the Synod Assembly, materials for discernment have been provided by our amazing Bishop Election Committee. Nominations were voted on at our synod’s five Conference Assemblies held on February 15, 2026. Four excellent candidates have been brought forward for consideration, and our process still leaves room for the ecclesiastical election, meaning that any pastor on the roster of this church is eligible to be named on the first ballot.

After that, successive rounds of balloting will occur with only the top vote-getters proceeding to the next round. It’s like processes used by political parties electing leaders except there is no campaigning and there is one other very distinct difference - the Holy Spirit is present and leads the bishop election process.

The task of stepping into the leadership role of the newly elected bishop will be to help guide the church through the choppy waters ahead. It won't be enough to simply keep our ship of the church steady, as we already know that we need to keep changing and adapting. Bishops are called to lead the transformation of the church, envisioning new directions, lifting up and amplifying innovators, and making space for those who have been historically excluded from leading.

We know that we live in an imperfect world, a world that is increasingly becoming more divided, unkind, and even volatile - where there appears to be a loss of respect for our common humanity and disregard for God's good creation. And yet, we don't stand idly by, wishing and hoping for someone else to make things better. We are people of faith who know that God entrusts us with the call to a living hope that leads to a life of action - action in love and in service to others, especially in times of difficulty and despair. Some have termed this our ultimate call to "neighbor love".

The fear and worry in our lives and in the world is real. It elicits a range of emotions. Yet, our ever-present God has promised *"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through the fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you."* Isaiah 43:2

Our baptisms free us to be in service toward those who are in need, reaching out in the same love in Christ that has been given to us. Seeing humanity suffering can and must propel us to action. However helpless we may feel, there are things we can do. Friends, we are made God's very own in our baptisms, and with that, our calling is to bear the fruits of mercy and justice in the world. There is much work to be done – pray, participate, and join in God's saving work.

God is always calling us to transformation that often seems hard or uncomfortable. I pray that the ministers, leaders, and congregations of this synod will be willing to listen to the Spirit and hold space to be uncomfortable at times. Your new bishop will guide all to be faithful in this transformation. They will need to help us seek faithfulness. And faithfulness will mean giving up a lot of ourselves and a lot of our baggage as the church. But faithful is what God continues to call us to be, even in this changing world. And faithful is what God promises to be, especially in the times of change ahead. Dear friends in Christ, trust. Trust in God's promises to be present in all things. God walks with this synod as you welcome your new bishop into the ministry for which we have all been called. Trust that God is always doing a new thing – and a new creation is everything!

In Christ,



Amy J. Odgren, Bishop
Northeastern Minnesota Synod

Synod Minister for Leadership Support Deacon Susan Williams

Our 2026 Synod Assembly theme, “A New Creation Is Everything!” reminds us of the hope that we have in Christ, in the resurrection, and in community. As we gather this year, we come from communities that are hurting, and from congregations that are working to meet those needs. The work of the Gospel is important, but also tiring, both physically and emotionally. How good to be reminded, then, that we have new life in Christ!

Transition Ministry: My main role on synod staff is to walk with congregations in transition and with rostered leaders in the call process. Please refer to the mobility report below for rostered leaders that have been in transition this past year. It is a blessing to walk with your congregation in the transition time.

Roster and First Call Placements: I maintain the roster for our synod’s transfers, new calls, ordinations, on leave from call status, retirements and deaths in our ELCA portal. In addition, my role picks up where Candidacy ends. Once a Candidate moves beyond the approval process, I work with our Region 3 bishops, assistants, and CaLM (Candidacy and Leadership Manager) Deacon Krista Anderson in the placement of First Call pastors and deacons.

Interim Ministry: I also recruit, equip and support the interim ministers in our synod. These leaders provide much needed care and leadership in congregations who are without a settled pastor. The ministers currently serving in this capacity are: Ben Buchanan, Lisa Buchanan, Mark Holman, Nancy Hong, Dave Peterson, Peter Schmidt, Paul Svingen and Tom Gustafson. A special thank you to those who have completed their interim ministry this past year: Jacob Burkman, Joel Guttormson, Paul Lutter, Carla Reiersen, Marion Rova, Bob Rusert, Denise Scheer, and Steve Sylvester.

First Call Leaders: Our first call rostered leaders are those who are in their first three years of ordained ministry. We gather online monthly and in person annually for continuing education, fellowship, retreat time and resource sharing. The ELCA requires all rostered leaders in their first three years of ministry to participate in a First Call Theological Education Cohort. Our winter retreat this year was held in conjunction with our Candidacy Committee and Rostered Leader Candidates, and focused on sparking hope and revitalizing joy in ministry.

Theological Educational Events: The 2025 annual Fall Theological Conference was held at Sugar Lake Lodge in Grand Rapids on September 15-17. Our speaker was Deacon Ross Murray. He spoke on the theme of “Sparking Abundant Life.” Mark your calendars for the 2026 Fall Theo Con which will be September 13-15 at Sugar Lake Lodge.

Worship planning: We have a fabulous group of volunteers who plan worship each year for our Synod Assembly and Fall Theological Conference: Pr. Josh Blair, Rick Gabriel, Pr. Leif Kratzke Nelson, Kristin Peterson, Pr. Erik Rundquist, and Pr. Sarah Stadler. This dedicated team of leaders work creatively and collaboratively in preparation for these annual events. A huge thank you to those who gave their time and energy to our worship this year!

Lutheran Advocacy: Each synod in Minnesota has representation on the Lutheran Advocacy - Minnesota policy council, which meets in person annually and via zoom the rest of the year. The bishops of the 6 Minnesota synods take turns serving on the council, and our own Bishop Amy Odgren is the bishop representative on the policy council at this time, while I serve as the chairperson of the policy council. The council advocates for justice in the areas of hunger, poverty, and care of God's creation. Visit the Lutheran Advocacy page via our synod website for more information and to subscribe to action alerts.

Lay Leader Network: I serve on the advisory board as their staff liaison. The Lay Leader Network's single day February seminar or year-long intensive series are open to all people in our synod, with a virtual option that means your location is no longer a barrier to participation. See the Lay Leader Network (LLN) annual report in this Bulletin of Reports and visit their page on the synod website for more information about how you might participate in the coming year to learn, grow and network with others throughout the Northeastern Minnesota Synod. If you feel that God is calling you to leadership in the church, the Lay Leader Network is a good place to start!

Compensation Guidelines Taskforce: This team meets several times over the fall and winter to provide recommended updates to our guidelines for Compensation and Benefits that the Synod Assembly votes on each year. Team members are Ginny Ahrlin, Pr. John Ansell, Pr. Tim Ehling, Pr. Rollie Bockbrader, Andy Larson, and Christine Ricketts. Thank you to all of you for your dedication and discernment.

Welcome and Reconciling Team: This team has worked tirelessly to provide educational events throughout our synod, and wrote the Welcome Statement that was approved at last year's synod assembly. The Northeastern Minnesota Synod is now a Reconciling in Christ Synod! The members of this team are available to work with your congregation as you seek to follow the RIC process or call an LGBTQIA+ rostered minister.

Bishop Election Committee Liaison: I have been working with this committee as a resource to help prepare our synod for this bishop election. Led by BEC chairperson Deacon Brenda Tibbetts, this committee has prepared the synod survey, Ministry Site Profile, facilitated the conference assembly voting process, hosted the bishop nominee forums, and walked with the nominees throughout the election process. Thank you to all of you for serving in this way!

In my visits with the councils, call committees and congregation members of our synod, I am grateful for the conversations about mission and ministry that I am blessed to have with all of you. As the Northeastern Minnesota Synod we work together to make sure all people know they are welcome here. May we step out boldly in service to our communities with assurance that "A New Creation Is Everything!"

2026 Synod Assembly: Mobility Report for 2025
Deacon Susan Williams, Synod Minister for Leadership Support

Transfers In:

The Rev. Paul Lutter, from the Minneapolis Area Synod
The Rev. Anne Hokenstad, retired, from the Southwestern Minnesota Synod
The Rev. Mary Kay Ashley, from the Southeastern Minnesota Synod
The Rev. Charles Barnes from the SW WA Synod
The Rev. Mark Kopka, from the SW MN Synod
The Rev. Stephen Palo, from the South Dakota Synod
Deacon Stephanie Engel-Brooks, from the LaCrosse Area Synod
The Rev. Grace Gravelle, from the Florida-Bahamas Synod

Transfers Out

The Rev. Chris Hill, to Northwest Intermountain Synod
The Rev. Michael Pancoast, to Minneapolis Area Synod
The Rev. Angela LaMoore, to the Minneapolis Area Synod
The Rev. Steve Sylvester, to the St. Paul Area Synod
The Rev. Paul Lutter, to the Minneapolis Area Synod

New Calls:

The Rev. Mary Kay Ashley to First Lutheran in Little Falls, 5/1/25
The Rev. Christina Kadelbach to Bethesda of Malmo, 6/1/25
Deacon Alex Theship-Rosales, Grace in Hermantown, 6/1/25
The Rev. Mark Kopka to Our Savior's, Pequot Lakes, 11/18/25
Deacon Stephanie Engel-Brooks, Camp Onomia Executive Director, 10/6/25
The Rev. Stephen Palo to Trinity, Princeton, 10/30/25
The Rev. Andrea Bonneville-DeNaples to First, Duluth, 11/1/25
The Rev. Andrew Stephens to Bethlehem, Aitkin, 11/23/25
The Rev. Grace Gravelle to Our Savior's, Outing and Bethany, Remer, 11/24/25
The Rev. Suzy Van Norman to Tri-United Parish, Bovey/Warba/Jacobson, 1/1/26

Invitation to Extended Service:

The Rev. Rebecca LeMenager, Gethsemane in Virginia, 9/1/25

Requests for "On Leave From Call" Status:

The Rev. Michael Poeschl, October 1, first year
The Rev. Nancy Hong, October 16, third year
The Rev. Steve Rye, November 1, second year
The Rev. Mark Wagner, year 2 (1/1/25)
The Rev. Beth Pottratz, year 2 family leave-6 yrs (1/1/25)
The Rev. Noah Johnson, year 2 family leave-6 yrs (2/15/25)
The Rev. Carla Reiersen, year 1 as of 11/16/25
The Rev. Mary Kay Ashley, year 1 as of 11/30/25

Retirements:

The Rev. Susan Berge, as of June 1, 2025

Ordinations:

Deacon Alex Theship-Rosales on 7/20/25

The Rev. Wendy Hjelmberg at Hope, Moose Lake on 12/13/25

In Memoriam:

The Rev. James Sjolie, on 5/12/25

The Rev. Robert Munneke, on 9/19/25

The Rev. Rebekah Wagner, 10/7/2025

The Rev. Roger Munson, Bishop Emeritas, on 11/28/2025

Synod Minister for Operations and Congregational Care

Pastor Rollie Bockbrader

Each year, in my report to the synod assembly, I write something like, “It is a great honor to be a member of your synod staff.” I do not know how to say it differently, and it is true for me this year, *I am honored and privileged to be on the staff of the Northeastern Minnesota Synod!!!* Being a part of the synod staff team is a boundless joy for me, to collaborate with Bishop Amy and the staff she has assembled, to work with and to be a resource to pastors, deacons, SAMs, and leaders of your congregation! Thank you!!

My duties in Operations and Congregational Care include the following:

- Being the primary office staff. I coordinate the administration of the day-to-day ministry of the synod office, through...
 - Answering the telephone and relaying messages to other staff members,
 - Opening the mail, and
 - Maintaining several lists for Constant Contact, emails, and occasional snail mail.
- Managing the synod finances, by...
 - Using QuickBooks Online
 - for receiving and recording Congregational Mission Support and designated gifts (World Hunger, Disaster Response, Missionaries, etc.),
 - paying Ministry Partners and vendors,
 - running payroll and making contractor payments, and
 - Using primarily PayPal for electronic gifts and payments to and through the synod,
 - Send a monthly ACH transfer to the ELCA of 40% of Congregational Mission Support and most designated gifts, and
 - Provide financial information to the Synod Council and many of the synod ministries (EcoFaith, Companion Synods, Lay Leader Network, etc.).
- Providing I.T. support for the Synod Assembly (often working with outsourced specialists), meetings of the Synod Staff, Synod Council and other committees and ministries
- Being a resource person and advisor for the Synod Assembly, Synod Council, the Synod Reference, Counsel, and Memorial Committee, The Synod Nominating Committee, and Synod Authorized Ministers (SAMs), etc.,
- Being the Synod Statistician, being the synod contact for the Congregational Reports (Form A) to the ELCA and assisting congregational leaders with questions on completing the online report for the Synod and ELCA, and
- A more recent duty, as of this winter, being the interim Synod Communication Coordinator. We thank Monica Bruning for her time as our Synod’s communications person. I stepped forward to be in this position temporarily, as we moved into a

bishop election. It will be a suitable time for the bishop-elect to evaluate staffing needs and wants, and how best to fulfill these over the next years in the Northeastern Minnesota Synod, ELCA.

This is probably my last report as a synod staff member to a Synod Assembly. I have become one of those people who, when I was a teenager, was “older than dirt.” Growing up on a farm in Ohio, I realized the value of dirt, and I realized that dirt has been around for a long time! Today, I may not feel like I am older than dirt, but I am getting close!!! Retirement is appearing more closely today...

Thank you for allowing me to be a partner with all of you! Thank you for this opportunity to be a part of the best synod in the ELCA! Thank you for this privilege, honor, and joy! Thank you!

Take care and God bless!

Rev. Rollie Bockbrader
Synod Minister for Operations and Congregational Care

Synod Minister for Discipleship & Christian Community

Rev. Taryn Montgomery

It is a gift to serve our Northeastern Minnesota Synod as the Synod Minister for Discipleship & Christian Community! This role meets my gifts and passions, and it's been a joy to see how the Holy Spirit has moved through the following ministries in the past year:

Faith Formation

- **LYO – Lutheran Youth Organization** continues to thrive with a renewed focus on youth-led programming and leadership opportunities. In June, we began with 25 high schoolers who attended our **LYO Leadership Camp** at Camp Vermilion in Cook. These youth then gathered in September for a planning retreat at Camp Onomia that culminated in leading the **All Youth Gathering** in November. Please see the LYO Report, written by Trevor Ranisate, for details. It has been a total joy to accompany these youth as they grow spiritually, ask questions, experiment with new skills, and learn more about their own leadership style.
- The **2027 ELCA Youth Gathering** will be held in Minneapolis! This is very exciting for all of Region 3 (Minnesota & Dakotas). After much prayer and discernment, we have decided that Synod Journey will *not* place in 2027. There are several reasons for this, primary among them is the proximity we have to the actual event. We are committed, however, to accompanying our smaller-member congregations and those that do not have dedicated youth staff, as they plan for their Gathering experience. It's SO EXCITING that the Gathering will be in our backyard, and we hope all our churches will engage and invite their youth to attend!

Looking Forward:

- Our synod is hosting a hybrid **Godly Play Core Training** on Tuesday, May 26th (Zoom) and Saturday, May 30th (Grace Lutheran, Hermantown). Register on the synod website.
- **LYO Leadership Camp** at Camp Vermilion, June 7-10. Registration is open! See the synod website for more details.
- **All Youth Gathering** will be held at Cragun's Resort, Nov 20-22, 2026. Our guest speaker will be Bishop Jen Nagel of the Minneapolis Area Synod.

Leadership Development

- **Beloved You: Conversation Circles** is continuing with a second cohort of young adults focused on discernment and meaning making in their lives. Over the past months, participants have experienced vocational shadowing, a silent retreat, exploring the enneagram, and experimenting with new spiritual practices. The experience will wrap-up with a closing retreat in mid-May.
- Of the young adults who participated in the first round of Beloved You in 2024-25, five have enrolled in seminary, one is training to be a Spiritual Director, and another is heading to grad school for a master's in social work. Alleluia!
- In October I attended the **Festival of Discernment** in Atlanta, hosted by the Forum for Theological Exploration, with 5 young adults from the NEMN Synod. This was a wonderful event focused on conversations around call, ministry, and our next most faithful step.
- In January, Region 3 hosted the **Quality of Call Leadership Summit** for female-identifying and non-binary rostered ministers. We received a \$100,000 grant from the ELCA to explore what makes a quality call experience for leaders. I served on the planning committee and

was one of the grant writers. Each synod is now exploring how to bring their learnings back to their synod. More information to come in the NEMN Synod on this!

Looking Forward:

- I continue to offer support and be available to our outdoor and campus ministries, chaplains, and youth staff/volunteers across the synod, as well as engage key conversations with those exploring a call to ministry.
- We received a \$2,000 grant from the Forum for Theological Exploration to host a Discernment Retreat with young adults. We are planning for Fall 2026.

Stewardship & Generosity

- This winter we launched another round of the **Generous Together** stewardship program, in partnership with the Southeastern Minnesota Synod. Generous Together is a year-round stewardship experience that congregations participate in. We come together monthly as an entire cohort from both synods, learning from various experts in the field – topics such as “How to Write a Narrative Budget” and “Planned Giving.” This project is funded by the Stewardship of Life Institute (SOLI), an ELCA ministry. We have 4 NEMN congregations participating in our 2026 cohort.
- Our 2025 participating congregations wrapped up their Generous Together experience in December. We are grateful for their many and varied learnings, the growth they experienced in giving, and the growth they experienced in their understanding and experience of what it means to live generously.
- The **Emmaus Fund** continues to grow thanks to the generous contributions of many of you! We raised over \$35,000 at our formal launch at last year’s Synod Assembly. Wow! This allowed us to offer three \$600 micro-grants to congregations doing innovative outreach in their communities. Our spring grant cycle closed April 15th. We look forward to awarding more grants in the coming weeks. The Emmaus Fund *supports leadership development, youth and young adult engagement, and congregational outreach by providing micro-grants for new ministry programs and opportunities*. For more information, please visit the synod website.

Looking Forward:

- Continued growth, engagement, and invitations to give to the Emmaus Fund.
- I would like to see more staff leadership connecting with congregations about mission support – thanking them for their faithful giving, education on what mission support is and what it does, and encouraging generosity.

In closing, this is an interesting time to be on synod staff. As I write this report, I don’t know what the future holds for me, my leadership, or our synod as a whole. And isn’t that often true for all of us! As Lutherans we are good are living in the “in between.” Between law and gospel, saint and sinner, the cross and the empty tomb. We reside in liminal spaces.

However the Holy Spirit moves in the gathered assembly - I know, trust, and *believe* that it will be good and that God will guide it. I am grateful for each of you - your leadership, your many gifts, and your commitment to *being church together*. Thank you for letting me be a part of God’s unfolding story in this sacred and special place. It has been a gift!

Candidacy Report Synod Minister for Candidacy Management Rev. Liz Davis

Welcoming

The work of the NEMN Candidacy Committee is to welcome God's people into discernment of how they will live out their baptismal vocation, especially focusing on those who are called into ordained ministry. Our church ordains people into two rosters: the ministry of Word and Sacrament (pastors) or the ministry of Word and Service (deacons). Candidacy is the formal formation process carried out within our synod that runs parallel to the academic formation process that occurs at seminary.

The candidacy team is meant to reflect the diversity of our synod. Members accompany candidates throughout their process, and form the interview panels for the three check points of entrance, endorsement, and approval. I give thanks for our team: Pastor Larry Johnson (Chair), Pastor Josh Blair, Pastor Laura Berdahl, Dr. Kristofer Phan Coffman, Pastor Gary Guptill, Barb Murray, Michele Plagman, and Pastor Michelle Ruen. These wonderful people have been so faithful in their accompaniment of our emerging leaders, please thank them for their service. A number of team members are completing their terms in 2026, so we will be welcoming new members. We invite you to nominate yourself or others who may have gifts in accompanying and interviewing, and who have a passion for our church, missional leadership, and Lutheran theology. We are especially mindful of forming a team that reflects the diversity of our synod. The Candidacy Committee is accompanied by our Region 3 Candidacy and Leadership Manager, Deacon Krista Anderson. She is an incredible asset and we are so thankful for her leadership and partnership.

Connecting

Throughout 2025, we had twelve people in candidacy: five Word and Service candidates and seven Word and Sacrament candidates, three of whom were in the TEEM program.

In January, we endorsed one Word and Sacrament candidate. We also gathered as a candidacy team, candidates, first call deacons and pastors, with Bishop Amy Odgren, Deacon Susan Williams, Joy Hensel, Pastor Erik Rundquist, Pastor Luke Lekander, and the Rev. Tim Schroeder for our annual Candidacy/ First Call retreat, building knowledge and relationship.

In May, we entranced one Word and Service candidate and one Word and Sacrament candidate, and endorsed one Word and Sacrament candidate.

In October, we entranced one Word and Service candidate, endorsed one Word and Service candidates and one Word and Sacrament candidate, and approved one Word and Sacrament candidate. In addition, we completed a TEEM CAP. We celebrated that the approved candidate was called and ordained in December.

Reforming

We are continually evaluating, learning, and adapting to better accomplish our goal of developing capable, healthy, missional, Christ-centered deacons and pastors.

The candidacy team has national, regional, and team training regularly as well as intentional conversation about how best to support our candidates and encourage more people to grow into their call to serve as ordained ministers.

The candidacy process is guided by ELCA policies and procedures, compiled into a Manual on Candidacy. The process itself is undergoing reformation as a result of listening to the experiences of stakeholders, including people representing seminaries, synods, and those who have gone through the process. In 2022, the Candidacy Leadership Development Working Group convened to redevelop a process to best serve the needs of the current and future church. This reformation will produce a clear, informative, and understandable process that is rigorous and flexible, recognizes and values all paths to ministry leadership, is theologically and Biblically sound, and removes barriers for underrepresented groups. Right now, a number of synods are piloting the new process, including in our region Minneapolis and SWMN synods. The new process will be launched fully in 2028 or later. Changes are being explored and evaluated during this pilot period, especially around discernment and inquiry, including an accompanier as a supportive/ non-evaluative role, shifting to competency-based assessment, and holding an annual review with candidates.

Supporting

From the moment a candidate reaches out to me to explore their call until their assignment for first call or their discernment towards a different calling, the candidacy committee supports candidates people through prayer, check-ins, and a dedicated relator from our team. The synod candidacy team is just one component of the support candidates receive during their formation. For that reason, my role includes connecting with colleagues in our synod, at our seminaries, across the synods in our regions, and in local congregations, as well as with our CaLM, to ensure all aspects of a candidate's formation are working in tandem and we are supporting them in every step of their journey.

There are a number of ways you can be active in supporting our candidates. A sense of call often begins with a trusted person noticing, naming, and nurturing the gifts of those who become our candidates. When we create opportunities in our congregation, synod, outdoor ministry, or campus ministry for people to use their gifts and be recognized for them, we are raising up new leaders. When our rostered ministers share their call stories, including both the clarity and joys as well as the doubts and struggles that were a part of their journey, they foster an imagination for call and ministry. When we pray that God would invite more people into service for the sake of the church and the world, we open hearts to God's invitation. When you are exploring staffing options, you might consider serving as an internship site and share your joy in ministry with someone eager to explore and learn.

Our NEMN Synod has created a special fund for candidates to access counseling and spiritual direction, both of which contribute to their ability to be healthy leaders and establish a pattern of seeking supports for their health. Gifts to this fund are always appreciated.

Thank you for your support of candidacy, through your mission support dollars, your encouragement of your fellow congregants to explore ministry, and your prayers.



Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus for the Integrity of Creation to the Abba (Great Mystery),

FY2025 (February 1, 2025 to January 31, 2026) was a tremendous privilege of Christ's One Heart to be invited as an Episcopal priest canonically resident in the Episcopal Diocese of Minnesota to be in service as your Director for Evangelical Mission for both the ELCA, ELCA Region 3, Northeastern Minnesota Synod, and most importantly the 125 faith communities who are spiritual homes/sacred places for over 50K souls who are all on a journey outward and inward. The respectful conversations I was able to co-curate through this shared ministry across so many previously held barriers between factions continues to bespeak of "Holy Cow" and "Of course."

By providing accompaniment, equipment and resources to congregational leaders and rostered word and sacrament ministers, rostered word and service ministers, plus SAMs, I have witnessed the depth and breadth of our journey together here, "Wow." Thank you and Mligwech for this gift of a renewed sense of the Holy Spirit embedding, embodying, extending, and enacting the mystery of the Holy Trinity, One Creator. Normally, I would take this time to draw your attention to some of the needs we responded to and on several occasions met. Also, some of the new experiments in ministry we started to meet unmet needs previously invisible to us. But, what I would most like to draw your attention to and offer you as the one reading this annual report is an invitation to "think impossibly."

Why now, are you being invited by this DEM to 'think impossibly?' Because imagination is now requisite for anyone to practice and thereby experience their faith in the living Christ Who is both With and In Between each soul. What is lovingly prepared and offered to you below is an invitation to afford more salience (i.e., priming the pump on the wellspring of life) to emerge within your particular personal, interpersonal and transpersonal situation. Basically, I really want to see each soul who identifies as Lutheran to imagine with me HOW we might begin together here, the work of "*Seeing God, Again, for the First Time.*"

A Spiritual Revival for Renewed Senses of the Sacred

There is nothing to do, but stay ... committed to an unfolding story with no real beginning and no real ending, unless the Alpha-point and Omega-point are at the same time both a particle and a wave of light. Perhaps, now more than ever before in human story-sharing, we are at a point of crisis (cf., Christ-point) then our story actually saves us. How then, might we learn to see God, again, for the first time and retain our human agency in the social arenas we negotiate, navigate, and narrate through on a daily basis?

Ultimately, the focal point of our fidelity will be revealed ... by a person, place, or thing who elects to face us and share with us what they deem to be the most relevant aspect of our unfolding story without a beginning or ending, and yet still deemed to be the only reliable reality worth approaching to seek the truth. Moreover, she/he/they who receives the focal point

of our fidelity will be the one who elects to face us and share with us what is also most reverent in our unfolding story whose mystery is manifold.

In the meantime, we are all experiencing the invitation to think impossibly ..., because both our external world and internal lives are growing exponentially in complexity. How could the manifold mystery of our unfolding story share and face us, again? Is there any child-like wonder still standing upright in between God and human suffering; the relative journey inward and outward through life? These are the open ended inquiries, that renew our spiritual senses for seeing God again, for the first time.

Final Gifts always hold the most aspiration ..., since everything, everywhere, all at once is clearly and lovingly seeing God, again, for the first time and still remembering the first gifts of faith, trust, and confidence in the person, place and thing of God With and In Between each of us. Justification and Sanctification *by* Grace, the beginning and ending, the inner journey and outer journey, the Alpha and Omega are simultaneously both particle and wave of Light, affording us an allowance to think impossibly *through* Godly play and faithful imagination.

Commentary

This reflective spiritual text explores the idea of rediscovering the sacred in a time of crisis and growing complexity. The author suggests humanity stands at a pivotal moment where our shared stories have the power to save us, prompting the central question: how do we learn to see God again, as if for the first time?

The text argues that our deepest loyalties are revealed through relationship — through whoever chooses to face us and honestly share what matters most in our ongoing human story. This mutual vulnerability becomes a source of both truth and reverence. The author calls readers to embrace “impossible thinking,” acknowledging that the mystery of life — both inner and outer — is expanding beyond easy comprehension. Childlike wonder is presented as the bridge between divine presence and human suffering.

The piece closes on a note of grace and hope: that everything, everywhere is caught up in a simultaneous act of rediscovering God. The traditional theological concepts of justification and sanctification, beginning and ending, Alpha and Omega, are reframed as two sides of the same reality — like a particle and a wave of light — inviting us into faithful imagination and “Godly play” as ways of engaging the sacred.

Central theme: In a world of overwhelming complexity, recovering a sense of wonder and openness is itself a spiritual act — one that allows us to encounter the divine freshly, repeatedly, and together.

Commentary section by Claude Sonnet 4.6 (Anthropic AI)

**“A NEW CREATION IS EVERYTHING!” GALATIANS 6:15B.
SYNOD ASSEMBLY 2026**

My name is Joy Hensel, and I am grateful to serve as Synod Minister for Mental Health and Wellness for the Northeastern Minnesota Synod (contracted, 20 hours per week).

Over the past year, our synod's theme has been Sparking Hope, rooted in Isaiah 40:31: "But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint." This year has brought many opportunities to partner with ministries across the synod and beyond, demonstrating that integrating mental health into ministry creates numerous moments that spark hope.



The Synod's Mental Health and Wellness team is a wonderful group of ministry professionals and lay leaders who meet each month with enthusiasm to listen, share, and support mental wellness throughout our synod.

Current members include Jon Moe (MS, RN, PHN), Minister Dave Erdmann (SAM), Deacon Kari Olson, Rev. Christie Manisto, Rev. Tim



Ehling, and Rev. Trish Jorgenson. This dedicated team actively incorporates mental wellness into events such as the Fall Theological Conference, Walking Together, All Youth Gathering, and Synod Assembly by



advocating for and creating safe spaces, encouraging healthy movement, educating and empowering leaders through sessions, and providing a resource table with helpful materials. They have also thoughtfully developed worship components focused on healing, integrated mental health into their own congregations, and continue to brainstorm



ideas to support and nurture everyone's well-being across the synod. I am grateful for their authenticity, thoughtful intentionality, and deep investment in this synod ministry.

Throughout the Synod, congregations inspire hope by collaborating to host mental health nights for youth, families, and communities. For the third consecutive year,



Bethesda in Carlton, Salem in Mahtowa, and Zion and Our Savior's in Cloquet gathered to learn about resilience, mindfulness, and prayer, with a focus on Psalm 48:9. I was also invited to join



energetic youth and dedicated adult leaders at Immanuel in Brunswick, and Grace and Calvary in Mora, where we discussed what to say and do when a friend faces mental

health challenges. It was a joy to return to Milaca with Zion and Trinity Lutheran for a Confirmation Night themed "Recharge and Revitalize: The Epic Adventure of Tending to Our Body, Mind, and Spirit." This year, 20 congregations across the Synod invited me to preach and/or present on mental wellness. It's truly inspiring to see congregations eager



to plant seeds of hope by creatively integrating mental health support into their activities. We are better together!

I am grateful for invitations and opportunities to lead workshops and serve as a resource for synod ministries, organizations, and gatherings, including the First Call and Candidacy retreats/gatherings,



Walking Together, the Interims, the Women of the ELCA (WELCA) Summer Conference, the WELCA Heartland Conference gathering, the Lake Superior Conference meeting, the Lay Leader Network, the Region 3 Hunger and Justice team retreat, Camp Onomia's Church Workers retreat, the upcoming Clearwater Forest Camp Ministry Leadership Retreat, the Youth Ministry Connect event in Bismark, North Dakota, the Holistic Stewardship webinars for Generous Together with the NE and SE Synods, and Youth Leadership Camp. This year's All Youth Gathering focused

on mental health and wellness. I had opportunities to educate, equip, and empower people of all ages at the Youth Leadership retreat, at All Youth Gathering trainings, and throughout the All Youth Gathering, through mental health moments, workshops, a resource table, and a safe space within the larger gathering space where all could find refuge.



I continue to nurture partnerships with mental health professionals and specialists, including Molly Johnson, Public Health Educator and Northeast MN Suicide Prevention Regional Coordinator at Carlton County Public Health and Human Services. This year, Molly and I hosted

an event for the Laurentian Conference and QPR training for the Lake Superior Conference meeting. Carlton County PHHS invited us to be part of a film Story North Productions is creating to share our partnership and the work we are doing throughout the Synod. I give thanks for the "fake" audience that showed up on a weekday morning at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in Duluth for the recording! Molly has also invited me to join the Regional Substance Abuse and Suicide Prevention gatherings, which are creating new and exciting opportunities with the St. Louis County Suicide Prevention Coalition and the Minnesota Alliance on Problem Gambling. I also look forward to attending the inaugural Minnesota Suicide Prevention Conference, "Hope in Action: Building Community Connection to Prevent Suicide," in Duluth in May.



Reflecting on this year's theme, Sparking Hope, and the Synod's core values, it has been a year of supporting congregations and ministry professionals through crises, exhaustion, grief, conflict, joys, and gratitude. I thank the many ministry professionals, lay leaders, youth, families, and councils who have reached out and used Synod resources to support and strengthen their ministries. I look forward to collaborating with you to explore opportunities and determine how I can best serve your ministry and the Synod. There is ongoing energy to integrate mental health into ministry, and I am committed to addressing mental wellness needs and empowering you to share God's love in Christ Jesus. Thanks be to God!

Joy Hensel, MA, LADC, ADC-MN, Synod Minister for Mental Health and Wellness
Joy.hensel@nemnsynod.org

Report of the Vice-President 2026
Rachel Berry
Northeastern MN Synod

Greetings Northeastern Minnesota Synod!

“A new creation is everything! As for those who will follow this rule - peace be upon them, and mercy” - Galatians 6:15b-16a

In Galatians 5, Paul urging Galatians to place their faith in God and God’s promises to them and not within the norms (in this case on circumcision) some people are pressuring them to do to show faithfulness to the ‘laws’ of Moses. In Galatians 6, this conversation continues. We see Paul encouraging the Galatians to remember that when we “Bear one another’s burdens, . . .you will fulfill the law of Christ” (6:2) Paul later says, “If you sow the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the Spirit”(6:8b) and what we do for the neighbor should be for the good of all (6:10b)! We then get Paul’s words “For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything; A new creation is everything!” (6:15) – God in Christ Jesus is the point. Our neighbors are the point. We, together, are a new creation because of Jesus!

I’ve been thinking about new creations lately. To create something is to bring it into existence. . . to cause something based on an action. It even means to “invest (someone) with a new rank or title!” (Oxford Dictionary). The triune God in Christ’s resurrection did all of this for the Galatians and others so long ago, for us today, and for those yet to come. This is our story.

This is also fitting for today and for this Synod Assembly as we gather. Our synod will be electing a new bishop and a new vice president. This will be a bit of a new creation that we are called into. New creations are exciting, scary, challenging, and filled with curiosity and wonder. A new creation is also surrounded by Christ and the neighbor (think of our baptisms!). I ask you to keep our current and future leaders in your prayers as we trust God to guide us into this *newness*.

For eight years, I have had the privilege of serving as your Vice President. My term will end this summer. I want to thank you for entrusting me with this role in our synod. I would like to think I have stewarded this role well and faithfully. I’ve treasured the leaders on Synod Council that you have raised up and elected over this time – those who completed their terms over the years and those who currently serve. They have each taught me about the importance of centering our work in Christ and carefully discerning how to steward our mission and ministry that we share in the Northeast Minnesota Synod. I cannot thank them enough for their leadership. If you meet a synod council member during our Synod Assembly, thank them for serving our church.

A little about Synod Council:

As Vice President of our synod, I am a Lay Leader who serves on the executive committee of the Synod and is chair of the Synod Council (much like your own church council presidents).

As anyone who has been in leadership knows, it is a humbling experience to serve God and serve one another. I am so thankful that I don't do this alone. I am honored to serve on our synod council with lay and rostered leaders from across our synod. They are Christ-centered, thoughtful, fun, genuine, intelligent leaders that work hard to steward our synod's mission and ministry. Below is information about what our Synod Council does.

Synod Council:

Chapter 10 of our Synod Constitution explains the structure of our synod council. We have about 20 people who serve on the council and are each a member of a congregation within our synod. The synod council includes four officers: Our Bishop, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer. We have sixteen conference and at-large members. Each conference of our synod – Heartland, Kettle River, Laurentian, Living Waters, and Superior vote to nominate a layperson and a clergyperson from their conference for election to the synod council. These names are then included on the ballot during the synod assembly. An additional six at-large members are elected by the assembly, which include a youth, a young adult, a minister of Word and Service (Deacon), and a person of multicultural heritage. All council members, excluding officers, are elected by the synod assembly for a three-year term with the ability for re-election to a second term.

Responsibilities:

S10.03 of our synod constitution outlines duties of the synod council. We are called to exercise trusteeship on behalf of this synod and steward the mission and ministry we share. We hold regular quarterly meetings via Zoom or in-person/Zoom hybrid. Each meeting, we spend time in devotion, review the minutes of our past meetings, approve the agenda, care for roster items (authorize On Leave from Call requests, retirement requests, specialized calls, and extend interim calls for rostered ministers of our synod), and receive reports of our synod's mission and ministry. We oversee and care for the budget of our synod. We discern and make funding decisions that fit the mission, vision, resolutions, and strategic plan goals of our synod, and we appoint individuals to fill any synod council vacancies until the next regular meeting of the synod assembly.

Prior to the synod assembly, we consider our synod budget for 2027 and provide recommendations to the synod assembly, we present recommendations on our synod compensation guidelines, and we authorize our Synod Authorized ministers (SAMs) voice and vote at the synod assembly. We report on our actions to the Synod Assembly through the Report of the Synod Council.

I hope this gives a little perspective on our Synod Council and the responsibilities we share for the sake of Christ and our synod. I cannot thank the members of our synod council enough for their leadership. For those who will be completing their terms, thank you for the work you have done and the leadership you have provided. I also want to say thank you to our voting members for the leadership you bring to your congregation around our synod and your discernment during Synod Assembly. I ask for your prayers for our synod council leaders as we transition leadership this summer, and we keep you in our prayers.

God's peace and mercy be with you,
Rachel Berry

Report of the Synod Council 2025-2026

Rachel Berry, Synod Vice President

320-304-3647

rachel.c.berry@gmail.com

Synod Council Meeting

Hybrid In-person & Zoom

June 7, 2025

VOTED

- SC.25.06.1** Approved the minutes of the February regular meeting and the March special meeting.
- SC.25.06.2** Approved the Interim Covenant for Rev. Mary Kay Ashley to serve First Lutheran Little Falls effective May 1, 2025.
- SC.25.06.3** Motion to receive synod financial report. Approved pending audit.
- SC.25.06.4** Motion to give each seminary student \$500 from the scholarship fund and additional money from the Nancy Paulson estate restricted funds. Approved.

Adjourned.

Synod Council Meeting

Hybrid In-person & Zoom

September 27, 2025

VOTED

- SC.25.09.01** Approved the minutes of the June regular meeting.
- SC.25.09.02** Approved “On Leave from Call” status for four pastors.
- SC.20.09.03** Approved updated Emmaus Fund documents. One council member abstained from voting.
- SC.25.09.04** Approved \$2000/applicant (2 total) for the Seminarian Debt Relief Fund disbursements.
- SC.25.09.05** Request from Hunger Committee for \$5,000 micro grant program. Motion was approved to table pending further discussion with the committee.
- SC.20.09.06** Motion was approved to deny request to realign Hope, Toivola to the Kettle River Conference.
- SC.25.09.07** Motion to receive synod financial reports. Approved (pending) audit.

Adjourned.

Special Meeting of the Synod Council

Online Email Meeting

Oct 21-24, 2025

VOTED

- SC25.10.1** Motion to appoint the following individuals to serve on the 2026 Bishop Election Committee. Motion was approved.
- (Deacon Susan Williams, Synod Staff liaison)
 - Deacon Brenda Tibbetts, Trinity, Cook
 - Abby Hartog, Immanuel, Brunswick, youth member

- Chuck Peterson, Bethany, Remer
- Pastor David Anderson, St. Andrews, Grand Rapids
- Kali Kadelbach, Deacon candidate
- Carol Christenson, Salem, Hermantown
- Pastor John Stiles, Dean of Kettle River Conference, SC member
- Rick Gabriel, SAM at Bethany, Onamia
- Pastor Christina Johnson, Zion Cloquet
- Saari Kroschel, Camp Onomia Program Director

Synod Council Meeting

Online Zoom

December 6, 2025

VOTED

- SC.25.12.01** Approved the minutes of the September regular meeting and the October E-meeting.
- SC.25.12.02** Approved the appointment of Dr. Frederick Ness to fill the Heartland Conference vacancy.
- SC.25.12.03** Approved the appointment of Pr. Luke Lekander to the Synod Committee on Discipline.
- SC.25.12.04** Approved synod call to Deacon Stephanie Engel-Brooks.
- SC.25.12.05** Approved synod call to Deacon Colleen Bernu to work with the Broken Lands Trust as Title Coordinator for Communal Curriculum Development.
- SC.25.12.06** Approved motion to accept on-leave status for five pastors.
- SC.25.12.07** Approved the request for retirement of Rev. Michelle Ruen.
- SC.25.12.08** Motion to receive synod financial reports. Approved pending audit.
- SC.25.12.09** Motion to use \$3500 of interest earned from Synod CD's coming due in December to show commitment to support the DEMs ELCA grants and to use \$2000 to support the RIC training support. Approved.
- SC.25.12.10** Motion to authorize the CD and remaining interest to reinvest the CD when it comes due. Approved.
- SC.25.12.11** Approved a motion to pay the full MN FPL of 0.66% entirely from the synod, unless Deacon Susan requests otherwise.
- SC.25.12.12** Approved the motion for the 2026 housing allowance for synod staff pastors.

Adjourned.

Synod Council Meeting

Online Zoom

February 21, 2026

VOTED

- SC.26.02.01** Approved the minutes from the December regular meeting.
- SC.26.02.02** Approved the request for "On Leave" status for two pastors.
- SC.26.02.03** Approved retirement request for Rev. Steven Rye.

- SC26.02.04** Approved the compensation adjustment for the core synod staff to bring to guidelines.
- SC26.02.05** Approved salary adjustment for bishop with addition of CPI adjustment annually.
- SC26.02.06** Motion to return proposed 2027 budget back to finance committee for further review.
- SC26.02.07** Motion to send to finance committee the recommendation to fund \$7500 to support the initiative at Holy Cross Lutheran Church Duluth Heights. Approved.
- 2026.02.05** Motion to authorize the Synod Authorized Ministers to be voting members of the Synod Assembly. Approved.
- 2026.02.06** Motion to authorize Brother Matt Cobb to be a voting member of the Synod Assembly. Approved.
- 2026.02.07** Motion to recommend the 2027 compensation guidelines to the synod assembly. Approved.
- 2026.02.07** Motion to recommend constitution changes to be presented to synod assembly. Approved.

Adjourned.

Special Meeting of the Synod Council

Online Zoom

March 26, 2026

VOTED

- SC.26.03.01** Approved the motion to support the Holy Cross Strategic initiative grant request with a total of \$7500 over 2 years, \$5000 in 2026 and \$2500 in 2027.
- SC.26.03.02** Motion to receive Statement of Activity, and Financial Position for 2025 (pending audit). Approved.
- SC26.03.03** Motion to table recommendation of 2027 spending plan and return to finance committee. Approved.
- SC26.03.04** Motion to recommend the LYO resolution to Synod Assembly. Passed with one vote of opposition.

Adjourned.

Special Meeting of the Synod Council

Online Zoom

March 30, 2026

VOTED

- SC26.03.01** Recommend the adoption of the proposed 2027 budget at the Synod Assembly. Approved.

Adjourned

Northeastern Minnesota Synod, ELCA

3/27/2026

Mission Spending Plan

Fiscal years 2025 - 2027

Fiscal year is February 1 through January 31

	2025 Spending	2025 Actual	Adopted 2026 Spending Plan	Synod Council Recommended 2027 Spending Plan	Notes:
Revenue					
4100 Mission Support	1,000,000	986,919.78	990,000	975,000	
4300 DEM Position ELCA Grant	82,500	94,918.44	95,000		90,000 Move to designated
4301 DEM Expenses ELCA Grant	10,000	10,000.00	10,000		9,000 Move to designated
4400 Interest Income	25,000	13,929.44	10,000	10,000	
4500 Misc Income	4,000	2,370.12	4,000	2,000	
4900 Transfer of Reserves	30,400	30,400.00	22,000	0	
Total Revenue	1,151,900	1,138,537.78	1,131,000	987,000	
Expenditures					
5000 ELCA & Ministry Partners					
5100 ELCA Apportionment	400,000	399,702.12	396,000	390,000	40%
5210 Luther Seminary	10,000	10,000.00	10,000	2,500	
5220 Lutheran Advocacy - MN	2,000	2,000.00	2,000	2,000	
5230 Lutheran Campus Ministry	48,000	48,000.00	24,000	24,000	
5240 MN Council of Churches	500	500.00	500	500	
5250 Region 3 Archives	5,000	4,554.00	5,000	5,000	
5260 Twin Ports Ministry to Seafarers	6,000	6,000.00	6,000	6,000	
5320 Companion Synod Support	1,000	1,000.00	1,000	1,000	
Total 5000 ELCA & Ministry Partners	472,500	471,756.12	444,500	431,000	
5400 Synod Programming					
5310 Together Here Ministries	6,000	6,000.00	3,000	3,000	
5330 EcoFaith	3,000	3,000.00	1,500	1,500	
5340 Lay Leader Network	2,000	2,000.00	2,000	2,000	
5470 Gather Network (Young Adults)				2,000	new line item
Mission Interpreter			500	0	
5410 Leadership Support	10,000	8,072.87	10,000	10,000	
5510 Synod Youth Ministry	10,000	9,999.96	10,000	10,000	
Total 5400 Synod Programming	31,000	29,072.83	27,000	28,500	
6100 Salaries & Benefits	544,000	619,862.21	554,000	424,900	466,777 (est. salary/benefit costs in 2026 without DEM)
7600 Synod Activities					
7610 Synod Assembly	1,000	1,000.00	1,000	1,000	
7620 Synod Council	1,000	0.00	1,000	1,000	
7630 Special Synod Committees	0	0.00	0	0	
7640 Intersynodical events	1,000	1,000.00	1,000	1,000	
Total 7600 Synod Activities	3,000	2,000.00	3,000	3,000	
Administrative Expenses					
7101 Rent	30,000	30,000.00	30,000	30,000	
7110 Telephone	5,000	6,199.96	5,000	6,000	
7130 Postage/Mailings/Postage Met	4,000	3,079.58	3,000	3,500	
7140 Printing	1,000	286.48	1,000	500	
7150 Supplies	2,000	2,057.13	2,500	2,500	
7160 Equipment Maintenance	7,000	7,547.94	4,000	4,000	
7170 Digital Resources	5,000	6,151.90	5,000	6,500	
7330 Office Equipment	3,000	1,325.98	3,000	3,000	
7340 Office & Grounds	500		0		
7410 Bank fees & service charges	500	35.18	100	100	
7420 Accounting & Auditing	7,000	1,514.66	10,000	10,000	
7430 Discretionary	400		400		
7450 Insurance	8,500	7,370.77	9,000	9,000	
7470 Legal & Related Expenses	500	125.00	500	500	
7510 Staff Travel	17,000	23,927.79	22,000	24,000	
7520 ELCA DEM Expenses	10,000	10,000.00	10,000		9,500 Move to designated
Bishop Election in 2026					
Total Administrative Expenses	101,400	99,622.37	105,500	99,600	
Total Expenses	1,151,900	1,222,314	1,134,000	987,000	
Income over Expenses	0	-83,775.75	0	0	

Statement of Financial Position
Northeastern Minnesota Synod, ELCA
As of January 31, 2026

Distribution account	Total
Assets	
Current Assets	
Bank Accounts	
1210 NO, Synod Checking, being closed/fraud activity	-25,401.75
1211 NBC Synod Checking (2026)	50,000.99
1220 NBC Savings	114,874.03
1230 NBC CD (five months)	500,000.00
1231 NBC CD - Shelter Next Duluth (5 months)	270,000.00
Total for Bank Accounts	\$909,473.27
Other Assets	
Foundation Accounts	
1310 ELCA Synod Foundation	99,284.97
1320 ELCA Foundation/Nancie Paulson Estate	157,448.22
1330 Emmaus Fund/ELCA Foundation	96,110.87
1900 Unrealized Gains/Loses	-71,036.68
Total for Foundation Accounts	\$281,807.38
Total for Assets	\$1,191,280.65
Liabilities	
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Accounts Payable	
2100 Global Missions Support	8,248.00
2200 Hunger Related Funds	28,152.10
2300 Misc Liabilities	
Total for 2300 Misc Liabilities	\$36,400.10
3000 Restricted Funds	
3101 Synod Assembly Income/Expenses	19,967.82
3110 EcoFaith Network	66,053.33
3120 Together Here Ministries	625.56
3130 Reconciled in Christ Fund	726.16
3140 Shelter Next Duluth	18,399.00
3150 NERCC Chaplaincy Ministry	1,287.65
3210 Honduras Companion Synod Fund	5,203.33
3220 Russia ELCIR/Ingria Companion Synod Fund	6,217.54

3330 South Andhra India (SALC) Companion Synod Fund	15,245.97
3410 Afghan Refugee Family Support	0.00
3420 Current for Curran Solar Project	0.00
3430 ELCA Hunger Grant	5,500.00
3431 Schmidt Ride Against Hunger	0.00
3432 Hunger/Justice Mini Grant Program	2,360.00
3433 Region 3 Hunger Retreat	0.00
3434 WELCA Bike Walk	0.00
3435 Synod Bike Ride	2,910.00
3450 Luther Seminary Grocery Assistance	0.00
3499 American Cancer Society	0.00
3510 Candidacy Support Fund	6,727.85
3520 First Call Continuing Education	-1,109.53
3530 Seminarian Debt Relief Fund	-2,971.01
3535 Seminarian Scholarship Fund	2,660.55
3540 SAM Education & Training	23,090.77
3550 Rostered Ministers Support	1,609.00
3551 Women's Rostered Ministry Retreat	1,984.66
3555 Fall Theological Conference	2,032.58
3560 Boundary Workshops (Rostered/SAMs)	1,587.01
3561 Healthy Boundaries	807.92
3570 Mental Health Initiative	3,689.39
3575 Mental Health Programming	0.00
3580 Lay Leader Network	6,591.06
3610 Bishop's Fund	547.98
3611 Synod Neighbor to Neighbor Fund	811.61
3620 Region 3 Bishops & Staffs Retreat	0.00
3650. Corrine Wehvelainen Gift	7,433.52
3670 Sale of Synod Properties	416,578.71
3690 Emmaus Fund	8,967.05
3691 Emmaus Fund Grant Money	521.00
3730 DEM/DEI Initiatives	0.00
3731 Broken Lands Podcasts	7,435.93
3732 Fresh Expressions/Evangelism (2026)	4,682.62
3733 Online Evangelism (2026)	937.70
3740 Walking Together Events	405.26
3750 Vitality Congregations/Reboot	505.01
3755 Stewardship and Generosity	12,224.23
3756 Godly Play - synod youth	1,500.00
3757 CYF 2025 Fall Retreat	146.14
3758 Reflective Leadership Grant (Duke/TM)	1,945.45
3759 All Youth Gathering	0.00
3761 Quality of Call - Region 3 (WND fiscal)	1,345.36

3800 Kettle River COOP Ministry	-7,146.04
3801 Kettle River Coop - Vitality Grant	29,617.05
3900 Young Adult Grant/Gather	2,199.58
3902 Beloved You!	3,506.47
3910 Synod Car Fund (2026)	6,000.00
3950 Synod Journey/ELCA Youth Gathering 2024	-30,100.72
3961 Prepay - Seafarer's Ministry	0.00
3962 Prepay - Luther Seminary	0.00
Total for 3000 Restricted Funds	\$661,260.52
Other Current Liabilities	
2301 Deferred Revenue - EcoFaith Summit	9,979.05
8000 Payroll Liabilities	-19,077.51
Total for Other Current Liabilities	-\$9,098.46
Total for Liabilities	\$688,562.16

	Synod Assembly 2025 Minutes
	<i>Living Christ's Wide Embrace: Echoing Shalom</i> <i>Isaiah 55: 11-12</i>
	Northeastern Minnesota Synod ELCA 38 th Synod Assembly May 3-4, 2025 Breezy Point Resort Breezy Point, Minnesota
<i>Empowering congregations and ministries to encounter and share the love of God in Christ Jesus.</i>	In Person and via Zoom

Plenary Session 1

Welcome

- Workshops and opening worship proceeded the opening of the assembly.
- Rachel Berry, Synod Vice President, gave opening remarks.
- Bp. Amy Odgren gave opening remarks.

Quorum Report

- Anne Lachel, Registrar, gave the quorum report:
 - 5 Ministers of Word and Service
 - 64 Ministers of Word and Sacrament under call
 - 4 Ministers of Word and Sacrament retired
 - 159 lay members
 - 8 Synod Authorized Ministers
 - 5 Synod council members
 - 245 voting member's total
 - 70% lay voting members, 30 % Rostered
 - Quorum is present

Explanation of Voting Procedures

- Rev. Phil Berge, Parliamentarian, explained the voting procedures.

Agenda

- Jon Moe, Synod Council Secretary, presented the assembly agenda.
- Approved by unanimous consent.

SA 25.05.01 Approval of assembly agenda.

Minutes of 2024 Assembly

- Jon Moe presented minutes of the 2024 Synod Assembly.
- Approved by unanimous consent.

SA 25.05.02 Approval of minutes from 2024 assembly minutes.

Rules and Procedures

- Rev. Phil Berge presented the rules and procedures for the assembly
- Vote to approve the rules and procedures.

SA 25.05.03 Approved the presented rules and procedures for the assembly.

Presentation of 2026 Spending Plan

- Theresa Jacobson, Treasurer, presented the proposed budget via video.
- Questions were raised about the proposed budget and answered by Rev. Rollie Bockbrader, synod staff for Operations and Congregational Care.

Compensation Guidelines Presentation

- Deacon Susan William, Synod Minister for Leadership Support, presented the proposed compensation guidelines for 2026.

Nomination Committee Report

- Rev. Kevin Olson, chair of the Nominating Committee, presented the nominations.

Conference Nominations

Lake Superior Conference

Synod Council, lay	Kristin Peterson
Synod Council, rostered	Rev. Kim Sturtz
Synod Nominating, lay	
Synod RCM, rostered	Rev. Laura Berdahl
Synod RCM, lay	Robert Jenko

Laurentian Conference

Synod Nominating, rostered	Rev. Kevin Olson
Synod Nominating, lay	Barb Tanem
Synod RCM, rostered	Rev. Kevin Olson
Synod RCM lay	Crystal Whitney

Living Waters Conference

Synod Nominating, rostered	Rev. Andrea Bonneville DeNaples
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Synod RCM, rostered	Rev. Lori Gordon
Synod RCM, lay	Phil Johnston

Heartland Conference

Synod Nominating, rostered	Rev. Sarah Stadler
Synod Nominating, lay	Ashleigh Wappler
Synod RCM, rostered	Rev. Paul Brown
Synod RCM, lay	Sue Lyback

Kettle River Conference

Synod Council rostered	Rev. Erik Rundquist
Synod Nominating, rostered	
Synod RCM, rostered	Rev. John Stiles
Synod RCM, lay	Elaine Garaghty

- Lake Superior Conference nominations accepted by unanimous consent.
- Laurentian Conference nominations accepted by unanimous consent.
- Living Waters Conference nominations accepted by unanimous consent.
- Heartland Conference nominations accepted by unanimous consent.
- Kettle River Conference nomination accepted by unanimous consent.

SA 25.05.04 All conference nominations accepted.

Synod Wide Nominations

Synod Committee on Discipline (six-year term ends 2031)

Rostered/male

Lay/male

Synod Consultation Committee (six-year terms end 2031)

Rostered/male

Lay/female

Synod Council At Large Positions (three-year terms)

Lay/multi-cultural

Lay/Young Adult	Kali Kadelbach
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- No nominations from the floor were brought forward.
- Motion and second to approve the uncontested ballot through floor vote.

SA 25.05.05 Approval of the uncontested ballot for the synod Council At Large Position of Lay/Young Adult.

Introduction and History of the RIC conversation process

- Rev. Jeff Davis, chair of the Welcome and Reconciling Team, presented an overview of the RIC conversation process.

Report from the Hunger/Justice Committee

- Rev. Sarah Stadler, chair of the Hunger, Justice, and Rural Life Committee, presented report and the “Holy Cow” Award.
- Sixteen congregations that gave \$10 or more per confirmed member to ELCA World Hunger were recognized.
- The “Holy Cow” Award was presented to St. Paul’s in Hackensack as the top leader in giving per confirmed member (seventeen congregation in total that gave \$10 or more per confirmed member to ELCA World Hunger).

Announcements

- Amy Loken spoke on Quilt Auction and Marketplace.
- Rev. Taryn Montgomery spoke about the launch of the Emmaus Fund.

Plenary Session 2

Announcement

- Service of Holy Communion preceded the start of plenary session 2
- Announcements by Rachel Berry

Quorum Report

- Report by Ann Lachel
 - 5 Ministers of Word and Service
 - 64 Ministers of Word and Sacrament under call
 - 4 Ministers of Word and Sacrament retired
 - 159 lay members
 - 8 Synod Authorized Ministers
 - 5 Synod council members
 - 245 voting member’s total
 - 70% lay voting members, 30 % Rostered
 - Quorum is present

Welcome and Reconciling Team

- Introduction by Bp Amy
- Instructions on activity by Deacon Susan Williams

ELCA Presentation

- Vance Blackfox, ELCA representative and Director of Indigenous Ministries, gave a presentation from the ELCA.

Break

Plenary Session 3

Mental Health Moment

- Joy Hensel, Synod Minister for Mental Health and Wellness, shared a moment as we returned for the start of session 3.

Lutheran Social Services Presentation

- Rev. Kathryn Tiede, LSS Representative, gave a greeting and presentation from LSS.
- Announced the Servant of Christ award to an ecumenical partner, Peace United Church of Christ in Duluth.

WELCA Greeting

- Jeannine Bruesewitz, Synod representative of the WELCA, gave a greeting and report to the assembly.

Report of Bishop

- Bp Amy Odgren presented her report to the assembly.
- The report highlighted activities focused on the four core values of the synod: Welcoming, Connecting, Reforming, and Supporting.
- Additional items, not in Bulletin of Reports
 - Grocery support for international students at Luther Seminary
 - *Pray Without Ceasing* Initiative
 - Theme leading to the 2026 assembly: Sparking Hope



Anniversaries of Ordination and Commissioning

Pastors: Five Years

Christina Kadelbach
Patty Bjorklund
Kim Suhr
Becky Swanson

Pastors: Ten Years

Kim Sturtz
Mark Wagner

Pastors: Forty Years

Loren Anderson-Bauer
Judy Anderson-Bauer
Tim Bauer
Phil Berge
Jeff Holter
Juli Borgstrom
Nathan Sager
Donald Schultz

Pastors: Fifteen Years

Brendan Johnston
Kate Mensing

Pastors: Twenty Years

Greg Anderson
Hans Anderson
David W Smith

Pastors: Twenty-five Years

David Carlson
Mark Skinner
Janice FitzGibbon
Reggie Denton
Rebekah Wagner

Pastors: Thirty Years

Erika Nilsen
Paul Erdal

Pastors: Thirty-five Years

Gary Guptill
Ellen Taube
Cynthia Hjerpe
John Lundberg
P. Joy Armstrong

125th Anniversaries

First Lutheran Church – Hibbing
St. Peter Lutheran Church – Canyon

In Memoriam

Rev. James Bailey 1/27/2024
Rev. Erika Foss 11/22/2024
Rev. Greg Garmer 12/1/2024

Holy Closures

Pastors: Fifty Years

Larry Johnson
Craig Carlson
Aaron Lofgren
John Sippola
Dennis Peterson
Larry Smith
Paul Svingen
Michael Wittkamper

Pastors: Fifty-five Years

Alan Hendrickson
Berhanu Alengo
Keith Piller

Pastors: Sixty Years

Carl Heidel
Gerald Augustine
Raymond Holter

Pastors: Sixty-five Years

Dan Bergeland
David Bolstorff

Pastors: Seventy-five Years

Pastor Henry Aukee

Deacons

Robert August Jalonon – 20 years
Janet Peterson – 40 years

Synod Authorized Minister

Dee Hillstrom – 25 years

Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Wright

Synod Council Recommendations

2026 NE MN Synod Compensation Guidelines

- Motion from synod council, second received to approve compensation guidelines
- No discussion
- Prayer and song before voting.
- Vote done by cards, passed

SA 25.05.06 Approved the recommended 2026 Compensation guidelines.

Announcements

- Rachel Berry made announcements.
- Lunch prayer led by Lutheran camp staff.

Lunch

Plenary Session 4

Mental Health Moment

- Joy Hensel brought us back with a mental health moment.

Report from the Reference, Counsel, and Memorial Committee

- Rev. John Styles, chair of the RCM Committee, presented all resolutions and memorials.

25-1B Resolution: Welcoming All to be Reconciling in Christ

- Updated resolution with grammatical corrections to the whereas and resolved sections. The revised wording to the Synod Welcome Statement (in the resolved section) presented to assembly.
 - “The Northeastern Minnesota Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is committed to the inclusive hospitality of God which welcomes all people into the work of the church to proclaim Christ, serve the neighbor, and strive for justice and peace in the world. We embody this hospitality in our life together as synod through unapologetic welcome and affirmation of people of all sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, races and ethnicities, ages and abilities, and socio-economic or citizenship statuses. We embrace the calling to work for welcome and reconciliation through our commitment to antiracism and inclusion.”
 - Discussion on the resolution.

- Prayer and song before voting.
- Vote done by ballot

25-2A Resolution: Language in Public Discourse on Palestine-Israel

- Resolution presented to assembly.
 - Discussion on the resolution.
 - Prayer and song before voting.
 - Vote done by ballot.

25-3A Memorial to Churchwide Assembly: Language in Public Discourse on Palestine-Israel

- Memorial presented to assembly
 - Discussion on the memorial.
 - Prayer and song before voting.
 - Vote done by ballot.

25-4A Memorial to Churchwide Assembly: In Support of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women

- Memorial presented to assembly.
 - Discussion on the memorial.
 - Prayer and song before voting.
 - Vote done by ballot.

25-5A Memorial to Churchwide Assembly: In Support of National Day of Remembrance for Indian Boarding Schools

- Memorial presented to assembly.
 - Discussion on the resolution.
 - Prayer and song before voting.
 - Vote done by ballot.

Announcement

Stretch Break

Synod Council Recommendations

2026 NE MN Synod Spending Plan (Budget)

- Motion Rev. Greg Anderson and second to amend the proposed budget as follows:
 - Reducing 5410 total leadership support (from 10,000 to 7,000) 3,000
 - Eliminating 6199 non-employee compensation 2,000
 - Reducing 7420 audit/accounting (from 10,000 to 7,000) 3,000
 - Reducing 7510 staff travel (from 22,000 to 17,000) 5,000
 - Increasing 4900 transfer of revenues (from 22,000 to 25,000) 3,000

- Total reductions of 16,000
 - Increasing 5230 Campus Ministry (from 24,000 to 40,000) 16,000
 - Discussion on the motion to amend the budget.
 - Called question to end debate on amendment. Debate on amendment ended.
 - Vote on amendment. Motion on amendment failed.
- Discussion on budget as presented in bulletin of reports.
- Vote on proposed budget as presented in bulletin of reports.
- Budget passed.

SA 25.05.07 Approved the proposed 2026 budget as present in the bulletin of reports.

Report on RCM Votes

25-1B Resolution: Welcoming All to be Reconciling in Christ

Yes 215, No 9; total ballots 224 (96% yes)

SA 25.05.08 Approved the resolution on the synod welcome statement

25-2A Resolution: Language in Public Discourse on Palestine-Israel

Yes 209, No 11; total ballots 220 (95% yes)

SA 25.05.09 Approved the resolution on language in public discourse on Palestine-Israel.

25-3A Memorial to Churchwide Assembly: Language in Public Discourse on Palestine-Israel

Yes 206, No 8; total ballots 214 (96% yes)

SA 25.05.10 Approved the memorial on language in public discourse on Palestine-Israel.

25-4A Memorial to Churchwide Assembly: In Support of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women

Yes 24, No 0; total ballots 214 (100% yes)

SA 25.05.11 Approved the memorial in support of missing and murdered indigenous women.

25-5A Memorial to Churchwide Assembly: In Support of National Day of Remembrance for Indian Boarding Schools

Yes 213, No 1; total ballots 214 (99.5% yes)

SA 25.05.12 Approved the memorial in support of National Day of Remembrance for Indian boarding schools.

Resolutions of the 2024 Northeastern Minnesota Synod

Only the Therefore clauses are printed.

Resolution 25-1B

A Welcome Statement from the NE MN Synod: Welcoming All to be Reconciling in Christ

RESOLVED that the Northeastern Minnesota Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America become a Reconciling In Christ Synod by adopting the following welcome statement and committing to fulfill the aspirations of this statement in its public work and witness:

“The Northeastern Minnesota Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is committed to the inclusive hospitality of God which welcomes all people into the work of the church to proclaim Christ, serve the neighbor, and strive for justice and peace in the world. We embody this hospitality in our life together as synod through unapologetic welcome and affirmation of people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and expressions, races and ethnicities, ages and abilities, and socio-economic or citizenship statuses. We embrace the calling to work for welcome and reconciliation through our commitment to anti-racism and inclusion.” and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Minnesota Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America live out these commitments through a yearly financial contribution to Reconciling Works ministries, holding periodic *Building an Inclusive Church* trainings, promoting an annual RIC Sunday, and continue support of the Northeastern Minnesota Synod Welcome and Reconciling Team as they serve as a resource to congregations in our synod.

Resolution 25-2A

Resolution on Language in Public Discourse about Palestine-Israel

Resolved: that the Northeastern Minnesota Synod, ELCA, acting in assembly, charge **Sumud Northland** to prepare study/educational materials clarifying the language used by the synod and its congregations in public discourse regarding the ongoing crisis in Palestine-Israel and recommending changes in such language to reflect Palestinian reality.

Resolution 25-3A

Memorial on Language in Public Discourse about Palestine-Israel

Resolved: that the Northeastern Minnesota Synod, ELCA, acting in assembly, memorialize the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to authorize the preparation of study/educational materials clarifying language used in public discourse regarding the ongoing crisis in Palestine-Israel and to make recommendations to the Churchwide organization and its affiliates regarding the use of language in public discourse and advocacy that reflects Palestinian reality.

Resolution 25-4A

Memorial to ELCA Churchwide Assembly in support of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW)

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Minnesota Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct the churchwide organization to address the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women through the following actions:

Strengthen education by requesting Augsburg Fortress, ELCA Hunger Appeal, and the ELCA communications and service and justice staff work together to:

- Develop educational resources about the prevalence and origins of this crisis;
- Commemorate MMIW Awareness Day annually on May 5; and
- Promote the wearing of red and participation in educational opportunities and advocacy opportunities for missing and murdered Indigenous women.

Lament and repent by requesting Augsburg Fortress and the ELCA worship staff work together to:

- Provide prayers of repentance and intercession for congregational and synodical use; and
- Plan a public service at the 2028 Churchwide Assembly of lament and repentance that leads to further actions toward healing people.

Advance advocacy and partnership by requesting the ELCA service and justice, witnessing in society, and advocacy staff to:

- Support legislation at state, local, and national levels addressing MMIW; and
- Collaborate with governmental, ecclesiastical, and non-profit organizations to increase public awareness and provide concrete ways for congregations to support affected families through prayer, search efforts, and appropriate outreach.

Resolution 25-5A

Memorial to ELCA Churchwide Assembly in support of National Day of Remembrance for Indian Boarding Schools

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Minnesota Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to address the legacies of our church's role in Indian Boarding Schools through the following actions:

1. Actively invite and equip all congregations, synods, and affiliate ministries to commemorate the National Day of Remembrance for Indian Boarding Schools annually on or near September 30th;
2. Broaden and deepen awareness at congregation, synod, and churchwide levels of Christian and Lutheran roles in Indian boarding schools, through creation of adult and children/youth educational programs and materials and through consistent publishing of articles in all of the church's publications;
3. Provide on-going recognition of and support for the growing network of lay people and clergy volunteering their time in the work of the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative on Indian Boarding Schools (see www.elca.org/IndianBoardingSchools) to locate all known records related to the ELCA's predecessor bodies' involvement with Indian boarding and day schools and to educate others about Indian boarding schools;
4. Encourage ELCA affiliate ministries to commit to learning the truth of their involvement with Indian boarding schools, in partnership with the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative; and to responsibly create paths to healing and repair;
5. Organize and care for all information in the ELCA's possession that was recorded about Indian boarding and day schools and the students who attended them, forcibly or otherwise; carry out this work in partnership with the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative and the ELCA Archives; recognize that this information belongs to and is a source of healing for student survivors, their descendants, communities, and Tribal Nations; and ensure that the records and research are made accessible to Indian boarding school survivors and their families in a responsible manner; and
6. Identify sources of funding to sufficiently support research and organizing efforts; and to sufficiently support digitization and labeling of all ELCA Indian boarding school archival records.

2027 **Proposed Compensation and Professional Expense Guidelines
for Pastors, Deacons, Lay Program Staff,
Lay Professionals, Support Staff, and Church Musicians:
A Congregational Resource**

by NE MN Synod Council–February 21, 2026



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Dear friends in Christ,

In the Northeastern Minnesota Synod, we are called to walk together as we proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. The following *Compensation and Professional Expense Guidelines for Pastors, Deacons, Lay Professionals, Support Staff and Church Musicians: A Congregational Resource* is just that – a **guideline** for congregational leaders as you pray, think about, and discuss compensation for church staff. The purpose of this document is to provide fair and equitable compensation for rostered ministers and lay professionals serving in our synod. These guidelines are provided as a starting point for determining compensation. They are intended to be **minimum guidelines** and are presented as a tool for congregations and those serving in the church to use together so that decisions regarding compensation can be made in such a way that God’s mission flourishes.

These guidelines are intended to be used within a culture of generosity and gratitude; rejoicing in the many gifts and resources that are shared and received in the context of congregational ministry. Assisting each other to live, love, and lead generously, we strengthen our ministries and we grow stronger, healthier, and better equipped to carry out God’s work in the world.

These recommendations in compensation assume full-time responsibilities. Appropriate adjustments in defined compensation need to be made for those serving part-time and in bi-vocational venues.

Ministers of Word and Sacrament (pastors) and Ministers of Word and Service (deacons) have attended years of college and graduate school; they have been involved in required training such as Internship and Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE). In addition, many lay professionals also have specific education and advanced degrees. They, too, need to be recognized for skills, experience, and knowledge that is shared to build up the Body of Christ.

Please note that these proposed Guidelines have a few new changes from past years:

- **Cost of Living Adjustment: 2.8 %**
- **Base salary adjustment to align with neighboring synods**
- **Annual Financial Checklist for councils**
- **Portico language update**
- **Minnesota Paid Leave**
- **Minnesota Earned Sick and Safe Time (ESST) update**

Thank you for your partnership with your church leaders, with other congregations, the Northeastern Minnesota Synod, and the ELCA!

Together in Christ,

Amy J. Odgren, Bishop
Northeastern Minnesota Synod

Financial and Payroll Checklist for Congregational Councils [new addition]

- Portico Benefit Services
 - It is critically important that the congregational council verify the compensation listed on Portico's website for any employees receiving benefits through Portico Benefits Services since benefits are based partially on the most current compensation information for enrolled employees. This can be done by logging into the portal at www.porticobenefits.org and selecting EmployerLink (not the myPortico link, which is for employees only)
 - This update should be done any time that compensation changes are made, but at least once a year, by the person within the congregation who is authorized to access Portico Benefit Services online for the employer via Portico's EmployerLink
 - The congregational council should review annually who the users representing the employer are that are currently authorized to access the EmployerLink in Portico Benefit Services and make changes as needed (it is possible there could be more than one person with access to the EmployerLink)
 - It is advisable to have at least two people listed as users, in case the primary user can't access the EmployerLink in Portico. All users will regularly receive emails from Portico related to employers.
- Minnesota Paid Family & Medical Leave ("MPFML")
 - The congregational council should review annually whether the congregation's current Paid Time Off policy for covered employees clearly states how the benefits (regarding pay and time off) under that policy are to be coordinated with the benefits for MPFML – for example,
 - does the congregation's Paid time Off policy clearly state that a covered employee is or is not allowed by the congregation to use their accrued but unused Paid Time Off to "top off" the pay that the state will give them while out on MPFML (employers are not required to let their covered employees "top off" their pay)?
 - does the congregation's Paid Time Off policy clearly state that a covered employee can or can not use Paid Time Off in addition to the MPFML accrued, or, are the MPFML hours used to be applied concurrently with the employee's accrued Paid Time Off at the time of going out on leave?
 - The congregational council should review annually who the three current Responsible Parties are, as registered on the Minnesota Unemployment Insurance website, to confirm the names listed or make changes, as needed.
 - The congregational council should review annually who the current Minnesota Paid Leave Administrator is, as registered on the Minnesota Unemployment Insurance website, to confirm that the name listed is still the appropriate person or make changes, as needed.
 - The Minnesota Paid Leave Administrator should review annually the rate being assessed for the congregation's covered employees to determine if the rate is correct for the actual number of covered employees and contact to get it changed to the correct rate.
- Minnesota Earned Sick and Safe Time ("ESST")
 - The congregational council should review annually whether the current Paid Time Off policy for covered employees clearly states how the benefits (regarding pay and time off) under that policy coordinates with the benefits for ESST – for example,
 - does the congregation's Paid time Off policy clearly state that a covered employee is or is not allowed by the congregation to use their accrued but unused Paid Time Off in addition to their accrued ESST hours they are paid for (Minnesota does not require that ESST hours paid be in addition to accrued Paid Time Off)
- Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State
 - Annually (by December 31), a congregation is required to file an Annual Renewal for

- Minnesota Nonprofit Corporation with the Minnesota Secretary of State for which there is generally no fee for congregations
 - The name for the Corporate President should be updated, if it has changed since the last filing (this would generally be the current congregational president)
 - The name and daytime phone number for the daytime contact should also be updated, if it has changed since the last filing
 - Go to <https://mbisportal.sos.mn.gov/Business/Search> to file electronically
- Minnesota Department of Revenue for employers
 - The congregational council should review annually who the authorized users are for accessing online the electronic payment portal for Minnesota income taxes withheld from employee paychecks that are remitted either monthly or quarterly (there are several different user levels so there could be more than one person with access) to determine if any changes should be made and to make those changes
 - The congregational council should review annually whether payroll taxes are required to be remitted monthly based on the amount withheld, or, quarterly if less than the amount requiring monthly remittance
 - Go to <https://www.mndor.state.mn.us/tp/eservices/> to log in
- IRS for employers
 - There are several different ways employers can remit Federal payroll taxes. The congregational council should review annually whether an online account is currently in place for remitting payroll taxes and who the authorized users currently are to determine if any changes should be made and to make those changes. There is a way to remit payroll taxes without needing an online account, so it could be that an online account was never set up.
 - To remit payroll taxes electronically without needing to log in to an account, go to irs.gov/payments/direct-pay-with-bank-account and select Pay business tax
- IRS Form 1099-NEC (effective 01/01/2026)
 - The threshold for reporting certain payments on Form 1099-NEC for independent contractors was recently changed from \$600 per payee to \$2,000 per payee for 2026, and, increased for inflation in the years after 2026
 - At least annually, obtain Form W-9 Request for Taxpayer Identification Number and Certification from any new independent contractors that the congregation pays during the year meeting the threshold for that year
 - At least annually, review the payments of independent contractors for whether all the payments made by the congregation are of the type subject to reporting, as there may be some that are not

Understanding Your Pastor's Compensation Northeastern Minnesota Synod, ELCA

1. How is a pastor compensated?

A pastor's overall compensation has two components that include pay (in various forms) and benefits, such as health insurance.

2. What are the components of a pastor's pay?

A pastor's compensation consists of up to three components and can include:

- Base pay
- Housing allowance and/or housing equity allowance
- Social security allowance

These elements together are commonly referred to as the pastors "defined compensation".

3. Why do pastors have three pay components?

The short answer is tax rules. Pastors have special tax rules that can help them reduce their tax bill. Thus, congregations generally structure the pastor's compensation to help minimize the pastor's tax.

4. What is the base pay and how is it determined?

The base pay guideline is based on the pastor's overall years in the ministry. The base pay guidelines begin at \$46,429 and increase based on years of service.

5. What is the housing equity allowance?

If the pastor is provided a parsonage the congregation also provides a housing equity allowance. The housing equity allowance is intended to help the pastor accumulate capital in lieu of appreciation if they owned a home. The housing equity allowance guideline is 3% of defined compensation.

6. What is the housing allowance?

If a parsonage is not provided, the pastor receives a housing allowance. The housing allowance guideline is 30% of base pay. Amounts classified as housing allowance are generally free from income tax, but not social security, to the pastor.

7. What is a social security supplement?

Generally, employees and employers each pay a 7.65% Social Security tax (FICA) on the employees pay. However, for social security purposes a pastor is considered to be self-employed and is obligated to pay both the employee and employer portion of the social security tax which is 15.3%. Congregations generally provide a 7.65% social security supplement to the pastor to assist them with their social security tax obligation.

8. What other benefits are provided to the pastor?

Various benefits are provided to a pastor and include:

- health insurance,
- employer retirement contribution,
- disability, and
- group life programs

9. What health insurance benefits does a pastor receive?

Various health insurance plans (Example: gold, silver, bronze, etc.) are available through our provider, Portico, and the congregation and pastor select the program that best suits the pastor's situation. Factors could include age and family status. A pastor with health insurance will also receive an employer retirement contribution, disability and group life benefits. See question 9 for more details.

10. Are the employer retirement contributions, disability and group life benefits bundled?

Yes. These benefits are bundled, and a pastor receives all three of the benefits.

11. What is the employer retirement contribution?

Pastors participate in ELCA retirement programs and congregations make yearly contributions to these programs to help support pastors in their retirement. The recommended employer retirement contribution amount is 12% of defined compensation. The minimum contribution is 10%.

12. What is the disability benefit?

If the pastor is disabled, they receive a disability benefit of approximately 66% of compensation. The disability benefit premium guideline is 0.3% of defined compensation.

13. What is the life insurance benefit?

If a pastor dies their beneficiaries receive a life insurance benefit equal to 100% of defined compensation. The group life insurance premium is 0.2% of defined compensation.

14. What reimbursements does the pastor receive?

Many congregations reimburse the pastor for items including:

- continuing education,
- mileage for church-related duties,
- attendance at Synodical events, and
- cell phone and other personal electronic devices used for church-related work

Reimbursements are part of the overall compensation and benefits discussions with the pastor.

15. What are synod guidelines?

Synod compensation and benefit guidelines are minimum recommendations to assist congregations in developing the pastor's overall compensation and benefits package.

16. How are the compensation and benefit guidelines determined?

At the annual synod assembly, the voting members approve the compensation and benefit guidelines. The voting members at the synod assembly are elected by their own congregations.

Introduction

Purpose

These guidelines have been thoughtfully prepared to provide a fair and reasonable compensation benefits expectation for congregations, rostered ministers and church staff. The task force has taken into account compensation levels of peers in other synods, Christian organizations and local communities. The guidelines, of course, cannot address all the concerns for congregations and leaders, but they provide a baseline for compensation and benefits discussions. A core value for the Northeastern Minnesota Synod is that rostered ministers and church staff are to be paid on the basis of experience, training and capability.

The question is often asked, “What is a rostered leader?” The ELCA has two rosters: Pastors, who are Ministers of Word and Sacrament; and Deacons, who are Ministers of Word and Service. The responsibilities of each are listed in the Candidacy Manual of the ELCA as follows:

Pastors (Ministers of Word and Sacrament) are called to:

1. preach the word;
2. administer the sacraments;
3. conduct public worship;
4. provide pastoral care;
5. seek out and encourage qualified persons to prepare for the ministry of the Gospel;
6. impart knowledge of this church and its wider ministry through available channels of effective communication;
7. witness to the kingdom of God in the community, in the nation, and abroad; and
8. speak publicly to the world in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, advocating dignity, justice, and equity for all people, working for peace and reconciliation among the nations, caring for the marginalized, and embracing and welcoming racially and ethnically diverse populations.

Deacons (Ministers of Word and Service) shall:

1. be rooted in the word of God, for proclamation and service;
2. advocate a prophetic diakonia that commits itself to risk-taking and innovative service on the frontiers of the church’s outreach, giving particular attention to the suffering places in God’s world;
3. speak publicly to the world in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, advocating dignity, justice, and equity for all people, working for peace and reconciliation among the nations, caring for the marginalized, and embracing and welcoming racially and ethnically diverse populations;
4. equip the baptized for ministry in God’s world that affirms the gifts of all people;
5. encourage mutual relationships that invite participation and accompaniment of others in God’s mission;
6. practice stewardship that respects God’s gift of time, talents, and resources;
7. be grounded in a gathered community for ongoing diaconal formation;
8. share knowledge of this church and its wider ministry of the gospel, and advocate for the work of all expressions of this church; and
9. identify and encourage qualified persons to prepare for ministry of the gospel

Compensation issues result in a partnership between the congregation, rostered ministers and staff. It is important for all parties to recognize the spirit in which compensation matters are to be addressed. Decisions should be made in such a way that:

- God's mission flourishes.
- Rostered Ministers (pastors and deacons) and staff are appreciated and respected as servants of God.
- All areas of the congregation's mission thrive.

Source

The compensation guidelines have been prepared by a task force of volunteers, both lay and rostered. The guidelines are reviewed and recommended by the Synod Council before they are adopted by the congregations of the Northeastern Minnesota Synod at the annual Synod Assembly.

The task force considers different factors in its deliberation for its recommendation of the guidelines. The task force gives consideration to economic conditions in the Northeastern Minnesota Synod, the issue of fairness and morale for rostered leaders, the added burden of repaying student debt (average student debt load for seminary trained rostered leaders are approaching \$60,000 or more), statistics regarding Federal COLA (Cost of Living Adjustments), Average Income Increase in Minnesota, as well as guidelines for comparable, surrounding synods in Region 3 [the nine synods in Minnesota, South Dakota and North Dakota] and the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin.

Task Force Members

Task force members include Ginny Ahrlin, Andy Larson, Pastor John Ansell, Pastor Tim Ehling, Christine Ricketts, Deacon Susan Williams, and Pr. Rollie Bockbrader. Should the leadership of an individual congregation request assistance in reviewing these guidelines, the task force will provide the guidance requested. Please contact Deacon Susan Williams, Synod Minister for Leadership Support or Pastor Rollie Bockbrader, Synod Minister for Operations at 218.724.4424.

SECTION I: PASTORS
SALARY/COMPENSATION RECOMMENDATIONS FOR
MINISTERS OF WORD AND SACRAMENT

A. BASE SALARY GUIDELINES

The following salary grid is intended to allow congregations the ability to meet local economic conditions while recognizing and respecting the Office of Pastor (*Minister of Word and Sacrament*). The minimum base salary guidelines assume full-time ordained ministry and are to be pro-rated for calls other than full-time.

Years of Experience	Year Ordained	Guidelines (parsonage/base only)	Guidelines (base plus 30% housing)
Graduate	2027	46,429 or more	60,358 or more
1	2026	47,126 or more	61,264 or more
2	2025	47,823 or more	62,170 or more
3	2024	48,520 or more	63,076 or more
4	2023	49,217 or more	63,982 or more
5	2022	49,945 or more	64,929 or more
6	2021	50,611 or more	65,794 or more
7	2020	51,308 or more	66,700 or more
8	2019	52,005 or more	67,606 or more
9	2018	52,702 or more	68,513 or more
10	2017	53,399 or more	69,419 or more
11	2016	54,196 or more	70,455 or more
12	2015	54,993 or more	71,491 or more
13	2014	55,790 or more	72,527 or more
14	2013	56,587 or more	73,563 or more
15	2012	57,384 or more	74,599 or more
16	2011	58,181 or more	75,635 or more
17	2010	58,978 or more	76,671 or more
18	2009	59,775 or more	77,707 or more
19	2008	60,572 or more	78,744 or more
20	2007	61,141 or more	79,484 or more
21	2006	61,710 or more	80,224 or more
22	2005	62,280 or more	80,964 or more
23	2004	62,849 or more	81,704 or more
24	2003	63,418 or more	82,444 or more
25	2002	63,988 or more	83,184 or more
26	2001	64,557 or more	83,924 or more
27	2000	65,126 or more	84,664 or more
28	1999	65,695 or more	85,404 or more
29	1998	66,265 or more	86,144 or more
30	1997	66,834 or more	86,884 or more
31	1996	67,403 or more	87,624 or more
32	1995	67,973 or more	88,364 or more
33	1994	68,542 or more	89,104 or more
34	1993	69,111 or more	89,845 or more
35	1992	69,680 or more	90,585 or more

IN ADDITION TO BASE SALARY ORDAINED PASTORS RECEIVE:

- Housing Allowance or Parsonage (see pg. 8)
- Employers Share of Social Security Tax (FICA) (see pg. 8)
- ELCA Pension, Disability, Survivor and Medical/Dental plan (see pg. 17)

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS FOR DETERMINING SALARY:

- Career Experience - if the pastor had a prior calling/career before coming to ordained ministry, the value of those experiences should be considered. An example would be to calculate the years of experience prior to ordination at the rate of ½ year for each year of experience, up to a maximum of 10 years. In this example, a newly ordained clergy with 10 years of other career experience, should be considered at a 5 year guideline level.
- Additional Earned Degrees - consideration should be given to those pastors with advance degrees: i.e. DMin, PhD, STM, or other degrees the congregation deems germane to their ministry. The recommendation is \$500 - \$1,000 for each additional degree.
- Supervisory Responsibilities - an additional \$500 to \$1,000 should be considered if the pastor is supervising staff.
- Merit Increase - based on performance evaluation. It is fine to be generous.
- Seminarian Debt Load - consideration should be given to an educational debt load reduction for leaders carrying considerable debt from preparing for rostered ministry. Payment is made directly to the lending institution. Check with your clergy tax consultant as there are certain requirements that need to be met and there may be a limited amount paid that would be considered as non-taxable income.
- Cost of Living Adjustment - for those whose current years of experience or salary is above the guidelines, consider a cost of living adjustment.
- Multi-point Parishes - If a solo Minister of Word and Sacrament serves two congregations, add \$1,000; if three, add \$2,000; etc.
- Two days free of church responsibilities should be provided each week. When holidays or days off are missed, compensation day(s) should be taken at another time. Consideration should be given to granting a pastor quarterly personal leave weekends off in addition to annual vacation. After 15 years of service, consideration should be given to granting the pastor a fifth week of vacation.

IF SALARY IS LESS THAN GUIDELINES:

- Pension should be paid according to the average salary for years of experience.
- Assisting in Seminarian Debt Load reduction is always welcome with payments made directly to the financial institution. This is not taxable income. Check with your clergy tax consultant as there are certain requirements that need to be met and there may be a limited amount paid that would be considered as non-taxable income.
- Consideration should be given and in consultation with the rostered leader as to some options available but not limited to i.e. additional vacation time, personal leave, continuing education funding, clergy coaching or spiritual direction, enhanced medical coverage or increased retirement percentage valued at not less than 2% of weekly compensation.

Every effort should be made by congregations below the guidelines to move toward guidelines.

B. PARSONAGE/HOUSING ALLOWANCE (*see also Addendum II*)

1. Parsonage

If a congregation is providing a parsonage, the congregation is to assume all costs for maintenance and utilities. The congregation should pay these costs directly. In a parish with a parsonage, the pastor does not have the option of owning a home which builds equity. It is recommended that those congregations providing a parsonage contribute toward a special ‘Housing Equity’ program. It is recommended that 3% of the pastor’s defined compensation should be applied each year to this fund. The ‘Housing Equity’ funds are to be invested as determined by the congregational council and the pastor - the Optional Pension Plan of Portico Benefit Services is a suitable option for housing equity funds. For purposes of FICA, a value is assigned to the parsonage (generally 30% of salary).

2. Housing Allowance

If no parsonage is available, the pastor is to be given a housing allowance which is to be designated each year as negotiated by pastor and council. The housing allowance figure to be used is 30% of base salary and is added to base salary. If a clergy couple, each pastor is entitled to a housing allowance. The pastor declares a housing allowance figure for their tax purposes at the beginning of the year. For example, if Pastor A has a base salary of \$40,000 the amount of housing will be \$12,000 (30% of base salary) for a total of \$52,000. If the pastor wishes to designate an amount for housing other than the 30% (rationale is needed for IRS purposes) it must be voted on by the church council. For example, if Pastor A provides rationale that \$20,000 better reflects their housing costs and the council approves, then salary would be listed at \$32,000 and housing at \$20,000 for a total of \$52,000.

C. FICA PAYMENTS

Since the IRS classifies pastors as self-employed for Social Security purposes, congregations are expected to reimburse pastors for the employer’s share of FICA (current rate for employer’s share is 7.65% of base salary and parsonage/housing allowance). For example, if Pastor A has a salary of \$40,000 and a housing allowance of \$12,000 for a total of \$52,000, the congregation should reimburse the pastor \$3,978 for FICA purposes (7.65% of \$52,000). Congregations are to be reminded that they are to file **W2 tax forms** for clergy.

D. OTHER ITEMS

Should a pastor desire to have a portion of compensation designated as a **furnishing allowance** that amount is to be determined by the church council. This is not an added expense to the congregation, but a tax benefit to the pastor. Congregation councils must approve, prior to the start of the fiscal year, allowances for housing, furnishing, utilities, and recorded in council minutes, in order for these to be excluded from income for IRS reporting.

E. VACATION, DAYS OFF AND HOLIDAYS

Pastors are expected to receive and use four weeks of vacation per year (including Sundays). The cost of pulpit supply is to be paid for and arranged by the congregation. Vacation time is to be used within the calendar year and not accumulated except by special agreement with the church council.

Time spent in outdoor ministries and retreats with congregational youth and family groups, or work with conference, synod or churchwide committees *is not* to be considered vacation time or continuing education leave.

Two days free of church responsibilities should be provided each week. When holidays or days off are missed, compensation day(s) should be taken at another time. One or more personal days per year may also be considered.

Pastors whose work includes regular Sunday involvement should also be granted quarterly personal leave weekend in addition to the annual vacation.

Pastors should also receive time off with pay on holidays. Those who perform essential service on the holiday may arrange for other time off.

Some holidays to be considered are as follows:

New Year's Day	Labor Day
Good Friday	Thanksgiving Day
Memorial Day	Christmas Day
Fourth of July	Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
President's Day	Easter Sunday/Monday
Juneteenth	Indigenous People's Day

F. MINIMUM COMPENSATION TABLE FOR PASTORS

The expectation for minimum compensation for clergy includes **base salary, parsonage or housing allowance and reimbursement for the employer's share of FICA**. Following is an example for figuring compensation.

<u>2027 Annual Minimum</u>	<u>Amount</u>	
Graduate	46,429.00	
Housing Allowance	13,928.70	30%
FICA Reimbursement	4,617.36	7.65%
Minimum Compensation	64,975.06	
15 Years of Experience	57,384.00	
Housing Allowance	17,215.20	30%
FICA Reimbursement	5,706.84	7.65%
Minimum Compensation	80,306.04	

The minimum compensation figure does not include medical/dental/pension benefits (See page 17).

G. CLERGY DEFINED COMPENSATION

Defined compensation for Rostered Ministers of Word and Sacrament (pastors/clergy) is:

Pastors with Parsonage

1.3 x (Base Salary + Social Security Allowance) + Furnishings Allowance

Pastors without Parsonage

(Base Salary + Social Security Allowance + Housing Allowance)

The congregation should refer to the Portico Benefits Services website. Each congregational treasurer receives a yearly memorandum from Portico Benefit Services with this information - see www.porticobenefits.org, click on “Employer Link for Treasurers and Benefits Administrators”. Under “Resources”, click on “Calculators” to help you determine the benefit package. Portico requires an annual sign-up for the health package benefits. The IRS requires your pastor to have a Housing Allowance request recorded in the December Council Minutes.

H. PART-TIME STAFF

Part-time rostered staff should have salary and benefits corresponding to the percentage of a full-time salary and benefits package.

Ministers of Word and Sacrament are eligible for a rostered call at 10 hours per week.

The structure of the part-time call should be carefully negotiated between the rostered leader(s) and the congregation council in consultation with the Bishop’s office in order to meet the needs of the congregational context.

SECTION II: DEACONS
SALARY/COMPENSATION RECOMMENDATIONS FOR
MINISTERS OF WORD AND SERVICE

A. BASE SALARY GUIDELINES

The following grid is intended to assist congregations in determining salary to meet local economic conditions while recognizing and respecting the Roster of Deacon. Deacons are *Ministers of Word and Service*, have a bachelor's degree and a related certification and/or master's degree from a seminary or divinity school. The base salary guidelines assume full-time rostered ministry and are to be prorated for calls other than full-time.

Years of Experience	Year Ordained	Guidelines with Bachelor's Degree	Guidelines with Master's Degree
Graduate	2027	51,304 or more	60,358 or more
1	2026	52,074 or more	61,264 or more
2	2025	52,844 or more	62,170 or more
3	2024	53,615 or more	63,076 or more
4	2023	54,385 or more	63,982 or more
5	2022	55,189 or more	64,929 or more
6	2021	55,925 or more	65,794 or more
7	2020	56,695 or more	66,700 or more
8	2019	57,465 or more	67,606 or more
9	2018	58,236 or more	68,513 or more
10	2017	59,006 or more	69,419 or more
11	2016	59,887 or more	70,455 or more
12	2015	60,767 or more	71,491 or more
13	2014	61,648 or more	72,527 or more
14	2013	62,529 or more	73,563 or more
15	2012	63,409 or more	74,599 or more
16	2011	64,290 or more	75,635 or more
17	2010	65,171 or more	76,671 or more
18	2009	66,051 or more	77,707 or more
19	2008	66,932 or more	78,744 or more
20	2007	67,561 or more	79,484 or more
21	2006	68,190 or more	80,224 or more
22	2005	68,819 or more	80,964 or more
23	2004	69,448 or more	81,704 or more
24	2003	70,077 or more	82,444 or more
25	2002	70,706 or more	83,184 or more
26	2001	71,335 or more	83,924 or more
27	2000	71,964 or more	84,664 or more
28	1999	72,594 or more	85,404 or more
29	1998	73,223 or more	86,144 or more
30	1997	73,852 or more	86,884 or more
31	1996	74,481 or more	87,624 or more
32	1995	75,110 or more	88,364 or more
33	1994	75,739 or more	89,104 or more
34	1993	76,368 or more	89,845 or more
35	1992	76,997 or more	90,585 or more

OTHER CONSIDERATION FOR DETERMINING SALARY:

- **Career Experience** - If the rostered leader had a prior calling/career before becoming a Deacon, the value of those experiences should be considered.
- **Additional Earned Degrees** - consideration should be given to those rostered leaders who have earned master's or doctorate degrees the congregation deems germane to ministry. The recommendation is \$500 to \$1,000 for additional degrees.
- **Supervisory Responsibilities** - an additional \$500 to \$1,000 should be given if the rostered leader is supervising staff.
- **Merit Increase** - based on performance evaluation. It is fine to be generous.
- **Cost of Living Adjustment** - for those whose current years of experience is above guidelines.

IF SALARY IS LESS THAN GUIDELINES:

- Pension should be paid according to the average salary for years of experience.
- Consideration should be given and *in consultation with the rostered leader* as to some options available *but not limited to* i.e. increased vacation time, personal leave, continuing education funding, clergy coaching or spiritual direction, enhanced medical coverage or retirement percentage valued at not less than 2% of weekly compensation.

B. FICA PAYMENTS

Congregations are required to pay employer's portion of the Social Security taxes and file W2 tax forms for Deacons.

C. VACATION, DAYS OFF AND HOLIDAYS

Deacons are expected to receive and use four weeks of vacation per year (including Sundays). The cost of pulpit supply is to be paid for and arranged by the congregation. Vacation time is to be used within the calendar year and not accumulated except by special agreement with the church council.

Time spent in outdoor ministries and retreats with congregational youth and family groups, or work with conference, synod or churchwide committees *is not* to be considered vacation time or continuing education leave.

Two days free of church responsibilities should be provided each week. When holidays or days off are missed, compensation day(s) should be taken at another time. One or more personal days per year may also be considered.

Deacons (*Ministers of Word and Service*) whose work includes regular Sunday involvement should also be granted a quarterly personal leave weekend in addition to the annual vacation.

Deacons should also receive time off with pay on holidays. Those who perform essential service on the holiday may arrange for other time off.

Some holidays to be considered are as follows:

New Year's Day	Labor Day
Good Friday	Thanksgiving Day
Memorial Day	Christmas Day
Fourth of July	Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
President's Day	Easter Sunday
Juneteenth	Indigenous People's Day

D. PART-TIME STAFF

Part-time rostered staff should have salary and benefits corresponding to a percentage of a full-time salary and benefits package.

Ministers of Word and Service are eligible for a rostered "Call" at 10 hours per week.

The structure of a part-time call should be carefully negotiated between the rostered leader(s) and the congregation council in consultation with the Bishop's office in order to meet the needs of the congregational context.

SECTION III: LAY PROGRAM STAFF

SALARY/COMPENSATION RECOMMENDATIONS FOR YOUTH & FAMILY MINISTERS, YOUTH DIRECTORS, ETC.

A. SALARY GUIDELINES FOR LAY PROGRAM STAFF

Lay Program Staff, such as Children, Youth, and Family Ministers, are valued members of a ministry staff team. Although they don't require the same housing benefits as pastors, other benefits should be the same or similar to that of the pastor or deacon. This includes, but is not limited to: Portico benefits, sabbaticals, vacation, continuing education, paid family leave, a quarterly Sunday off, and mileage.

Consideration should be given to Lay Program Staff to give additional compensation to Lay Program Staff who have additional degrees. For example, an increase of \$500 to \$1,000 based on having a master's degree and/or other specialized training and/or a supervisory role. The following salary guidelines assume a 40 hours/week, 52 weeks/year.

Years of Service	Guidelines
1	43,493 or more
2	44,290 or more
3	45,087 or more
4	45,884 or more
5	46,681 or more
6	47,478 or more
7	48,275 or more
8	49,072 or more
9	49,869 or more
10	50,666 or more
11	51,463 or more
12	52,260 or more
13	53,057 or more
14	53,854 or more
15	54,651 or more

Years of Service	Guidelines
16	55,448 or more
17	56,245 or more
18	57,042 or more
19	57,839 or more
20	58,636 or more
21	59,433 or more
22	60,230 or more
23	61,027 or more
24	61,824 or more
25	62,621 or more
26	63,418 or more
27	64,215 or more
28	65,012 or more
29	65,809 or more
30	66,606 or more

Beyond 30 years congregations should negotiate with staff member to arrive at a salary commensurate with the nature of the position. Part-time employment should be prorated on the basis of the salary guidelines.

B. FICA PAYMENTS

Congregations are required to pay employer’s portion of the Social Security taxes and file W2 tax forms for Lay Program Staff.

C. VACATION, DAYS OFF AND HOLIDAYS

Vacation, days off and holidays are to be negotiated for Lay Program Staff. Vacation time is to be used within the calendar year and not accumulated except by special agreement with the church council.

Time spent in outdoor ministries and retreats with congregational youth and family groups, or work with conference, synod or churchwide committees *is not* to be considered vacation time or continuing education leave.

Two days free of church responsibilities should be provided each week. When holidays or days off are missed, compensation day(s) should be taken at another time. One or more personal days per year may also be considered.

Lay Program Staff whose work includes regular Sunday involvement should also be granted quarterly personal leave weekends in addition to vacation time.

Lay Program Staff should also receive time off with pay on holidays. Those who perform essential service on the holiday may arrange for other time off. Some holidays to be considered are as follows:

New Year’s Day	Labor Day	Juneteenth
Good Friday	Thanksgiving Day	Indigenous People’s Day
Memorial Day	Christmas Day	President’s Day
Fourth of July	Martin Luther King, Jr. Day	Easter Sunday

D. PART-TIME STAFF

Part-time Lay Program staff should have salary and benefits corresponding to a percentage of a full-time salary and benefits package. Congregations are encouraged to check with Portico Benefit Services for options regarding Lay Program Staff. The structure of a part-time call should be carefully negotiated between the Lay Program Staff and the congregation council in order to meet the needs of the congregational context.

E. EARNED SICK AND SAFE TIME (ESST) AND MN PAID LEAVE

Minnesota Paid Leave

- Effective January 1, 2026, Minnesota enacted MN Paid Leave.
 - Benefits are administered and paid by the State of Minnesota.
 - This provides for up to 12 weeks of paid leave and job protection for certain medical conditions and up to 12 weeks of paid leave and job protection for certain family issues (combined total of paid medical and paid family leave cannot exceed 20 weeks in a year) .
- Medical leave:
 - Taking care of yourself for a serious health condition. A serious health condition means a physical or mental illness, injury, impairment, condition, or substance use disorder.

- Taking care of yourself for this serious health condition may involve evaluation, treatment, inpatient care, recovery, or not being able to perform regular work, attend school, or do regular daily activities
 - This includes childbirth, conditions related to pregnancy, or surgery
- Family leave:
 - Bonding leave – to care for and bond with a new child welcomed through birth, adoption, or foster placement
 - Caring leave – to care for a family member with a serious health condition
 - Military family leave – to support a family member called to active duty
 - Safety leave – to respond to issues such as domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking
- The state program requires congregations to submit quarterly reports through the Employer Portal on the State of MN unemployment insurance website. This requires a MN Paid Leave Administrator be named on behalf of the congregation. Note: most congregations may not have had accounts as they are not required to submit unemployment insurance.
- You will need to create an account and participate in this leave program as a non -profit religious organization. In addition, congregations must pay quarterly premiums to the state.
- The premium rate ranges from as low as 0.66% for certain small employers (less than 30 employees) to a max of 0.88% for all other employers. The rate is paid on the wages of covered employees. The state will assume the congregation has more than 30 employees and assign a 0.88% rate. If you have fewer employees, contact the state.
- The employee pays 0.44% or less. However, congregations may elect to pay all or a part of the employees' premium.
- Minnesota has informally stated that as long as pastors who are self-employed for Social Security and Medicare tax purposes and those deacons who claim self - employment treatment for Social Security and Medicare tax purposes would not be covered under the program and their compensation would not be included in the quarterly reports filed for Minnesota Paid Leave.
- More Information can be found at both the following websites:
 - www.uimn.org/employers/paid-leave <https://pl.mn.gov/employers/roles-and-responsibilities>
- Congregations should already have taken the following steps (January 1, 2026 was the effective start of this program)
- Set Up Your Accounts: You need an employer account and an administrator account to meet the responsibilities under Paid Leave.
 - Register for an Employer Account at www.uimn.org/employers/paid-leave
 - Designate a Paid Leave Administrator in your Employer Account at www.uimn.org.
 - Create a Paid Leave Administrator Account at <https://pl.mn.gov/employers/roles-and-responsibilities>
- Notify Employees: You must notify your employees about Paid Leave by December 1, 2025.
 - Hang the Paid Leave workplace poster.
 - Provide individual notices to your employees and keep signed forms for each employee acknowledging receipt of the notice. (sample notices are available online).
- Prepare Your Workplace Policies: There are other important decisions you can make today to make Paid Leave work best for your organization.
 - Explore decisions you can make about premiums, leave policies, and more on the Paid Leave website.
- Additional information on paid leave can be found online.

- Effective January 1, 2024, Minnesota enacted MN Earned Sick and Safe Time (ESST) laws.
 - The laws apply to employees who are expected to work more than 80 hours (by any employer) in a given year in Minnesota. As an example: Your employee works 60 hours for your congregation and 40 for another employer in Minnesota. This employee is eligible.
 - A notice from the state website should be given to all employees and posted. www.dli.mn.gov/sick-leave

There are two options for employers to choose related to ESST:

- Option 1: The minimum requirement of the law is to provide one hour of ESST for every 30 hours worked with a cap of 48 hours in any given year.
 - ESST is not earned during periods of unpaid leave, while using accrued PTO, on paid holidays not worked, or while on workers' compensation leave (unless required by law).
 - Accrued but unused ESST can be rolled over from year to year – with a maximum rollover of 80 hours (amounts over that time are forfeited).
 - The hours are available to use as they are accrued/earned.
 - Congregations may supplement the minimum time off with their own policy.
- Option 2: Employers can front-load ESST by giving an employee an amount of sick time at the beginning of the year that meets or exceeds the accrual provisions. The front-loaded amounts must be either:
 - 48 hours if the employer pays an employee for accrued but unused ESST at the end of the year, OR
 - 80 hours if the employer does not pay an employee for accrued but not used ESST at the end of the year
- Additional information can be found at <https://www.dli.mn.gov/sick-leave-FAQs>

SECTION IV: BENEFITS FOR PASTORS AND DEACONS

A. PENSION, DISABILITY, SURVIVOR, MEDICAL/DENTAL

The congregation shall budget for and participate in the ELCA Pension, Disability, Survivor and Medical/Dental plan for ordained pastors, deacons and their families as needed.

A conversation is suggested between the council and rostered leader for medical coverage preference. Flexible spending accounts are available to employees. Each congregation determines what combination of coverage and plan options best meets the needs of their clergy and staff while not exceeding the financial resources available. Check the Portico Benefit Services website at www.porticobenefits.org for more information. Prescription cost, copays and deductibles will vary based on the chosen plan.

Congregations are to refer to the Portico Benefits Services website at www.porticobenefits.org to access calculators and information. Click on 'Employer Link for Treasurers and Benefits Administrators' and under 'Resources' for the calculator that can assist in determining the benefits package.

The Synod Council of the Northeastern Minnesota Synod recommends that congregations move toward a pension contribution of 12% and not less than 10%. If salary is under guidelines, it is recommended that pension be paid at the 'Years of Experience' salary guideline.

B. WORKER'S COMPENSATION

All congregations must provide Workers Compensation coverage for employees.

C. DISABILITY, MATERNITY or PATERNITY & FAMILY MEDICAL, SICK AND EMERGENCY LEAVE

Temporary and/or Permanent Disability:

It is recommended that each congregation develop explicit written policy relating to temporary and permanent disability. Each congregation shall contribute towards Portico Benefit's disability policy.

It is expected that a congregation will continue to pay full salary, housing (for pastors), and benefit contributions for the first 60 days of temporary disability (accident, illness, surgery etc.), after which, if needed, the temporary disability of the Portico Benefits plan begins. The congregation should thereafter pay the cost of the medical insurance for up to 10 months.

Any period of disability (beginning date, length and return to service) is to be based on a physician's recommendation and is subject to the Bishop's and the Northeastern Minnesota Synod Council's approval.

Sick Leave:

One day sick leave for each month of employment cumulative to 30 to 45 days. These days may be used for the care of an immediate family member. **Each congregation is encouraged to develop explicit written policy relating to sick leave before the need arises.*

Maternity or Paternity Leave and Family Medical Leave:

Paid maternity/paternity leave of up to 12 weeks is recommended when a child is born or adopted. Knowing that the early weeks are intense and stressful for parents, consideration should be given to granting additional leave if the congregation has the ability to do so. Conversation about this leave and creation of a congregational policy is encouraged at the time of call.

Family Medical Leave Paid family leave of up to 12 weeks is recommended when a pastor needs to care for an immediate family member during a health crisis. This might include a spouse, child, parent or sibling. It is important for congregations to discuss with their rostered leader who is included in this provision for paid family leave. Paid family leave of up to 12 weeks is recommended. Conversation about this leave and creation of a congregational policy is encouraged at the time of call.

Emergency Leave:

Absence of three to five paid days due to a death in the immediate family is normally permitted. 'Immediate family' is defined as spouse, parents, siblings, children, in-laws, grandparents and grandchildren.

D. UNEMPLOYMENT TAXES

Federal and state tax law generally exempts churches from this requirement for rostered leaders since theirs is a service performed in the employ of a religious organization.

E. PROTOCOL REGARDING SEVERANCE BENEFITS FOR ROSTERED MINISTER

For the mutual health and benefit of a congregation and/or the rostered minister, the congregation's council is required to consult with the Bishop regarding the matter; and, if necessary, request the Memorandum of Understanding for Transitional Support of the Northeastern Minnesota Synod for the rostered leader.

F. MILITARY CHAPLAINS

A congregation/parish whose rostered minister serves simultaneously as a chaplain in a military reserve unit must by law grant leave time for the pastor to fulfill their military obligations. Such military leave time is to be granted exclusive of vacation and continuing education time. *(The same law applies to rostered and non-rostered persons who belong to military reserve units and who work in congregations or ministry agencies.)*

It is recommended that each congregation/parish develop written policies relating to compensation issues for rostered ministers while on military leave. Policy guidelines are available from the ELCA Federal Chaplaincy website: (www.elca.org/federalchaplains/involuntarycallupguidelines.html).

SECTION V: PROFESSIONAL EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENT FOR PASTORS AND DEACONS

A. AUTOMOBILE/WORK-RELATED TRAVEL

Automobile expenses and other work-related travel are a business expense for the congregation and should not be considered as part of the rostered person's salary or benefits if reimbursed under an accountable plan. Automobile allowance should be sufficient to cover all parish related car expenses including depreciation. Currently, there are three methods for handling car expense reimbursement. They are as follows:

- Congregation reimburses for actual miles driven at the IRS allowance rate per mile. Reimbursement is not taxable.
- Congregation pays a determined amount as a car allowance on an annual basis. This rate should reflect actual costs including depreciation. A car allowance is taxable income.
- Congregation purchases or leases a car and assumes the total automobile expense. If personal use of a church owned automobile is allowed, the value of personal use must be considered additional salary and reported as wages on the W2 or the employee may reimburse the church for personal use amount.

The IRS requires accurate records to support automobile expenses incurred in connection with parish related travel. Each person is responsible for maintaining adequate records. The method of reimbursement is to be determined at the time of the call and reviewed annually.

B. CONTINUING EDUCATION

The Lutheran Church has a history of well-educated and well-trained staff. Congregations should expect their Pastor/Deacon to be involved in continuing education programs which will provide opportunity for personal development, enrichment of devotional life, as well as growth in effectiveness and competency. Continuing education should be regarded as an essential on-going process which assists in maintaining and sharpening the professional skills required in a rapidly changing world.

Continuing Education is to be distinguished from program development, vacation or synod assembly or other synod sponsored learning events. Continuing Education is for the purpose of self-renewal and professional growth. Congregations will indeed benefit from a rostered minister's participation in Continuing Education.

It is therefore suggested that the Continuing Education program be mutually studied and agreed upon by the pastor/deacon and the congregation council. Continuing Education may involve independent study, seminary classes, workshops or educational materials, etc. While Synod Assemblies do have an educational component, they are not to be considered as Continuing Education for your rostered leader.

Recommendations for Continuing Education are as follows:

Yearly Continuing Education: It is expected that the Pastor/Deacon be granted at least two weeks and \$1,000/yr. cumulative up to three years. It is recommended that at least one week/year is used. The ELCA expects a minimum of 25 contact hours annually (50-minute classroom instructional session or equivalent) in continuing education.

C. SABBATICAL LEAVE

I. A Brief Theology and Definition of Sabbatical

Beginning with the Bible's story of creation, and quietly echoing down through all the generations and communities of the people of God, is the concept of Sabbath: the rhythm of work and rest, and how the wholeness of life is to be found in that harmony. Genesis reports that God rested after the labor of creation, and the writer of Hebrews invites us (with some urgency) to enter into the "rest of God."

The example of Jesus, who frequently sought out a quiet place where he could meditate and pray, away from the constant demands of the crowds, is a strong model for a sabbatical. Unlike a vacation, a sabbatical is intended for purposeful reflection and restoration. A sabbatical also provides the opportunity for a congregation to experience the freshness of a break in the rhythm of parish life and leadership. With the increased complexity of life in ministry, the puzzles become more difficult to solve. The demands for more effective ministry grow more urgent. The explosion of knowledge requires ceaseless learning. The mission of the Church is best served by the health, energy, spiritual renewal, and knowledge which a sabbatical leave provides for its rostered leaders and congregations.

A sabbatical can be a time of inspiration, a word that is literally connected to the need to "breathe in" after a period of "breathing out." Those who study parish ministry have found that healthy pastorates (especially those of longer duration) require that attention be paid to this "sabbatical" rhythm if that health - for both pastor and parish - is to be maintained. Far from simply being a "favor" to the pastor, the synod's sabbatical program (outlined below) is designed to offer refreshment and renewal for the whole ministry of the congregation by taking seriously the need for our called leaders to be renewed and, yes, "inspired" by all of the dimensions - rest, reflection, study, prayer, and more - that are included in a period called "sabbatical."

II. Benefits of a Sabbatical Leave

- a. Rest
- b. Time for family and friends
- c. Spiritual growth and renewal.
- d. Intellectual stimulation
- e. Time to explore or pursue a "dream" or "interest" or anything that makes one's "heart sing"
- f. A sabbatical provides for the leader:
 - Creates a new vision of vocation
 - Infuses new life into the leader
 - Sharpens leadership skills
 - Refocuses the leader's sense of calling and mission
 - Deepens the leader's appreciation of their current call
 - Creates a new resolve to serve the church and the Kingdom of God.
 - Allows for an intentional time of rest
- g. A sabbatical provides for the congregation:
 - Focuses and engages the ministry of the laity
 - Creates a renewed appreciation of the leader and the work they are called to do with the congregation

- Reconnecting leader and congregation following a sabbatical, gives an opportunity to share stories and experiences of God's presence in a sabbatical time
- Revival of mutual devotion of leader and congregation
- Spiritual growth for both leader and congregation

III. Criteria for Sabbatical Leave

- a. Pastors, Deacons, Youth Directors, and Synod Staff shall be considered for a sabbatical after serving in ministry for 7 years and every 7 years thereafter. Years spent in other synods are to be counted.
- b. Pastors, Deacons, Youth Directors, and Synod Staff need to have served at least 3 years in their present call even if they have been in ministry 7 years or longer.
- c. Participants gifted with a sabbatical leave are expected to return to their current calls for at least one year after the leave unless there are compelling reasons to do otherwise.
- d. The recommended time for sabbatical is 3-months away from the parish. Vacation time is not included as sabbatical. Vacation time is granted as in any other year. Variations from the 3-month recommendation can include a part of vacation time if congregation and participant negotiate an agreement.
- e. When a call is issued to a Pastor, Deacon, Youth Director, or Synod Staff, consideration should be given to the inclusion of sabbatical leave in the call documents.
- f. Half- time Pastors, Deacons, Youth Directors, and Synod Staff could be considered for some variation of the 3-month time frame in consultation with leader and congregation.
- g. Each congregation/parish are encouraged to develop **their own sabbatical policy** for staff.

Note: Northeastern Minnesota Synod's Sabbatical recommendations are simply recommendations for health and wellness for leaders and congregations. The following are meant to be helpful going forward: links to sample policies used by various churches, and commissioning (blessings) for a sabbatical leave used in worship, utilizing the Northeastern Minnesota Synod's Sabbatical Ambassador Team. (The Ambassador Team is a small group of clergy and lay people who have a passion for sabbaticals, and an understanding of ways sabbaticals can be adapted into various settings.) The team is willing to provide educational resources, adult forums, facilitate conversation, and generally to provide support and encouragement in ways that help a leader/congregation think through what a sabbatical might mean for their particular setting.

IV. Funding

- a. The congregation will continue to pay full salary and benefits including the housing, retirement contributions, and other remunerations of the called person on sabbatical.
- b. Car and phone allowances will not be paid during the sabbatical period.
- c. The congregation, with support from the conference and synod, is responsible for providing leadership support and service during the sabbatical time. This includes Sunday worship, teaching, confirmation, visitation, funerals, weddings, etc. as applicable.
- d. The congregation is encouraged to allocate \$500-\$1000 dollars a year into a sabbatical leave fund to assist with the overall cost that the congregation may incur during the leave time.
- e. Grants are available through the Lilly Foundation at www.lillyendowment.org.
- f. The congregation is not expected to fund the sabbatical in any way unless they choose to do so.

V. Staffing Issues

- a. Congregations are to arrange a minister and provide a stipend during the rostered minister's sabbatical as needed. There are a variety of options for leadership including members of the

congregation assuming new roles such as worship leadership, confirmation, community outreach, visitation. Other options to be explored: a retired rostered minister, a neighboring ELCA pastor, temporarily partnering with a full communion congregation for shared ministry needs, or if neighboring congregations are not available the bishop may authorize a properly qualified lay person of their choice for word and sacrament ministry for this specific time and place.

- b. If a minister is contracted to more than one congregation, the congregation holding the call determines the sabbatical policy. This should be negotiated at the time of the contract.

VI. Other Concerns

- a. The encouragement, interpretation, and promotion of the sabbatical leave shall be carried out by the bishop, synod staff, and Sabbatical Ambassador Team of the Northeastern Minnesota Synod.
- b. Each individual planning on a sabbatical leave should have a “sabbatical support team” in the congregation or institution for guidance, encouragement, and disseminating information before, during and following the leave.
- c. Each individual planning on a sabbatical leave should provide a written outline of the sabbatical plan to the bishop, Northeastern Minnesota Synod’s Sabbatical Ambassador Team, and congregation they are serving.
- d. Following the sabbatical, it is strongly encouraged that the congregation and called pastor, deacon, youth director, or synod staff share stories, experiences, holy happenings, and “aha” moments of their time away.

Conclusion:

The Northeastern Minnesota Synod hopes conversation and time surrounding sabbatical leave is a healthy one for all involved. However, if a rostered leader or a congregation needs any assistance in regards to a sabbatical leave please contact the synod office who will direct you to the Sabbatical Ambassador Team for help and guidance.

D. CELL PHONES, BOOKS, PERIODICALS AND OTHER EXPENSES

Professional expenses such as cell phones, computers, books, periodicals, educational materials and other business-related expenses should be shared by the congregation and Pastor or Deacon. This should be negotiated between the rostered minister(s) and the congregation council.

E. CHURCH AND SYNOD SPONSORED LEARNING EVENTS

Synod Assembly, the Fall Theological Conference, First Call Theological Education events and other Church and Synod sponsored learning events *are not* to be considered vacation time or educational leave. Serving on conference, synod or churchwide committees is not to be considered as vacation time or educational leave. Rostered ministers *are expected* to participate in these activities per the ELCA’s and congregation’s constitution and congregations *are expected* to work supportively with rostered ministers to pay for the reimbursement of these expenses.

SECTION VI: INTENTIONAL INTERIM PASTORS, PART-TIME and/or PULPIT SUPPLY

A. INTENTIONAL INTERIM PASTORS/INTERIM PASTORS

Interim clergy serving a congregation should be compensated as agreed upon by the pastor and church council(s) involved. Recommendations are as follows:

Full-time Interim Pastors:

Compensation should be on the basis of the previous pastor's salary and benefits package. It should not be less than the guidelines for seminary graduates.

1. Parish supplies appropriate housing for the pastor, if needed.
2. Benefits should be included in the compensation package.
3. Auto allowance should be paid by the parish. Congregations are encouraged to cover the cost of at least one round trip weekly from home for the pastor serving them during the interim period.
4. Interim calls may be issued by the Synod Council.

Part-time Interim Pastor:

Compensation will be proportionate to the base salary, benefits and automobile allowance of a full-time pastor.

B. SUNDAY PULPIT SUPPLY

A single congregation or multi-point parish should reimburse a pulpit supply person at the rate of \$175 for a single worship service; each additional worship service should be compensated at a rate of \$50. If a class/adult forum is taught on Sunday another \$35 should be added. Mileage should be paid at the IRS approved rate.

In a multi-point parish the amount reimbursed for pulpit supply is \$175 plus \$50 per additional worship service/preaching point, plus mileage. The parish congregations will determine how to split the reimbursement.

C. OTHER SERVICES (Weddings, Funerals, etc.)

The pastor should receive the prevailing rate in the community for such services.

SECTION VII: GUIDELINES FOR LAY STAFF

A. SALARY GUIDELINES FOR OTHER LAY PROFESSIONALS

Consider using the following salary grid for other lay professionals. This group can include the following but not limited to office manager, bookkeeper, parish nurse, volunteer coordinator, etc. (For Lay Program Staff [Children, Youth & Family Minister] see page 14.)

Years of Service	Guidelines	
1	41,216	or more
2	42,013	or more
3	42,810	or more
4	43,607	or more
5	44,404	or more
6	45,201	or more
7	45,998	or more
8	46,795	or more
9	47,592	or more
10	48,389	or more
11	49,186	or more
12	49,983	or more
13	50,780	or more
14	51,577	or more
15	52,374	or more

Years of Service	Guidelines	
16	53,171	or more
17	53,968	or more
18	54,765	or more
19	55,562	or more
20	56,359	or more
21	57,156	or more
22	57,953	or more
23	58,750	or more
24	59,547	or more
25	60,344	or more
26	61,141	or more
27	61,938	or more
28	62,735	or more
29	63,532	or more
30	64,329	or more

Beyond 30 years congregations should negotiate with their staff member(s) to arrive at a salary commensurate with the nature of the position. Part-time employment should be prorated on the basis of the salary guidelines.

Congregations are encouraged to check with Portico Benefit Services for options in offering benefits for their lay professional employees.

B. SALARY GUIDELINES FOR SUPPORT STAFF

Support Staff are those who provide necessary services to allow the ministry to proceed effectively and efficiently. Support staff includes secretary, custodian, treasurer, financial secretary etc. Compensation should be comparable to local positions with similar duties, education and responsibilities. If special training or certification is required and/or achieved that should be a consideration in determining compensation. State and Federal Minimum Wage Laws would supersede this guideline.

Years of Service	Guidelines Per Hour	
1	13.66	or more
2	13.95	or more
3	14.23	or more
4	14.52	or more
5	14.80	or more
6	15.09	or more
7	15.37	or more
8	15.66	or more
9	15.94	or more
10	16.22	or more
11	16.51	or more
12	16.80	or more
13	17.08	or more
14	17.36	or more
15	17.65	or more

Years of Service	Guidelines Per Hour	
16	17.93	or more
17	18.22	or more
18	18.50	or more
19	18.78	or more
20	19.07	or more
21	19.36	or more
22	19.65	or more
23	19.92	or more
24	20.21	or more
25	20.50	or more
26	20.78	or more
27	21.06	or more
28	21.35	or more
29	21.63	or more
30	21.92	or more

Beyond 30 years, congregations should negotiate with the staff member to arrive at a salary commensurate with the nature of the position. Part-time employment should be paid based on the hourly rate. **It is also to be noted that compensation should not be less than the federal minimum wage standard.*

SECTION VIII: BENEFITS FOR NON-ROSTERED PROFESSIONAL AND SUPPORT STAFF

A. PENSION AND MEDICAL

Pension and Other Benefits: Pensions and major medical benefits plans of the ELCA (www.porticobenefits.org) are highly recommended for all non-rostered persons employed by congregations, except those who are on a part-time basis (20 hours or less/week) or who work less than six months out of the year.

- **Sick Leave:** One day per month, cumulative to 30 to 45 days, is recommended for sick leave. In the event of serious illness, and if the employee is covered by Portico Benefits, the congregation shall assume responsibility for providing full salary benefits for the first two months of the illness at which time the Portico disability plan could take effect.
- **Maternity or Paternity Leave and Family Medical Leave:** The recommendation for non-rostered leaders is a minimum of six weeks and up to twelve weeks leave with full salary and benefits, for a birth, adoption and family care needs.
- **Emergency Leave:** Three-to-five-day absence due to death in the immediate family is normally permitted. Immediate family includes spouse, parents, children, siblings, in-laws, grandparents and grandchildren.

B. WORKERS COMPENSATION

All congregations must provide Workers Compensation coverage for employees.

C. SABBATICAL POLICY FOR LAY PROFESSIONALS

After every seven years of service in a qualified position, the Northeastern Minnesota Synod recommends that full-time staff be granted a sabbatical of up to three months with full pay in lieu of the recommended continuing education time for the year. The staff member would be expected to return to their present position for at least one year following the sabbatical. [See the policy beginning on page 17.]

D. VACATION AND HOLIDAYS

1. For Lay Program Staff, please see page 15. Recommendations for vacation for other full-time lay professionals and support staff, other than Lay Program Staff, are:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|
| • For service less than one year: | 5/6 of a day/month |
| • Years 1-5: | Two work weeks |
| • Years 6-10: | Three work weeks |
| • Year 11 and over: | Four work weeks |

The work week is based on the number of days worked per week i.e., if a person works two days/week, then two work weeks of vacation would be four days. Service years are cumulative including employment in previous congregations or units of the ELCA. Consideration should also be given for employment in closely related fields.

2. Staff whose services are not essential on holiday workdays shall receive time off with pay. Those who perform essential service may arrange for other time off. Following are holidays to be considered:

New Year's Day	Labor Day
Good Friday	Thanksgiving Day
Memorial Day	Christmas
Fourth of July	Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
President's Day	Easter Sunday
Juneteenth	Indigenous Peoples' Day
One or more personal day(s) per year	

3. Personal leave of one to three days may be given depending upon circumstances.

E. UNEMPLOYMENT TAXES

Federal and state tax law generally exempts churches from this requirement as service performed in the employ of a religious organization.

All congregations are strongly encouraged to have updated, written Personnel Policies in place and available to all employees.

**SECTION IX: PROFESSIONAL EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENT FOR
NON-ROSTERED PROFESSIONAL AND SUPPORT STAFF**

A. AUTOMOBILE/WORK-RELATED TRAVEL

Automobile expenses and other work-related travel are a business expense for the congregation and should not be considered as part of the staff person's salary. Currently, there are three methods for handling car expense reimbursement.

The IRS requires accurate records to support automobile expenses incurred in connection with parish related travel. Each person is responsible for maintaining adequate records.

B. CONTINUING EDUCATION

Retreat, workshop or continuing education time is to be regarded as professional growth time and not vacation. It is recommended for full-time staff that a minimum of \$500 and at least one week per year be provided for continuing education as appropriate to the job function i.e. a computer class for an office secretary etc.

C. CELL PHONES, BOOKS AND PUBLICATIONS

Congregations are encouraged to provide non-rostered staff with funds to purchase books and professional publications related to their area of responsibility as a way of enriching the congregation's ministry. Consideration and compensation should also be available to professional staff who rely on cell phones for work related duties i.e. Ministers of Youth and Family Ministry.

All congregations are strongly encouraged to have updated, written Personnel Policies in place and available to all employees.

SECTION X: OTHER CHURCH EMPLOYEES

A. CHURCH MUSICIANS

Salary Guidelines

Compensation should be comparable to local positions with similar duties, education and responsibilities.

Vacation

Vacation recommendation for full-time and part-time church musicians is as follows (prorated for part-time):

For service less than one-year	5/6 of a day/month
Years 1 – 5	Two work weeks
Years 6 – 10	Three work weeks
Years 11 – over	Four work weeks
See page 15 for determining part-time vacation.	

Expense Reimbursement

Congregations should also consider compensation for worship conferences, music/books/subscriptions and continuing education.

B. PARISH NURSE

Salary Guidelines

Compensation should be comparable to local positions with similar duties, education and responsibilities. Sources to help congregations to establish fair compensation would be the Parish Nursing Center, Concordia College, Moorhead, MN or the Parish Nurse Association in St. Paul, MN.

Benefits

Benefits should be provided to the Parish Nurse in the same manner as those provided to other Non-Rostered Professional and Support Staff personnel (See pages 18-19).

Professional expenses for workshops, books/subscriptions and continuing education are to be negotiated between the congregation and the parish nurse. Business mileage is to be reimbursed at the standard IRS mileage allowance rate.

All congregations are strongly encouraged to have updated, written Personnel Policies in place and available to all employees.

SECTION XI: ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES FOR ALL STAFF

A. ANNUAL REVIEW OF SALARIES

- All salaries/compensation shall be reviewed annually. This shall be done by the personnel committee, mutual ministry team or church council. Each staff member shall participate in his/her salary review.
- Salary adjustments are to be made based on current year synod guidelines, job performance review in relationship to job descriptions/ministry goals and COLA (cost of living adjustment).
- The church council shall be responsible for presenting appropriate rationale for the salary/compensation package presented at the annual congregational meeting.

B. LEAVE OF ABSENCE

A Leave of Absence, after having exhausted personal sick leave, with or without pay may be granted for up to six months for a variety of circumstances i.e. health issues, marriage or parenting issues, primary caregiver, etc. This will not be considered time of employment for salary increment and benefits.

C. JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Well-defined job descriptions should be provided to all church staff and should be reviewed on a regular basis.

D. OTHER ITEMS

Congregations and staff may encounter other areas not included in these guidelines. Synod staff may be of assistance as council/rostered and non-rostered leaders seek resolution.

It is recommended that congregations review their professional liability insurance policy with their insurance agent. Other important items to be reviewed with the insurance agent include liability regarding but not limited to: Cyber Security, Armed Intruder and Safety Guidelines, Sexual Misconduct and Harassment.

Changing passwords when staff changes occur is critical.

E. EARNED SICK AND SAFE TIME (ESST) AND MN PAID LEAVE

Minnesota Paid Leave

- Effective January 1, 2026, Minnesota enacted MN Paid Leave.
 - Benefits are administered and paid by the State of Minnesota.
 - This provides for up to 12 weeks of paid leave and job protection for certain medical conditions and up to 12 weeks of paid leave and job protection for certain family issues (combined total of paid medical and paid family leave cannot exceed 20 weeks in a year) .
- Medical leave:
 - Taking care of yourself for a serious health condition. A serious health condition means a physical or mental illness, injury, impairment, condition, or substance use disorder.
 - Taking care of yourself for this serious health condition may involve evaluation, treatment, inpatient care, recovery, or not being able to perform regular work, attend school, or do regular daily activities
 - This includes childbirth, conditions related to pregnancy, or surgery
- Family leave:

- Bonding leave – to care for and bond with a new child welcomed through birth, adoption, or foster placement
 - Caring leave – to care for a family member with a serious health condition
 - Military family leave – to support a family member called to active duty
 - Safety leave – to respond to issues such as domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking
- The state program requires congregations to submit quarterly reports through the Employer Portal on the State of MN unemployment insurance website. This requires a MN Paid Leave Administrator be named on behalf of the congregation. Note: most congregations may not have had accounts as they are not required to submit unemployment insurance.
 - You will need to create an account and participate in this leave program as a non -profit religious organization. In addition, congregations must pay quarterly premiums to the state.
 - The premium rate ranges from as low as 0.66% for certain small employers (less than 30 employees) to a max of 0.88% for all other employers. The rate is paid on the wages of covered employees. The state will assume the congregation has more than 30 employees and assign a 0.88% rate. If you have fewer employees, contact the state.
 - The employee pays 0.44% or less. However, congregations may elect to pay all or a part of the employees' premium.
 - Minnesota has informally stated that as long as pastors who are self-employed for Social Security and Medicare tax purposes and those deacons who claim self - employment treatment for Social Security and Medicare tax purposes would not be covered under the program and their compensation would not be included in the quarterly reports filed for Minnesota Paid Leave.
 - More Information can be found at both the following websites:
 - www.uimn.org/employers/paid-leave
 - <https://pl.mn.gov/employers/roles-and-responsibilities>
 - Congregations should already have taken the following steps (January 1, 2026 was the effective start of this program)
 - Set Up Your Accounts: You need an employer account and an administrator account to meet the responsibilities under Paid Leave.
 - Register for an Employer Account at www.uimn.org/employers/paid-leave
 - Designate a Paid Leave Administrator in your Employer Account at www.uimn.org.
 - Create a Paid Leave Administrator Account at <https://pl.mn.gov/employers/roles-and-responsibilities>
 - Notify Employees: You must notify your employees about Paid Leave by December 1, 2025.
 - Hang the Paid Leave workplace poster.
 - Provide individual notices to your employees and keep signed forms for each employee acknowledging receipt of the notice. (sample notices are available online).
 - Prepare Your Workplace Policies: There are other important decisions you can make today to make Paid Leave work best for your organization.
 - Explore decisions you can make about premiums, leave policies, and more on the Paid Leave website.
 - Additional information on paid leave can be found online.

MN Earned Sick and Safe Time (ESST)

- Effective January 1, 2024, Minnesota enacted MN Earned Sick and Safe Time (ESST) laws.
 - The laws apply to employees who are expected to work more than 80 hours (by any employer) in a given year in Minnesota. As an example: Your employee works 60 hours for your congregation and 40 for another employer in Minnesota. This employee is eligible.
 - A notice from the state website should be given to all employees and posted. www.dli.mn.gov/sick-leave

There are two options for employers to choose related to ESST:

- Option 1: The minimum requirement of the law is to provide one hour of ESST for every 30 hours worked with a cap of 48 hours in any given year.
 - ESST is not earned during periods of unpaid leave, while using accrued PTO, on paid holidays not worked, or while on workers' compensation leave (unless required by law).
 - Accrued but unused ESST can be rolled over from year to year – with a maximum rollover of 80 hours (amounts over that time are forfeited).
 - The hours are available to use as they are accrued/earned.
 - Congregations may supplement the minimum time off with their own policy.
- Option 2: Employers can front-load ESST by giving an employee an amount of sick time at the beginning of the year that meets or exceeds the accrual provisions. The front-loaded amounts must be either:
 - 48 hours if the employer pays an employee for accrued but unused ESST at the end of the year,
 - OR
 - 80 hours if the employer does not pay an employee for accrued but not used ESST at the end of the year
- Additional information can be found at <https://www.dli.mn.gov/sick-leave-FAQs>

All congregations are strongly encouraged to have updated, written Personnel Policies in place and available to all employees.

ADDENDUM I

COMPENSATION WORKSHEET FOR ROSTERED LEADERS

This worksheet is designed to assist congregations build a compensation package for pastors and other rostered leaders using the synod guidelines. Page numbers of the Compensation and Professional Expense Guidelines are referenced.

'Defined Compensation' is the figure that Portico (www.porticobenefits.org) uses to calculate pension, medical/dental, disability and administration. Defined compensation for pastors includes salary, housing, FICA allowance - please access the Portico website for calculating defined compensation for pastors with parsonages. Per IRS, Deacons are not eligible for housing benefits.

The compensation package includes Defined Compensation + Benefits (does not include professional expenses)

Name of pastor/other rostered

Year

	This Year	Guidelines	Proposed
<u>Taxable Income</u>			
Base Salary	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
Housing Allowance (if parsonage is NOT provided)	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
FICA Reimbursement	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
Furnishing Allowance (if parsonage IS provided)	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
Utility Allowance (if not paid by congregation)	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
TOTAL SALARY	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____

Benefits

Housing Equity	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
(when parsonage is provided)			
.....			

Pension	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
Medical/Dental	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
Supplemental Medical/ Dental	\$ _____ \$ _____	\$ _____ \$ _____	\$ _____ \$ _____
Disability/Survivor Plan	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
Administration	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
Other	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
TOTAL BENEFITS	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
PACKAGE TOTAL (salary & benefits)	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____

Professional Expenses

Automobile	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
Continuing Education	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
Books, Periodicals and Other expenses	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
TOTAL FEES	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____

Non-financial Items

Vacation Time	_____ weeks	_____ weeks	_____ weeks
Additional Sundays Off	_____ days	_____ days	_____ days
Continuing Education	_____ weeks	_____ weeks	_____ weeks
Other	_____ weeks	_____ weeks	_____ weeks

ADDENDUM II

PARSONAGE GUIDELINES

A parsonage is a home provided by the congregation for their pastor(s). The parsonage is an expression of the hospitality of the congregation and therefore needs regular care and attention. The pastor and family may appreciate the parsonage as part of the compensation; however, the pastor forfeits the building of equity in a home and therefore providing an equity allowance is important.

IN PROVIDING A PARSONAGE, THE CONGREGATION AGREES TO:

- Provide the parsonage without cost to the pastor - utilities are to be paid by the congregation including electricity, fuel, soft water service, telephone, cell phone and internet service.
- Provide for regular oversight and repair of the parsonage by designating members who will meet with the pastor/family regarding needed repairs, remodeling, maintenance and redecorating. The pastor/family should not be expected to come to the church council to make appeals for regular repair and maintenance.
- Not expect the pastor to do major repairs or capital improvements.
- Provide stove, refrigerator, dishwasher, cable/satellite TV, window coverings, light fixtures, flooring, paint, wallpaper, soft water system (*if needed*), humidifier/ dehumidifier (*if needed*)
- Provide for the care of grounds. The upkeep of the yard is the congregation's responsibility unless negotiated otherwise.
- Respect the privacy of the pastor/family.
- Provide suitable garage space for cars - normally this would be space for two vehicles.

NOTE: Before a pastor moves into a parsonage it should be thoroughly cleaned and there should be an expectation that some redecoration may be necessary. In addition, parsonage maintenance should be listed as a separate line item in the annual budget with a clear understanding of who has the authority to make budgeted purchases.

IN ACCEPTING A PARSONAGE, A PASTOR WILL:

- Respect and care for the parsonage, exercising good stewardship.
- Report emergency concerns regarding the parsonage to the property committee.
- Pay for any damage done to the property resulting from negligence.
- Leave the parsonage clean when moving.

NOTE: The pastor and congregation council should reach agreement on these items prior to the call being finalized by congregational vote.

ADDENDUM III - SELECTED RESOURCES

Bolsinger, Tod Canoeing the Mountains: Christian Leadership in Uncharted Territory, IVP, 2015

Bouman, Stephen P. The Mission Table: Renewing Congregation & Community, Augsburg Fortress, 2013

Clergy Financial Resources: <https://www.clergytaxnet.com/> Maple Grove, MN: Copyright 2018

Congregational LEADER Series: Pastor and People - Making Mutual Ministry Work Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress 2003

Foss, Michael W. Power Surge: Six Marks of Discipleship for a Changing Church, Fortress Press, 2000

Hammar, Richard R. Church & Clergy Tax Guide Matthew, NC: Christian Ministry Resources (order on-line for appropriate year - www.CLTStore.com)

Keck, David Healthy, Faithful Churches: Covenant Expectations for Thriving Together, Alban Institute

Malotky, Catherine - Editor How Much is Enough? A Deeper Look at Stewardship in an Age of Abundance; Region 9, 2011, Contributors: Charles R. Lane, Craig L. Nesson, William O. Avery, Jim Mauney, Stephen Bouman, Marty E. Stevens

Meed, Loren: A Change of Pastors: and How It Affects Change in the Congregation, Alban Institute, 2012

Portico Benefits, www.porticobenefits.org

Powell, Mark Allan: Giving to God: The Bible's Good News about Living a Generous Life, Wm B Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006

Scazzero, Peter: The Emotionally Healthy Church, Zondervan, 2003

LUTHERAN VOICES SERIES: Devotions for Leaders, Councils and Committees

Burtness, Eric: Leading on Purpose: Intentionality and Teaming in Congregational Life, Augsburg Fortress, 2004

Burtness, Eric: A Life Worth Leading, Augsburg Fortress, 2006

Fryer, Kelly A., Reclaiming the 'L' Word: Renewing the Church from Its Lutheran Core, Augsburg Fortress, 2003

Holley, Robert F. & Walters, Paul E. Called by God to Serve: Reflections for Church Leaders, Augsburg Fortress, 2004

LINKS: www.nemnsynod.org

Year Ordained	2026 Graduate	2016 10 years	2006 20 years	1996 30 years
Average (see note)	45,342.000	52,573.833	59,304.167	65,779.833
NE MN	44,192.000	51,944.000	59,476.000	65,014.000

Note: This is the average of salaries in these neighboring synods.
Southeastern Minnesota, Southwestern Minnesota, Northwestern Minnesota,
Eastern North Dakota, and Western North Dakota

AMENDMENTS TO THE *CONSTITUTION FOR SYNODS*
AS APPROVED BY THE 2025 ELCA CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY

Notice of Recommended Provisions

Prepared by the Office of the Secretary
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
August 2025

Following is official notification of amendments to the *Constitution for Synods* that were approved by the 2025 Churchwide Assembly. Additions are underlined; deletions are ~~struck through~~; all changes are **highlighted**.

Amendments to Non-Required Provisions

These are recommended amendments from the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly. The Synod Council, at its February 21, 2026 meeting, voted to recommend the adoption of this group of amendments to the Synod Constitution and Bylaws, by the 2026 Northeastern Minnesota Synod Assembly at its assembly April 24-26, 2026.

Chapter 7.

SYNOD ASSEMBLY

S7.26. This synod may establish processes through the Synod Council that permit **persons currently serving as synod-authorized ministers and/or** lay representatives of authorized worshipping communities **and/or outreach ministries** of the synod, which have been authorized under ELCA bylaw 10.01.04., to serve as voting members of the Synod Assembly, consistent with †S7.21.

Chapter 9.

NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS

S9.04. The bishop shall be elected by the Synod Assembly by ecclesiastical ballot. Three-fourths of the legal votes cast shall be necessary for election on the first ballot. If no one is elected, the first ballot shall be considered the nominating ballot. Three-fourths of the legal votes cast on the second ballot shall be necessary for election. The third ballot shall be limited to the seven persons **(plus ties)** who receive the greatest number of legal votes **(including ties in the final qualifying position)** on the second ballot, and two-thirds of the legal votes cast shall be necessary for election. The fourth ballot shall be limited to the three persons **(plus ties)** who receive the greatest number of legal votes **(including ties in the final qualifying position)** on the third ballot, and 60 percent of

the legal votes cast shall be necessary for election. On subsequent ballots a majority of the legal votes cast shall be necessary for election. These ballots shall be limited to the two persons ~~(plus ties)~~ who receive the greatest number of legal votes ~~(including ties in the final qualifying position)~~ on the previous ballot.

Chapter 10.

SYNOD COUNCIL

S10.05. ~~No~~ Elected members of the Synod Council shall ~~not~~ receive compensation solely for ~~such their~~ service ~~as council members~~.

S10.06. No person related to a synod staff member shall be eligible for nomination to or membership on the Synod Council or the following synod committees: Synod Consultation Committee, Synod Committee on Discipline, Synod Audit Committee, Synod Mutual Ministry Committee, Synod Personnel Committee. For this purpose, a related individual is one who, with respect to the synod employee, is a spouse, parent, son, daughter, sibling, uncle, aunt, niece, nephew, grandparent, grandchild, including corresponding members of blended families and in-laws (parent, son, daughter, or sibling of a spouse, spouse of a sibling, or the parent or sibling of the spouse of a sibling).

S10.0607. If a member of the Synod Council ceases to meet

S10.0708. The composition of the Synod Council

S10.0809. *Robert's Rules of Order*, latest edition, shall govern

Chapter 13.

CONGREGATIONS

S13.40. **Synod-authorized Worshiping Communities and Outreach Ministries**

S13.41. ~~Authorized worshiping~~ **Worshiping** communities ~~and outreach ministries,~~ **authorized by the synod and** acknowledged under criteria, policies, and procedures approved by the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, shall accept and adhere to the Confession of Faith and Statement of Purpose of this church, shall be served by leadership under the criteria of this church, and shall be subject to the discipline of this church.

Rationale for the above recommended amendments to the Synod Constitution and Bylaws:

- S7.26.** This would allow synod authorized ministers (SAMs) or representatives of synod-authorized worshiping communities or outreach ministers to serve as voting members of the Synod Assembly. [Editor's note: the Synod Council has the past and current practice of Synod Authorized Ministers (SAMs) to be voting members at the synod assemblies.
- S9.04.** Clarification of election process in the event of tie votes.
- S10.05.** Clarification, and establishment of the possibility that elected Synod Council members may receive compensation for other services provided to the synod.
- S10.06.** For purposes of avoiding conflicts of interest, this provision allows synods to define where relatives of synod staff may or may not serve.
- S10.07.** Renumbering.
S10.08. Renumbering.
S10.09. Renumbering.
- S13.41.** This amendment reflects a change in terminology when referring to authorized worshiping communities and extends the synods' authority to acknowledge authorized outreach ministries as well.

Report of the Northeastern Minnesota Synod's Bishop Election Committee To the 2026 Synod Assembly

The Bishop Election is a Call Process, albeit a very public process. Voting members' responsibilities are similar to that of a congregational call committee. Not every pastor nominated will fulfill every gift or skill set on a voting member's wishlist. It was the goal and is the hope of the Bishop Election Committee that the work done through conference conversations, surveys, website links and forums, that all synod assembly voting members will be familiar with this important process and constitutional requirements as helpful resources to guide them through this process. It is the Bishop Election Committee's prayer that all voting members are open to the movement of the Holy Spirit in this bishop election call process. We trust the Holy Spirit is very much present throughout this entire process from nominees discernment through the gathered assembly. We pray for the Holy Spirit's guidance as we seek to raise up the next Bishop for the Northeastern Minnesota Synod whose gifts and strengths will match the needs of the synod in this time and place. The Bishop Election Committee began meeting via zoom in the fall of 2025. Here is a timeline of our work.

September 2025: Synod Council approves Bishop Election Committee Members.

October 2025: Zoom meetings for overview of Bishop Election Process, review ELCA's Bible Study for conference conversations, provide important upcoming deadlines and meeting dates for the election process. Sub-committees formed to work on survey questions and begin work on Synod Ministry Site Profile.

November 2025: Multiple zoom meetings. Synod wide survey approved and launched November 12. Also zoomed with Deans and Synod Authorized Ministers to walk them through the Bishop Election Process. Synod wide survey and responses are available @ nemnsynod.org. Utilizing the synod's 2022 Strategic Plans four core values of: **Welcoming, Connecting, Reforming, Supporting**, in addition to the responses received from conference conversations, the survey and the synod constitution, questions were categorized into areas of responsibilities of a bishop. Questions for the Bishop Nominee Forums were formulated from these responses which were categorized as follows: Administration; Advocacy & Public Witness; Relationship Building with congregations, staff, rostered ministers & Synod Authorized Ministers as well as synod ministry partners; Challenges & Opportunities; Communication; Conflict Management & Leadership Style; Constitutional Role of a Bishop; Faith Formation for All Ages; Personal Sense of Call; Spiritual Discipline; and Self-Care.

November 2025 - December 2025: Synod Ministry Site written up and posted in December.

December 2025 - January 2026: Pre-nominations opened December 8 for bishop candidates. Eight candidates were put forward for consideration as bishop nominees with each one providing answers to several designated questions as well as their personal bio and photo. January 14, 2026 was the deadline for submitting candidates' names. The appropriate background checks were done for all nominees prior to the February Conference Assemblies.

February 9, 2026: Synod Minister for Operations Rev. Rollie Bockbrader provided a power point tutorial presentation on the Modified-Ecclesiastical balloting process to the Bishop Election Committee.

February 15, 2026: All five Conference Assemblies met simultaneously at 2:30 pm. Each candidate provided a 2 minute video introducing themselves. Results of the Conference Assemblies narrowed down the slate of eight candidates to four pastors who were voted on to move to the first ballot at the April 24-26, 2026 Synod Assembly. The four nominees voted to move forward are listed in alphabetical order:

Rev. Andrew Berry, Rev. David Carlson, Rev. Taryn Montgomery, Rev. Kathryn Tiede

January - March 2026: Subcommittee worked on bishop nominee forum questions and presented them to the full Bishop Election Committee for editing and approval. The sites, times, questions and names of Bishop Election Committee Members who would be facilitating the forums were finalized.

March 12, 13 & 14: Bishop Nominee Forums were held with the four nominees participating.

Thank you to the host sites:

St. Andrew's Lutheran Church, Grand Rapids	7:00 pm
Trinity Lutheran Church, Brainerd	7:00 pm
Salem Lutheran Church, Hermantown	2:30 pm

All three forums were offered in-person as well as live-streamed and recorded. Each nominee gave a one minute introduction. At each forum the individual nominees were allotted a two minute response to the eleven different questions asked at each site. The recorded forums may be accessed through the Northeastern Minnesota Synod's website under the Bishop Election Process.

The people who joined in-person were invited to write out their questions on index cards while those participating via live-stream had the option to type in their questions in the chat. The Bishop Election Committees thirty-three forum questions covered a large area of constitutional questions regarding a bishop's responsibilities as well as covering the topical areas which came in with the surveys. Questions received at the forums were taken into consideration by the Bishop Election Team for possible use at the Synod Assembly's Nominee Question and Response time.

March 2026: Bishop Amy Ogden was interviewed by Deacon Brenda Tibbetts and Deacon Susan Williams. Bp. Odgren shared highlights and challenges of her 6 years experience serving as the fourth Bishop of the Northeastern Minnesota Synod. This video can be viewed at nemnsynod.org

April 24-26, 2026: The 2026 Northeastern Minnesota Synod Assembly will utilize VPOLL, an electronic voting platform for the bishop election balloting process. Four pre-identified nominees will be listed on the first ballot. The first ballot will allow for write-in nominations. Any nominee who discerns not to move forward, must do so in writing by 8:30 am on Saturday, April 25 at the Bishop Election Table at the assembly. Thank you to The Rev. CeCee Mills, ELCA Secretary and Deacon MaryAnn Schwabe who will be our churchwide representatives to assist us in facilitating the bishop election process.

Members of the Bishop Election Committee include:

- * Rev. David Anderson-St. Andrew's, Lutheran, Grand Rapids; Living Waters Conference
- * Ms. Carol Christenson-Salem Lutheran, Hermantown; Lake Superior Conference
- * Mr. Rick Gabriel-SAM & seminary student, Bethany Lutheran, Onamia; Heartland Conference
- * Ms. Abby Hartog-LYO & Synod Council-Immanuel of Brunswick, Mora; Kettle River Conference
- * Rev. Christina Johnson-Zion Lutheran, Cloquet; Kettle River Conference
- * Ms. Kali Kadelbach-Seminary student, Bethesda Lutheran, Malmo; Heartland Conference, seminary student, and Synod Council - At Large/Young Adult
- * Ms. Sari Kroeschel-Program Director, Camp Onomia, Onamia; Heartland Conference
- * Mr. Chuck Peterson-Bethany Lutheran, Remer; Living Waters Conference
- * Rev. John Stiles-Our Redeemer Lutheran, Pine City; Synod Council, Kettle River Conference
- * Deacon Brenda Tibbetts, (retired)-Trinity Lutheran Cook; BEC Chair, Laurentian Conference
- * Deacon Susan Williams-NEMN Minister for Leadership Support/BEC Liaison to Synod Staff
- * Special thanks to Synod Vice-President Rachel Berry, Laurentian Conference, for her initial assistance regarding the constitutional guidance and Synod Council information.

Respectfully submitted,

Deacon Brenda Tibbetts

2026 Bishop Election Committee Chair

2026 Conference Nominations

Needing approval at Synod Assembly

*Indicates incumbent and eligible for reelection

Lake Superior Conference

Synod Nominating, lay person
Synod RCM, lay person
Synod RCM, rostered minister

vacant (term ends 2027)
Robert Jenko*
Rev. Laura Berdahl*

Laurentian Conference

Synod Council, lay person
Synod Council, rostered minister
Synod RCM, lay person
Synod RCM, rostered minister

Bruce Garbisch*
Rev. Kevin Olson*
Crystal Whitney*
Rev. Kevin Olson*

Living Waters Conference

Synod Council, rostered minister
Synod Nominating
Synod RCM, lay person
Synod RCM, rostered minister

Rev. Lori Gordon*
[replacing Rev. Andrea Bonneville DeNaples]
Phil Johnston*
Rev. Lori Gordon*

Heartland Conference

Synod Council, lay person
Synod Council, rostered minister
Synod RCM, lay person
Synod RCM, rostered minister

Dr. Frederick Ness*
Rev. Sarah Stadler
Sue Lyback*
Rev. Sarah Stadler

Kettle River Conference

Synod Nominating, lay person
Synod Nominating, rostered minister
Synod RCM, lay person
Synod RCM, rostered minister

Wendy Reamer-Johnson
Rev. Seth Wynands
Elaine Garaghty
Rev. John Stiles

2026 Synod Wide Nominations Needed
To be elected at the Synod Assembly

*Indicates incumbent and eligible for reelection

Synod Bishop (six-year term) – under auspice of Bishop Election Committee/ELCA

Synod Vice President (lay person) (four-year term)
Karen Gabriel

Synod Council, At Large (person of color) (three-year term)
Pastor Victor St. George

Synod Committee on Discipline

Layperson/female, term ending 2027 (replacing Mary Pfohl who moved)
Valerie Connor

Rostered Minister/male, term ending 2031
Layperson/male, term ending 2031

Rostered Minister, term ending 2032
Layperson, term ending 2032

Synod Consultation Committee

Rostered Minister/male, term ending 2031 (no one elected at 2025 SA)
Layperson/female, term ending 2031 (no one elected at 2025 SA)

Rostered Minister/female, term ending 2032
Rev. Susan Van Norman

Layperson/male, term ending 2032

Biographical Information
2026 Synod Wide Nominations

Synod Vice President

Karen Gabriel

Congregation: Faith Lutheran, Isle

Occupation: Retired; working part time as a special education due process specialist

Experience that has prepared you for service in this capacity:

- Council President
- Adjunct Professor in special education at Bethel University
- Special education department leader

Three congregational, synod or Churchwide activities you have been or currently are involved in:

- Congregational council at Faith Lutheran; currently council president, previously a council member
- Chair of Local and Global Mission team
- Adult education at Faith Lutheran

Educational background:

- Masters Degree – University of St. Thomas – special education
- Bachelors of Science – Calvin University – social studies, elementary education, special education

I do not aspire to this position. However, when I was asked to consider serving as vice president of the synod council, I prayerfully and thoughtfully considered it. I believe God calls us to serve for specific purposes. If my skills and abilities can be used to serve in this capacity, I am willing to do so if elected.

Synod Council – At Large/Person of Color

Pastor Victor St. George

Congregation: Elim Lutheran, Duluth

Occupation: Pastor

Experience that has prepared you for service in this capacity:

- I served on the Synod Council in Northeastern Iowa Synod
- I am the immediate past chair of Men As Peacemakers in Duluth
- I have been active in a variety of volunteer and leadership roles in the past twenty years

Three congregational, synod or Churchwide activities you have been or currently are involved in:

- Called by the Synod to serve as a prison chaplain 2022-2025
- Served as a voting member of the Churchwide Assembly in Orlando
- I have served as a bridge pastor at two congregations in the NW Synod of WI

Educational background:

- Minneapolis Area Vocational Technical Institute Welding Program – 1979
- University of Minnesota Twin Cities Campus – sociology major (no degree)
- Luther Seminary – Master of Divinity – 1998

I have enjoyed serving on Synod Council, I am an enrolled member of the Fond du Lac Band of the Lake Superior Chippewa Tribe. I believe that the more I put into something, the more I get out of it. I enjoy serving the church and the community. I believe I bring a different viewpoint than most people because of my blue-collar background as well as being a part of the community of color.

Synod Vice President

- The Vice President shall be a layperson.
- The Vice President is the chair of the Synod Council which meets four times each year and as needed.
- The Vice President shall be a voting member of a congregation of this synod.
- Four (4) year term, with re-election possible to a maximum of three terms.

Synod Council

- The Synod Council is the board of directors for the NE MN Synod.
- The Synod Council usually meets four times each year. Daytime meetings on Saturday, and occasional electronic (email) and Zoom meetings.
- Three (3) year term, with re-election possible to maximum of two terms.
- Synod Council members attend the Synod Assembly (each spring) as voting members.
- Synod Council serves as the synod's board of directors between Synod Assemblies.

Synod Nominating Committee

- Leads the process in finding nominations for conference and synod wide positions.
- Consists of ten members: two representatives from each conference (one lay and one rostered minister),
- Three (3) year term, with re-election possible.

Committee on Reference, Counsel, and Memorial

- Reviews all resolutions and memorials before introducing them to the Synod Assembly.
- Consists of one rostered minister and one lay representative from each conference, one member of the Synod Assembly Planning Committee, and anyone else appointed by the Synod Bishop and/or Synod Council.
- Checks each resolution or memorial for grammar, spelling, factuality, and documentation.
 - May consult with the author(s) for clarification and accuracy.
- Shall present each resolution/memorial to the Synod Assembly without any recommendation.

Committee on Discipline

- Convened when charges are brought against a person or entity in the synod; Synod Constitution, S11.03.
- Committee consists of 12 members: six (6) lay and six (6) rostered ministers.
- Rotating six (6) year terms

Consultation Committee

- Members of this committee and others have been asked by the Bishop to help in the Consultation Process; Synod Constitution S11.02.
- Convened by the Synod Bishop to assist the bishop in resolving a situation by consultation.
- Committee consists of 12 members: six (6) lay and six (6) rostered ministers.
- Rotating six (6) year terms

Resolution: Funding for the Northeastern Minnesota Synod Hunger Grant Fund

(The original resolution was presented and voted on at several Conference Assemblies in some form.
This version is a revision from a conversation between RCM and the Hunger Committee leadership.)

WHEREAS, one in five households in Minnesota experience food insecurity and 26% of households with children do not have regular access to adequate nutrition*; and

WHEREAS, local ministries that address food insecurity could be enhanced through the support from funds provided by the NEMN Synod; and

WHEREAS, ELCA Domestic Hunger Grants are limited to only one or two grants per synod each year; and

WHEREAS, the NEMN Synod Hunger, Justice, and Rural Life Committee has created a Northeastern Minnesota Synod Hunger Grant Fund** to provide grants of \$100 to \$1,000 to help congregations and non-profit organizations within our synod fund programs and ministries that address local hunger issues; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Synod support these grants by designating \$5,000 for the Northeastern Minnesota Synod Hunger Grant Fund in the 2028 NEMN Synod Budget; and be it

RESOLVED, that congregations and individuals be encouraged to contribute to this fund as a way of supporting local projects to address food insecurity in our communities.

Submitted by the Hunger, Justice, & Rural Life Committee, NEMN Synod

Rev. Sarah Stadler

Rev. Loren Anderson-Bauer

Rev. Larry Nelson

Vicki Schmidt

Rebecca Romosz, NEMN WELCA President

Mary Ann Hansen

Rev. Rollie Bockbrader

Rev. Tom Anderson

Tammy Walhof, Director, Lutheran Advocacy-Minnesota

*From Second Harvest Heartland: www.2harvest.org

***The purpose of NEMN Synod Hunger Grant Fund is to provide small grants to congregations and non-profit organizations within the Northeastern Minnesota Synod to address local hunger issues and to support greater engagement in hunger ministries.*

The fund is to be administered by the synod treasurer. Congregations and individuals are invited to designate gifts to the NEMN Synod Hunger Grant Fund.

Once the fund has accumulated \$5,000, application for grants of \$100 to \$1,000 will be accepted. A three-person committee appointed by the Hunger, Justice, and Rural Life Committee will evaluate and award the grants. Grants must address hunger, root causes of hunger, or advance the development of hunger ministries.

**Ecological Resilience in a Time of Climate Crisis
(from Synod EcoFaith Network)**

(The original resolution was approved at several Conference Assemblies. This version was modified by the EcoFaith Network and the RCM Committee.)

WHEREAS, God gives the whole creation, including human beings, the capacity for resilience, to thrive amid changing circumstances; and

WHEREAS, scripture encourages, illustrates, and embodies resilience;¹ and

WHEREAS, challenges to resilience persist, such as

- a) accelerating change in climate, including extreme weather events which are increasing in frequency and intensity on a global scale and also in northeastern Minnesota; and
- b) recent federal funding cuts to food assistance, health coverage, education, scientific research, environmental protection, and climate change mitigation, such that churches are doing ministry in a time when people cannot depend on government support for some services their communities need; and

WHEREAS, congregations, drawing strength from the steadfast love and faithfulness of God, are a resilient presence in their communities through their historical and ongoing ministries of worship and hospitality, outreach and service, care for people in need, civic engagement and public witness, education and creation care; and

WHEREAS, the Northeastern MN Synod's EcoFaith Network has, through numerous initiatives,² since being established by the synod at its assembly in 2008, assisted the synod in living out God's call to be stewards of the earth for the sake of the whole creation; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern MN Synod, meeting in assembly, affirm ecological resilience as a value we share as people of faith; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern MN Synod, meeting in assembly, encourage congregations to become active centers of resilience (see examples in footnotes)³ which address the impacts of climate and ecological harm; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern MN Synod, meeting in assembly, strengthen its efforts for advocacy and civic engagement at local, state, and national levels including encouraging circles of civic engagement and partnership with Lutheran Advocacy MN; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern MN Synod support these actions with, through and by the leadership of the bishop and synod staff, conference leaders, and the EcoFaith Network's Leadership Team and its Partner Congregations.

ENDNOTES

1. Examples of scripture illustrating resilience:

- the steadfast love of the LORD that never ceases (Lamentations 3:22),
- the Earth's regenerative capacities renewing desolate landscapes (Isaiah 55:13),
- those who trust in the LORD, who are like trees planted by water, continuing to bear fruit in anxious times (Jeremiah 17:7-8),
- those whose faith enables them to endure hardship (Job 19:25), to take heart (John 16:33), to press on toward the goal of new life (Philippians 3:12), and not to grow weary in doing what is right (Galatians 6:9); and
- Jesus Christ the faithful witness (Revelation 1:5), whose life, ministry, death and resurrection embodied God's unwavering, redeeming love for the cosmos (John 3:16; Colossians 1:20).

2. Examples of EcoFaith Network of the Northeastern MN Synod initiatives, conducted along with its Partner Congregations and more recently other ELCA synods:

- annual EcoFaith Summits fostering a community concerned for Creation across the Upper Midwest (Current year's theme is "From Fear to Fire: Igniting Community for a Planet in Peril," which emphasized faith-based community organizing),
- bi-monthly Green Blades Rising newsletters,
- a Pollinator Sanctuary movement within our Pollinator Synod,
- weekly Preaching Roundtable commentaries,
- website resources; and
- a Lenten pilot project to support circles of civic engagement in congregations advocating for neighbors and nature in partnership with Lutheran Advocacy MN and MN Interfaith Power & Light.

3. Examples of how congregations can become active centers of resilience:

- providing places people can turn to for ongoing services and/or referral during times of disruption and recovery,
- fostering the resilience of the broader community by helping it ask questions about its power, water and air quality, biodiversity, economic sustainability, and how people can become neighbors to each other,
- becoming clusters of resilience with other congregations in their conferences and communities,
- making room in worship for lament and for confession that names ecological suffering, that identifies systems of exploitation and extraction that oppress people and the rest of the Earth community, and that proclaims God's saving gospel for the whole creation,
- assessing programs, communication, operations, buildings and power systems with an eye to being better prepared for weather and health emergencies; and
- learning from Indigenous neighbors and other marginalized groups both within our church and beyond it who have long been practitioners of resilience.

Resolution 26-3a

RESOLUTION: Youth and Young Adult Voting Members at Synod Assembly

WHEREAS, Jesus professed abundant inclusion of youth, “Let the children come to me, and do not stop them, for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs” (Matthew 19:14); and

WHEREAS, the Northeastern Minnesota Synod promotes ministry that welcomes, connects, reforms, and supports people of all ages, in adherence with our four core values; and

WHEREAS, the mission of the Lutheran Youth Organization of the Northeastern Minnesota Synod is to nurture leaders in God’s church and empower youth to influence the faith communities they are a part of; and

WHEREAS, ELCA Young Adult Ministries works to empower young people by sharing leadership and allowing young adults’ gifts and perspectives to contribute to the future of their faith communities; and

WHEREAS, the goal of the ELCA as stated in 5.01.E25 (ELCA Constitution Continuing Resolution) is at least 20% of voting members at the Churchwide Assembly, Church Council, and churchwide boards and committees be youth and young adults; and

WHEREAS, the goal of this synod as stated in †S6.04.01 (NE MN Synod Bylaw) is at least 10% of voting members of the Synod Assembly, Synod Council, committees, and organizational units of this synod be youth and a young adults, and the Synod Council has been tasked with establishing a plan for implementing this goal; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that each congregation of the Northeastern Minnesota Synod is entitled to add one youth voting member (“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.), in addition to its allotted voting members to any meeting of the Northeastern Minnesota Synod Assembly; and be it further

RESOLVED, that each congregation of the Northeastern Minnesota Synod is encouraged to appoint a young adult (age 18-35) as one of its allotted voting members to any meeting of the Northeastern Minnesota Synod Assembly.

Submitted by: Lutheran Youth Organization (LYO) of the NEMN Synod
Abby Hartung, LYO Leadership President and Synod Council Member

Resolution on the World Council of Churches Ecumenical Decade of Climate Justice Action

Northeastern Minnesota Synod Assembly

**Submitted by the Leadership Team of the NE MN Synod EcoFaith Network
Pastor Kristin Foster and Pastor David Carlson, co-chairs**

WHEREAS, the ELCA social statement, *Caring for Creation*, adopted 33 years ago by the 1993 Churchwide Assembly, acknowledged that we face dangerous global warming and emphasized that action to counter degradation is essential to the future of our children and the entire planet; and

WHEREAS, the 2022 ELCA Churchwide Assembly reaffirmed the commitment of this church to engage in creation care and advocacy, and on Earth Day 2023, the ELCA Church Council unanimously adopted a social message, *Earth's Climate Crisis*, stating that, “[f]rom a standpoint of faith, it is reasonable to conclude that the climate crisis is, indeed, a kairos moment” and challenged all expressions of the ELCA to “[j]oin with ecumenical, interfaith, and secular partners working to address the climate crisis”; and

WHEREAS, in his 2025 “Message on the Tenth Anniversary of the Paris Climate Accords”, ELCA Presiding Bishop Yehiel Curry emphasized: “It is not too late to protect our climate. With God, it is never too late. Kairos means that this is an opportune and urgent time to address Earth’s climate crisis”; and

WHEREAS, on June 21, 2025, the World Council of Churches (WCC) launched the *Ecumenical Decade of Climate Justice Action*, “an unprecedented commitment by the global church—a bold and prayerful response to the climate emergency....(that) calls churches to ecological metanoia and systemic change rooted in justice, peace, and the integrity of creation”; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA Social Message, *Earth's Climate Crisis*, names this as a “kairos moment” and calls us to heed “God’s urgent call for decisive action in history” and such decisive action will require additional resourcing of churchwide staff and programs dedicated to climate justice; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Minnesota Synod, meeting in assembly, urges every congregation, synod, and the churchwide office of the ELCA to commit to active participation in the WCC’s *Ecumenical Decade of Climate Justice Action*; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Minnesota Synod, meeting in assembly, urges the ELCA Churchwide Organization to devote additional funds and staffing to lead the church’s work for climate justice, and to launch a fundraising campaign, “Climate Justice Action for the Life of the World”, seeking to raise at least \$1 million for specific programs dedicated to greenhouse gas reduction and other efforts to address Earth’s climate crisis; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Minnesota Synod, meeting in assembly, urges the ELCA Church Council to adopt this resolution and work with the Conference of Bishops to implement these actions.

Proposed by: the Leadership Team of the Northeastern Minnesota Synod EcoFaith Network, by unanimous vote on 3/25/26

Supporting material

- ✓ The 1993 ELCA social statement, *Caring for Creation*, expressed concern about “climate change;” acknowledged that, “according to the preponderance of evidence from scientists worldwide” we face “dangerous global warming, caused by the buildup of greenhouse gases, especially carbon dioxide;” and emphasized that “action to counter degradation, especially within this decade, is essential to the future of our children and our children’s children. Time is very short;”¹
- ✓ In 2022 the ELCA Churchwide Assembly voted 672-45, “to receive with gratitude the memorials from 17 synods² concerning greenhouse gas emissions;” “to reaffirm the commitment of this church to engage in creation care and advocacy . . . ;” and “to encourage congregants, rostered ministers, and bishops to commit themselves to education about the urgency of the climate emergency . . . ;”³
- ✓ On Earth Day 2023, the ELCA Church Council unanimously adopted a social message, *Earth’s Climate Crisis*, stating that, “[f]rom a standpoint of faith, it is reasonable to conclude that the climate crisis is, indeed, a *kairos* moment”⁴ and challenged all expressions of the ELCA to “[j]oin with ecumenical, interfaith, and secular partners working to address the climate crisis;”⁵
- ✓ ELCA social teachings have emphasized the ethical priority for the most vulnerable and marginalized, who have contributed least to the climate crisis and bear a disproportionate weight of its effects; and the ELCA calls on organizations to support strategies that enable adaptation to climate change, including protecting the land rights of Indigenous peoples, in whose care land, resources, and biodiversity are more likely to be protected;
- ✓ ELCA Presiding Bishop Yehiel Curry, in his 2025 “Message on the Tenth Anniversary of the Paris Climate Accords,” affirmed the 2015 United Nations agreement that committed all nations, including the U.S., to limit global warming to well below 2°Celsius (C) while also pursuing efforts to limit it to 1.5°C,⁶ and emphasized:

¹ ELCA Social Statement, [Caring for Creation, Vision, Hope, and Justice](#), 1993.

² Oregon Synod, Southwest California Synod, Northeastern Minnesota Synod, Minneapolis Synod, Saint Paul Area Synod, Southwestern Texas Synod, Northern Illinois Synod, Northeastern Iowa Synod, East-Central Synod of Wisconsin, Greater Milwaukee Synod, North/West Lower Michigan Synod, New England Synod, Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod, Central States Synod, and Delaware-Maryland Synod.

³ ELCA, [Report of the Memorials Committee, 2022 Churchwide Assembly](#), July 15, 2022, pp. 13-28.

⁴ ELCA Social Message, [Earth’s Climate Crisis](#), approved on Earth Day, April 20, 2023.

⁵ *Id.* p. 17.

⁶ United Nations Climate Change, [The Paris Agreement](#), accessed 20 December 2025.

“It is not too late to protect our climate. With God, it is never too late. *Kairos* means that this is an opportune and urgent time to address Earth’s climate crisis. I am calling this church to be more connected and sustainable. This includes stewarding God’s creation as an expression of faith and seeking sustainability rooted in ways of living that honor everything God has called ‘good,’ including learning from and following the leadership of Indigenous communities. I commend to you the social message,” *Earth’s Climate Crisis*;⁷

- ✓ On June 21, 2025, the World Council of Churches (WCC) began an Ecumenical Decade of Climate Justice Action, which is “a prophetic pilgrimage of repentance, transformation, and hope” that calls “churches to ecological *metanoia* and systemic change rooted in justice, peace, and the integrity of creation;”⁸
- ✓ The ELCA is a leader in resourcing churchwide staff positions dedicated to programming for racial justice and gender justice; and the ELCA seeks to lead comparably in the work of climate justice, especially in light of its 2023 Social Message, *Earth’s Climate Crisis*, which calls us to see the climate crisis as a *kairos* moment, a moment when we recognize “*God’s urgent call for decisive action in history*”; and the ELCA’s leadership in the call to decisive action will require bold resourcing of additional churchwide staff member(s) solely dedicated to climate justice.⁹
- ✓ The fundraising campaign, “Climate Justice for the Life of World,” is critical to our successful involvement in the WCC Ecumenical Decade for Climate Justice Action. As we discovered through the ELCA Malaria Campaign (2011-2015), the \$15.4 million raised to fight malaria also generated increased awareness and stronger engagement across our whole church. (Sunday school children, college students, congregations, synods, camps, WELCA, and individuals were inspired by the goal of providing millions of malaria nets – a tangible effort that appealed to members of all ages). The success of the ELCA’s Good Gifts initiative is another example of this. Further, we have already received commitments of \$200,000 from donors eager to support this work. The Climate Crisis demands such an engaged and generous response. (Imagine what it might mean if the ELCA could raise funds for 1 million solar panels for its congregations).

⁷ ELCA, [A Message on the Tenth Anniversary of the Paris Climate Accords](#), December 9, 2025.

⁸ World Council of Churches, “[Ecumenical Decade of Climate Justice Action: Moving Together in Ecological Metanoia for Transformation](#).”

⁹ The ELCA has a full-time Director for Racial Justice (Jennifer DeLeon) and a full-time Director for Gender Justice and Women’s Empowerment (Mary Streufert).