

God calls the NC Synod of the ELCA to...



**VITAL
CONGREGATIONS**

**WHOLE & HEALTHY
LEADERS**



COLLABORATION

PROPHETIC VOICE



...all for the sake of the word.



North Carolina Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

1988 Lutheran Synod Drive
Salisbury, NC 28144

☎ 704-633-4861

✉ synod@nclutheran.org

🌐 www.nclutheran.org



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Proclaim the Promise of the Resurrection with a Prophetic Voice

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Anchored in grace and hope, we seek to engage congregations in vital conversations about purpose and ministry in the world. God is always doing a new thing in congregations and systems, freeing us to speak truth to power and advocating for the dignity of all God's people. The gospel frees us to live and proclaim courageously.

KEY SCRIPTURE

I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.

-Isaiah 43:19

WAYS WE WILL CONTINUE TO PROCLAIM THE RESURRECTION WITH A PROPHETIC VOICE:

- Provide guidance and conversation with congregations around the ten options for ministry sustainability into the future.
- Explore learnings and share best practices from our Holy Innovations for Anchor Churches, Yoked Parishes, and Mission Planting & Partnership.
- Continue to grow and engage in the work of the Social Justice and Advocacy Team through the lens of accompaniment.
- Serve alongside the work of partners like Lutheran Services Carolinas in disaster relief and refugee resettlement.
- Encourage congregations to explore social statements and provide feedback as the part of the larger public voice of the ELCA.
- Continue to speak truth to power encouraging us to work for the dignity of all people.



◀ The Rev. Sunitha Mortha teaching at our 2018 Bold Like Jesus Conference.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- Strengthen our witness, voice, and teaching around the Freedom of the Christian always clinging to the central truth that the gospel frees us; therefore, we are able to pursue and partner in God's creative and redeeming work in the world.
- Intentionally create space for confession, lamentation, and walking together as we pursue reconciliation.
- Engage our full synodical staff in trainings that equip them to be ministers for reconciliation like anti-racism training.
- Create space for, lift up, and encourage the voice of our female leaders in order to transform the leadership landscape in the synod.
- Educate, communicate, and connect congregations to resources, strategies, and programs provided by the ELCA centered in hunger, poverty, and advocacy.
- Assume a posture of listening as we work together.
- Incorporate into our rostered ministers' First Call Theological Education training focused on balancing prophetic voice with pastoral care for congregation.

Embrace & Engage in Collaboration

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Knowing we are better together, we seek to embrace being a church of three expressions—congregations, synod and churchwide ministries. Called to unity by the Holy Spirit, we work to build and live into the holy relationships with our ecumenical and interfaith partners. Expanding our witness to the gospel, we faithfully partner with NC Synod agencies and institutions, organizations, and with churchwide ministries.

KEY SCRIPTURE

The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. -John 17:22-23

WAYS WE WILL CONTINUE TO EMBRACE AND ENGAGE IN COLLABORATION:

- Support and engage with our agencies, institutions, and organizations including 10% of budget increases to grow financial support.
- Continue trips with Lenoir-Rhyne University-Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary to Holy Land and explore possibilities with ILCO (Costa Rican Lutheran Church) as a host site for learning and accompaniment.
- Celebrate and expand a renewed relationship with the AME-Zion congregations through leadership retreats.
- Engage emerging generations with programs and events like Bishops' School and the ELCA Youth Gathering.
- Implement and learn from the Holy Innovation with the United Methodist Church in Wilmington, NC and the innovation in Campus Ministry.
- Continue to use Michael Peeler/Virginia Casey Funds to invest in the life of congregations and mission partners.



▲ The joint confirmation classes of Alamance, Alamance; Emmanuel, High Point; and Our Father, Greensboro.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- ➔ Expand the work of the Ecumenical Relations Team to include inter-faith dialogue and explore processes for deeper, consistent engagement.
- ➔ Strengthen the conference structure, clarifying and maximizing the role of the dean.
- ➔ Re-establish relationship with Papua New Guinea (PNG) as a Companion Synod including 2019 travel to PNG.
- ➔ Adopt and live into the NC Synod gift policy including sharing 10% of additional gifts, bequest with the churchwide expression.
- ➔ Explore a Holy Innovation with LYO-Lutheran Youth Organization and LSC-Lutheran Services Carolinas.
- ➔ Commit to denominational partnerships as we plant new churches with a commitment to sustainability and vitality.



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Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Three things converged about a year ago that helped lead to the development of these vision and mission priorities for us as a synod.

The first was my observation that, while “synod” means walking together, we mostly weren’t. We were silos as congregations and as rostered ministers. Perhaps you saw my e-news article from that time that asked the question, “What if we acted as if we really were in this church thing together?”

A second reality was that we had several new staff people but still a structure and vision statement built around the church and cultural assumptions of the late 1990’s. We needed to coalesce as a synod staff to maximize our gifts to address the challenges we have now.

The third piece of the convergence was discerning if, why, how, and how best the synodical expression of our church can help facilitate the Gospel ministry of Jesus in a Lutheran tradition here in NC in 2018 and for the next few years. It was energizing to see clarity coming together around congregational vitality (we have no synod without congregations), healthy and whole leaders, collaboration, and prophetic voice as our calling.

We’re excited as a staff, as deans, and as Synod Council to have begun living into this already, and we look forward to exploring, tweaking, and refining these visions and priorities with you, for the sake of Christ, for the sake of the world. We couldn’t be “us” without your being “you.” Thank you for this ministry we share and your vital part in it!

Bishop Tim Smith

Cultivate & Celebrate Vital Congregations

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Led by clear vision, vital congregations strengthen their relationship with God, nurture their relationship with others, and are a life-giving presence in the community. Vital congregations embrace and reflect the fullness and diversity of the image of God. Realizing that we are part of something bigger than ourselves, we seek to cultivate vital congregations through resources and leadership. Together, we model faith practices for all generations and give and serve generously.

KEY SCRIPTURE

When they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness. Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. -Acts 4:31-34a

WAYS WE WILL CONTINUE TO CELEBRATE AND CULTIVATE VITAL CONGREGATIONS:

- Trust the Spirit to guide our work as we match congregations and leaders in the call process.
- Gather each week as a staff to worship, center our work, and pray for congregations by name.
- Utilize resources like the Vitality Survey and Call Process Study to help congregations get to know themselves better.
- Develop and encourage the stewardship life of congregations through Stewardship for All Seasons.
- Host events like Bold Like Jesus that allow for renewal, rejuvenation and deep thought about our work together in ministry in the world.
- Implement and learn from the Holy Innovations: Planting Hope, Excellence in Worship, Storytelling.
- Provide supply preachers and pastoral presence for congregations with a vacancy.
- Encourage participation in and provide excellent opportunities for young people to gather through LYO – Lutheran Youth Organization and Youth Quake.
- Celebrate and share stories of congregations that are participating in God’s Work. Our Hands. Sunday throughout the synod.
- Give generously through the Michael Peeler/Virginia Casey Funds (nearly a half million dollars a year).
- Walk alongside congregations navigating conflict.
- Encourage love for reading the Scripture through our summer Bible reading plans guided by the Engage the Bible Task Force.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES (2018-2020)

- ➔ Provide intentional support for congregations in administrative matters (ie. constitutional changes).
- ➔ Explore new ways of walking alongside congregations that are a vital and life-giving presence to their community but not sustainable.
- ➔ Transition the Synod Partners program to Synod Storytellers focused on sharing and celebrating where God is at work among us.
- ➔ Leverage technology to create resources that congregations can use in their own context.
- ➔ Cultivate trainings, resources, and materials to equip congregations for conversations that matter.
- ➔ Establish a cohort of congregations to explore what it means to “Grow Young,” guided by a partnership with Fuller Seminary.
- ➔ Provide tools and trainings to congregations for asset mapping their congregation and community as well as doing one-on-ones to listen to their community.

Identify, Equip and Nurture Whole & Healthy Leaders

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

We seek to support rostered and lay leadership in healthy habits in all areas of life (social, emotional, physical, financial, vocational, intellectual, and spiritual). Reflecting the diversity of God’s world, we commit to develop multicultural and culturally-sensitive leaders who engage in life-long learning. Walking with leaders, we strive to identify, nurture, and create space for ongoing discernment. We hold rostered ministers accountable to a life committed to and equipped for giving witness to the gospel.

KEY SCRIPTURE

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. -Ephesians 4:1-3

WAYS WE WILL CONTINUE TO IDENTIFY, EQUIP AND NURTURE WHOLE AND HEALTHY LEADERS:

- Invest in candidacy as a priority of time, leadership and financial resources.
- Continue to offer leadership development events and tools like Fall Convocation, Leadership School, and Boundary Training.
- Seek to alleviate financial burdens for leaders through Faith+Finances+Freedom including exploring ways for the Fund to be available well into the future.
- Continue to follow the Spirit’s guidance to match leaders and congregations through the call process.
- Invest and learn from the Holy Innovations centered on leadership including: First Call Coaches, Discernment, Lay Preaching, Fast Growing Congregations
- Create space for youth and young adults to discern gifts and practice leadership through the LYO Board and YARPS – Young Adult Readiness Program.
- Lift up and provide resources for leaders to pursue life long learning and continuing education.



▲ Leaders gathered at Fall Convocation held at Lutheridge.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES (2018-2020)

- ➔ Begin regular anti-racism training.
- ➔ Intentional connections with camps, campus ministry, and Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGM) alums with regard to discernment and leadership.
- ➔ Incorporate wellness wheel resources and tools into candidacy process.
- ➔ Identify and support multicultural candidates through the candidacy process.
- ➔ Explore and propose creative internship arrangements that help to more fully prepare students for the current landscape.
- ➔ Create a taskforce to explore and create a comprehensive approach to leadership and discipleship in the synod.
- ➔ Create and share resources/training for mutual ministry teams.