



## Bishop's reflections

*This reflection from Bishop Tim Smith was first published on our website on Nov. 5, 2018.*

Some of you are quite aware of our four new vision priorities for the North Carolina (NC) Synod—"Vital Congregations," "Healthy Leaders," "Collaboration" and "Prophetic Voice." Visions can be exciting and inspiring. Structure, not so much, but structure is really important. It's been quite a number of years since we had a major constitutional overhaul in the NC Synod other than the required changes every three years after a churchwide assembly. Structures should serve the vision—not vice versa. Accordingly, our staff and our Synod Council have been working for a full year on making some proposed changes to our NC Synod constitution that we believe will help us to operate more clearly and efficiently. Most of the current constitution was written with realities and assumptions of a very different church and culture 30 years ago.

Changes to the synod's constitution can be made two ways. One would be to present the changes to voting members sometime this coming spring, vote on them at our synod assembly in June 2019, and then ratify those changes a year later. Another option would be to mail out the proposed changes more than six months in advance of assembly and then the changes would become effective immediately as of the time they pass at the 2019

synod assembly with no need to ratify them a year later. "But," you say, "we won't have our voting members even selected yet. To whom would you send those proposed changes?" Great question. A little-known fact is that all synod assembly voting members serve for a full-year term. That is, until the following year's assembly is called to order, the previous year's voting members are technically still the synod assembly. We will email the proposed constitutional changes to each rostered minister and to all of the 2018 synod assembly lay voting members. Also, a paper copy will be mailed to each congregation that gives us the more-than-six-month required notice.

The proposed changes were approved this fall by our Synod Council. I'll highlight some of what I consider to be the more substantive changes:

Reducing the number of Synod Council members from 24 to 15 and increasing terms from three years to four years. Additionally, to meet our diversity goals/requirements as well as expertise (legal, finance, etc.) needs, the Synod Council may appoint up to four additional council members.

Having a business (voting) synod assembly every other year (odd-numbered years) but on even-numbered years having a fellowship, worship and continuing education assembly (think "Bold Like Jesus" or "Power in the Spirit") event.

Appointing conference deans rather than electing them; they can be utilized in new ways as an extension of the bishop's office.

Spring conference meetings would move to every other year, meeting in clusters—eastern, central and western—with the bishop, some synod staff and Synod Council officers present at each.

Synod Council committees could include people not on the Synod Council.

Read the full list of proposed changes or the entire proposed constitution on the 2019 synod assembly webpage: [bit.ly/ncassembly2019](http://bit.ly/ncassembly2019).

For more information about the proposed constitutional changes, contact Michael DeNise, NC Synod director of finance and administration, at 704-680-9562. ☒

## Women in ministry, seriously!

On a staff retreat of the NC Synod, we began a discussion about the call process and women leaders. Instead of operating from assumptions alone, we committed to gathering women clergy to listen to them.

In 2018, we held three gatherings with just over 60 of our 100 women on the word and sacrament roster. Each gathering was facilitated by Dr. Mindy Makant, deacon and professor at Lenoir-Rhyne University, and included time with and without

colleagues brainstormed an idea to create a video and pitched it to the synod staff. We created this video—titled *Seriously?*—hoping it would challenge, heal and affirm that we are at our best as God’s church when gifts of both women and men are recognized and appreciated. Following its debut showing at our 2018 Fall Convocation for rostered ministers and congregational leaders, the video went viral on the internet with over 500,000 views. Women from across the church and beyond resonated with the statements.



The Rev. Stephen Troisi reacts after reading a statement in the *Seriously?* video.

We are grateful to the women of this synod for their courage and vulnerability. We are all better for it. We offer a special word of thanks to our male colleagues and allies who gave their voices to this project. All of them expressed grief over the treatment of their sisters and vowed to continue to be vocal advocates for women in ministry.

The synod staff has continued to move forward in this area with some next steps, including a series of podcasts featuring women in ministry (or their family members). Another next step is gathering the synod’s deacons for similar conversations. Also, we look forward to gathering women from other synods in the region to imagine together how we might support and empower women in ministry across the church.

female members of the bishop’s staff. Following several hours of conversation, Bishop Tim Smith joined us and listened to a confidential recap of what had been shared. Each gathering ended with worship. A 15-page narrative was created from these conversations with clergy women.

Women at our first gathering wished for a way that congregations could hear some of their stories and receive them with empathy. Two

Links to the video, narrative and podcasts can be found at [nclutheran.org/womeninministry](http://nclutheran.org/womeninministry). 

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## 2019 NC Synod Assembly—save the date!

This year’s synod assembly will be held May 31-June 1 at Koury Convention Center in Greensboro. Join us for synod business, worship, learning and fellowship under the theme of “Congregational Vitality.” Our guest will be the Rev. Ruben Duran, ELCA director for congregational vitality.

The pre-assembly event will be May 30 with Deacon Peggy Hahn on faithful metrics.

Find more details and the link to register at [bit.ly/ncassembly2019](http://bit.ly/ncassembly2019).

# Recovery, resilience, reclaiming hope

In late October 2018, five weeks after Hurricane Florence, Deacon GeoRene Jones, our synod's liaison for Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR), hosted the Rev. Mike Stadie, LDR's U.S. program director, as they met with some of our coastal congregations to listen and see the damage after the storm.



St. Matthew hallway damage.

In both Goldsboro and Lumberton, catastrophic flooding after Hurricane Matthew (2016) washed away entire neighborhoods. Many homes could not be rebuilt; some that were condemned still await demolition. Families lost everything and neighborhoods literally van-

ished, leaving gaping holes in the tax bases of Wayne and Robeson counties. No tax base means no tax revenue for municipalities: no money for infrastructure services such as schools, law enforcement, county health departments, etc. If local businesses survived to reopen, they lost workers who were forced to move away. In the recent flooding post-Hurricane Florence, local farmers lost the year's livelihood as field crops were destroyed.

**St. Andrew's Lutheran Church, New Bern:** The sanctuary roof was severely damaged by the storm. Several days of torrential rains followed by warm weather left the interior of the



St. Andrew's sanctuary with plastic coverings.

sanctuary sodden, causing mold on nearly every inch of surface area. Even worse, 15 families in the congregation lost their homes. Still, St. Andrew's members are welcoming, housing and feeding volunteer recovery crews. Stadie and Jones were joined by Paul Dunn, Lutheran Services Carolinas (LSC) disaster response coordinator, as they met with St. Andrew's to hear its specific needs and those of the wider Craven County community.

**Reconciliation Lutheran Church, Wilmington:** The good news was that they had just removed three dangerously large cypress trees. The bad news was that Florence's winds followed by days of driving rain forced water around and over sills of stained-glass windows in the sanctuary and down through the walls beneath a section of storm-compromised roof. They had inches-deep flooding in the main building and the educational building where the preschool normally meets. No families experienced catastrophic damage.



Plaster damage in St. Paul's stairwell.

**St. Matthew Lutheran Church, Wilmington:** Thankfully, the fairly new roof over the sanctuary held

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Reconciliation's stained-glass window survived the storm.

fast. Offices, the preschool and choir rooms all were damaged when the educational building's flat roof succumbed to the storm. Even while tear-out, mold remediation and repairs were going on, St. Matthew hosted emergency response crews and a National Guard nursing unit serving in emergency evacuation shelters. The day of the LDR visit, some Women of the ELCA members continued their work on Lutheran World Relief quilts.

**St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Wilmington:** While many of St. Paul's families sustained property



At Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Goldsboro, the Rev. Joanna Stallings and members hosted representatives of LSC, NCVOD and the Wayne Co. Long Term Recovery Group. The group shared how collaborative partnerships helped the community recover after Hurricane Matthew in 2016.

damage, thankfully all are safe and accounted for. The 1880s church building has weathered many storms, but this one toppled parapets, wrenched tiles from the roof and left it vulnerable to extreme water damage. Inside, they experienced spalling plaster, peeling paint, disintegrating wood and mold growth, as well as ruined stained glass, missing windows and copper architectural details thrown from towers like children's toys.

Jones and Stadie were not able to visit every affected congregation on their trip around the area. There are 25 coastal congregations in the synod. Some of those not highlighted here experienced damage as well.

Our synod has received gifts from individuals and seven other ELCA synods. We have shared over \$100,000 directly to needy congregations in the hurricane-affected coastal region. ♫

**Recovery will continue for years to come. YOU CAN HELP! Donate today.**

**Give by check to:  
NC Synod (memo: domestic disaster), 1988  
Lutheran Synod Dr., Salisbury, NC 28144.**

**Give online at <https://bit.ly/2AokBq8>.**