

Report of the Synod Council to the 2026 Synod Assembly

Synod Council members in 2025 included Rev. Richard Adams, Rev. Lisa Barnes, Rev. Jim Bricker, Wendy Davis, Linda Everitt, Scott Frost, Chad Hebrink, Barbara Horn, Ray Huff, Rev. Justin Lingenfelter, Mr. Jonathan Moser, Mr. Bruce Romanic, Mr. Noah Roux. Mr. Gabriel Schaeffer, Eileen Stauffer. We thanked Jonathan Moser, Bruce Romanic, Gabriel Schaeffer and Ray Huff (synod secretary) for their service, and welcomed Dale Chomas, Rev. Katy Moran, Ellie Schaeffer, and Slone Smith who began their service in summer 2025. Rev. Barnes began her term as synod secretary on Sept. 1, 2025.

Actions of the Synod Council

Numbering of council actions includes the year, the month, and a sequential number (SC 2025.02.02. indicates the second action of the synod council in 2025, 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 on Feb. 8, 2025

SC 2025.02.01. (Miller/Horn) to approve the editorial amendments to the Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Upper Susquehanna Synod. ADOPTED.

SC 2025.02.03. (Miller/Horn) to adopt amendments to the synod Personnel Manual and allow Pastor Hebrink & Bishop Miller to make appropriate. ADOPTED

SC 2025.02.04. (Miller/Everitt) to appoint Ron Mitchell, Mark Elliot, Marianne Brock, Justin Lingenfelter, and Meecee Baker to the Task Force to recommend guidelines for synod Mission Funds. ADOPTED

SC 2025.02.05. (Miller/Barnes) to recommend the synod assembly adopt compensation guidelines for pastors and deacons as follows. ADOPTED:

First call pastor base salary \$42,563, with step increase of \$425 per year of ordination after

Housing allowance range of \$17,937-21,437

First call deacon salary increase of 2.5% to \$47,124, with increments of \$425 per year of ordination after

SC 2025.02.06. (Huff/Horn) to adopt a recommended Sunday supply minister rate of \$175 for one service, \$225 for two services. ADOPTED

SC 2025.02.07. (Hebrink/Adams) to adopt amendments to the fiscal year end 2026 budget and to recommend the budget for fiscal year end 2027 for adoption by the synod assembly. ADOPTED

Meeting on May 10, 2025

SC 2025.05.08. (Roux/Adams) To approve the agenda. ADOPTED

SC 2025.05.09. (Barnes/Everitt) To adopt as a response to the report of the ad hoc Committee on Synod Mission Funds: ADOPTED.

1. To receive the report of the ad hoc committee to develop policy proposal for a new Synod Mission Fund with gratitude.
2. To retire the Small Church Grants program.
3. To direct the treasurer to transfer \$14,000 from the temporarily restricted ELCA Grants Fund (2-602-2204) to the Mission Start Congregation fund (2-602-2207).
4. To designate the annual ELCA DEM support grant for use in supporting the work of the DEM and to direct that any funds not used in a fiscal year be transferred to the Bold Ideas Grants Fund, contingent upon approval by the Synod Assembly of the recommendations below.
5. To direct the Director for Evangelical Mission, contingent upon approval by the Synod Assembly of the recommendations below, to create ongoing means of encouraging congregations and individuals to contribute to the Bold Ideas Grants fund as an opportunity to create a legacy of witness to the love of Christ at work in our world.
6. To recommend to the 2025 Synod Assembly:

- A. Whereas, Faith Lutheran Church, near Williamsport, was organized on April 4, 1954, and dissolved on December 1, 1985; and

Whereas, the congregation voted to dissolve on October 27, 1985, and included in its plan for distribution of assets a contribution of 10% to “C.P. Synod Church Development Fund [sic]”; and

Whereas, the Upper Susquehanna Synod (USS) formed in 1987/8 with the merger that created the ELCA, and funds from the Central Pennsylvania Synod were divided between the three new synods (USS, Allegheny, and Lower Susquehanna), including funds from the “Parish Development Fund” in the amount of \$131,147.87; and

Whereas, minutes from the September 13, 1988, meeting of the Executive Committee state, “\$21,000 has been received from the sale of Faith Church, near Williamsport”; and

Whereas, the Faith Church Loan Fund served to provide loans to congregations of the synod for small capital projects; and

Whereas, no loans have been requested or issued to congregations since 2005; and

Whereas, synod leadership has determined it no longer has the capacity to manage a loan program; therefore it is

RESOLVED, that the treasurer of the Upper Susquehanna Synod be directed to discontinue the Faith Church Loan Fund (4-452-0000) and redirect the fund balance to the ELCA Grants Fund (2-602-2204).

- B. Whereas, the Synod Council on November 9, 2024 voted 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”*; and

Whereas, the Committee, in its report to the Synod Council on May 10, 2025, recommended establishing a Bold Ideas Grants program; and

Whereas, the Committee, in its report to the Synod Council, recommended *“a team of four people, including the DEM, to implement the grant application and application process, to review and implement grants; and further to develop an ongoing means of evaluating the grant program”* therefore it is

RESOLVED,

To thank the ad hoc Committee to Develop Policy Recommendations for a new synod Mission Fund for its work.

To direct the synod council to use the ELCA Grants Fund (2-602-2204) to establish a Bold Ideas Grants Fund as a temporarily restricted fund that will offer grants to congregations from \$5,000 to \$50,000.

To direct the Bishop and Synod Council to appoint a Bold Ideas Committee of four members, including the synod Director for Evangelical Mission, to implement the Bold Ideas Grants program by developing guidelines and an application process for approval by the Synod Council and serving as the grants review committee.

To direct the Synod Council and Bold Ideas Committee to evaluate this grants program after three years and maintain, adjust, or discontinue the program based on effectiveness of the program and changing needs of the synod.

SC 2025.05.10. (Miller/Frost) To approve a change in roster status for the Rev. Tom Martin to retired, effective May 10, 2025. ADOPTED.

- SC 2025.05.11. (Miller/Lingenfelter) To approve continuing On Leave From Call status for the Rev. Karl Runser through May 21, 2026. ADOPTED.
- SC 2025.05.12. (Miller/Adams) To appoint to the ad hoc Committee for Review of the USS Fund for Leaders: Rev. Karla Leiby (chair), Karla Bombach, Karen Sigler, Mark Elliot, Sherry Bingaman. ADOPTED.
- SC 2025.05.13. (Miller/Huff) To appoint Rev. Ralph (Mike) Sigler and Ms Sherry Bingaman to the Lay Ministry Institute Board for a term ending June 30, 2027. ADOPTED.
- SC 2025.05.14. (Miller/Barnes) To reappoint Mr. Rich Handy to the Audit Committee for a term ending June 30, 2028. ADOPTED.
- SC 2025.05.15. (Miller/ Adams) To approve the Rules of Procedure for the 2025 Synod Assembly for recommendation to the assembly for adoption. ADOPTED.
- SC 2025.05.16. (Miller/Frost) To approve the Program Agenda for the 2025 Upper Susquehanna Synod Assembly and to empower the bishop to make adjustments as necessary before presenting it for adoption by the assembly. ADOPTED.
- SC 2025.05.17. (Frost/Stauffer) To adopt amendments to the Gift Policy. ADOPTED.
- SC 2025.05.18. (Frost/Lingenfelter) To adopt amendments to the Investment Policy. ADOPTED.
- SC 2025.05.19. (Frost/Everitt) Resolution on Student Loan Fund. ADOPTED.
- SC 2025.05.20. (Barnes/Stauffer) To approve the report of the Auditors. ADOPTED.

Meeting on July 9, 2025

- SC 2025.07.21. (Bricker/Horn) To establish a committee of 8 people, including the Bishop and Vice President *ex officio*, considering the diversity of the synod (skill, experience, age, geography, etc.) and ELCA representational principles. The committee will implement the resolution, SA 2025.06.10., Adopted by the Synod Assembly. ADOPTED.
- SC 2025.07.22. To appoint the Rev. Justin Lingenfelter and Rev. Jim Bricker to the Nominating Committee. ADOPTED
- SC 2025.07.23. To appoint Scott Frost and Eileen Stauffer to the Executive Committee. ADOPTED.
- SC 2025.07.24. (Miller/Horn) To appoint Diane Bubb and Wendy Davis to the Lay Ministry Institute Board for terms ending June 30, 2028. ADOPTED.

Meeting on Sept. 13, 2025

- SC 2025.09.25 (EC) to approve the Value Copay 4000 Portico Health Plan for synod staff. ADOPTED
- SC 2025.09.26 (Miller/Frost) Motion to approve continuation of On Leave status for the Rev. Vickie Sickles Brown in accordance with ELCA Constitution 7.31.07.b. ADOPTED.
- SC 2025.09.27 (Miller/Bricker) Motion to appoint Chris Minnich and Cindy Bilger to the Synod Structure Team in accordance with SC 2025.07.16. ADOPTED
- SC 2025.09.28 (Miller/Stauffer) Motion to appoint the Rev. Justin Lingenfelter and Karen Sigler to the Bold Ideas Committee for staggered terms as follows: Pastor Lingenfelter term expires June 30, 2026; Karen Sigler term expires June 30, 2027. ADOPTED

SC 2025.09.29 (Roux/Davis) Motion to adopt June 6, 2026, as the date for Synod Assembly at Camp Mount Luther. ADOPTED.

Meeting on Nov. 15, 2025

SC 2025.11.30. (EC) to approve 2026 compensation for Bishop Miller in the amount of \$95,221 of which \$35,000 will be paid as housing allowance. ADOPTED.

SC 2025.11.31. (Miller/Horn) to approve a call to the Rev. Kristina Schaeffer as Chaplain and Director of Religious and Spiritual Life at Susquehanna University, under the oversight of that institution in consultation with the bishop of this synod, effective December 1, 2025. ADOPTED.

SC 2025.11.32. (Miller/Adams) to appoint the Rev. Ken Longfield and Mr. John Yingling to the Synod Structure Team. ADOPTED.

SC 2025.11.33. (Miller/Lingenfelter) to appoint Ms Sarah Bower to the Bold Ideas Committee for a term expiring June 30, 2028. ADOPTED.

SC 2025.11.34. Bricker/Moran to strike S10.o6 from and subsequent renumbering. Adopted.

SC 2025.11.35. (Miller/Stauffer) to recommend to the 2026 Synod Assembly adoption of amendments to the Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Upper Susquehanna Synod as Adopted by the 2025 Churchwide Assembly to non-required provisions of the Constitution for Synods. ADOPTED.

SC2025.11.36. (Miller/Adams) Motion to recommend the 2026 Synod Assembly ratify amendments Adopted by the 2025 Synod Assembly: specifically, to S9.03., S9.05., and S9.06. ADOPTED.

SC 2025.11.37. (Miller/Lingenfelter) to enter a Committee of the Whole for the purpose of discussing amendments to the policy for the Upper Susquehanna Synod Fund for Leaders. ADOPTED.

SC 2025.11.38. (Roux/Horn) to exit the Committee of the Whole. ADOPTED.

SC 2025.11.39. (SC) to recommend the 2026 Synod Assembly adopt amendments to the policy and application for the Upper Susquehanna Synod Fund for Leaders. ADOPTED.

SC 2025.11.40. (Miller/Lingenfelter) to approve an enduring permission for Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Pennsylvania to appeal annually to congregations for the raising of funds. ADOPTED.

SC 2025.11.41. (Miller/Moran) to affirm The Table – Bloomsburg as a Worshiping Community of the Upper Susquehanna Synod and to approve a grant of \$7,000 for The Table – Bloomsburg for the calendar year 2026, the funds to come from the Mission Start Congregation account (2-602-2207). ADOPTED.

SC2025.11.42. (Miller/Frost) to approve amendments to the budget for fiscal year ending January 31, 2027. ADOPTED.

SC2025.11.43. (Frost/Everitt) to approve as auditors for the fiscal year end January 31, 2026, Baker Tilly US, LLP. ADOPTED, with Bishop Miller and Pastor Hebrick abstaining.