

Report of the Synod Council to the 2024 Synod Assembly

Synod Council members in 2023 included Rev. Richard Adams, Rev. Lisa Barnes, Rev. James Park Bricker, Ms Wendy Davis, Mr. Michael Dock, Mr. Scott Frost, Ms Holly Fry, Rev. Chad Hebrink, Mr. Ray Huff, Mr. Jonathan Moser, Mr. R. Craig Rhoades, Mr. Gabriel Schaeffer, Ms Karen Sigler, Ms Eileen Stauffer. We thanked Karen Sigler, and Holly Fry for their service as they concluded their terms, and Michael Dock who needed to resign his term; and we welcomed Barbara Horn and Noah Roux, who began their terms this summer.

The Upper Susquehanna Synod Council met five times in 2023 and took the actions listed below.

Actions of the Synod Council

Numbering of council actions includes the year, the month, and a sequential number (SC 2023.02.06. indicates the sixth action of the synod council in 2023, which took place in February. Numbers beginning with EC are actions of the Executive Committee). Names in parentheses indicate the mover and second ((Fry/White) indicates Holly Fry moved and Pastor White seconded; (EC) indicates a motion from the Executive Committee). Where numbers appear to be lacking in sequence the missing motions were to adopt the agenda or minutes for a meeting.

SC 2023.02.02. (Miller/Barnes) To approve a grant in the amount of \$3,000 to The Table – Bloomsburg for 2023.

SC 2023.02.03. (Miller/Sigler) To adopt the Consent Agenda.

1. To approve the appointment of Ms Kay Trick to the Audit Committee for a term ending June 30, 2024; and to approve the appointment of Mr. Rich Handy to the Audit Committee for a term ending June 30, 2025; and to approve the appointment of Mr. Michael Hess to the Audit Committee for a term ending June 30, 2026.
2. To approve a second year of On Leave From Call status for the Rev. Viking Dietrich.
3. To approve a change of status for the Rev. Jeffrey Gainsley to Retired.
4. To set 382 as the maximum voting membership for the 2023 Synod Assembly, including 107 rostered leaders and 275 lay members.

SC 2023.02.04. (Miller/Frost) Whereas, the Bishop's Discretionary Fund has a balance of \$6,154.52; and
Whereas, the synod does not have a policy governing the Bishop's Discretionary Fund; and
Whereas, the balance in the fund includes a contribution of \$5,000 given to the bishop at his installation; and
Whereas, the contribution of \$5,000 came with a note that indicated the bishop should use the funds at his discretion; and
Whereas, the offerings from the installation of the bishop on September 17, 2023 were designated for United Lutheran Seminary and Haven Ministries; therefore, it is
Resolved, the synod council authorizes a one-time payment of \$1,000 to United Lutheran Seminary and \$1,000 to Haven Ministries from the Bishop's Discretionary Fund.

- SC 2023.02.05. (Bricker/Sigler) To authorize the Executive committee to nominate for appointment to the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church.
- SC 2023.02.06. (Fry/Adams) To authorize Holly Fry and Bishop Miller to negotiate a lease agreement with Milton Lutheran Church for synod office space.
- SC 2023.02.07. (Huff/Hebrink) To propose for adoption by the synod assembly compensation guidelines for Ministers of Word and Sacrament as follows: for first call, base salary of \$40,232, with an additional \$425 for each year of service, and housing allowance range of \$17,150 to \$20,600;
and for Ministers of Word and Service as follows:
- | | |
|---------------|-------------------------------|
| 0-5 years | \$44,550 - \$46,675 |
| 5-10 years | \$46,675 – \$48,800 |
| 10-15 years | \$48,800 – \$50,925 |
| Over 15 years | add \$425 per year of service |
- SC 2023.02.08. (Frost/Sigler) To adopt the Bishop’s Discretionary Fund policy.
- SC 2023.02.09. (Frost/Adams) To adopt the amendments to the budget for Fiscal Year End January 31, 2024.
- SC 2023.05.10. (Miller/Hebrink) To approve the Rules of Procedure for the 2023 Synod Assembly.
- SC 2023.05.11. (Miller/Adams) To ratify appointments to 2023 Synod Assembly positions:
- a) Mr. Noah Roux, the Rev. Rick White, Deacon MaryLou Byerly, and the Rev. Vicki Brown to the Committee on Reference and Counsel;
 - b) Ms Aly Wyland, Mr. Ty Turner, and Mr. Gabe Schaeffer to the Elections Committee;
 - c) Ms Amber Ellis as Registrar (assisted by Brenda Krouse)
- SC 2023.05.12. (Miller/Frost) To designate the offerings from the 2023 Synod Assembly 50% to the synod Fund for Leaders and 50% to the Lutheran Church in Liberia university project.
- SC 2023.05.13. (Miller/Frost) To approve the following appointments to the Lay Ministry Institute Board: The Rev. Troy Spencer, the Rev. Theodore Cockley, and Mr. Ed Coup to first terms ending in 2026; Mr. Jim Girven and Ms Mindelle Bartholomew to second terms ending in 2026; and Ms Barbara Horn to a second term ending in 2025.
- SC 2023.05.14. (Miller/Frost) To approve the appointment of Mr. Jeff Mitchell to the Fiscal Management Team.
- SC 2023.05.15. (Miller/Lingenfelter) To approve a Small Church Grant in the amount of \$3,000 for the East Lycoming Cooperative Ministry project (Messiah, Clarkstown; Mt Zions, Hughesville; St John, Montgomery; St John, Unityville; Trinity, Hughesville). The grant may be renewed at the same level in 2024 at the discretion of the bishop.
- SC 2023.05.16. (Adams/Lingenfelter) To approve the lease agreement with Milton Lutheran Church.
- SC 2023.05.17. (EC) Motion to approve the Audit report for fiscal year end January 31, 2023.
- SC 2023.05.18. (Miller/Schaeffer) To approve the proposal for Synod Youth Ministry from Camp Mount Luther, effective June 1, 2023.

- SC 2023.05.19. (Frost/Adams) To recommend the budget for fiscal year end January 31, 2025, for adoption by the 2023 Synod Assembly.
- SC 2023.05.20. To enter a committee of the whole for the purpose of perfecting the motion on the Antiracism Task Force.
- SC 2023.05.21. Synod Council reaffirms its commitment to combating racism by the official formation of the Anti-Racism Committee and appoints the Rev. Scott Kershner, Gabriel Schaeffer, and Sherry Bingaman. This team will then implement and complete the work outlined in the original resolution by June of 2024.
- SC 2023.05.22. (Schaeffer/Lingenfelter) Resolution to grant the title Bishop Emerita to the Rev. Barbara Collins.
- Whereas the Rev. Barbara Jeanne Collins served faithfully, lovingly, and effectively as bishop of the Upper Susquehanna Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, from September 1, 2016, to August 31, 2022, upon which date she retired from active ministry; and
- Whereas Bishop Collins encouraged the ministries and members of the Upper Susquehanna Synod to tend to their relationships with one another; and
- Whereas Bishop Collins presided over the synod through more than two years of a global pandemic, providing calm and deliberate leadership; therefore, it is
- RESOLVED that the synod council of the Upper Susquehanna Synod confer upon the Rev. Barbara Jeanne Collins the title of Bishop Emerita of the Upper Susquehanna Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- SC 2023.07.24. To elect the Rev. Lisa Barnes and Mr. Gabriel Schaeffer to the Executive Committee for terms expiring August 1, 2024.
- SC 2023.07.25. To appoint Ms Barbara Horn and Mr. Jonathan Moser to serve on the Nominating Committee for the 2024 Synod Assembly.
- SC 2023.07.26. (Miller/Frost) To elect the Rev. Barbara Jeanne Collins as Trustee for United Lutheran Seminary.
- SC.2023.07.27. (Miller/Frost) To form an ad hoc committee to review the synod constitution, bylaws, and continuing resolutions.
- SC 2023.09.28. (Huff/Frost) To approve the minutes of the 2023 Synod Assembly for publication.
- SC 2023.09.29. (EC) To set staff health benefits for 2024 at Portico Gold+.
- SC 2023.09.30. (EC) To redirect the churchwide assembly seat normally assigned to the synod vice president (S9.01.01.b.3)) for nomination at large.
- SC 2023.09.31. (Miller/Bricker) To approve on leave from call for the Rev. Vickie Brown, effective November 1, 2023.
- SC 2023.09.32. (Miller/Lingenfelter) To approve \$1,500 from the synod Mission Funds to pay for synod members to attend the Ending With Grace class.
- SC 2023.09.33. (Miller/Huff) To approve the appointment of Ms Kaye Long to the Lay Ministry Institute Board for a term ending in 2026.
- SC 2023.09.34. (Miller/Barnes) To approve amendments to the synod structural organization as follows:

1. Distinguish “Committees”, “Boards”, and “Teams”:
 - a. Except for Synod Assembly committees and Assembly elected committees, Committees and Boards are appointed by the bishop with approval of synod council and follow constitution definitions of terms and term limits. All Committees and Boards report to the synod council.
 - b. Ministry “Teams” may be appointed by the bishop without approval of the synod council and report to the bishop: They do not follow terms or term limits as defined in the constitution unless established as such by synod council or synod assembly action.
2. Delete the “Innovation” area along with “Strategy” and “Research & Data”.
3. Move Discernment, Consultation, and Discipline under Christian Community & Leadership.
4. Rename the Fiscal Management Team to Finance Committee.
5. Rescind the action of the Executive Committee (2020) to establish a “Leadership Formation Ministry Team”.
6. Add the Synod Assembly committees to the organization chart, and
 - a. Direct the ad hoc committee on the synod constitution to consider amendments to bylaws to rename these as Teams.

SC 2023.11.35. (EC) To set Defined Compensation for Bishop Craig Miller during fiscal year end January 31, 2025, at \$88,000.00 of which \$36,000.00 will be designated as housing allowance.

SC 2023.11.36. (Miller/Barnes) To approve retired roster status for the Rev. Rick White, effective January 1, 2024; and
To approve retired roster status for the Rev. William Jones, effective January 1, 2024.

SC 2023.11.37. (Miller/Schaeffer) To approve the appointment of the Rev. Theodore Cockley to the Antiracism Committee for a term ending in 2026.

SC 2023.11.38. (Miller/Moser) To approve the request of Lutheran Campus Ministry at Penn State to mail a general solicitation to congregations of the Upper Susquehanna Synod in the month of November 2023.

SC 2023.11.39. (Miller/Barnes) To approve renewal of the Purchase of Service agreement with Salem Lutheran Church, Selinsgrove, and the Rev. Kristina Schaeffer; and
To approve the renewal of the Purchase of Service agreement with St. John Lutheran Church, Northumberland, and the Rev. Karla Leiby.

SC 2023.11.40. (Huff) To approve a grant in the amount of \$3,000 for The Table – Bloomsburg for the year 2023.

SC 2023.11.41. (Frost/Huff) To approve a grant in the amount of \$3,000 for The Table – Bloomsburg for the year 2024; monies to come from synod Mission Funds (2-602-2204).

SC 2023.11.42. (Miller/Moser) To amend SC7.21.A19 as follows to take effect following the 2024 assembly:

S.7.21.A19A23. The number of lay voting members to Synod Assembly from each congregation shall **be determined at least six months before the next scheduled regular assembly and** be based upon baptized membership as reported on the previous year’s parochial report. Congregations with baptized membership of up to 500 shall have 2 voting members; congregations with baptized membership of 501 through 900 shall have 3 voting members and congregations with baptized

membership of 901 and above shall have 4 voting members. Congregations that fail to submit a parochial report in the previous year shall be allotted one (1) lay voting member.

SC 2023.11.43. (Frost/Bricker) To approve the appointment of Baker Tilly US, LLP as auditors for the fiscal year ending January 31, 2024.

SC 2023.11.44. (Frost) Whereas, the synod council adopted a resolution (SC 2021.11.37.) designating “net funds from the sale of the synod offices and land for five years for cost of relocation”; and

Whereas, the synod council did not define “net funds”; therefore, it is

RESOLVED, that for the purposes of SC 2021.11.37., “net funds” is defined as the gain on the sale less expenses related to relocation of the office, exclusive of capital purchases.

SC 2023.11.45. (Frost) To adopt the Employee/Volunteer Expense Accountable Reimbursement Plan.

SC 2023.11.46. (Frost) To adopt the Cell Phone Reimbursement Plan (attached).

SC 2023.11.47. (Frost) To adopt the Synod Credit Card Policies (Attached).

Actions of the Executive Committee

The Executive Committee meets at least once in the intervening months between meetings of the Synod Council and may act on behalf of the Synod Council on certain issues. Executive Committee meetings allow time for discussion of business that will come before the Synod Council and development of motions for Council action.

EC 2023.03.04. To nominate Ms Grace Roux and the Rev. Gary Schaeffer for the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church.

EC 2023.06.05. To approve the change of status for the Rev. Richard Fangman to retired effective June 1, 2023.

EC 2023.06.06. To approve appointments to the Candidacy Committee – the Rev. Christine Kirchner (2025), Ms Eileen Stauffer (2025), Ms Pam Rhoades (2025), the Rev Scott Kershner (2026).

EC 2023.09.07. To approve a distribution from the Rostered Leaders’ Seminary Debt Reduction Fund of \$590 in January 2024, and to waive the policy regarding timing of grants and approve an additional distribution of \$590 to be made in this calendar year.

EC 2023.09.08. To approve the Holiday Schedule for 2024 with the understanding that the week between Christmas and New Year is not holiday.

EC 2023.09.09. To recommend to synod council that staff health benefits for 2024 be set at Portico Gold+.

EC 2023.09.10. To recommend that the synod council redirect the churchwide assembly seat normally assigned to the synod vice president (S9.01.01.b.3)) for nomination at large.

EC 2023.11.11. To ratify the bishop’s recommendations on compensation for Fiscal Year End January 31, 2025.

EC 2023.11.12. To recommend the synod council set Defined Compensation for Bishop Miller during fiscal year end January 31, 2025.

EC 2023.12.13 Barnes/Huff: To approve by Extended Service the call to the Rev. Pamela Meilands as Mission Developer for The Table at Bloomsburg.

EC 2023.12.14 Hebrink/Barnes –To adopt resolutions related to synod credit card applications.