



North Carolina Synod  
ELCA

# Ministry Site Profile

## 2025 Bishop's Election

*The North Carolina Synod office is located on the original and ancestral homelands of the Catawba and Keyauwee peoples, and we acknowledge their presence here since time immemorial. We also wish to recognize and honor all our Indigenous siblings who have called and continue to call this land their home. [\[Link to the full Land Acknowledgement statement.\]](#)*

In November 2024, Bishop Tim Smith announced his intention to retire as bishop of the North Carolina Synod, effective July 31, 2025. Since Bishop Smith's announcement, leaders of the North Carolina Synod have been at work preparing for the process of electing a new synod bishop at this year's May 29-31 Synod Assembly in Greensboro.

Synod Vice President Diana Haywood appointed two committees to plan and manage the election of our next bishop. The first is the Bishop's Transition Committee, chaired by Deacon Tammy Jones West. They manage pieces of the transition from one bishop to the next, including a celebration of Bishop Smith's years of service and the installation of the newly elected bishop.

The second is the Bishop's Election Committee, co-chaired by Pastor Josh Copeland and Allison Runge. They will manage the particulars of the bishop's election at the upcoming synod assembly. The guidelines for the election of a bishop are much different from the other elections taking place, which will be managed by the Assembly Elections Committee.

In addition to those committees, the NC Synod Council asked Pastor Jerome Cloninger, Pastor Jennifer Ginn, and Pastor Russell Peek to form a Writing Team in order to compose a Ministry Site Profile, which was presented to the Council at its March 2025 meeting.

The Writing Team composed this document after conversations with and input from Bishop Smith, assistants to the bishop, synod office staff, other leaders, and a synod-wide survey. Our primary goal was to offer a realistic view of the many ways God is active in and through the North Carolina Synod.

The Writing Team prays that this document is a helpful discernment tool for potential candidates for bishop and 2025 NC Synod Assembly Voting Members. Let us pray:

*Almighty God, you have given your Holy Spirit to the church to lead us into all truth. Bless with the Spirit's grace and presence the people of the North Carolina Synod as we prepare to elect a bishop. Keep us steadfast in faith and united in love, that we may manifest your glory and welcome the way of your kingdom; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.*

(adapted from ELW Occasional Services for the Assembly, p. 413)

# Who We Are at a Glance

## Purpose

As the North Carolina Synod, we are called by God to...

- cultivate & celebrate vital congregations;
- identify, equip, and nurture whole & healthy leaders;
- embrace & engage in collaboration; and
- proclaim the promise of the resurrection with a prophetic voice

...all for the sake of the world.

## Values

✝ Christ-Centered

🤝 Generosity

👤 Relationship

🤝 Reconciliation

## A Brief Overview

The North Carolina Synod's 185 congregations have 47,465 members. We have congregations that trace their roots to the 18th, 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries. They are located from the mountains to the coast in rural, suburban, and urban contexts and are divided into 12 conferences. While we have congregations of various sizes throughout the synod, most congregations have fewer than 70 people for in-person worship on Sunday. Many of our congregations have experienced a decline in worship attendance and finances, especially since the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic onset. This has led to a gradual decline in financial Mission Support to the synod.

In addition to our 185 congregations, we give God thanks for the 13 agencies and institutions, 13 campus ministry sites, seven mission developments, two companion synods, and many mission partners.

The synod has over 460 rostered ministers. North Carolina has trained 20 Synod Authorized Ministers (SAMs). Thirteen SAMs are serving congregations, three are retired, and four are available for service. We also have 22 trained Lay Preachers; 18 are currently serving. Additionally, eight Lay Preachers and four SAMs are in the formation process and will be commissioned by 2026



# Current North Carolina Synod Staff

## Full Time

The Rev. Tim Smith  
**Bishop**

Lexi Barnhill  
**Events Coordinator & Special Projects  
Administrator**

Evin Burleson  
**Director of Finance & Administration**

Sarah Greene Burleson  
**Bishop's Administrator**

Catherine Fink  
**Director of Communications & Resources**

Angel Jeffery  
**Associate Director of Communications—  
Digital Media Strategist**

The Rev. CeCee Mills  
**Assistant to the Bishop for Call Process**

The Rev. Cassie McIntosh Overcash  
**Assistant to the Bishop for Boundaries and  
Inclusion Education**

Jenny Ramos  
**Supply Coordinator & Administrative  
Assistant**

Deacon Wendy Roberts  
**Candidacy Coordinator**

The Rev. Phil Tonnesen  
**Assistant to the Bishop for Campus Ministry  
and Deans**

## Part Time

The Rev. Michael Dickson  
**Coordinator for Social Justice & Advocacy  
Ministries**

Deacon Andrew More  
**Children, Youth, & Family Lead Deacon**

Elizabeth Smith  
**Associate Director, Heilig Resource Center**

## Other Partners

Stephanie Burke  
**ELCA Regional Gift Planner**

## Grant Funded

The Rev. Emily Lemoine  
**Lutheran Disaster Response Carolinas—  
Administration**

The Rev. John Mocko  
**Faith+Finances+Freedom Program Director**

Amy Phillips  
**Lutheran Disaster Response Carolinas—  
Western North Carolina Response Coordinator**

The Revs. Ray & Ruth Ann Sipe (sharing a  
full-time call)  
**Lutheran Disaster Response Carolinas—  
Disaster Coordinators/Network Builders**



## 2025 Approved Budget

Projected Income

\$3,622,400

Projected Expenses

Vital Congregations and Healthy Leaders  
Collaboration

\$1,632,000

\$1,687,340

(includes \$586,840  
to Agencies and Institutions)

Prophetic Voice

\$303,060

Total Expenses

\$3,622,400

Projected Income vs. Expenses

\$0





# What We Are About:

## Purpose, Values, and Ways We Are Living into Them

*While this list is not comprehensive, it seeks to give many concrete examples of synod ministries that align with our purpose and values.*

**As the North Carolina Synod, we are called by God to...**



### Cultivate & Celebrate Vital Congregations

- Bi-annual Synod Gathering at Lenoir-Rhyne University
- Bi-annual Synod Assembly
- Conference and cluster gatherings
- Supporting youth ministry, including Lutheran Youth Organization Assembly, YouthQuake, and the ELCA Youth Gathering
- Teaching, worship, and financial management resources for congregations
- Synod communications regularly sharing stories of congregational ministries
- Michael Peeler/Virginia Casey Funds
- God's Work, Our Hands resources
- Celebrating significant milestones of congregations
- Synod staff and bishop involvement in congregation crisis and conflicts
- Congregation president and treasurer learning opportunities
- Seven mission sites



### Identify, Equip, and Nurture Whole and Healthy Leaders

#### Identify

- Candidacy Committee works and regularly reaches out to rostered ministers to identify potential deacons and pastors
- Collaboration with our seminaries
- 13 Campus Ministry sites

#### Equip

- Annual rostered ministers convocation at Lutheridge
- Continuing education opportunities for rostered ministers regularly featured in Synod e-News
- Bible studies, book studies, various learning opportunities
- A commitment to coaching for seasoned and first call rostered ministers
- Boundaries training for rostered ministers, in cooperation with the synods of Region 9
- Training/encouragement/resources for deacons
- Training for SAMs and Lay Preachers (Advanced Lay Ministers—ALM)
- Scheduling supply preachers
- Support for mission starts/eagerness for new opportunities

## Nurture

- Resources for self and family care
- Sabbatical support
- Support for women in ministry
- Opportunities for worship services for rostered ministers



## Embrace & Engage in Collaboration

- ELCA World Hunger Appeal
- Lutheran Disaster Response
- Lutheran Men in Mission, Women of the ELCA, Lutheran Youth Organization
- Lenoir-Rhyne University and Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary
- Novus Way Ministries
- Agape Kure Beach Ministries
- Lutheran Services Carolinas
- Active collaboration with our full communion partners and Region 9 synods.
- Encouraging possibilities for collaboration among smaller congregations, including yoking with another congregation.



## Proclaim the Promise of the Resurrection with a Prophetic Voice

- Discussing and studying ELCA Social Statements
- Sharing messages from the bishop and presiding bishop regarding pressing social issues
- Offering workshops, webinars, and in-person gatherings showcasing and supporting prophetic preaching and confidence in God's promises
- Racial Justice Network
- African Descent Strategy Team
- All Races One Church Fund
- Supporting rostered ministers to attend events like the Festival of Homiletics and other preaching seminars

....all for the sake of the world.





# What We Are Looking for

## from Our Bishop and Staff

The call to serve as bishop of the synod can be both rewarding and daunting. The bishop's role in guiding and governing the synod includes all the duties and tasks defined in the NC Synod Constitution, chapter S8.01-S8.15.

As the Holy Spirit guides this synod in discerning whom to call as the next bishop and after conversations with the bishop's office, synod staff, other leaders in our synod, and a synod-wide survey, we, the North Carolina Synod of the ELCA, have identified strengths, gifts, and goals we believe will be important for the incoming bishop:

### Promote Purpose Statement, Core Values, Mission and Vision

- Be a faithful disciple with a servant heart who follows Jesus and leads others to him
- Focus on God's call in all circumstances
- In cooperation with assistants to the bishop and synod council, guide our synod to live into and live out our stated purpose and the values that lie at the core of who we are as Christ's church
- Model and foster a deep spiritual climate among synod staff, synod council, and congregations
- Honor our rich heritage, with vision set on the future

### Administration

- Exhibit strong administrative skills
- Accompany and supervise bishop's assistants and office staff
- Be self-aware of gifts, strengths, and growth areas; be able to prayerfully and thoughtfully assemble a team that complements and/or supplements those strengths
- Be both trustworthy and willing to trust staff and leaders, delegating tasks as appropriate and necessary

### Communication

- Be a compassionate listener and skilled communicator
- Be the public figure of our synod who leads, encourages, and guides our synod by witnessing publicly to the Gospel of Jesus Christ in both word and deed
- Foster deeper relationships through ongoing conversations with our Full Communion and Interfaith Partners locally, nationally, and internationally
- Maintain confidentiality when addressing sensitive or private issues
- Convey our synod's mission and ministries through synod communications, media, and social media
- Be prepared to speak on behalf of the synod when approached by the media
- Raise awareness of the role of the synod office staff as partners in our shared work



## Interpersonal Climate

- Foster a climate of collaboration, cooperation, and trust in the synod office staff and among the congregations, organizations, and institutions of the synod
- Set the tone in every setting by modeling our core values
- Support, encourage, and equip the rostered ministers of our synod, especially newly rostered ministers
- Accompany, encourage, and equip our congregations, especially smaller congregations

## Recruit and Equip Leaders

- Be able to recruit and equip those who will serve as rostered ministers, as well as lay leaders, for mission and ministry throughout our synod
- Work in cooperation with and support the NC Synod Candidacy Committee and rostered ministry candidates in their discernment
- Actively pursue and encourage diversity in developing lay and rostered ministers, with special attention to those who may be overlooked due to age, gender, race, sexuality, and other inherent qualities
- Work to confront and break down assumptions and barriers in congregations that may keep qualified leaders from receiving a call

## Self-care/Family Life

- Designate time for maintaining physical, mental, and spiritual health and fostering strong, loving, healthy family relationships
- Lift up self and family care as both model and expectation for synod staff and rostered ministers

## Strategic Mission Planning

- In partnership with the NC Synod Council, lead and guide our synod in fulfilling its mission and casting a vision of God's future
- Evaluate our current structure, making adjustments and changes necessary for our synod to move forward together
- Be open and willing to lead change, even when new initiatives mean letting go of previous ones
- Dream big and be innovative, understanding the current situation of our synod and this church in the post-pandemic world
- Seek and foster opportunities to engage more fully with our Full-Communion Partners
- Enhance and further Mission Development (new mission starts)
- Promote collaboration with the other synods of Region 9 and our partner synods, both domestic and international

## Ministry in Crisis/Conflict Management

- Seek reconciliation and restoration in times of both crisis and conflict, always fostering and pursuing unity in Christ
- Strive to work collaboratively with congregations in conflict or crisis, seeking to cultivate and nurture strong relationships
- Address conflict directly and openly



# Practical Considerations

## for Our Next Bishop

### Compensation Package

- Defined Compensation for the NC Synod Bishop is Synod Guidelines for years of experience as a Minister of Word and Sacrament, plus \$25,000.

### Insurance and Retirement Benefits

- Health Insurance is provided for the bishop and family member(s) through Portico at the Gold+ level.
- Retirement contribution through Portico is 12% of defined compensation.

### Vacation and Continuing Education

- Vacation: 4 weeks, including 4 Sundays
- Continuing Education: 2 weeks, including 2 Sundays

### Other Benefits Provided by the NC Synod

- Allowances for professional expenses
- Access to a synod-owned car
- A cell phone
- Moving expenses

### Personnel Policies

- The NC Synod has personnel policies in place for parental and family leave, sick leave, and sabbatical leave for the bishop.

### Important Expectations for our Next Bishop

- The NC Synod Bishop is expected to work in the Salisbury synod office unless traveling for synod-related work.
- The ELCA Bishops have a covenant for their work together. The NC Synod Bishop is expected to be a part of this covenant
- The ELCA Region 9 Bishops have agreements for their work together as bishops in this part of the ELCA. The NC Synod Bishop is expected to participate in this ministry.



## *Practical Considerations for Our Next Bishop, Continued*

Commitments and realities of which the incoming bishop should be aware:

- Time commitments
  - The day-to-day demand upon the bishop's time will be very different from that in a congregation
  - The unpredictability of the office—must be able to adapt
  - The bishop's schedule is often dictated by others
  - A large amount of time is committed to our synod's agencies and institutions
    - Many meet four times per year for 2-3 days
  - Other time commitments
    - Bishop's Academy
    - Conference of Bishops Meetings
    - Synod Council
    - Candidacy
    - Ordinations
    - Churchwide Assembly
    - Synod Assembly and Synod Gathering
    - Misconducts and disaffiliations (very time consuming)
  - Much of the bishop's work is driven by ELCA churchwide work
    - Churchwide appointments to committees and taskforces
    - Work with Region 9 partners
    - Need to establish good rapport with the ELCA Secretary and Legal
    - Will work with an assigned mentor bishop
- The bishop does not possess as much power as others tend to assume
- The bishop is often perceived as a representative of the ELCA rather than an ambassador from the synod to the ELCA
- The bishop is often expected to be a lead donor in financial campaigns for our agencies and institutions
- Congregation and rostered minister morale is not as high as it once was
- Rapidly changing and shifting landscape of the post-pandemic world: declining membership, congregational participation and giving, Mission Support
- The bishop is expected to be:
  - The public representative of the synod
  - A relationship builder
  - A visionary leader

Key Dates for the NC Synod Bishop to Know:

- NC Synod Bishop Term Begins. August 1, 2025
- Attend New Bishops' Formation School. June 22-26, 2025 in Chicago
- Attend ELCA Churchwide Assembly as a non-voting member. July 28-August 2, 2025, in, Phoenix, AZ
- Synod Council Retreat, September, 2025
- Conference of Bishops, October 3-7, 2025. Chicago
- Bishop's Installation, November 15, 2025, at 2:00 p.m., at Christ, Charlotte.