



# Upper Susquehanna Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

*United as Christ's Disciples, we Support one another; and Serve God in the World*

## Report of the Synod Council to the 2025 Synod Assembly

Synod Council members in 2024 included Rev. Richard Adams, Rev. Lisa Barnes, Rev. James Park Bricker, Ms Wendy Davis, Mr. Scott Frost, Rev. Chad Hebrink, Ms Barbara Horn, Mr. Ray Huff, Rev. Justin Lingenfelter, Mr. Jonathan Moser, Mr. R. Craig Rhoades, Mr. Noah Roux, Mr. Gabriel Schaeffer, and Ms Eileen Stauffer. We thanked Craig Rhoades for his service as he concluded his term; and we welcomed Linda Everitt and Bruce Romanic, who began their terms this summer.

The Upper Susquehanna Synod Council met five times in 2024 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 2024.02.06. indicates the sixth action of the synod council in 2024, which took place in February. Numbers beginning with EC are actions of the Executive Committee). Names in parentheses indicate the mover and second (Huff/Hebrink) indicates Ray Huff moved and Pastor Hebrink 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.*

#### Meeting February 17, 2024

**SC 2024.02.01. (Bricker/Frost)** – To recommend to the 2024 Synod Assembly a commitment of \$45,000.00 over three years from synod restricted funds to the Camp Mount Luther capital campaign, payments to begin this year. Adopted

**SC 2024.02.02. (Miller/Bricker)** – To approve a grant in the amount of \$3,000 to the congregations of the East Lycoming Cooperative Ministry Exploration for 2024. Adopted

**SC 2024.02.03. (Miller/Moser)** – To approve the appointment of the Rev. Scott Kershner to the Candidacy Committee for a term expiring June 30, 2027. Adopted

**SC 2024.02.04 (Miller/Adams)** – To approve On Leave From Call status for the Rev. Viking Dietrich through December 31, 2024. Adopted

**SC 2024.02.05. (Miller/Horn)** – To amend S7.21.B19 as follows. Adopted  
S7.21.~~B19~~**B24**. Each conference shall elect two youth and two young adult (as defined in ELCA constitution chapter 6) at-large voting members and credential them with their home congregations. The credentialing of at-large conference youth and young adult voting members elected by conferences shall be an exception to S7.21.~~e.A23~~. in regard to the number of voting members from a congregation. The conference shall make all efforts possible to maintain the ratio of men and women of S7.21.c. Registration costs shall be borne by the synod will cover registration, room and board expenses for these voting members.

**SC 2024.02.06. (Huff/Hebrink)** – To adopt the following two resolutions *en bloc*. Adopted

Resolved, the synod council recommends to the 2024 Upper Susquehanna Synod Assembly the Salary and Housing Allowance Guidelines for Ministers of Word and Sacrament in 2025 as follows.

Resolved, the synod council recommends to the 2024 Upper Susquehanna Synod Assembly the minimum salary guidelines for Ministers of Word and Service in 2025 as follows.

**SC 2024.02.07. (Frost)** – To recommend the budget for fiscal year end January 31, 2026 for adoption by the 2024 Synod Assembly. Adopted

Meeting May 18, 2024

**SC 2024.05.08.** To appoint the Rev. Chad Hebrink Treasurer for a term ending in 2028. Approved.

**SC 2024.05.09. (Miller/Bricker)** to approve a change in roster status for the Rev. Karl Runser to On Leave from Call, effective May 20, 2024. Approved.

**SC 2024.05.10. (Miller/Horn)** to approve the Agenda and the Rules of Procedure for recommendation to the synod assembly. Approved

**SC 2024.05.11. (Miller/Moser)** to appoint MeeCee Baker to the Candidacy Committee for a term ending 2027 with an extension to 2028 upon approval of the proposed amendments to the bylaws by the Synod Assembly. Approved

**SC 2024.05.12. (Miller/Horn)** to appoint Kaylene Trick to the Audit Committee for a term ending 2027. Approved.

**SC 2024.05.13. (Miller/Bricker)** Adopted.

*Whereas EMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH (Emmanuel), located at 121 North Mill Street, Thompsontown, Pennsylvania, is a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) rostered with the UPPER SUSQUEHANNA SYNOD (Synod); and*

*Whereas Emmanuel has not held a service of worship since December 24, 2023; and*

*Whereas the leaders of Emmanuel determined at the end of 2023 that the congregation should dissolve; and*

*Whereas the membership of Emmanuel Lutheran Church has diminished to a point at which it has become difficult to hold a legal meeting of the congregation; and*

*Whereas the borough council of Thompsontown, Pennsylvania, has expressed their desire to take possession of the real property of Emmanuel Lutheran Church and has begun the legal process to effect the transfer of said property; and*

*Whereas the Constitution of the Synod, Section 13.24. provides that if it is the opinion of the Synod Council that the membership of a congregation has become so scattered or so diminished in numbers as to make it impractical for such a congregation to fulfill the purposes for which it was organized or that it is necessary for the Synod to protect the congregation's property from waste and deterioration, the Synod Council, itself or through trustees appointed by it, may take charge and control of the property of the congregation to hold, manage and convey the same on behalf of the Synod; therefore it is*

**RESOLVED**, that for the reasons set forth above, all of which are included and incorporated herein and made a part hereof as if fully set forth, the SYNOD, pursuant to Section 13.24 of its constitution does hereby impose synodical administration over the property of Emmanuel to take charge and control of the property of Emmanuel and to hold, manage, and convey on behalf of the SYNOD, and it is further,

**RESOLVED**, that the following are hereby appointed as trustees, with the full power to hold and manage the property of Emmanuel on behalf of the SYNOD in all regards relating directly or indirectly

*to the taking charge and control of the property of Emmanuel and in holding, managing and conveying such property of Emmanuel on behalf of the SYNOD, to wit: Mr. Dana Gantt, Mr. Christian Satterfield, Ms Waynett Dunn, Ms Ann Shambaugh, and the Rev. Richard Adams; and it is further*

**RESOLVED**, *that the signature of any two of the Trustees acting to take charge and control of the property of Emmanuel and to hold, manage, and convey the property of Emmanuel on behalf of the SYNOD shall be binding upon and considered as the act of all of the Trustees. No person or party acting in reliance of the signature of one such Trustee as binding upon all Trustees shall be charged with notice of any revocation or change of such authority unless he, she or it shall have received actual written notice thereof. No person or party shall be required to look behind the signature of such Trustee; and it is further*

**RESOLVED**, *that the remaining liquid assets of Emmanuel, after any and all bills and fees related to the real property, be distributed in the following manner: to Wings of Kindness, P.O. Box 225, Thompsontown, PA 17094, \$10,000; to the Emmanuel Lutheran Cemetery, Thompsontown, PA, \$10,000; to the Borough of Thompsontown, PA, for maintenance of the former church building, \$10,000; to the Upper Susquehanna Synod, PO Box 36, Lewisburg PA, for archives, \$3,000; the remaining funds to be distributed equally between Camp Mount Luther (355 Mount Luther Lane, Mifflinburg PA), Meals on Wheels (Mifflin-Juniata Area Agency on Aging, Inc., 1 Buena Vista Cir, Lewistown, PA 17044), Tiger Treats (St John Lutheran Church of Richfield, PO Box 266, Richfield PA 17086), and Juniata County Food Pantry (114 North Main Street, Mifflintown PA).*

**SC 2024.05.14. (Miller/Moser)** to recommend amendments to the Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions for adoption by the synod assembly. Approved

**SC 2024.05.15. (Frost/Horn)** Resolution on synod reserve. Approved.

Whereas

1. The Upper Susquehanna Synod has approximately \$283,000 recorded as General Fund Principal (Reserve) at January 31, 2024.
2. S15.14 of the Constitutions states, "Except when such procedure would jeopardize current operations, a reserve amounting to no more than 16% of the sum of the amounts scheduled in the next year's budget for regular distribution to synod causes shall be carried forward annually for disbursement in the following year in the interest of making possible a more even flow of income to such causes. The exact number of dollars to be held in reserve shall be determined by the Synod Council."
3. The current General Fund Principal (Reserve) is in excess of 16% of the next year's budget.
4. The finance committee has reviewed the constitution and the excess and notes the following:
  - a. The intention of S15.14 is to prohibit the synod from accumulating funds by not spending the funds it receives from congregations on the synod's mission. This is not how this excess occurred.
  - b. The sale of the synod office increased the General Fund Principal (Reserve).
  - c. The transition of staff led to favorable budget variances and contributed to the increased the General Fund Principal (Reserve).
  - d. The finance committee recommends the fund for the Camp Mount Luther Capital Campaign be drawn from the reserve.
  - e. The finance committee foresees the potential for budget deficits in the future and believes the excess should be held in reserve for those years. And

Whereas, the synod council recognizes that the reserve is in excess of 16% of the sum of the amounts scheduled in the next year's budget for regular distribution to synod causes.

**RESOLVED**, that Synod Council determines that \$ 282,843.02 is to be held in reserve for future budget deficits and commitments including the donation to the Camp Mount Luther Capital Campaign; and it is further

**RESOLVED**, that the Synod Council review the reserve annually on the Synod's Annual Statements and determine the appropriateness of the balance until compliance to the constitution is met.

**SC 2024.05.16. (Frost/Roux)** to amend the previous action of the synod council, SC 2024.02.01., as follows: To recommend to the 2024 Synod Assembly a commitment of ~~\$45,000.00~~ ~~\$50,000 over three years~~ from synod reserve funds to the Camp Mount Luther capital campaign, ~~payments to begin this year~~. Approved.

**SC 2024.05.17. (Frost/Schaeffer)** to accept the report of the auditors for Fiscal Year End January 31, 2024. Approved.

**SC 2024.05.18. (Miller/Horn)** to adopt the revised Lay Ministry Insitute Handbook as a substitute for the current version. Approved.

#### Meeting July 10, 2024

*[The sequential number '18' was accidentally used twice in numbering synod council actions]*

**SC2024.07.18.** To have the secretary cast one ballot on behalf of the synod council to elect Rev. Lisa Barnes and Linda Everitt to the Executive Committee. Adopted.

**SC2024.07.19.** To have the secretary cast one ballot on behalf of the synod council to elect Jonathan Moser and Eileen Stauffer. "Adopted

**SC2024.07.20.** (Miller/Horn) To approve expenditure of up to \$1,500 from the restricted funds "Faith Formation (Pass & Bk Faith) (2-602-2010) to purchase lunch for the synod members attending the 2024 ELCA Youth Gathering.

**SC2024.07.21.** (Miller/Barnes) To approve changes to the agreement with St. John Lutheran Church, Northumberland, for the services of Pastor Karla Leiby as follows:

- Increase average hours to 10 hours per week.
- Increase compensation to \$26,370 per year.)
- Direct the congregation that \$3,790 of the annual compensation must be paid to Pastor Leiby as additional salary.
- by reallocating \$4,000 from staff travel, \$1,200 from the Lay Ministry Institute, \$2,000 from Support – Student Scholarships, and authorizing release of \$380 from the Fees/Auth Lay Worship Leaders Program (2-602- 3400) Adopted.

#### Meeting September 21, 2024

**SC2024.09.22. (Miller/Horn)** To adopt the Consent Agenda. Adopted.

1. To adopt the minutes from the meeting July 10, 2024.
2. To approve the minutes of the 2025 Synod Assembly for publishing and direct the bishop to see that they are posted on the synod website, with appropriate notification through synod newsletters and social media.
3. To appoint Deacon Mary Lou Byerly to the Candidacy Committee for a term expiring June 30, 2027.
4. To approve change of roster status of the Rev. Joel Zeiders to Retired, effective January 1, 2025.

5. To authorize the Executive Committee to review medical benefits options from Portico Benefits Services and select the level of benefits, no lower than Value Copay, to offer staff for 2025.

**SC2024.09.23. (Bricker/Huff)** To amend the motion by adding Camp Mount Luther as an organization receiving equal distribution of remaining funds. Adopted

**SC2024.09.24. (Miller/Huff)** To adopt the amended plan of distribution. Adopted.

To amend the plan of distribution of the remaining funds from Emmanuel's Lutheran Church, Thompsontown, to give \$3000 to the Upper Susquehanna Synod for archives, \$10,000 to Wings of Kindness, \$10,000 to the Borough of Thompsontown, and the remaining equally distributed between Meals on Wheels, Juniata Valley Food Pantry, Camp Mount Luther, and Tiger Treats.

Meeting November 9, 2024

**SC2024.11.25. (Roux)** To recommend compensation for Bishop Miller (salary, housing, social security allowance) of \$92,000.00 for fiscal year 2026 of which \$35,000 will be paid as housing allowance. Approved.

**SC2024.11.26. (Miller/Huff)** To approve the plan of dissolution for Hilday Lutheran Church. Approved.

**SC2024.11.27. (Miller/Barnes)** To approve roster status of 'Retired' for Pastor Viking Dietrich, effective January 1, 2025; and

To approve roster status of 'Disabled' for Pastor Jodi Ellis, effective October 1, 2024. Approved.

**SC2024.11.28. (Miller/Schaeffer)** To authorize The Table – Bloomsburg as a Worshiping Community of the Upper Susquehanna Synod and to approve a grant of \$8,000 for The Table – Bloomsburg for the calendar year 2025, the funds to come from synod mission funds (2-602-2204). Approved.

**SC2024.11.29. (Miller/Lingenfelter)** To approve the Rev. Katy Moran to a term on the Candidacy Committee ending June 2027. Approved.

**2024.11.30. (Hebrink/Horn)** To establish an ad hoc committee for the purpose of reviewing the synod Fund For Leaders in accordance with current policy. Members of the committee shall be appointed by the bishop with the approval of the Executive Committee. Approved.

**2024.11.31. (Hebrink/Barnes)** To establish an ad hoc committee, convened by the DEM, to develop policy recommendations for a new synod Mission Fund, funds to come from the Faith Church Loan Fund and ELCA Grants funds. The synod DEM, in consultation with the bishop, will appoint members with the approval of the Executive Committee. Approved.

**2024.11.32. (Miller/Adams)** To approve Baker Tilley US LLP, as auditors for Fiscal Year 2025. Approved.