

Bulletin of Reports – Synod Assembly 2025

Table of Contents

1. Letter from Bishop Eaton – English.....	3
2. Letter from Bishop Eaton – Spanish.....	5
3. Bishop Tim Smith’s Report.....	6
4. The Rev. Phil Tonnesen’s Report.....	8
5. The Rev. Cassie Overcash’s Report.....	10
6. Finance & Administration Report.....	11
7. DEM Report.....	13
8. The Rev. CeCee Mills’ Report.....	14
9. Noteworthy Events.....	15
10. Communications & Resource Center Report.....	20
11. Vice President’s Report.....	21
12. Secretary’s Report.....	22
13. Treasurer’s Report.....	23
14. Lutheran Men in Mission Report.....	24
15. NC Women of the ELCA Report.....	25
16. Home Mission Foundation Report.....	27
17. Lutheran Services Carolinas Report.....	29
18. Agape+Kure Beach Report.....	30
19. NovusWay Report.....	33
20. LTSS Report.....	34
21. NC Council of Churches Report.....	36
22. Twin Lakes Report.....	37
23. African Descent Strategy Team Report.....	38
24. Engage the Bible Report.....	39
25. Costa Rica Task Force Report.....	40
26. NC Synod Foundation Report.....	41
27. Crumley Archives Report.....	43
28. Portico Benefits Services Report.....	44
29. ELCA Foundation Report.....	45
30. Campus Ministry Report.....	53
31. Candidacy Report.....	54
32. Social Justice & Advocacy Ministries Report.....	56
33. Specialized Pastoral Care Report.....	58
34. Global Refuge Report.....	59

35. Lutheran Disaster Response Carolinas Report.....	61
36. Mission Fund Report.....	62
37. Mission Investment Fund Report	64
38. Seafarers International House Report	65
39. Vitality Team Report	67



"We have known and believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them." —1 John 4:16

April 2025

Dear friends in Christ,

Thank you for your dedication and faithfulness, as together we continue to share God's love throughout the world.

During the past year and a half, I had the privilege to gather with many of you at our God's Love Made Real regional conversations. Connecting with you during these events was extremely inspiring as we heard about the many ways God's love is being made real in communities across this church.

Among the stories that were shared, we heard about a congregation's "bold" decision to reconstruct a food pantry to help increase the capacity to serve more people, a Christmas in July celebration for a single mom and her five children experiencing homelessness, a Queer youth poetry open mic event described by one pastor as a tangible experience of God's Love Made Real, a partially gutted parsonage that was renovated to provide long-term housing for survivors of human trafficking, and an ecumenical ministry group that developed a community center that feeds people with meals and spiritual connections.

Our vision of a world experiencing the difference God's grace and love in Christ make for all people and creation is being made manifest in these ministries, but these are only a few examples of what's happening throughout our church. I know this is work your congregations do every day, and I thank you for helping people know the way of Jesus to discover community, justice and love.

The world around us is changing, and our church will also experience change with the election of a new presiding bishop and a new secretary at the 2025 Churchwide Assembly this summer. Many of you will be electing a new synod bishop and other leaders.

Amid these changes, our call remains the same: to love and serve others as Jesus taught. Our church will continue our work to proclaim the gospel and to serve all of God's people.

It has been a privilege to serve as your presiding bishop. May God continue to hold us and guide us into the future.

In Christ,

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



Evangelical
Lutheran Church
in America

*"Y nosotros hemos llegado a saber y creer que Dios nos ama. Dios es amor.
El que permanece en amor, en Dios permanece y Dios en él" – 1 Juan 4:16*

Abril de 2025

Estimados amigos en Cristo:

Gracias por su dedicación y fidelidad, en tanto que juntos seguimos compartiendo el amor de Dios en todo el mundo.

Durante el pasado año y medio tuve el privilegio de reunirme con muchos de ustedes en nuestras conversaciones regionales de El Amor de Dios Hecho Realidad. El habernos conectado con ustedes durante estos eventos fue sumamente inspirador, ya que oímos de las muchas formas en que el amor de Dios se está haciendo realidad en las comunidades de esta iglesia.

Entre las historias que se compartieron, escuchamos sobre la decisión "audaz" que tomó una congregación de reconstruir una despensa de alimentos para ayudar a aumentar la capacidad de servir a más personas, una celebración de Navidad en julio para una madre soltera sin hogar y sus cinco hijos, un evento de micrófono abierto de poesía juvenil queer que un pastor describió como una experiencia tangible de El Amor de Dios Hecho Realidad, una casa parroquial parcialmente destruida que fue renovada para proporcionar vivienda a largo plazo a sobrevivientes de la trata de personas, y un grupo ministerial ecuménico que desarrolló un centro comunitario que alimenta a las personas con comidas y conexiones espirituales.

Nuestra visión de un mundo que experimenta la diferencia marcada por la gracia y el amor de Dios en Cristo en todas las personas y la creación está siendo manifestada en estos ministerios, pero estos son solo algunos ejemplos de lo que está sucediendo en toda nuestra iglesia.

Sé que este es el trabajo que sus congregaciones hacen todos los días, y les doy gracias por ayudar a las personas a conocer el camino de Jesús para que descubran la comunidad, la justicia y el amor.

El mundo a nuestro alrededor está cambiando, y nuestra iglesia también experimentará cambios con la elección de un nuevo obispo presidente y un nuevo secretario en la Asamblea Nacional de 2025 este próximo verano. Muchos de ustedes elegirán a un nuevo obispo sinodal y a otros líderes.

En medio de estos cambios, nuestro llamado sigue siendo el mismo: amar y servir a los demás como Jesús enseñó. Nuestra iglesia continuará su obra para proclamar el Evangelio y servir a todo el pueblo de Dios.

Ha sido un privilegio haber servido como su Obispa Presidente. Que Dios nos siga sosteniendo y guiando hacia el futuro.

En Cristo,

La Rvda. Elizabeth A. Eaton
Obispa Presidente
Iglesia Evangélica Luterana en América

Bishop Timothy M. Smith Submission for 2025 NC Synod Assembly Bulletin of Reports
(covering calendar year 2024)

The most joyous news to report from 2024 was a surge in ordinations of recent seminary graduates—the most in my 10-year tenure as bishop. From May of 2024 and through May of 2025, there have been 14 ordinations in this synod of pastor and deacon candidates not only in quantity but also in quality. We are blessed, and though the church faces major changes amid great cultural uncertainty, I am grateful to say we are in good hands.

January and February 2024 are relatively easy to report on, since I was (gratefully) granted a sabbatical for those two months plus December of 2023. I completed a course toward the Executive Certificate in Fundraising, which I received later in 2024, relaxed, traveled, and spent time with my wife and with grandchildren. This was most welcome, given an unusually active string of misconduct cases, congregational conflicts, and prostate cancer treatments in 2023.

The rest of the year's highlights include two week-long gatherings of the ELCA Conference of Bishops (Chicago) during a time of great transition in the churchwide expression as well as a week at the ELCA Youth Gathering (first in six years) in New Orleans. Our beloved NC Synod-affiliated agencies and institutions experienced a lot of change or anticipated change in 2024. All of our camps have had long-term interim CEOs, LTSS announced and then followed through on its physical move to the Hickory campus, and L-R's president announcement that he would be retiring soon. And, of course, there was my own discernment in late 2024 that I would also retire in the summer of 2025, as well as Lutheran Services Carolinas serious and extensive cuts from government funding beginning in late January 2025.

Hurricane Helene in late September of 2024 changed our trajectory of priorities within the synod office for much of the rest of 2024. We partnered with LDR Carolinas and LDR to help provide all sorts of assistance, and our "Bridging Together" program will likely move forward for several years to come.

Staff changes were significant at the synod office in 2024. Diane Ryan retired in March of 2024 and was replaced by the very capable Jenny Ramos, and Michael DeNise retired at the end of July and was replaced a couple of months later by the capable Evin Burleson. We also at the end of 2024 felt the need to adjust our synod budget downward by about 10% due to lagging mission support, which is always hard. This resulted in the loss of an Assistant to the Bishop, Pastor Alfredo Oviedo. We are grateful for all those who have served here.

I've immensely enjoyed being in so many different congregations for so many reasons, yet I'm also looking forward to retirement and to what God has in store both for me and for the synod in 2025 and beyond.

--Bishop Tim Smith

The Rev. Philip T. Tonnesen – Assistant to the Bishop

“God calls the NC Synod of the ELCA to cultivate and celebrate vital congregations; identify, equip, and nurture whole and healthy leaders; embrace and engage in collaboration; and proclaim the promise of the resurrection with a prophetic voice.”

As I reflect back on the year 2024, I offer thanks to God for the gifted rostered and lay leaders of our North Carolina Synod. I celebrate 200 communities of faith that have become flexible and adaptable while reaching out to a world that desperately needs to hear a message of hope and grace. I celebrate faithful mission support which undergirds our shared ministry.

As bishop and staff, we all assume responsibility for pastoral care issues, call process and congregational conflict resolution. Individually, in 2024, I served as the Bishop's liaison to Campus Ministry, Global Mission, retirement transitions and gatherings, the Board of Agape+Kure Beach Ministries, the Region 9 Council, the Region 9 Archives, and our conference deans.

I was excited to visit our companion synod in Costa Rica this past August along with members of the SW Texas Synod as we seek to re-energize this relationship following the global pandemic. In addition, four members of our synod visited our companion synod in Papua New Guinea in 2024 which helped to solidify our relationships with colleagues in that church.

As I begin my 29th year of ministry in this call, I continue to value and give thanks to God for my relationships with my colleagues. Through our partnership with the synod council, I am amazed at how God's Spirit energizes us as we seek to answer God's call to serve the congregations and leaders of this great synod.

On a personal note, I celebrate not only a call to ministry, but also a call to be husband and father and son. Deb continues to enjoy being part of the community at Lenoir Rhyne University, and our three children and son and daughter-in-law are thriving in vocations that give them meaning and purpose. Thanks for the opportunity to serve on your behalf across the North Carolina Synod!

Staff Report: Cassie Overcash

Cultivate and Celebrate Vital Congregations:

- Since beginning my role in September 2023 I have visited 56 congregations in the synod.
- Walking with them through conflict, call process, and other Synodical business.

Identify, Equip, and Nurture whole and healthy leaders:

- Since beginning my role in our office, I have walked with rostered ministers experiencing conflict or distress providing support.
- Checking in regularly with Rostered Ministers in the call process
- Facilitated retreats for CYF professionals in our synod.
- Wrote curriculum and provided Lent Kits and Advent kits for use in our congregations
- Worked with several misconduct survivors to provide care
- Worked with our LYO Board made up of youth leaders from across our synod/
- Prepared Christmas Boxes for our Rostered Ministers with Children!
- Provided support, care and education to our First Call leaders.
- Planned for Synod Chrism Mass Services and All Saints Services for our rostered leaders to worship together.

Embrace and engage in collaboration:

- Region 9 Bishop's Relational Agreement: working with Region 9 to provide boundary opportunities.
- Working with Synod worship team on Convocation, All Saints, and Assembly
- Communicating with the Mission and Ministry Committee
- Beginning work on Fall Convo 2025.
- Supervising Deacon Andrew More getting him settled so that he can largely carry out what was identified by CYF professionals in the visioning process.
- Working on Synod Gathering 2026
- Went on a companion synod trip to Papua New Guinea
- Served on a team for the ELCA Youth Gathering in 2024, and leading a team for the 2027 Youth Gathering.
- Served on the planning team for the ELCA Rostered Ministers Gathering.

Proclaim the promise of the resurrection with a prophetic voice:

- Participating in Synod Office Diversity Equity and Inclusion efforts
- Working on misconduct situations, maintaining records of misconduct for the next Bishop.
- Walking with several rostered ministers who are struggling.
- Helping get the Saints of Gloria Dei resettled in their new columbarium at Bethel.

Serving as an assistant to the bishop of the North Carolina Synod has been a deeply formative and meaningful chapter in my life. This call invited me into sacred spaces—both joyful and difficult—where I witnessed the Spirit's movement in our shared ministry.

There were certainly hard moments. Walking alongside congregations and leaders through staff transitions, and helping to navigate the painful realities of misconduct, required courage, compassion, and a deep trust in God's grace. These experiences challenged me and shaped me, reminding me constantly of the importance of transparency, accountability, and care.

Yet, this call was also filled with profound joy. Accompanying the LYO Board and watching young leaders grow in faith and confidence was nothing short of inspiring. Each completed call process was a reminder of God's faithfulness and the beautiful way Christ knits together communities and leaders for the sake of the gospel.

I am deeply grateful to the North Carolina Synod for entrusting me with this role. Thank you for the opportunity to serve, to lead, and to learn.

Submitted with Love:

Cassie Overcash

Finance & Administration Report
Evin Burleson
Synod Assembly 2025

I'm new on the job as of October 2024, but I have been tackling the larger, unexpected events (such as the hurricane) in order to start learning the rest of my job in earnest. I expect to take those aspects starting this summer so I can fully situate myself into my role.

On the Synod Administrative Council, but since I've been on it, not much has happened. They closed a congregation before I joined, and discussions have centered around how to handle it better next time. We have been discussing possibilities for the current congregation that is under synod administration. The two closed congregations (Prince of Peace/Kinston and Prince of Peace/Salisbury) are on the market and Bishop Smith and I are working closely with Foundry to sell these buildings. Gloria Dei/Salisbury was successfully sold to Salisbury Academy; they have a "future home of" sign up in the yard. Arbol de Vida/Durham was sold to Habitat for Humanity of Durham.

We discovered the NC Synod had a church property in its possession that we hadn't had knowledge of since at least 2006. Another congregation outside the synod is using it under the terms of an unofficial agreement from the 1970s. They have made improvements, added onto the building, maintained the cemetery, and sold plots, and are all around taking excellent care of this property. We haven't yet decided how exactly to handle this situation yet, but we are looking at all possibilities of transfer.

The Synod Foundation's work is going very well and received a higher return than normal. Currently, we are working on evaluating and distributing those funds according to the grant guidelines.

Mission Support was more than \$200,000 less than expected. The Budget Committee and Bishop Smith have worked on limiting expenditures and working within our means to make up for the shortfall. To the best of our ability, the staff came together to work toward working within our means and coming under budget when possible.

The financial situation we were in helped us resolve and create a new budget for 2026-27 that factors in lower mission support and higher expenses. We want to remain optimistic while taking into account the reality of our financial prospects.

The most recent personnel shift the staff experienced was the departure of Rev. Danielle DeNise as DEM. Before then, Rev. Alfredo Oviedo, Michael DeNise, and Diane Ryan all departed from the staff.

The most significant event affecting my work in the last calendar year was the destruction wrought by Hurricane Helene. It not only turned Western North Carolina into a disaster zone, but it flooded the synod office with donations (both material and monetary), volunteer efforts, and enough work for nearly the whole staff to pitch in on to accomplish for at least three months out of the end of 2024. We are still working on keeping up with donations and thank-you letters, management of donations, and now the Bridging Together project done in collaboration with Lutheran Disaster Response Carolinas and Mennonite Disaster Service. This happened right as I came onto the synod staff, so my work has been largely inundated with LDR matters.

The audit is finished and the committee will meet in mid-May to review and approve the report. Rev. Tony Bradshaw was instrumental in assisting with this audit, as I was out of the country for an educational opportunity in the pursuit of my Master's degree during some of it.

Director for Evangelical Mission
2024 Bulletin of Reports

SYNOD GATHERING – Serving as the Gathering Manager took up a lot of the DEM Pr. Danielle Denise's time. We had a successful synod gathering which ended in a net profit which allowed us to secure a speaker for 2026. In the wake of the success of the Synod Gathering and the departure of the Director of Finance and Administration Michael DeNise who normally operated as the Assembly Manager, Danielle took on the responsibility for managing the 2025 Synod Assembly.

SYNOD ASSEMBLY PLANNING – The webpage was launched with basics including costs dates and a brief schedule. In light of the need for a Bishop's election, Danielle renegotiated contracts to accommodate the additional day. The Assembly committee and staff met on December 4th.

LILY GRANT – We applied for and received a \$609,000 Lily Grant for children's ministry. This will allow the Synod Office to bring on some staff to support and expand the work of children's ministry – especially accompanying neurodiverse children.

MISSION DEVELOPMENT UPDATES – In 2024, Danielle shepherded six Synod Authorized Worshiping Communities (SAWC) and two Synod Authorized Outreach Communities (SAOM): Anam Cara Community (Digital First), Connect NC - Young Adult Ministry (Synodwide), Christ Beloved Community (Winston-Salem), Church of the Wilderness (North Durham), Community of Spiritual Practice (Asheville), The Dwelling (Winston-Salem), Emmaus (Charlotte), and Living Waters (Cherokee). A plan to start an Arabic Ministry in Charlotte was waiting on the developer to receive his Visa appointment.

ORGANIZING – Christ Beloved Community organized in March and was received as a new congregation at the Synod Gathering. Emmaus was scheduled to attend the ELCA class on organizing but it was cancelled due to weather.

VITALITY MINISTRY & STRATEGIC MINISTRY WORK – The Advent Strategic Ministry (Charlotte) set a goal of 10 persons in bible study to begin discerning their way forward. Partnership conversations were happening between Christ the King (Cary) and Lord of Life (Garner), Cedar Grove (Vale) and St. Paul (Startown), and with Mt. Zion (Richfield) who was still looking for a ministry partner. A conversation between Reformation (Taylorsville) and Friendship (Taylorsville) did not result in a partnership.

LEADERSHIP – Six mini-sabbaticals were offered before the responsibilities were transitioned to Assistant to the Bishop Pastor Alfredo Oviedo. Danielle continued to serve as the Dean of the DEMs and held regular meetings.

DISASTER RESPONSE – Beginning in October, this became a huge part of her job as she supervised the LDR Carolinas staff as they responded to Hurricane Helene. Pastors Ray & RuthAnn Sipes were invaluable. Not only did they provide help on the ground, but they also served as liaisons to our agencies and institutions during the disaster response.

On Behalf of Former DEM Pastor Danielle DeNise,
Lucille "CeCee" Mills

Call Process Coordinator 2024 Bulletin of Reports

In 2024 the call process in the North Carolina Synod completed thirty-three processes. This is up from the twenty-five we completed in 2023. We continued to use the transition strategy. By focusing on listening to the Holy Spirit and intentional weekly oversight of the status of all congregations in the process.

Congregations reported that the planning retreat for call committees was helpful, and they felt ready for the process. This was a deep learning as there is sometimes resistance to completing this step because of professional expertise acquired in their vocation. However, in most cases once the retreat ends it has become clear that this is helpful in not only answering questions about the process but helping the call committee function as a spirit-guided team.

The strong start by the call committee has helped to decrease time lost from confusion about the steps in the call process. Another asset of the current call process is the regular monitoring of congregations in the call process and the focus of one staff member to identify and work with candidates. In 2024, adding this particular focus to a staff member other than the call process coordinator helped to have it receive more focused attention. This created better contact with candidates and again reduced time in the call process.

As I began my service seven years ago on synod staff by working with congregations who would benefit from shared ministry / yoking, I found it was unfamiliar and unattractive to many I approached with the possibility. However, in this season we are finding it to be suggested by some of the congregations we previously approached as a hopeful path for future ministry. With a clear commitment by synod staff to help the congregations discover how to work together by covenant relationships, I believe we are turning a corner where more congregations will get excited about working together.

We continue to work call process in coordination with candidacy. This helps us not only nurture and sustain current leaders but look to continue identifying and accompanying new leaders.

The materials continue to be refined and need to be simplified and readily available on the website. With this last big hurdle accomplished, I am quite sure we will maximize the spiritual and practical aspects in call process to create a healthy spirit guided process for both the leader and the ministry site.

The call process team includes the assistants to the bishop, the bishop, a reader, a dozen volunteer retreat leaders, and an administrative support person.

In Christ's Service,

Lucille "CeCee" Mills, Assistant to the Bishop, Call Process Coordinator

Noteworthy Events 2025

Congregations with Significant Anniversaries This Year

Celebrating 175 Years

Beth Eden, Newton

Celebrating 250 Years

Morning Star, Matthews

The following congregations are celebrating anniversaries of beyond 225 years:

Congregation	Years
Salem, Lincolnton	229
Zion, Hickory	235
Beck's, Lexington	238
St. Luke's, Lexington	238
St. Mark's, Cherryville	239
Emmanuel, Lincolnton	240
Cold Water, Concord	243
Lutheran Chapel, China Grove	245
Shiloh, Lewisville	247
Morning Star, Matthews	250
Daniels, Lincolnton	252
Lows, Liberty	254
St. Paul's, Burlington	255
Philadelphia, Dallas	258
Old St. Paul's, Newton	270
Pilgrim, Lexington	271
St. John's, Salisbury	278
Friedens, Gibsonville	280
St. John's, Concord	280

Nine Pastors will celebrate 25 years in Gospel Ministry in 2025:

The Reverend Chad R. Walker
The Reverend Dale E. Cline
The Reverend David A. Jenkins
The Reverend Deborah S. Dawson
The Reverend Jennifer M. Ginn
The Reverend Linda B. Nelson
The Reverend Michael G. Weaver
The Reverend Monta Maki
The Reverend William N. Rose III

Six Pastors will celebrate 35 years in Gospel Ministry in 2025:

The Reverend Carla Lang
The Reverend Jeffrey L. Hoffner
The Reverend Linda A. Faltin
The Reverend E. Raymond Mohrmann, Jr.
The Reverend Terry M. Dorsey
The Reverend Keith H. Dey

Ten Pastors will celebrate 50 years in Gospel Ministry in 2025:

The Reverend Dale L. Pederson
The Reverend James B. Huffman
The Reverend John C. Propst

The Reverend John E. Pless
The Reverend John G. Pearson
The Reverend Joseph A. Miller
The Reverend K. Michael Varn
The Reverend Richard A. Hites
The Reverend Ronald G. Wedekind
The Reverend Stephen T. Gragg

Two Pastors will celebrate 60 years in Gospel Ministry in 2025:

The Reverend Richard B. Graf, Jr.
The Reverend William K. Hollar, Jr.

Five Pastors will celebrate 65 years in Gospel Ministry in 2025:

The Reverend A. Curtis Paul
The Reverend Boyce D. Whitener, Sr.
The Reverend David P. Nelson
The Reverend Robert M. Weeks
The Reverend William F. Seibert

The 2025 Synod Assembly applauds the following pastors whose years in service go beyond 50 years in Gospel Ministry in 2025:

Name	Years in Ministry
The Reverend Charlie Zimmerman	51
The Reverend Bob Shoffner	51
The Reverend John Woodard	51
The Reverend Johnny Cozart	51
The Reverend Dwight Shellaway	51
The Reverend Garry Vogelpohl	51
The Reverend Royall Yount, Jr.	52
The Reverend Woodrow Frick	52
The Reverend Gene Bost	52
The Reverend Ronald Fink	52
The Reverend Richard Lischer	53
The Reverend Lang Collins	53
The Reverend James Shimota	53
The Reverend Doctor Leonard Bolick	53
The Reverend Bill Mims	53
The Reverend Paul Cooper	53
The Reverend Ronald Rinn	53
The Reverend Michael Megahan	53
The Reverend Peter Hoyer	54
The Reverend William Jeffcoat	54
The Reverend Robert Young	54
The Reverend Doctor Marcus Miller	54
The Reverend Richard Handschin	54
The Reverend David Kilde	54
The Reverend Geoffrey Hoy	55
The Reverend Paul Kanupp	55
The Reverend John Boyd	55
The Reverend W. Raymond Hollifield	55
The Reverend Carl Sachtleben	55
The Reverend David Franzen	55
The Reverend John Nagle	56

The Reverend Kay Overcash	56
The Reverend Tommy Beaver	56
The Reverend George Simmons	56
The Reverend Donald Safrit	56
The Reverend Gilmer Miller	56
The Reverend John Beeg	56
The Reverend Thomas Ridenhour	56
The Reverend Bill Battermann	57
The Reverend Michael Hoffmann	57
The Reverend William Howard	57
The Reverend Charles Duncan	57
The Reverend John Harder	57
The Reverend Bernard Hess	57
The Reverend Clyde Christmas III	57
The Reverend Richard Roth	58
The Reverend G. David Swygert	58
The Reverend Stephen Blank	58
The Reverend Craig Bartholomew	58
The Reverend L. Alfred Mullen	58
The Reverend Michael Wendt	58
The Reverend Gary Logan	59
The Reverend David Huddle	59
The Reverend Doctor Robert Allen	59
The Reverend John Pfisterer	59
The Reverend Ronald Heinze	59
The Reverend Richard Graf	60
The Reverend William Hollar	60
The Reverend Milbert Kurtz	61
The Reverend John Weinbach	61
The Reverend Doctor John Merck	61
The Reverend David Keck	61
The Reverend William Harper	61
The Reverend Luther Mauney	61
The Reverend Kenneth Tonnesen	61
The Reverend Malcom Lerch	61
The Reverend Donald Poole	62
The Reverend Claude Deal	62
The Reverend Henry Boschen	62
The Reverend Robert Matthias	62
The Reverend Carroll Robinson	63
The Reverend Edgar Trexler	63
The Reverend Harwood Smith	63
The Reverend Lonnie Karriker	64
The Reverend Robert Weeks	65
The Reverend A. Curtis Paul	65
The Reverend Boyce Whitener	65
The Reverend Doctor David Nelson	65
The Reverend William Seibert	65
The Reverend Donald Deal	66
The Reverend James Harbinson	66
The Reverend Doctor Ted Edwards	66
The Reverend Douglas Johnson	66
The Reverend Terry Agner	67
The Reverend James Haney	67
The Reverend William Milholland	67

The Reverend Ernest Bolick	67
----------------------------	----

Rostered Ministers Received by Transfer

Synod

The Reverend Frantisek Janak	New Jersey
The Reverend Harold Heidegger	Florida-Bahamas
The Reverend Cheryl Kester-Schmidt	Southwestern Texas
The Reverend Linda Hatcher	South Carolina
The Reverend Anna Merritt	Montana
The Reverend Steve Cruys	Saint Paul Area
Deacon Mitzie Budde	Metro DC
Deacon Andrew More	Southwestern Texas
The Reverend James Merkel	Indiana-Kentucky
The Reverend Michael Glymph	Florida-Bahamas
The Reverend Mary Johnson	Upstate New York

Rostered Ministers Transferred Out

Synod

The Reverend Zach Parris	Rocky Mountain
Deacon Missie Bonser	Rocky Mountain
The Reverend Doctor Beverly Wallace	Southeastern
The Reverend Nick Giannatasio	Central States
The Reverend Kristina Palacios	Southwestern Texas
The Reverend Dennis Shaw	Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast
The Reverend Kirsten Wee	Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana

Retirements Since Last Assembly/Gathering

Name	Date
The Reverend Mark Coulter	September 1, 2024
The Reverend Doctor Mary Shore	March 1, 2025
The Reverend Daniel Keck	May 5, 2025
The Reverend David Eck	January 1, 2025
Deacon Robert Durocher, Jr.	March 1, 2025
The Reverend Stacie Loizeaux	December 1, 2024
Deacon Mitzie Budde	January 1, 2025

Deceased Rostered Ministers Since June 2024

Name	Date
The Reverend Doctor Colonel Ralph S. Spear	May 16, 2024
The Reverend Theodore Thuesen	July 11, 2024
The Reverend Robert B. Lineberger	July 17, 2024
The Reverend Doctor Philip Baker	July 16, 2024
The Reverend John C. Misenheimer	November 26, 2024
The Reverend Henry Rendleman	December 15, 2024
The Reverend Charlie Hoyle	January 20, 2025
The Reverend Gunnard Duane Johnson	February 27, 2025
Deacon Donna Hanna	March 13, 2025
The Reverend David Mielke	March 29, 2025
The Reverend Doctor C. Lynn Bailey	March 29, 2025
The Reverend Henry Rehder, Jr.	April 10, 2025
The Reverend Michael Joseph Hoffmann	May 10, 2025
The Reverend Carla Lang	May 17, 2025

Rostered Interims and SAMs

Name	Start Date	Congregation	End Date
SAM Brad Alexander	1/1/2023	St. Mark's, Cherryville	
Deacon Rachel Bailey	9/8/2024	Ascension, Shelby	9/8/2025

Lexi Barnhill	2/25/2025	Bethel, Salisbury	
SAM Chris Bass	7/1/2022	St. John's, Lenoir	
SAM Chris Bass	7/1/2022	Philadelphia, Granite Falls	
The Rev. Jim Braswell	7/4/2021	St. Timothy, Havelock	
The Rev. Jason Chesnut	11/7/2024	Shiloh, Lewisville	12/31/2025
The Rev. Wayne Cobb	9/1/2018	Calvary, Spencer	
The Rev. Keith Copeland	2/15/2023	St. Luke's Charlotte	5/14/2025
The Rev. Tom Cogan	3/1/2024	Cold Water, Concord	
The Rev. Sara Cutter	1/19/2025	St. Paul's, Startown	9/30/2025
The Rev. Linn Fisher	5/20/2024	St. Paul, Hamlet	
The Rev. Horace Free (Episcopal)	8/1/2022	St. Andrew's, Andrews	
The Rev. Woody Frick	10/1/2008	New Bethel, Richfield	
SAM Wayne Giese	5/1/2024	St. Paul's, Startown	
The Rev. Terry Graunke	1/1/2022	Pilgrim, Lexington	
The Rev. Ed Harper	10/1/2007	Haven, Salisbury	
SAM Susan Harris	11/1/2023	Sharon, Statesville	
The Rev. Scott Homesley	9/15/2021	St. John's, Cherryville	
The Rev. Jeff Hoffner	5/20/2018	Luther's, Richfield	
The Rev. Dr. Marcus Hovis III		Ebenezer, Catawba	
Deacon Margaret Howell	9/11/2022	Salem, Lincolnton	
SAM Mark Howell	3/1/2024	Cedar Grove, Vale	
Deacon Deb Johnson	3/30/2021	Unity, Hickory	
The Rev. Cheryl Kester-Schmidt	2/23/2025	Mt. Hermon, Concord	12/31/2025
The Rev. Marcia Kifer	9/1/2024	Ascension, Wilson	8/31/2025
The Rev. Ken Langsdorf	11/1/2022	Holy Family, Highlands	
SAM Rebekah Moretz	2/1/2025	St. Andrew, Mt. Airy	7/31/2025
The Rev. Clarence Pettit	9/22/2024	A Mighty Fortress, Charlotte	
The Rev. Jonathan Pucik (Episcopal)	3/1/2023	Christ, Jonesville	
The Rev. Steve Ridenhour	2/1/2025	Shepherd of the Hills, Sylva	8/1/2025
SAM Deb Rosenberg	1/24/2023	St. Mark's, Lumberton	
The Rev. Maggie Rourk	4/23/2017	Episcopal Church of the Messiah, Murphy	
The Rev. Don Safrin	1/1/2003	Messiah, Salisbury	
The Rev. Craig Saltzer	9/1/2023	Mt. Zion, Richfield	
The Rev. Dick Schroeder	7/1/2019	Messiah, Hickory	
The Rev. Brook Seaford	8/15/2024	Holy Communion, Dallas	
The Rev. Mary Louise Sittin	6/1/2024	Reformation, Taylorsville	6/1/2025
The Rev. Phil Stringer	12/1/2022	St. Michael, High Point	
The Rev. Scott Swix	2/2/2024	St. Stephen's/Mt. Gilead	
The Rev. Joseph Tallent	2/10/2025	Wittenberg, Granite Quarry	8/10/2025
SAM Carol Talley	9/15/2024	Bethany, Hickory	
SAM Ned Thigpen	9/1/2021	Grace, Liberty	
The Rev. John Tucker	10/17/2021	Lutheran Chapel, China Grove	
The Rev. Mike Varn	2/12/2014	Resurrection, Kings Mountain	
The Rev. John Yost (SC Synod)	3/2/2025	St. Matthew's, Kings Mountain	6/26/2025



North Carolina Synod
ELCA

2025 Report

Catherine Fink | Director of Communications & Resources

Angel Jeffery | Associate Director of Communications—Digital Media Strategist

OUR COMMUNICATIONS TEAM *WHY* As the synod's communications team, using the lenses of the synod's core values and purpose, we crafted our *why* statement: To build relationships and tell stories together so that God's beloved can feel a sense of belonging. Our communications *why* leads us to storytelling—Mission Support, God's Work. Our Hands., and more.

COMMUNICATIONS—ROUTINE TASKS The tasks that we do routinely—week in and week out—are: assembling and publishing e-news (*Synod e-News*, *Leader e-News*, *Special e-News* [for ordinations and obituaries], and an email to rostered ministers every Monday); adding events and information to the website (news posts, synod-sponsored and continuing education partner events); sharing updates on socials from bishop's staff, congregations, and other ministry partners; creating and posting verse and prayer graphics (each Wednesday and Sunday—also available on the website for congregations to use); and supporting congregation leaders through Zoom consults.

COMMUNICATIONS—PROJECTS This year our projects have included:

- 1) Arranging for a new sign with the NC Synod logo above the main door of the synod office,
- 2) Planning synod film projects, including Land Acknowledgement videos and a call process video,
- 3) Collaborating with other synod staff on graphics, editing, and promotion for synod events, including the reports to the bishop email, Mission Support, Synod Gathering, and more,
- 4) Attending a bit of the deans' retreat, the entire LYO Assembly (what a blessing!), and Get to Know Your Synod days to make connections and share about communications,
- 5) Managing our synod's communication of the LTSS move to Hickory,
- 6) Planning for and helping with Synod Gathering, including follow-up communications and a workshop,
- 7) Assisting with mission support efforts, including a podcast recorded at Synod Gathering,
- 8) Sharing celebrations for a great number of ordinations and installations,
- 9) Sharing events, including the ELCA Youth Gathering and our four pastors' trip to Papua New Guinea,
- 10) Tending to the relationship and collaboration with ministry partners, Caffeinated Church and Catawba Clergy Network, including each of us offering a workshop,
- 11) Supporting LDR Carolinas in communicating Hurricane Helene information and stories,
- 12) Communicating cancelations (like Fall Convo and the Small Congregation's retreat) and pivoted ministry opportunities following the hurricane's widespread devastation,
- 13) Collaborating with colleagues on *Loving Your Neighbor in Anxious Times* events and sharing Election 2024 resources.
- 14) Managing production, photography, and videography contracts for synod assembly 2025, and
- 15) Managing the production of the synod's 2024 Christmas card.

HEILIG RESOURCE CENTER As Augsburg Fortress announced their discontinuation of the long-standing curriculum *Augsburg Adult Bible Studies*, one of our main tasks of 2024 was to research and make available for preview new curriculum possibilities for adult Sunday school. Most classes still using that curriculum were looking for a replacement that would be similar: subscription-based, following the International Bible Lessons series, and with a leader guide that is easily followed. We now have options from other mainline Protestant publishers for folks to preview. The HRC assistant, Elizabeth Smith (Calvary, Spencer), and volunteer, Dave Phillips (St. John's, Salisbury), manage all of the tasks of this long-standing resource center so ably. A big thanks to each of them!

We give thanks for your trust in us as we communicate and resource this ministry we share with you!

The Annual Report of the Vice President – May 2025

It is an honor and a pleasure to serve as Vice President of the North Carolina Synod. North Carolina is a great place to be and celebrate ministry.

As Vice President, I have the privilege of representing the synod in a variety of settings throughout the year. My responsibilities include regularly chairing Synod Council meetings and Executive Committee meetings, as well as taking part in conference calls focused on planning and preparing the agenda for our council meetings. It is a joy and an honor to serve in this role and support the vital work of our synod.

In 2024-25, along with other Vice Presidents in Region 9 synods, I served on the Region 9 Council. It was also my privilege to attend many synodical committee and planning meetings as an ex officio member. It continues to be my pleasure to chair the Synod's African Descent Strategy Team.

I regularly attend online meetings with other ELCA Vice Presidents. This provides us with an opportunity to share information, learn from each other, and get updates from the Churchwide Unit. Synod vice presidents constantly work together and discuss topics related to current synodical issues, synodical support, available resources and to deepen relationships with Churchwide Staff and fellow Vice Presidents.

Over the past year, the Synod Council remained actively engaged in its work as the Synod Council and as the synod prepared for the election of a new Bishop. A combination of in-person and virtual gatherings allowed us to meet effectively and ensure that the council's responsibilities were carried out efficiently. We continue to navigate a time when many decisions require timely action and thoughtful discernment. As a result, we saw an increase in email votes to address time-sensitive matters, more specially called meetings, and additional committee gatherings to respond to emerging and often complex situations. I am deeply grateful for the faithfulness, flexibility, and dedication of our council members.

The synod council remains committed to living into the synod's mission and core values and being guided by Jesus, generosity, relationship and reconciliation. North Carolina is indeed "the place to be", as we intentionally embrace our vision: ***"As the North Carolina Synod of the ELCA, God calls us to: Cultivate and Celebrate Vital Congregations, Embrace and Engage in Collaboration; Proclaim the Promise of the Resurrection with a Prophetic Voice ... All for the Sake of the World"***. In a nation often divided by politics, ideology, and demographics, my hope remains that our congregations and leaders will be guided by the Spirit to seek peace, pursue reconciliation, live into our shared vision, and intentionally deepen our relationship with God, with one another, and with the communities we are called to serve.

Many thanks are extended to Bishop Tim Smith and the staff at the Synod Office for their support, vision and the grace they have shown. I am especially fortunate to have had the opportunity to benefit from the experience and energy of this staff. The help, attention and support regarding issues related to the Synod Council are phenomenal.

The North Carolina Synod is richly blessed with many gifted leaders who serve faithfully as Synod Council members, committee chairs, and committee members. Your Synod Council is exceptional—their dedication, hard work, and the time they devote to advancing the synod's mission and goals, especially amid more frequent meetings, is truly commendable. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to each council member. Their ministry, wisdom, and service are deeply valued and continue to make a meaningful impact. Their commitment to serving Christ through the work of this synod has been a true blessing, and I am honored to have served alongside them during this meaningful season.

Finally, siblings in Christ of the North Carolina Synod, I want to express my deep gratitude to each of you for your encouragement, partnership, prayers, grace, and the kindness you've shown me personally; for your unwavering support of the mission and ministry of this synod and the wider church; and for your commitment to "Walking together - sharing Christ".

Sincerely,



Diana Haywood

Report of the Secretary May 2025

First, I want to say thank you for your confidence in electing me to serve on the NC Synod Council two years ago. Secondly, I have appreciated the opportunity to serve as the interim Secretary for the Synod Council since last fall. It has helped me to realize my strengths and my weaknesses. Fortunately, I had people who were willing to help me fulfill that task and I want to express my thanks to them.

There is much more to serving as secretary than one might ultimately imagine. Not only are there regular Synod Council meetings, but also Zoom meetings as well as several committees that required attendance.

Sometimes on an online “giving” form, there is a box to check that reads “where needed most.” I suppose you could put that entry beside my name as well. I am willing to serve wherever, and however, I am “most needed.” I am happy that I could help out when the need arose; but I am also glad that my interim term as secretary will be ending and I can continue to serve in the role of a Synod Council member for the remainder of my term.

Susan P. Harris

According to the Synod constitution, the treasurer shall provide and be accountable for the management of the monies and accounts of this synod, its deeds, mortgages, contracts, evidences of claims and revenues, and trust funds; investment of funds; receipt and acknowledgment of offerings, contributions, and bequests; collecting interest and income from its invested funds, and paying regular appropriations to the treasurer of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; maintenance of a regular account with each congregation of this synod; and rendering at each regular meeting of the Synod Assembly a full, detailed, and duly audited report of receipts and disbursements for the preceding fiscal year, together with the tabulation, for record and publication in the minutes, of the contributions from the congregations...and all of this as authorized by the Synod council and subject to the order of this synod.

Much of this is done by committees and boards made up of faithful stewards from throughout the synod, and of course the Director of Finance, who until the beginning of August 2024 (and my appointment as treasurer) was Michael DeNise. As Evin Burleson (the new director of finance) and I continue to transition into these positions and responsibilities, we are so thankful for the support not only of those committees and boards and the office staff with whom we work, but of the congregations of the North Carolina Synod whose generosity and faithfulness make our ministry together possible.

In these uncertain economic times and given the devastation of Hurricane Helene and the manpower and financial resources needed for relief work in Western North Carolina, mission support gifts for 2024 totaled \$2,868,157 a decrease of 3% from the previous year, and 6% short of the approved budget for 2024 of \$3,050,000.

However, thanks to endowments and gifts and the generosity of men and women partnering in the synod's ministry through planned gifts and estate planning, our reserves are healthy, and while, like many of you on the congregational level, we are taking this trend seriously in the proposed budgets for 2026 and 2027, we are committed to our mission support to the ELCA and to the agencies and institutions with whom we share ministry, trusting in God's provision for the work God entrusts to us.

In closing, the annual audit of the Synod's financial records, policies, and procedures for the fiscal year ended January 31, 2025 is near completion by Bernard Robinson & Company and an unqualified opinion (which is good) is anticipated.

Thank you again for your generosity and faithfulness as we partner in ministry for the glory of God. In Christ, Tony Bradshaw, Treasurer



North Carolina Lutheran Men in Mission

Annual Report to Synod Assembly, 2025

We are blessed to have men who are faithful and dedicated to our ministry. Local projects and ministries are happening across North Carolina; mentoring young people, ministry at homeless shelters, helping hand projects, prison ministry and youth projects. There are multiple opportunities to serve. Each of these activities helps us share God's grace and build relationships as we serve our Lord.



Disaster Recovery Ministry: Our disaster recovery truck and trailers, equipped with tools and supplies for construction, are beginning their second year of ministry in New Bern NC.

Our ministry partner, the Coastal Carolina Disaster Resiliency Agency, coordinates volunteers to support households impacted by disaster to recover and rebuild. This mission is carried out by a dedicated staff and volunteers.

Hurricane Helene: Men have responded to the need for help and assistance in Western NC, volunteering to collect needed items for families and helping rebuild homes. Men are participating in the Building Bridges Campaign of the Mennonite Disaster Service and Lutheran Disaster Response Carolinas. They coordinate fund raisers and provide labor for this important ministry.

In 2023, our ministry partner, the Home Mission Foundation established two new funds, the *Scholarship for Seminarians Fund* and the *Lutheran Grace Fund*. A goal was set to raise \$300,000 over a three-year period. Our current focus includes this ambitious goal and the funds are showing a steady growth.

The 102nd Annual Gathering of NCLMM was held on March 8, 2025 at Daniels Lutheran Church in Lincolnton. The gathering was well attended with men traveling from the mountains in the west to the coastal areas of NC. The gathering theme was "Team Jesus". Our scripture verse, "Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: if either of them falls down, one can help the other up! But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. Ecclesiastes 4: 9-10. We are all "Lifetime Members" of the ultimate Team – God's Team. With the 2025 March Madness



tournaments beginning, in a display of team spirit attendees were asked to wear their "Team Jesus" uniform"; their favorite NCAA colors.

NCLMM is here to serve you with resources to help strengthen your ministry. Please contact our office at 704-680-9560 or email nclmm1988@gmail.com for assistance.

Respectfully Submitted, Terry Edwards, Men's ministry Coordinator, cell 704-477-3429

Our vision is for all men to become bold and daring followers of Jesus Christ

North Carolina Women of the ELCA

2024–2025 Highlights & Activities

The 2024 Annual Gathering at Lenoir-Rhyne University was a vibrant celebration of faith and fellowship. Attendees welcomed newly elected leaders:

- President: Terri Brown
- Treasurer: Nena Babb
- Board Members: Lori Shaefer and Patty Schmid

Looking ahead to 2025, elections will be held for Vice President, Secretary, and five Board Members.

Mark your calendars! The 2025 Annual Gathering will feature keynote speaker Dr. Jennifer Hockenberry, Interim Director of Women of the ELCA (Churchwide), and include elections for voting members to the 2026 Triennial Gathering in Des Moines, Iowa (*Theme: “I Am Worthy”*).

Women were engaged and connected:

- Fall 2024 Gathering programs were “Women of Wonder” which highlighted the special bond of women.
- Committee Day in August drew strong participation, fostering connections across the synod.
- February 2025 One-Day Retreats, centered on “*Women of the Word*,” which offered spiritual renewal and study.
- Spring Gatherings 2025 program “Wonder Watchers” explored God’s wonderful world through prayer.
- The NC WELCA Board meets quarterly (July, March, November) as a dedicated team committed to inclusivity, advocacy, and strengthening the synod’s women’s organization.

- Lutheran World Relief (LWR): NC WELCA led a successful quilt and kit in-gathering, with hundreds of items redirected to support western North Carolina communities recovering from Hurricane Helene.
- Advocacy: Members stood in solidarity on the National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG), calling for justice amid systemic violence rooted in colonization and racism.

Looking Forward

With prayer, service, and collaboration, NC WELCA continues to empower women, uplift communities, and live out God's call. *Thank you* to all who contribute to this vital ministry!

Stay connected for updates on 2025 events and opportunities to engage by visiting our website at www.ncwelca.com



**The Home Mission Foundation is Part of the
NC Lutheran Men in Mission & Supports:
Lutheran Congregations – Seminarians – Pastors – Institutions**



The funds of the Home Mission Foundation are represented by clay *Vesse/s* which are located in the NC Synod lobby. Left to right they represent: Revolving Loan Fund, Gift Fund, Professorship Fund, Scholarship Fund and Lutheran Grace Fund.

Home Mission Foundation funds are used in several ways:

- To make low interest loans directly to congregations. As of 12/31/2024 we had \$965,365 loaned out to ten NC ELCA Lutheran congregations. Most loans are for improvements such as paving the parking lot or replacing the roof or HVAC system.
- For Scholarships to Lutheran Seminary Students. In December 2024 we mailed out checks totaling \$95,000 + to more than 40 students from North and South Carolina. We want our seminary students to graduate without burdensome debt.
- We provided \$30,000 in support of the North Carolina Lutheran Men organization.
- For grants for various institutions and endeavors. In 2024 we made a grant of \$9,000 to support the hiring of three camp counselors at Novus Way / Lutheridge.
- Our newest fund, the Lutheran Grace Fund stands ready to make grants to Lutheran institutions and causes across the State of North Carolina. This fund is unrestricted.

We thank you for all that you do to further God's kingdom!

Should you have questions regarding: a loan for your Church, a potential grant, OR how to make a legacy gift OR a donation to the Home Mission Foundation, please contact:

Roger Lyman, President
rdlyman0689@gmail.com
704-907-0507
www.homemissionfoundation.org

Thank you for your continuing support!

LUTHERAN SERVICES CAROLINAS

Dear Friends,

The year of 2024 was a year of expansion and growth for Lutheran Services Carolinas (LSC), your health and human services social ministry of the North and South Carolina Synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).

Last year, more than 2,500 LSC teammates, along with 2,421 donors and 4,359 advocates, improved the lives of thousands of Carolinians. In North Carolina:

- 584,662 days of residential services were provided to 3,946 North Carolina seniors.
- LSC's child and family programs served close to 4,990 individuals.
- In North and South Carolina, 419 children were served by dedicated foster parents and case workers.
- LSC's New Americans Program assisted 3,310 people on their path to new lives in the United States, including 486 new arrivals in North Carolina.
- 31 families and 26 children were served through LSC's Special Needs Adoption Program (SNAP). Thirteen adoptions were finalized.
- LSC's disaster services served 3,300 individuals with the help of partners.

In 2024, LSC opened its new Trinity Village Independent Living apartments in Hickory and expanded its Trinity at Home program to New Hanover County, on the campus of Trinity Landing.

LSA Pharmacy, which provides prescriptions and medication to LSC's residents, became a joint venture with Neil Medical in October 2024. The newly named Leading Care Pharmacy transitioned to more modern and efficient medication administration and distribution systems to better serve seniors in LSC communities.

LSC also expanded its Senior Total Life Care PACE partnership (Program of All-inclusive Care for the Elderly) to Shelby, North Carolina. LSC is a partner in five PACE locations.

During the fiscal year ending September 30, 2024, LSC achieved strong financial results. Maintaining a positive bottom line is crucial for overall financial stability, enabling the organization to continue providing services where they are most needed during difficult times. We appreciate your prayers, partnership, and support. We are the church together!

Yours in Christ,



Ted W. Goins, Jr.
LSC President

Agapé + Kure Beach Ministries Report to Synod Assembly - 2025

Agapé + Kure Beach Ministries has had a remarkable year! We have had lots of challenges and so many joys. From staff changes, construction delays, to huge volunteerism, and booked retreats and bustling summer camp, there has not been a dull moment at AKB. We have lots of work to do and much to be grateful for in 2025.

Summer 2024

Summer camp registration numbers are still in recovery-mode following 2020. We welcomed 185 campers to Agapé last summer. The 2025 summer is shaping up to be one of our best yet, with many returning staff and a steady rate of registrations. We are grateful to be able to offer camperships to many kids who otherwise would not get to attend a summer camp.

In 2024, we held 2-day camps and are planning for four weeks of day camp in 2025. We are grateful for the support of these congregations for helping us bring camp to their communities.

Retreats

Both hosted and programmed retreats have filled nearly every weekend (and many weekdays) in our 2024 calendar. 56 groups had meaningful and productive retreats in our facilities. Our programmed retreats, such as BYG (Building Youth Groups), Mother-Daughter weekend, and Family Camp, welcomed around 200 participants of all ages in 2024.

ACE Ed - The Agapé Center of Environmental Education

ACE Ed continues to serve school groups throughout the state. In 2024, nearly 3,000 children from over 50 North Carolina schools came to Camp Agapé to explore and learn. We also have several homeschool groups that have a home(school) away from home at Agapé for their environmental science curriculum. ACE educators and staff are dedicated to getting kids outdoors for a chance for hands-on, experiential learning they may not otherwise get the opportunity to have.

Volunteers!

The people who donate their time and talents are truly remarkable! In 2024, 3,300 hours were spent in service at Camp Agapé by 140 individuals. This impressive number does *not* include the hundreds of Board hours, off-site and unseen hours contributed by community members who organized events, hosted counselors, or the many other ways

our community shows up for A+KB. We could not do what we do without the presence and support of our volunteers!

Accessibility

A+KB continues to improve accessibility at Agapé. Expanded sidewalks from Woodlands to the Lodge and the Retreat House have made the walk easier and safer. Improved lighting at the Lodge has made evening check-ins safer, and with more plans for lighting and improved safety features around camp, we continue to improve hospitality and accessibility to guests, staff, and visitors. Thanks to the Peeler/Casey Grant and all the Synd Council for helping make camp more accessible to all people.

Staff Changes

We said goodbye to Lee Lindeman in October 2024 with gratitude for his service as Interim Executive Director. Rev. Heather Bachelder came to A+KB from parish ministry as Interim. While Pr. Heather does not come with a great deal of camp experience, she is a good administrator and loves camp life. She also has a lifelong connection to A+KB through her family.

Lucas Welch, A+KB's Program Director, resigned in December 2024 and moved on to a position at the YMCA in Cary. We are grateful to Lucas for all the energy and improvements he made to programming and retreat hosting in his time at A+KB. Michael Mitchum, long-time Agapé camper and staff member, was hired as Director of Programs and Retreats. Michael will begin full-time in May 2025, but has already jumped in working on staffing and training for Summer 2025.

Mir Youngquist-Thurrow retired after decades of loyal and energetic service to A+KB as director of ACE-Ed. Krista Roa is serving as the Director of ACE-Ed. We are excited to continue the great programs that Mir created as well as the creativity and experience that Krista brings to the program.

Zook Williams came on board as our chef and kitchen manager in November. He is making delicious meals for retreat guests and youth groups. We can't wait to see what he cooks up for summer.

Jamala (registrar), Penny (marketing), Nancy (office manager), and Anne and John Griffin all continue to bring their best to their work at Agapé + Kure Beach, and we are grateful for all their talents, support, and commitment to making Agapé fun, safe, and welcoming.

The Pool...

We will break ground on our new pool this fall. Currently, we are installing the pump for the new pool into the old unit, so we will have a pool this summer. Construction has been delayed a number of times for various normal and unusual reasons, but we are filled with hope for a construction project beginning in September 2025. We are blessed with generous and patient donors to this project, particularly the Triangle area churches who raised \$166,000 to fill the pool. We will get there!

Our Partners in Ministry

Agapé + Kure Beach Ministries is the result of a lot of dreaming, bold choices, and faith. With our community in the NC Synod, the churches and community members who have loved and supported us, we will continue to move with bold faith in a hurting world. Together, we will continue to offer a space where individuals of all ages can experience a faithful community and encounter the Spirit in Christ and in God's Creation.

Agapé + Kure Beach Board of Directors

Melinda Menz – President
Andrew Chamberlain– V.P.
Murney Rinholm - Secretary
Devin Buell - Treasurer
Lelia Moore
Madeleine Dassow
Andy Smith
Synod Council Rep. – Rev. Phil Tonnesen
Rev. Ethan Overcash
Katie Neuhauser
Jeff Fike
Ray Prill
Rev. Dan Burris
Debbie Simerly



2025 Report to Synod Assemblies

The Mission of NovusWay Ministries is to provide experiences for all people in God's creation that inspire faith, build relationships, and transform lives. Our Vision for this mission is, "Trusting in God's promises, lives are transformed to love and serve as part of inclusive communities."

In fulfillment of this vision, the following Values are central:
inclusion, renewal, stewardship, hospitality, formation, and discipleship.

- In 2024, we welcomed 1,700 youth campers and 550 adult and family campers for summer camp programs at Lutheridge, Lutherock, and Luther Springs. Through summer camp ministry, people of all ages experience God and Christian community in new ways, deepening their understanding of who they are as children of God and strengthening them to serve as disciples of Jesus every day.
- We also welcomed over 1,000 youth and adult participants to year-round programs in 2024. Retreats for confirmation students, women, men, and families provide time away for learning, fellowship, worship, and renewal. We celebrate the Spirit's movement among those who experienced camp all year long.
- Hosted ministry at Lutheridge, Lutherock, and Luther Springs continues to be a significant part of our ministry. In 2024, many groups spent time at one of our NovusWay sites for a wide variety of events including quilting programs, business meetings, council retreats, festivals, and family reunions.
- In May of 2024, we launched the Lutheridge 75th Birthday Capital Campaign to provide needed updates to the Lutheridge facilities, build new spaces for campers and guests, and reduce internal debt. The response from congregations, Lutheridge staff alumni, and other long-time supporters has been inspiring. We are on our way to meeting and surpassing our \$3.6 million campaign goal. For more information, please visit Lutheridge.org/Campaign.
- Hurricane Helene caused significant damage at Lutheridge and Lutherock. We are grateful to those who responded during our season of need by sharing financial support and volunteer time. A large amount of cleanup work remains, but we have made great progress and are happy to be open for camp. Through partnerships with Lutheran Disaster Response and other local organizations, we are providing housing and program support for those serving in long term recovery work in North Carolina.
- In November of 2024, following a time of study and discernment, the NovusWay Board of Trustees made the difficult decision to suspend the operation of Lutheranch and sell the camp property. Proceeds from this sale will support ongoing youth ministry and leadership development opportunities in the Southeastern Synod and across NovusWay.
- The ministries of NovusWay continue to provide transformational faith experiences for children, youth, and adults. We are grateful for the gifts of individuals, congregations, and synods which empower this ministry we share. Thank you for your generous prayers and support for Lutheridge, Lutherock, Luther Springs, and for all we serve!



2025 Report to the Synod Assemblies of Region 9

Greetings from Hickory, in the name of the Holy Trinity!

Since my last report to Synod Assemblies, Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary has had a truly historical year. There is far too much to recount in one Synod Assembly report, but I will summarize it with a simple word of gratitude. Thank you. I give thanks for the students who are now enjoying *vibrant formation* on campus in Hickory, for the faculty who are creating new rhythms for *innovative teaching and learning*, for university colleagues helping establish *dynamic partnerships*, and to the Advisory Council, Alumni Board, alumni and friends across Region 9 for helping to *tell our story* in a new era of theological education for LTSS.

While a few decisions remain related to the sale of the Columbia property and the relocation of the Flentrop organ, the move has been as successful as one could have hoped. The Lineberger collection is installed and operating in Rudisill Library, faculty, staff and students are at home in the Russell House at the heart of our beautiful campus, Grace chapel hosts worship every day in person and online, and we look forward to welcoming a new class of students in the fall. In the light of God's grace, the future of theological education for LTSS and the Lutheran tradition of higher education at Lenoir-Rhyne university is full of promise.

First Week Formation

This semester marked the seventh First Week gathering and the first in Hickory. We enjoyed fellowship among the student body, faculty and staff in venues across campus, including President Whitt's home, the new Rectory, Bear's Club Pavillion, Cromer Center, and Moretz Stadium. We worshipped, learned, and convened a community workshop and faculty panel focused on the historical and theological interpretation of Christian Scripture and traditions. We are grateful to local congregations in Conferences of the NC Synod for providing meals and coming to build relationships with LTSS!

LTSS benefits from a grant from the Bolick Foundation that covers the costs of First Week. We welcome more financial support from those who would like to sustain this significant experience of vibrant formation.

Curriculum

Already this year we have two curricular revisions working their way through university committees. One is a new Accelerated Masters Program by which students can complete the requirements for a BA in Religious Studies and the MDiv in six years. This innovation is made possible through our collaboration with the LRU college of Humanities and Social Sciences and will open new pipelines for undergraduates who have already discerned a vocation to Ministry, and mature students who do not yet have an undergraduate degree. The second establishes a research project component for our Master in Theological Studies that strengthens the academic requirements of our MTS program.

We continue to offer Explore courses that allow students and alumni to take one-hour interdisciplinary courses. We are encouraged by the partnership with the Region 9 Stewardship Council that created a nine module Explore course on Stewardship. This course is led by experts from across the ELCA who engage students and alumni in a sustained study of our faithful relationship to money, management, use of church property, care for creation, mutual aid and partnerships for ministry. This Region 9 Partnership is a significant upgrade to the stewardship symposium and will be a gift to the wider church for years to come.

This year, LTSS partnered with the LRU Lutheran Student Movement, and drew on the Marple Funds to host a Spring Break immersion in international ecumenism. We led a group of 10 undergraduate students and seminarians to Geneva, Switzerland to encounter the programs and staff the Lutheran World Federation, the World Council of Churches, worship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Geneva, tour United Nations

organizations, and spent an ecotheologically focused day immersed in the beauty of the Swiss Alps. And yes, we ate a significant portion of fondue.

We are expanding our Lifelong Learning Program in the areas of continuing education and formation events for alumni and the general public. We are continuing our Public Safety Chaplaincy, our Spiritual Direction Certification Program, launching an eight week training for Synodically Authorized Lay Ministers in collaboration with United Lutheran Seminary as the Eastern Cluster of Lutheran Seminaries, and building our online offerings through the ELCA Womanist Initiative and the Richard Stewart Lifelong Learning Certificate in cooperation with the Conference of International Black Lutherans (CIBL). In these and other ways, we realize the four main initiatives of our strategic plan: (1) innovative teaching and learning, (2) vibrant formation, (3) telling our story and (4) creating dynamic partnerships for learning.

Special Events

By the time you receive this report, LTSS will have hosted our annual Alumni Day and Yost Lecture. It was a time for Alumni and the entire church to gather for the Yost Lecture, which welcomed Ms Savanna Sullivan, Program Executive for Youth of the Lutheran World Federation on the theme of Intergenerational Justice. The day included a faculty led session of Theological Jazz, campus tours, a barbecue lunch on the quad, and a town hall forum on the future of theological education, hosted by Dr Rimmer and Bishop Eaton.

Gratitude for the past, present and future

We are grateful to our Bishops for their ministry among us. We are grateful for the financial support of your Synod, faithful congregations and individuals in Region 9 and beyond. And we are grateful to you who encourage the faithful to consider their vocation to public ministry.

We invite you to visit your seminary in our new home on the beautiful campus of Lenoir-Rhyne University. And now that this part of our pilgrimage is complete, we turn our faces towards 2030, which will be the 200th anniversary of LTSS and the 500th anniversary of the Augsburg Confession. Embedded on this campus with a rich history of Lutheran higher education, LTSS is positioned to be a flagship in the future of theological education, as we continue to nurture, educate and form leaders for public ministry for generations to come.

Peace be yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Chad M. Rimmer". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed name "Chad M. Rimmer".

NORTH CAROLINA COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

With 19 denominations representing over 6,200 congregations in N.C., the Council provides incarnational evidence of Christian Unity. By creating unity without expecting uniformity, member bodies collaborate on matters that contribute to the flourishing of God's creation. We are grateful to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for your support and for Pastor Michael Dickson and Deacon Deborah Johnson's leadership on our governing board. Deacon Johnson also sits on the planning committee of the Council's Governing Board.

- **Immigration** advocacy and policy reform is a longstanding project for the Council. As things become increasingly tedious for our immigrant neighbors we are working directly with immigrant lead organizations to stand with them and exploring legal channels to protect them. For more information, contact info@ncchurches.org.
- **Capital Punishment Abolition** has long been a priority for the Council. With our allies from N.C. Coalition for Alternatives to the Death Penalty we are focused on adding North Carolina to the list of states who no longer allow this arbitrary and retributive practice. Most recently, we were part of the effort that achieved 15 commutations from outgoing Governor Cooper. The work continues. For more information, contact info@ncchurches.org.
- **Reproductive Rights** advocacy is about more than abortion, a decision best left to the pregnant person, her health care providers and her support network of family and friends. Reproductive rights include the right to have a child, the right not to have a child, and the right to raise that child in a safe, healthy environment. For more information, contact info@ncchurches.org.
- **Gun Violence Prevention** focuses on telling the truth about gun violence in our country. We know the majority of gun deaths are suicides; the next highest number is homicides, usually among people who know each other or who are related to one another. Our work is to help people understand how guns end up in places that create great harm and what each of us can do to make all of us safer. For more information, contact jennifer@ncchurches.org.
- **The Opioid Overdose Response Program** educates people of faith about compassionate responses to these growing health concerns and opportunities to reduce the associated stigmas. We provide avenues to engage the overdose crisis by connecting congregations to resources in their communities. If you would like to host an event or learn more about this project, contact donna@ncchurches.org.
- **Cash Bail Reform** is a part of our criminal justice system coming under the microscope for its unfair application. It is also a misunderstood piece of the justice system, making it harder to reform. The Council has assembled a team of representatives from several of our member denominations to help educate all of us about Cash Bail Reform and advocate for better practices. For more information, contact info@ncchurches.org.
- **Eco-Justice Connection (EJC)** is a multi-faith program area focusing on environmental and climate justice, with an emphasis on "advocating with compassion." A keystone initiative of EJC is NC Interfaith Power & Light. EJC's current work includes community stakeholder engagement in the N.C. Carbon Plan proceedings, supporting congregational resiliency hubs, partnering with Duke University's Heat Innovation Hub, and leading a local to global solidarity movement for faith communities. For more information, contact susannah@ncchurches.org.
- **Partners in Health and Wholeness (PHW)** provides tools to help faith communities form healthy habits by supporting congregation-based health ministries with resources. Current foci are mental health, substance use disorder, tobacco use cessation, healthy aging, healthy eating, and exercise. Behavioral health, including mental health and opioid response, is currently a major priority area for our work. For more information, contact phwinfo@ncchurches.org.

Other areas of emphasis include paid family leave endorsement, fair courts advocacy, and voting rights and democracy advocacy. Resources are available online and our staff is available to help your congregation address any of the myriad concerns that arise in our contemporary setting. If you have any questions or are interested in more information, please contact us at info@ncchurches.org, or call our office at 919-828-6501.

90th Anniversary Celebration: make plans now to join the Council in 2025 as we celebrate our 90th anniversary. The year will be filled with opportunities to connect to the mission of the Council and learn more about our justice advocacy work across the state. We will culminate the year with a day of learning and worshiping together.

Denominational members include Alliance of Baptists · African Methodist Episcopal Church · African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church · Christian Methodist Episcopal · Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) · Episcopal Church · Evangelical Lutheran Church in America · General Baptist State Convention · Metropolitan Community Churches · Mennonite Church USA · Moravian Church in America · Presbyterian Church (USA) · Reformed Church in America · Reformed Churches of God in Christ, International · Religious Society of Friends · United Church of Christ · Unity Fellowship Church Movement · United Methodist Church Southeastern District Church of the Brethren.

Jennifer E. Copeland, Executive Director
www.ncchurches.org

Twin Lakes enjoyed another good year in 2024.

Residents. Our campus population grew to 850 in 2024, upon the arrival of about 90 new residents in the Stockton, a beautiful new apartment building. Regardless of number, Twin Lakes residents create a thriving community at Twin Lakes, and surpass themselves year over year in creativity, talent and energy. They raised funds for Hurricane Helene victims in western North Carolina, organized a theater group and put on Twin Lakes's first theatrical production, conducted a craft fair before Christmas, and worked with our dining staff to hold special meals celebrating various world cultures.

Employees. Team members also participate actively in the community at Twin Lakes. We have graduated five classes of certified nursing assistants through our special program designed to offer employees the opportunity, free of charge, to become caregivers. We also were selected by the local community college to serve as the experiential site for students in their inaugural year of an intensive LPN program. Team members also participated in the second annual "Souper Bowl" contest among departments to raise canned food for our staff food pantry (the contest was conducted, of course, during the Super Bowl playoffs!)

Construction. We completed construction of a 48-apartment building, the Stockton, together with the adjoining Agnes Coble Chapel and Saponi community building. The chapel, named after one of our original benefactors, overlooks one of the memorial gardens on campus. The Saponi, named with permission from the Occaneechi Band of the Saponi Nation after the original inhabitants of the land on which Twin Lakes is located, has brought much-needed gathering space for our growing campus. We also opened sales for apartments in the second phase of the Stockton, and with all apartments claimed, we began construction of the second phase in the spring of 2025. We look forward to welcoming the 36 new Stockton families in the summer of 2026.

Recognition. We were honored to be recognized by Newsweek Magazine as one of the top 20 continuing care retirement communities in the country. Long accredited by CARF (the only accreditation organization for CCRC's), we have a history of striving for excellence and were pleased by the magazine's recognition of us. We also were reaffirmed by the Fitch rating agency with a BBB investment grade rating; this objective recognition of our financial strength is an important indicator to prospective and existing residents that their future at Twin Lakes is secure.

Outreach. We take very seriously our responsibility, as a faith-based nonprofit, to serve both the broader community in which we operate and older adults across the economic spectrum. Approximately ten percent of our residents benefit from financial assistance from Twin Lakes. That, together with financial support we provide to other nonprofits in our community, totaled more than \$2million in outreach and support.

We are grateful for our strength and for our community of remarkable people.

African Descent Strategy Team - 2025 Annual Report

“Preparing for the Heavenly Feast: All Races, One Church”

The North Carolina Synod's African Descent Strategy team continues to embrace this bold mission with the intent of promoting racial reconciliation and helping congregations in the North Carolina Synod to become more inclusive and welcoming. The team: works on ministry opportunities; encourages innovative and creative methodologies while promoting the ministry of existing predominantly African Descent congregations in the North Carolina Synod; partners with and advocates for African Descent ministries and leaders; and supports predominantly Caucasian congregations in their effort to be in ministry with people and communities of African Descent.

In January, the team held a Kwanzaa community event to celebrate, learn together and establish a North Carolina chapter of the African Descent Lutheran Association. The chapter plans to organize in 2025.

The African Descent Strategy Team finalized plans to relaunch the Developing Culturally Sensitive Leaders training. Updated resources have been prepared, and training opportunities are now available. In February, the team hosted a session at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Charlotte, which was attended by members from various congregations throughout the Charlotte area.

- Emmaus Church with *the dedicated and steadfast leadership of Rev. Dr. Shanitria Cuthbertson* has continued to take deep dives into the context, history, geography, and intertextuality of the Bible. Emmaus hosts weekly bible studies exploring the intersection of the Bible and wisdom for everyday life. In 2024, Emmaus Continued to host STEM Days in the West Charlotte Community providing students with STEM Activities and free laptops. *Emmaus also expanded its community outreach by establishing new partnerships to better serve the Charlotte Metro Area.* In collaboration with FaithTech Charlotte, Cooperative Christian Ministry, The Relative Youth Crisis Shelter, and Roof Above, Emmaus joined community efforts to address housing and food insecurity, the use of technology and faith, and the educational digital divide.
- In 2024, the faithful members of Church of the Abiding Savior continued their ministry in the Campus Hills area of Durham. Though small in number, the congregation remains diverse, resilient, and deeply committed to discovering new ways to grow, strengthen its ministry, and live out God's mission—both in the Durham community and beyond. With building upgrades completed, the congregation has begun exploring new opportunities to engage and welcome the surrounding community. Abiding Savior continues to serve as the synod's Campus Ministry site for nearby North Carolina Central University (NCCU). The congregation currently faces the challenge of a pastoral vacancy, yet remains hopeful and active. Members continue to seek meaningful ways to proclaim the Good News, serve those in need, and share the love of Jesus, while faithfully advocating for justice and compassion in both word and action.
- In 2024, Prince of Peace continued ministry in neighborhood of Warnersville! Our life together included gathering for worship and fellowship, celebrating milestones in our community like a member's 90th birthday, Pastor CeCee's 20th ordination anniversary and Pastor Matt's 5th ordination anniversary with a surprise gift of a handmade stole, and welcoming new members. We celebrated a full year with our Minister of Music Reyna Alston who has brought so much giftedness and joy to our worship and choir leadership. A particular highlight in music ministry was our first public choir concert in several years. We had ministry with children in the form of Sunday mornings, Youth Sew-Along group lead by Pastor Constance and several summer camps hosted in our building. We partnered with neighbors and community organizations to make use of our building and grounds. And we grew our community farm ministry in meaningful ways and expanded the amount of food grown on our property and shared with neighbors. We are blessed by God's grace to keep living out our call to lift every voice with the joy of Jesus.

The African Descent strategy team is a committed and uniquely gifted multicultural group of rostered and lay persons, bringing different experiences, perspectives and ideas, supporting the synod's goal of ***‘Reaching out through witness and service to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ in a changing world’***, while helping the synod to ***‘Strive to reflect the diversity of the people of North Carolina’***.

Engage the Bible Ministry Team—A Book of Faith Ministry 2024 Annual Report

We started 2024 with the **Tell It! Video Contest**, where congregational youth groups submit videos on a biblical theme. The youth were given complete creative agency to tell a story related to the 2024 LYO Assembly Theme: 'Y'all Means All'—and they did not disappoint. The videos were shown at the LYO Assembly in February and rated by the attendees. Cash prizes are awarded to the top three youth programs for the top three videos. The following congregations submitted:

- Mt. Hermon, Concord
- Morning Star, Matthews
- First, Greensboro—Third Place
- St. John's, Salisbury—Second Place
- Christ the King, Cary—First Place

Watch them all! <https://www.youtube.com/@nclutheran/playlists>

Another project of our team was the **Summer Bible Reading Plan for 2024: Genesis Generations II (GG2)**—a continuation of the 2023 Reading Plan, *Genesis Generations*. In the GG2 introduction, ministry team chair, Dan Voelkert, writes:

But, through it all it is God's action that binds it all together. His saving action—time and time again—to these people he has called who often seem to just be stumbling along through life. Might these people of Genesis have things to teach us about our own "stumbling through life" in 2024?

The Summer Bible Reading Plan is accomplished by this team, in addition to the valuable, volunteer help of Pastor Jonathan Schnibben (Grace, Hendersonville) with the podcast. We are thankful to be able to offer the synod this opportunity to engage in summer readings with sight, hearing, and visual creativity. We are amazed by our volunteer writers from all across the synod, both rostered and lay people of all ages—we are thankful for them each year!

(Stay tuned for the upcoming 2025 Summer Bible Reading Plan: *Heartfelt Hebrews*.)

In December 2024, Dan Voelkert ended his long-term leadership of the Engage the Bible Ministry Team. We are incredibly thankful for his leadership, wisdom, and the gifts he has provided for many years. Brooke Watson-Summerour will take up the mantle of chairperson for this team beginning in January 2025.

We are committed to continuing this good work by envisioning new ways to spread this ministry of seeds planted and grown through God's word.

2024 Ministry Team Members:

The Rev. Heather Bachelder

The Rev. Thomas Johnston

Brooke Watson-Summeour

Dan Voelkert, chair

Catherine Fink, synod staff liaison

Costa Rica Companion Synod Task Force

April, 2025

The Lutheran Church in Costa Rica (ILCO) has experienced significant leadership turnover in the past few years. The NC Synod task force has met quarterly with the ILCO task force from the Southwest Texas Synod as well as with the new leadership in ILCO.

In August of 2024, Pastor Phil Tonnesen joined representatives from the SW Texas Synod in attending ILCO's anniversary celebration. The ILCO leadership would like this to be a regular event and plans are underway for two members of the ILCO task force from NC to attend the anniversary celebration in August of 2025.

Respectfully submitted,

Mindy Makant

Annual Report of the North Carolina Lutheran Synod Foundation, Inc.
March 2025

In 2007, the Synod Council created the North Carolina Lutheran Synod Foundation, Inc. as a public charity to help ensure that legacy gifts may continue to be used for their intended purposes. Trustees are elected by the Synod Council to direct the Foundation. The Trustees are charged to prudently invest, manage, and administer the Foundation's assets. Foundation assets are invested in an efficient and effective administrative, accounting, reporting, and investment platform with BNY Mellon. The investment policy is designed to provide perpetual support to the North Carolina Synod's various programs, agencies, and ministries.

The Foundation's return (net of management fees) for the 12 months ended 12/31/2024 was 13.23%; for the 10-year period ended 12/31/2024, the Foundation's average annualized compound return (net of management fees) was 7.62%. At 12/31/2024, Foundation assets totaled \$24.22 million. Distributions in 2025 will total \$821,813; cumulative distributions from 2002 through 2025 will total \$12.96 million.

Annual distributions from the funds are smoothed, as disbursements are based upon the 5 year rolling quarterly average of each fund's market value. Fund balances as of 12/31/2024 and 2025 distribution details are:

- The Michael Peeler Fund (\$14.78 million / \$530,038 distribution) to be used "wherever it is needed most for the advancement of the Kingdom of God"
- The Virginia Casey Fund (\$4.94 million / \$177,253 distribution) "to glorify God and promote the work of the Church"
- The North Carolina Synod Endowment Fund (\$681,293 / \$19,966 distribution) provides support to the Synod's Agencies and Institutions
- The Charles S. Heilig Fund (\$154,621 / \$5,484 distribution) supports the Heilig Resource Center at the North Carolina Synod headquarters
- The Linda Kaelke Fund (\$241,595 / \$8,568 distribution) supports Youth Ministry
- The Deal Pastoral Care Education Fund (\$214,163 / \$7,592 distribution) provides tuition assistance for seminarians' required unit of Clinical Education, and rostered leaders returning for specialization in Chaplaincy, Pastoral Counseling, or Clinical Education.
- The Barbara Boland Scholarship Fund (\$239,885 / \$8,507 distribution) provides scholarships for students from the North Carolina Synod preparing for rostered leadership
- The North Carolina Lutheran Synod Enrichment Fund (\$508,013 / \$18,017 distribution) invests the long-term portion of the Synod's investment portfolio
- The Lefler Fund (\$997,232 / \$32,222 distribution) provides training and enrichment activities for rostered leaders.
- In 2023, the Synod Council transferred a portion of the Synod's reserve fund into the Foundation. The Synod Reserve Fund (\$1.47 million / \$14,165) provides money for the Synod Annual Budget.

Additional gifts of nearly any amount may be received into any of the existing funds. Future “named” funds may be created either when Synod Council identifies a need or when a significant gift is received and approved by Synod Council and the donor wishes to designate support for a specific area of ministry. To make a contribution or for details about this program, please contact the Synod Office at 704-633-4861 and ask to speak with Evin Burleson, Director of Finance and Administration (eburleson@nclutheran.org).

The Trustees of the North Carolina Lutheran Synod Foundation, Inc. as of March 2025 are Anne Brown (Secretary), Rev. Richard Hogg, Leon Hoover, Greg Hudgins (Vice Chair), Jay Jacob, and Tommy Page (Chair). Thank you to Doug Nelson and Rev. Steve Troisi who completed their terms of service in February 2025.

**James R. Crumley Jr Archives
2025 Report**

Administration

Personnel and Hours of Operation

The Archives employs five part-time workers: Shannon Smith, director and archivist; Trudy Bouknight, office manager; Scott Reeves, digital archivist; Ashley Ragland, assistant archivist; and Laura Hendrickson, project specialist.

Accessions

New and reoccurring accessions from Region-9 synods, congregations, and individuals are deposited in the Crumley Archives and are processed by staff.

Special Projects:

“Unsung: A Chronicle of Black Lutherans”

The Crumley Archives, under the direction of Dr. Harvey Huntley and Scott Reeves, is producing another feature film entitled, “Unsung: A Chronicle of Black Lutherans”.¹ Filming began with pastors and laity from the S.C. and S.E. Synods who shared their stories and memories. This film is based upon the scholarship of Dr Huntley, who for more than two years has sought to compile and catalog congregation, mission, and personal records related to African descent Lutherans. These records are preserved in the Crumley Archives. Filming will involve each synod in Region-9. Please check our website for updates as segments are produced.²

If you have a story or record to share, please contact Shannon Smith at archivist@crumleyarchives.com.

Archives Relocation

After LRU’s decision to move the Seminary to the Hickory campus, the Archives has begun investigating possibilities for its relocation. Discussions among the Crumley Archives board of directors and synods are active and ongoing.

Friends of the Archives Banquet

This year’s banquet will be held in Columbia, S.C. and will honor the Rev. Dr. Bill and Mrs. Karla Trexler; St. Mark’s Lutheran Church (Jacksonville, FL), and the FL-BAH Synod. It will be held Friday, Sept. 12. Details will follow. Please contact Shannon Smith at archivist@crumleyarchives.com for more information.

Shannon L. Smith

¹ See trailer here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SobFCVCcF0I>

² Crumley Archives: www.crumleyarchives.com

The Impact of Our Benefits

Portico Benefit Services' Report to 2025 Synod Assemblies

As the ELCA's benefit ministry, Portico is dedicated to helping our rostered ministers and church professionals live holistically healthy lives, so they can serve others with confidence and grace. Here is a visual recap of what our community of over 52,000 plan members experienced in 2024.

52,067

*Members
served by
Portico*



2,998

Text/Virtual Health Care Visits

To 98point6®, and 699 of these were ELCA-Primary plan members new to our text-based primary care service.



198

*Births &
Adoptions*

10th

Consecutive Year

Of our Customer Care Center being named a Center of Excellence by Benchmark Portal.



518

*Changes
of Call**

1,199

**Sword Health
Enrollments**

And nearly 26K total sessions in their Thrive, Move, and Bloom digital physical therapy and mobility programs.

\$199K

Debt Paid Off

By members via LSS of Minnesota Financial Counseling, with over \$2.4M paid off since 2008.

15.17%

of Member Income

Saved for retirement, on average, by members sponsored in the Traditional Benefits Program, thanks to employer and member contributions.*

\$209M

**Made in Annuity
Payments**

And 515 retirements.



39

*Beginning
Disability Benefits***

16K

**Members and
Employers
Invited to
Participate**

In our Benefits reExamined surveys, with more than 4,100 responses.*



**Nearly 10% of Our 10K ELCA
Medicare-Primary Plan Members**

Participated in the SilverSneakers fitness program with an average of 8 visits to a fitness center per month.*

We design our benefits to align with the needs of the church and seek to provide accessible support that enhances and improves everyday living and brings value to those who serve.

*Source: Traditional Benefits Program. All other numbers and percentages are drawn from across Portico's benefit programs.

**Total as of 2023; 2024 disability claims numbers have not been finalized.



ELCA
Foundation

2024 ANNUAL REPORT





BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Ingrid S. Stafford*
Chair

The Rev. Kathleen O. Reed*
Vice chair

Karen M. Bohn*
Secretary

Eric Draut*
Treasurer

Trustees

Eric Brudos*

Keith Christensen

Presiding Bishop Elizabeth
Eaton

The Rev. Frank Espegren

The Rev. William E. Flippin Jr.

Bruce D. George

Eric Golberg

Naomi Horsager*

Roberto Lara Aranda

Heather Marx*

Mark Stauffer

Andrew G. Steele

Committee Members

The Rev. Lisa Carol Bennett

Pam Vetter

Advisers

The Rev. Suzanne D. Dillahun

Lori S. Fedyk

The Rev. Anthony Prinsen

*Executive committee member

*"And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance,
so that by always having enough of everything, you may
share abundantly in every good work."*

—2 Corinthians 9:8

Dear friends in Christ,

At the ELCA Foundation, we know that strong financial stewardship is essential to sustaining and growing ministry. Your generosity and partnership make this possible. Because of you, vital ministries across the ELCA continue to thrive, sharing the gospel and serving communities even during times of challenge and uncertainty.

In 2024, the ELCA Foundation surpassed \$1.1 billion in total assets under management. This achievement reflects not only the growth of our financial resources but also a deepening trust and collaboration across the ELCA. More congregations, synods and ministry partners are turning to the Foundation for guidance in securing their financial future, which ensures that their work will continue for generations to come.

Our commitment to strong investment management has not wavered. Last year, the Ministry Growth Fund delivered an 11.4% net return, exceeding its benchmark and providing stable distributions even in fluctuating markets. Through disciplined stewardship, the Foundation facilitated an additional \$93.5 million in total gifts and investment assets, including \$58.6 million in new planned-gift commitments, \$6.2 million in currently funded gifts and \$28.6 million in new Ministry Growth Fund assets.

This financial strength translates directly into impact. In the past year, the Foundation distributed \$61.8 million to support ministries and programs across the ELCA. These funds sustain congregations, fuel mission work and provide hope to communities near and far. Even in uncertain times, the Foundation stands as a steadfast partner, helping ELCA members and ministries navigate financial planning with confidence and faith.

Planning for the future is an act of trust and hope, and the ELCA Foundation is here to help. Whether you're considering a new gift, revisiting an existing plan or exploring endowment opportunities, our regional gift planners are ready to walk with you. Find your nearest planner at Foundation.ELCA.org/contact or call 800-638-3522 to start the conversation.

Thank you for your faith, generosity and commitment to sustaining ministry for generations to come.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Annette C. Shoemaker".

Annette C. Shoemaker
Interim President and CEO

The ELCA Foundation is proud to partner with:



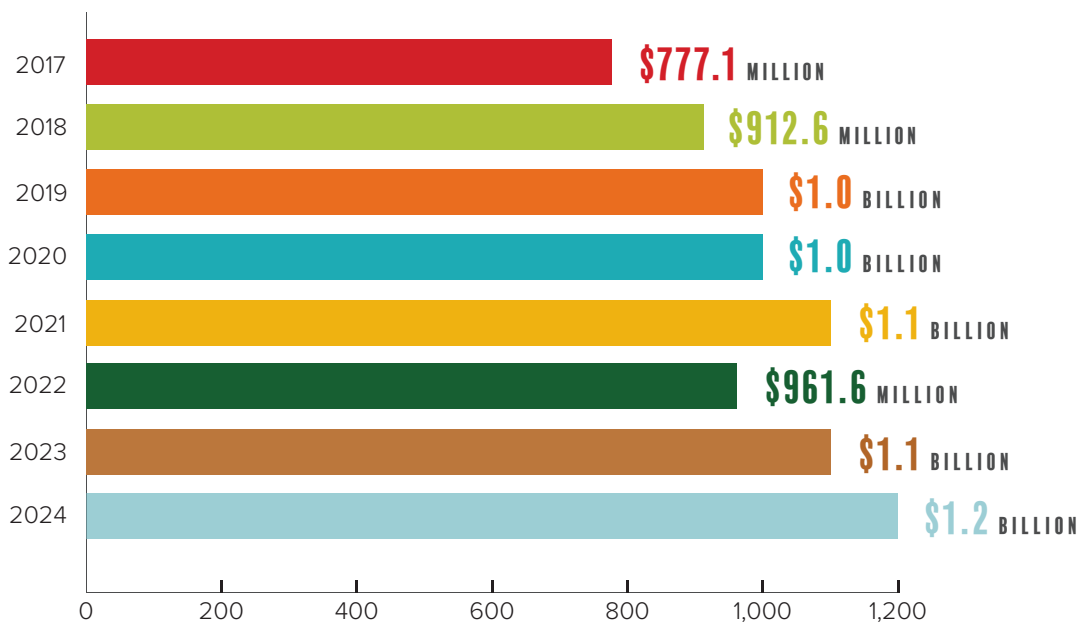


Our mission is to support and sustain ELCA ministries by enhancing gifting capacity and stewarding resources.

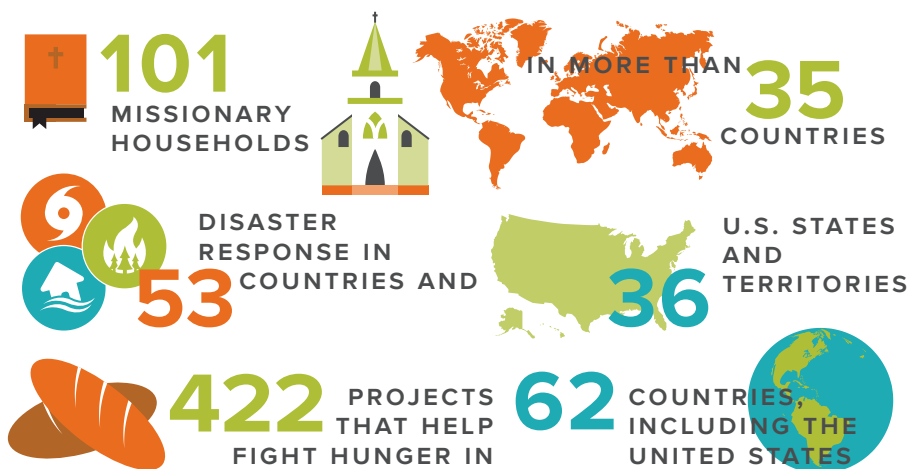
Our vision is to be a thriving ministry that develops a culture of intentional generosity and financial stewardship to expand the work of the ELCA.



NET ASSETS OF THE ELCA FOUNDATION



IN 2024, \$7.2 MILLION IN DISTRIBUTIONS MADE TO THE ELCA CHURCHWIDE ORGANIZATION SUPPORTED PROGRAMS AND MINISTRIES IN THE UNITED STATES AND AROUND THE WORLD, INCLUDING:



GIFT PLANNING



In 2024, the ELCA Foundation's gift planning network walked alongside **199 donors/families** in developing faith-focused gift plans that reflect their passion and purpose.



\$59.9
MILLION

in future planned-gift commitments

\$13
MILLION

in direct support to individual congregations

\$6.2
MILLION

in currently funded gifts

\$51.9
MILLION

in existing gifts to ministry stewarded

WHO BENEFITS?

\$21.0
MILLION

IN REALIZED GIFTS
DISTRIBUTED TO CONGREGATIONS,
SYNODS AND OTHER LUTHERAN
ORGANIZATIONS AND
MINISTRIES IN 2023

We're here to help.

The ELCA Foundation's network is strengthened by a dedicated team of regional gift planners who are passionate about helping our members and organizations leave their legacies. Our gift planning services are available at no cost. It is our ministry to be of service.

Foundation.ELCA.org/contact





The Ministry Growth Fund of the ELCA Endowment Fund Pooled Trust was established to allow for the collective investment of funds belonging to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), including the churchwide organization and its congregations, synods, seminaries and other eligible affiliated entities. The fund allows congregations and other entities to retain ownership of their funds while participating in balanced, socially responsible investments to ensure the long-term sustainability of their ministries.

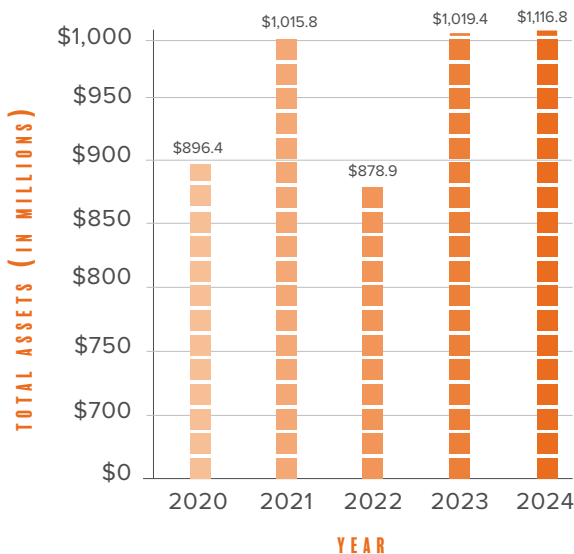
Working together, we can do so much more than we can working alone. With a strong, growing pool of funds, we increase our ability to diversify our investments and maximize our impact in the world.

WHO'S PARTICIPATING?

DOLLARS INVESTED

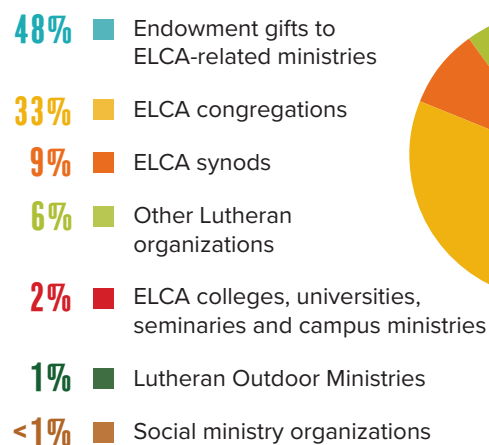
\$1,116,898,977

5-YEAR GROWTH OF ASSETS



The Ministry Growth Fund is a sophisticated investment tool with ministry at its heart. Our fund structure allows participants to benefit from the same market opportunities regardless of their investment size while realizing lower regulatory reporting costs overall. Guided by a team of financial experts and strengthened by our partnerships with other Lutheran organizations, the Ministry Growth Fund generates stable, quarterly distributions that allow you to fund current ministry needs while maintaining the underlying investment value of gifts and managed assets.

MAKEUP OF INVESTED ASSETS AS OF 12/31/2024



WHO BENEFITS?

**\$40.8
MILLION**

DISTRIBUTED FROM THE MINISTRY GROWTH FUND TO PARTICIPATING CONGREGATIONS, SYNODS AND OTHER LUTHERAN ORGANIZATIONS AND MINISTRIES IN 2024

We invite you to learn more about the performance of the Ministry Growth Fund in 2024 by watching the recording of our investor call for the fourth quarter of 2024. Scan the QR code or visit bit.ly/FO-investor-call to watch it today.





Writing new stories — with gifts of love

By Erin Strybis

Stories have always captivated William “Bil” Johnson. His fascination began when he was 4 and his father read to him from the newspaper after coming home from work. He became an avid reader himself, devouring such classics as *Black Beauty* and *The Little Prince*. This passion led him to a 44-year career at Northern Illinois University, teaching British literature and history of the 16th and 17th centuries.

“It was the perfect way to read stories, poems, prose and plays and share the joy of it all with other people,” Johnson said of his vocation. “I never even thought about [retirement] because I loved teaching so much. I am a teacher; I tell stories.”

His rich career included publishing widely; teaching summer courses in Oxford, England; and serving as executive director of the international English honor society, Sigma Tau Delta.

Upon retirement, this lifelong Lutheran faced a new question: “What is God doing with me now to make me new, given that I’m no longer teaching or publishing?”

An active member of First Lutheran Church, DeKalb, Ill., for over 50 years, Johnson learned of the ELCA Foundation through the denomination’s magazine and his synod.

His faith inspired him to consider how to share his gifts with others beyond First Lutheran. “I feel very strongly about giving because so much has been given to me,” he said.

Every fall, Johnson withdrew his required minimum distributions from his IRAs and sent that money to various charities through the ELCA Foundation.

“I particularly wanted to focus on the ELCA because I think our denomination does such a good job with the distribution,” Johnson said. “It’s trustworthy. I know where the money is going and who’s taking care of it.”

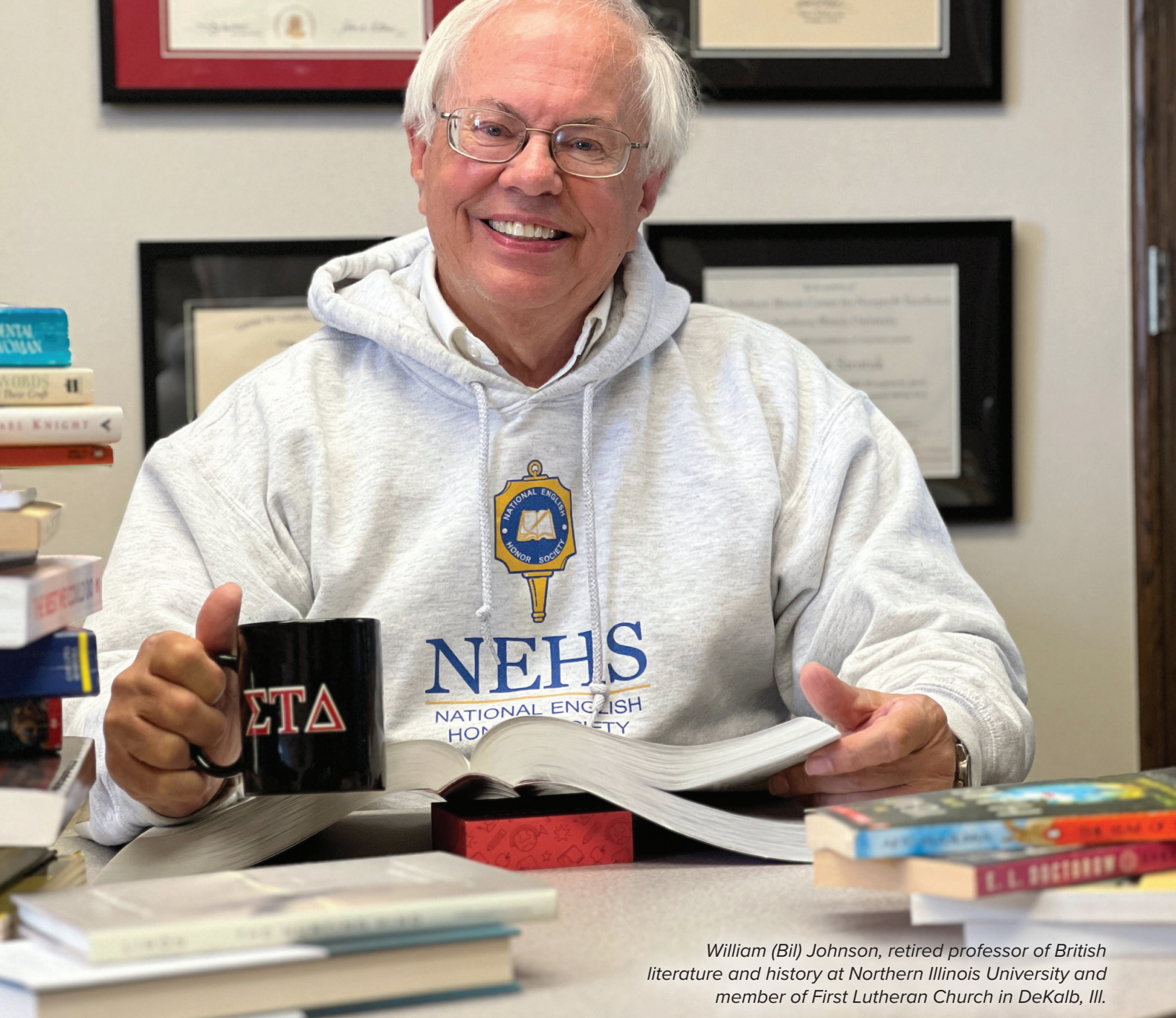
Years later, Johnson told his contact at the ELCA Foundation that he was thinking of updating his estate plan and trust. She suggested that he connect with regional gift planner Tim Urness. Last February, Urness partnered with Johnson to revise his estate plan and multiply his gifts to the ELCA ministries he loved.

“Bil and I worked through who he’s gifting to now, and who he would like to see get gifts at the end of his life,” Urness said. “He’s been smart about his giving. He was kind of realizing what he was going to do when he’s called home to our Lord and Savior.”

Urness set up a named endowment with Johnson that included the bulk of his estate and the proceeds of his life insurance. Recipients include Lutheran Disaster Response, Young Adults in Global Mission, ELCA Fund for Leaders, Global Refuge, AMMPARO Migrant Ministry, ELCA World Hunger, Lutheran World Relief and Lutheran Social Services of Illinois. He’s also giving to his congregation, First Lutheran. The total gift to ELCA ministries will be \$4.5 million.

Johnson likes that his endowment will touch the lives of our siblings in the global church, advancing new ministries — and stories — for years to come.

“We are all part of the communion of saints,” he said. “When somebody is hungry, you feed them. When someone is in need, you do something to help. It doesn’t make any difference at all that anyone remembers my name or who I was. What is important is that somebody will be benefiting from what I’ve done.”



William (Bill) Johnson, retired professor of British literature and history at Northern Illinois University and member of First Lutheran Church in DeKalb, Ill.

*"We are all part of the communion of saints.
When somebody is hungry, you feed them. When
someone is in need, you do something to help."*



ELCA
Foundation

8765 West Higgins Road
Chicago, IL 60631-4101
800-638-3522 • Foundation.ELCA.org

The Ministry Growth Fund is not a mutual fund, though it has similar features — including unitization, diversification among many securities, and professional investment managers. This is an investment and, as such, it may lose value. Past performance is no indication of future results. For additional information, contact the ELCA Foundation to request a Ministry Growth Fund disclosure statement.

Campus Ministry Report 2024-2025

The NC Synod and the Lutheran voice are heard on many campuses of the universities across the state. Throughout the UNC system and affiliates, to state and private institutions, both large and smaller the campus pastors are creating safe places where the vibrant word of God is shared and lived. The following web site lists the active ministries in our synod. <https://nclutheran.org/local-mission/campus-ministry/> In the lower right corner of the site new and returning students can be referred to ministries across the nation as well as North Carolina.

There are several themes experienced by students following the global pandemic. Students carry more stress and anxiety into their academic careers. They have concerns about climate change, voter suppression, the treatment of queer and transgender citizens, the elimination of DEI, as well as the struggle to find fulfilling work following graduation. International students face fear and isolation from family when school administrations recommend cancelling trips home because of the fear of not being able to return. This past fall students in the western part of the state experienced the disruption and fear brought on by Hurricane Helene. All of this and more creates a heaviness in academia that is felt by students and administrations.

University campuses deal with scheduling constraints as they pack seminars, class time, and exams into evenings and weekends. Students must make the most of these requirements and opportunities. The ongoing challenges of scheduling affect student engagement and planning in campus ministry, yet gatherings to build faith still happen.

In this context campus pastors strive to create safe places where students can reflect on their identities as God's beloved children and affirm that nothing will separate them from the love of God in Christ. The importance of providing inclusive and welcoming communities of grace and hope in God and one another is now more important than ever. Opportunities for worship, service, learning, and intentional relationship-building are critical touchstones of campus ministry. Faith is built in communities of students who share life together for the sake of the world.

Boundless joy is found in the relationships built through campus ministry. Opportunities to rest, laugh, and explore faith in God creates enduring relationships. Collaborating with other ministries on campus or other universities in proximity to one another, enriches the opportunities for fellowship, worship, and service into which God calls. Campus pastors walk alongside students throughout their experiences. Seeds of faith are planted, kindness, courage, compassion, and discipleship grow during the critical years of higher education. Respectfully submitted, Joanna Stallings, Campus Ministry Committee Chair

2025 Bulletin of Reports - Candidacy Committee Report

The Candidacy Committee works with individuals who sense a call to rostered ministry in the ELCA. Our work ranges from initial discernment conversations to celebrations of congregation or synodical calls at the end of the process. Each candidate receives an annual interview, ongoing communication with a contact person, and site visits at their internship parish.

Congregations and agencies assist in the candidacy process by identifying and encouraging members with gifts for rostered ministry. The candidacy process begins with the congregation's recommendation and ends with a congregation or agency of the church issuing a call. Along the way, congregations are needed as sites for fieldwork and internships. Congregations are also encouraged to support candidates financially.

As of December 31, 2024, we had thirty-five candidates in process. During 2024, we had twelve positive entrance decisions, three positive endorsement decisions, and thirteen positive approval decisions. Five of these approved candidates were called to serve congregations before the end of the year, and three candidates approved in 2023 were ordained (seven pastors, one deacon). We have twenty-eight candidates preparing for Word and Sacrament ministry and seven candidates preparing for Word and Service ministry. Of our current candidates, twenty-two are involved in Distance Learning programs at ELCA seminaries, and thirteen are residential students.

Except for regional, seminary, and synod representatives, candidacy committee members serve five-year terms and are limited to two terms. Many serve for ten years, giving generously of their time and talent. We would like to thank Rev. Rosemary Peek, who served two terms, and Rev. Dr. Marty Stevens, and Mr. Napoleon Avery, who served one term each. All three completed their work on the candidacy committee in 2024.

As of the beginning of 2025 our Candidacy Committee members are Rev. Dr. Kimberly Carlson (chair), Mr. Wayne Smith (secretary), Dr. Michael Kestner (treasurer), Dr. Felicia Eybl, Rev. Richard Goeres, Rev. Margaret Herz-Lane, Ms. Robin Huffman, Mr. Brett Koceja, Rev. Betsy Mitchell, Rev. Pam Northrup, Ms. Signe Offenbergh, Rev. Amy Onstad, Rev. Dr. Ryan Ray, Deacon Katie Rivers, Rev. Greg Williams. Rev. Lianet Ramirez Barrientos is the ELCA Region 9 Candidacy and Leadership Manager. Also serving on the committee are Rev. Dr. Chad Rimmer (seminary representative), Rev. Dr. Tim Smith (bishop), and Deacon Wendy Roberts (Candidacy Coordinator on synod staff). Ms. Sarah Burleson provides administrative support.

Through the generous gifts of mission support, the Mary Ona Wolf Endowment, the Michael Peeler/Virginia Casey Fund, and the Barbara Boland Fund, the NC Synod was able to offer support to all NC candidates with gifts of \$4000/year of full-time (or part-time equivalent) academic studies. Over the duration of their coursework, Word and Sacrament candidates are offered a total of \$12,000, and Word and Service candidates are offered a total of \$8,000. Financial assistance for students who enter mid-way through the process is prorated per the amount of remaining coursework. In 2024, the NC Synod disbursed \$68,350 to NC Synod candidates from your mission support offerings to support their academic studies. The Home Mission Foundation also generously gifted \$50,833 in scholarships to our NC Synod candidates in 2024. Together, we are helping to make seminary an affordable reality for more candidates.

The executive committee also administered the disbursement of \$16,800 in scholarships split among seven candidates from our North Carolina Fund for Leaders Scholarship. Additionally, one of our NC candidates received a full tuition scholarship from Fund for Leaders (\$60,000). We also disbursed \$3000 from the Lefler Fund, which the committee explicitly designated to support students in particular financial need among our candidates who are black, indigenous, or persons of color (BIPOC).

The Candidacy Committee is grateful for the support of our NC Synod congregations as we partner in raising up future rostered ministers of the ELCA. Please consider participating in forming our candidates by serving as a site for fieldwork and internships and by encouraging those who have the heart and gifts for rostered leadership to consider a vocation in ordained ministry. Thank you for praying for our candidates and committee.

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Dr. Kimberly Carlson
Chair, NC Candidacy Committee

Social Justice and Advocacy Ministries Report for NC Synod ELCA

Michael Dickson SJAM / Public Church Coordinator (Half-Time Role)

June 2023 - June 2025

Racial Justice in the NC Synod

- Liaison to now defunct Racial Justice Network and RJN Strategy Team
- Facilitated book tour events in NC Synod on racial justice for Rev. Kenneth Wheeler's *U.S.: The Resurrection of American Terror*
- Leading quarterly Racial Equity / Authentic Diversity work sessions ("READING Days") at the NCS Office of the Bishop for ongoing learning, developing a culture of inclusion, and incorporating values of relationship and generosity into institutional policy.
- To provide support for African Descent Strategy Team's work in creating education opportunities like the Developing Culturally Sensitive Leaders training.
- To improve promotion and communication for All Races, One Church initiative, which distributes ongoing financial support for congregations and communities that are primarily people of color (POC), both from freewill donations and from regular synod budget contributions.
- Worked with Synod Communications Team and ANKOS Films on developing videos for NCS Land Acknowledgement.
- Supported NCS Indigenous Learning Team in advocacy sharing boarding school history

Loving Your Neighbor in Anxious Times

- Facilitated hearings on Zoom and at 2024 Synod Gathering to reflect and offer feedback on the ELCA Draft Social Statement on Faith and Civic Life.
- Hosted synod bishop Zoom townhall on "Loving Your Neighbor in Anxious Times" in fall 2024.
- Planned and led Election Eve Prayer Service on Zoom November 2024
- Organized NC Synod Advent Peace Vigil in December 2024 at St. Paul's Lutheran, Durham in partnership with Anam Cara Digital Community, with creative liturgy built around Octavia Butler's "A Few Rules for Predicting the Future" and art by Daniel Erlander.

The Bishop's Challenge on Refugee Hospitality

- Directed Synod Immigration & Refugee Ministry Team in advocacy and equipping congregations.
- Tracked congregational participation in the challenge, now completed.
 - More than 100 congregations in NC participated in the challenge in one way or another.
- Facilitated fundraising and seed grant distribution
 - \$38,000 gathered between AMMPARO, Bolick Foundation, and private donations
 - \$23,000 went to congregations in refugee hospitality seed grants
 - \$13,000 went to the LSC New Americans Program as emergency crisis funding
 - \$2,000 funded Fresh Change kits for LIRS/Global Refuge prepared at Fall Convocation 2023 and send to refugee hospitality centers in New Mexico.
- Facilitated interview panel and workshop on refugee hospitality for 2024 synod gathering and personally taught a 45-minute crash course on the immigration system.

Ministry Partnerships

- **Organizing for Mission Network:** Chaplain on planning team for faith-based community organizing trainings in North Carolina with ecumenical partners UMC and AME Zion. First training June 5-8 2025 in Salisbury.
- **NC Synod Immigration & Refugee Ministry Team**
 - With funding support from ELCA AMMPARO, facilitating series of congregational trips to support El Refugio Hospitality Center outside of Stewart Detention Center, largest long-term immigration detention center in the United States.
- **The Mission Fund:** Serving on board and supporting mission developers and communities in Winston-Salem and Asheville (La Comunidad Amada de Cristo, The Dwelling, and the Community of Spiritual Practice). Participated in visioning around possible Arabic-speaking mission development.
- **NC Council of Churches:** Serving on governing board and linking NC Synod teams with NCCC opportunities. Supporting advocacy and ghost writing/co-editing NCCC editorials.
- **Lutheran Outdoor Ministries:**
 - Will serve as chaplain for LOM Lutheran theological education event fall 2025
 - Completed service as staff support chaplain for two summers at Agape Kure Beach Ministries
 - Played consulting role on LGBTQ inclusion task force for AKB board.
 - Facilitated peace and justice retreat confirmation retreat at Lutheridge

Other Responsibilities

- Visiting congregations 1-2 Sundays a month to preach and/or teach (Other 2-3 Sundays are committed at First Lutheran in Greensboro)
- Representing SJAM and speaking on public church questions at synodical events
- Meeting ministry team members across synod, compiling resources in response to expressed needs
- Serving as liaison and facilitating ministry teams, exploring possibilities for new or returning teams
- Collaborating with Synod Communications Team to share information and support public church-related communications.
- Cultivating broader ELCA and NC nonprofit connections and relationships, including Church World Service, Young Adults in Global Mission, and Lutheran Services of the Carolinas, among others. Facilitating opportunities for those organizations to connect with NCS.

Annual Report for 2024
Specialized Pastoral Care Team
North Carolina Synod of the ELCA

This committee serves to support approximately 54 rostered and non-rostered Lutherans who have a commitment to pastoral care ministries. Many in this group serve as full-time or part-time chaplains, pastoral counselors, and clinical educators, or have retired from those positions. Others receive support from the committee as they discern their call to specialized ministry and/or are participating in Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE).

We were able to meet in March 2024 for our Annual Retreat with approximately 20 participants. The committee met via Zoom early in the year, and finally in-person/zoom for our Fall meeting. We approved scholarships to seminarians for their CPE internships. Plans were also made for a Spring 2025 retreat to be held at Camp Agape.

We are committed to serve and support anyone who may be involved with or discerning a role within specialized pastoral care. We intend to bear witness to them through counsel, fellowship, education, and affirmation. This committee supports all Rostered Ministers and those pursuing Word and Sacrament or Word and Service Ministry in this church in the area of Pastoral Care and education.

Throughout this year, many members of this group served in hospital, long-term care, hospice, and other settings which continued to experience much loss due to the pandemic – both of residents/clients and of fellow staff members. It has been a difficult time to serve as a chaplain, but we are blessed to have a synod which supports us and this group to lean on.

Rev. Tom Hehenberger, 2025 Acting Committee Chair

Dear Partners in Ministry,

Grace and peace to you this synod assembly season. **At Global Refuge we remain committed to the work of welcome, no matter the challenges.** For 85 years, Global Refuge (formerly known as Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service) has championed the work of welcome by providing support to immigrants and refugees as they rebuild their lives in the United States. Founded by heartbroken Lutherans in the United States who felt called to provide a home for those fleeing violence of the World Wars, Global Refuge has continued this good work welcoming more than 800,000 newcomers since 1939.

Our mission states, “As a witness to God’s love for all people, we stand with and advocate for migrants and refugees, transforming communities through ministries of service and justice.” With help from Global Refuge, families are welcomed into their new homes with a hot meal, adults are enrolled in English language classes, children are enrolled in school, and Global Refuge partners guide newly-arrived refugee(s) in using public transportation and accessing community resources.

Unfortunately, on January 24, 2025, Global Refuge and the 9 other national resettlement agencies received a **stop-work order** from the U.S. Department of State as it relates to our funding for the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program, effectively cutting off vital support to families who have already lawfully resettled in the United States. The stop-work order directly affects thousands of refugees who rely on resettlement services for essential support such as housing, food, English classes, and job placement. While we were anticipating a pause of the refugee resettlement program and work with future clients, this stop-work order for clients in our care came as an unexpected blow. However, we are committed to carrying out our mission, through our hope in the promise of the resurrection, and remain steadfast in our holy work of welcome.

Despite the challenges, we are heartened by continued and growing support faith communities are providing for our work. **More people of faith are getting involved in our work each year to meet the ever-growing need.** In fact, 85 new faith communities became supporters of Global Refuge in 2024.

With the support of these new partners and Lutheran communities like yours, in 2024 we were able to...

- Welcome **18,622+ refugees** from countries across the world.

- Empower and support **116 clients** and **67 Businesses** through personal and business loans.
- Open **a new office in Mexico** to expand our Camino A Casa programming and serve **1017 clients** start again at home.
- Write and distribute **10,000 Hope for the Holidays cards** that provided messages of welcome and hope to newcomers.
- Attend the ELCA Youth Gathering in New Orleans where we engaged **20,000+** youth on the work of welcome and packed more than a **1000** welcome kits.

In a political season rife with anti-immigrant rhetoric and messages that villainize newcomers, we have a unique opportunity to change this narrative and refocus on all the gifts newcomers bring to community. We invite you to join us in this work!

- **Support Refugees with a gift** – If you or communities you’re connected with are willing to support financially, please use/share this link: www.globalrefugee.org/give
- **Learn more and Advocate** – Explore resources with more information about executive orders and accompanying actions: www.globalrefugee.org/advocate
- **Know Your Rights** – Our partners at AMMPARO have a great resource for communities to read about their rights and those of immigrants in their care. www.blogs.elca.org/ammparo/the-latest-kyr/
- **Explore Resources** – Visit our Congregational Resources page to explore all the resources available to you: www.globalrefugee.org/congregations
- **Sign up for our Monthly E-newsletters** – Get the latest updates for faith leaders by emailing outreach@globalrefugee.org.
- **Volunteer with us** – Support refugees in your community and beyond: www.globalrefugee.org/volunteer

Thank you for your continued support. The many ways Lutheran communities embody Jesus’ ministry through the work of welcome is truly inspiring.

Go in peace. Welcome the stranger.



Deacon Sarah Kretschmann / Congregational Engagement Specialist
outreach@globalrefugee.org

2024 Annual Report from LDR Carolinas

We continued promoting preparedness and developing a network of interested individuals and congregations throughout the year. We have visited twenty congregations to provide an LDR Sunday or other event, including preaching or teaching about personal preparedness, congregational preparedness, best practices when a disaster occurs, and to talk about the work of LDR Carolinas following disasters. We encourage congregations to discuss ways that they can respond to disaster in their communities and beyond. We welcome invitations to come to your congregation!

We also attended meetings with conference clergy, synod deans, the annual gatherings of Lutheran Men in Mission and Women of the ELCA, as well as synod assemblies in both NC and SC.

We have participated in quarterly meetings of both NC & SC VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster) to develop relationship with other organizations and individuals providing disaster services. We participated in special meetings before and after major events. We also serve on the National VOAD Preparedness Committee.

We have been in contact with conference deans and rostered leaders in congregations following disaster events impacting their congregations or communities, including severe storms, tornadoes, and flooding in several locations, a fatal police shooting in Charlotte, plus Tropical Storm Debbie, PTC-8 (Potential Tropical Cyclone 8, also known as the No-Name Storm), and Hurricane Helene which had a tremendous impact on both North and South Carolina.

We have requested financial assistance from synod disaster funds when congregations experienced damage or to assist with other needs in the community following local disasters. We applied for and received LDR Solidarity Grants to assist recovery in affected communities following a major hailstorm in Rock Hill SC, Tropical Storm Debbie in several areas across NC, and PTC-8 which caused severe flooding in Brunswick County NC. We also received additional grant funding from LDR following Helene, which has funded positions for two Response Coordinators. (These positions – one each in NC and SC – were filled in early 2025.)

With financial assistance from the NC Synod Heilig Resource Center, the NC Synod Michael Peeler/Virginia Casey Grant Fund, and the SC Mission Fund, we completed projects and events including an online book study on **A Ready Hope**, work to upfit the NC Synod trailer for disaster response, a service trip to assist Craven County (NC) Disaster Recovery Alliance with ongoing recovery work following Hurricane Florence in 2018, and congregational preparedness mini-grants,

During the final quarter of the year, our work has been centered on Hurricane Helene response in both North and South Carolina. An outpouring of generosity from individuals and congregations in the Carolinas and beyond has made it possible for us to supply cleanup kits, personal care kits, children's comfort kits, quilts, and a myriad of other items needed across western NC following Hurricane Helene. We are grateful to congregations in both synods that served as collection points for these donated items, including Good Shepherd, Raleigh; Grace, Salisbury; and Zion, Hickory NC; plus Good Shepherd, Walterboro; and Zion, Lexington SC.

A major new project with Mennonite Disaster Response has emerged since Helene. Bridging Together is a partnership to replace private bridges in western North Carolina that were damaged or destroyed by flooding. (Construction on the first bridge in this partnership began in 2025.)

We continue to share information with others via our website www.ldrcarolinas.org which includes a resource page, blog, and a page dedicated to the Bridging Together project. We also have a Facebook page www.facebook.com/ldrcarolinas which we have used to post information about events and response to disasters, and a YouTube page www.youtube.com/@LDRCarolinas with recordings of our online network meetings and book study.

The Revs. Ray & Ruth Ann Sipe

Mission Fund Committee Annual Report for Synod Assembly 2025

The Mission Fund Committee is blessed with excellent leadership. They provide support to mission developers, address the business of the Mission Fund, and collaborate with the synod as well as ecumenical partners. The budget has grown to three-quarters of a million since the last synod assembly in 2023. The members of the committee are Russell Peek, treasurer, Heather Bacholder, Michael Dickson, Anthena Thommason-Bless, Greg Williams, and Joanna Stallings.

The sites include:

- Anam Cara Community is a first online community established by Pastors Tim Brown, Jason Chestnut, and Tuhina Rasche. They produce high-quality worship reels, and a podcast called *Hash Cast* found on YouTube @anamcaracommunity2794. They gather around the microphone to talk about the weekly texts for preaching with guest theologians from around the country.
- Since the last NC Synod Assembly in 2023 Arbol de Vita a Latino congregation in North Durham closed. Following the killing of one of the congregational members, the attendance diminished and was not sustainable. This is an example of the vulnerability experienced by some in our synod.
- Christ's Beloved Community in Winston Salem was chartered at the last synod assembly. It was an exciting moment for this growing Spanish speaking congregation. Pastor Javier Aries along with congregational leadership share word and sacrament each Sunday. They celebrate high festivals with the community as well as other similar congregations in North Carolina. They also have a food pantry that serves the essential needs of the community. This ministry is a collaboration with the Episcopal Diocese of NC.
- The Community of Spiritual Practices in Asheville is led by Pastor Elizabeth Rawlings. In the past year, a steering committee formed to set up regular meetings. They meet in area restaurants, city parks, for worship, to educate or to rally support for issues of justice. At the end of 2024 Pastor Rawlings was instrumental in connecting people to resources following the devastation of Hurricane Helene in Asheville.
- The Dwelling in Winston Salem is a faith community formed to build relationships and celebrate the inherent dignity of all people who may be unhoused, experiencing past trauma, mental health issues, or substance abuse. This ministry provides showers, feasting, community, restorative writing opportunities, a winter shelter, and advocacy. Through Spark Dwell, a summer service-learning program, young

people engage in meaningful change. This ministry is led by Pastor Emily Harkins, Deacons Brooke de Jong, and Brittany Perry.

- Emmaus Church in Charlotte is led by The Rev. Dr. Shinitria Cutberthson. Their mission is to educate, edify, enrich, and empower through the hope of the gospel. Through weekly worship and Bible Study the congregation discovers the accessibility, relevance, and empowering grace of God. At this Synod Assembly the congregation will be chartered. We celebrate with them as they grow in God's grace.
- The Rev. Jack Russell serves at Living Waters in Cherokee. This worshipping community on the Boundary Reservation is the only Cherokee ministry East of Mississippi. In addition to building faith, they have a thriving food pantry that serves the surrounding community. Following Hurricane Helene this pantry provided essential provisions to the wider community.
- The Wilderness Community in Durham provided opportunities for catechetical engagement to a young and largely unchurched community. When the founding pastor relocated for her partners job, the congregation decided to close.

The Mission Fund is a 501c3 organization designed to provide support for the mission developments and new communities of faith in the North Carolina Synod. Holding fast to the truth that God is doing new things, we work to create sustainable mission communities that change lives for the sake of the gospel.

Respectfully submitted by Pastor Joanna Stallings, Executive Director of the Mission Fund



Mission Investment Fund

The Mission Investment Fund: Empowering communities with financial services



For more than 150 years, the Mission Investment Fund (MIF), a *financial services ministry of the ELCA*, has been a **steady and reliable financial partner** for congregations, ministries and individuals. Through times of growth and uncertainty alike, MIF has remained committed to strengthening ministries and communities through customer-centric support and flexible financial resources.

In 2024, MIF continued to support ministry growth across the ELCA. Your investments helped expand worship spaces, create new education and youth ministry areas, fund schools and programming for the next generation, start green projects and support accessibility remodeling for community spaces. These projects ensure that ELCA ministries remain welcoming, inclusive and equipped to serve their communities.

By the Numbers:

- **Total Loans Outstanding:** \$610,534,000
- **Total Investment Obligations:** \$547,491,000
- **Total Assets:** \$774,550,000
- **Net Assets & Capital Ratio:** 27.5%

Why Is MIF the Right Choice?

- **Proven Stability:** With over a century and a half of experience, MIF has weathered changing economic and political landscapes, maintaining financial strength for ELCA ministries.
- **Deep Expertise in Church and Ministry Financing:** We understand the unique needs of faith communities and have longstanding experience in congregation and ministry-building projects.
- **Competitive Rates and Terms:** Our financial offerings are structured to support ministries of all sizes.
- **A Full Suite of Financial Services:** In partnership with the ELCA Federal Credit Union, we provide a range of financial solutions for congregations, ministries, and individuals.
- **Faithful Stewardship:** Investments in MIF directly support loans that fund hundreds of capital projects across the church.

With 2025, MIF has entered a new era of modernization—enhancing our tools and financial services to better support ELCA ministries. While embracing innovation, we remain rooted in the trust and stability that have defined us for generations. Through every season, we stand with ELCA members, congregations, and ministries, walking together in faith and financial stewardship.

MIF at work in the North Carolina Synod (as of December 31, 2024):

- 14 Mission Investment Fund loans, with a balance of \$6,236,381
- \$6,678,556 in Mission Investment Fund investment obligations

For more information about MIF capabilities, please visit our website, mif.elca.org
or contact your Regional Manager, Jerry Johnson: 773-380-1722 jerry.johnson@elca.org

2024 ANNUAL REPORT

HIGHLIGHTS Seafarers International House

MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: We cannot wait till the world is sane

Dear friends of Seafarers International House (SIH):

Thanks to your support, we assisted 19,066 people, over 1,000 more than last year! We had many reasons to rejoice as we journeyed together with seafarers and immigrants legally seeking asylum, even though the year itself can be described as "unsteady".

In January, Houthis fired upon two US-flagged container ships, putting seafarers in danger. From November 2023 until their release on January 22, 2025, 17 Filipinos, 3 Ukrainians, 2 Bulgarians, 2 Mexicans, and 1 Romanian of the MV Galaxy Leader, a vehicle carrier, were held hostage. Since November 2023, over 90 vessels have been attacked, sinking at least two ships, and killing four mariners. Add the "normal" isolation of contracts lasting for 6-9 months and you understand that seafarers continue to make great sacrifices.

Thanks to your support, our Port Chaplains can bring a ministry of presence, essentials, and transportation to seafarers. Last February, we celebrated the official start of our Ukrainian-born Port Chaplain Pastor Vitalii Guz, who serves with our partners at the Baltimore International Seafarers Center (BISC). We also welcomed our ship visitor, Tim Marzik, who has big shoes to fill with the retirement of our beloved Ruth Setaro after 27 years of service.

We reignited our partnership with the Deutsche Seemannsmission e.V., which traces its roots to 1907, when the son of the director of the German Emigrant House (a predecessor of SIH), helped found the German Seamen's Mission in the Port of New York, a service we continue to this day.

Tragically, on March 26, the Francis Scott Key Bridge in Baltimore was struck by a container ship. The accident killed six construction workers, all of whom were immigrants. In the aftermath, 7 ships operated by 120 seafarers were temporarily trapped, and to this day many of the crew members on the accident-causing ship continue to be held in the US as litigation progresses. With Baltimore International Seafarers Center (BISC), and Chaplain Vitalii and – returning from retirement – Chaplain Rev. K. Robert "Bob" Schmitt, SIH was able to provide relief to those affected.

In April, it was party time! Thanks to our honorees Katie Higginbottom, Randi Ciszewski, and Tim Nolan and the support of their friends, the Setting the Course Reception was a success! 180 attendees ensured through their contributions that we would be able to serve 13,556 seafarers in the Ports of Albany, Baltimore, Duluth, New Haven, and New York & New Jersey, and with accommodations in NYC.

Then in August, we bid fair seas and following winds to two SIH icons: Arthur William Clark (1944), a long-time SIH board member and treasurer for over 20 years; and Port Chaplain Rev. William C. Fensterer (1930), who for over 50 years provided unparalleled service to mariners.

We exulted, when, in September, the Ghanaian family, who we supported at the Lighthouse, found their own home. All four miraculously survived the dangerous journey through the Darian Gap and almost drowned before legally applying for asylum and working hard to become self-sufficient. Throughout 2024, we assisted 33 asylees and provided them with a safe place for a

MISSION

Seafarers International House (SIH) is the Lutheran response to the urgent needs of vulnerable seafarers and immigrants.

SIH offers hospitality, social assistance, and advocacy to a multi-national and multi-faith community in the Ports of Albany, Baltimore, Duluth, New Haven, and New York & New Jersey, and in New York City.


combined 1,508 lodging nights.

After the November elections, we pray that legal immigration will remain possible and vow to stand with people who are persecuted or experience violence elsewhere.

At Christmastime we rejoiced! With the help of all those listed on page 5, we delivered a record setting 3,507 satchels to seafarers out at sea spreading love around the globe.

With this bittersweet year in mind, I would like to close this report with excerpts from Madeleine L'Engle's poem *First Coming*:

*He did not wait till the world was ready,
till men and nations were at peace
He came when the Heavens were
unsteady
and prisoners cried out for release. ...*

*... We cannot wait till the world is sane
to raise our songs with joyful voice,
for to share our grief, to touch our pain,
He came with Love: Rejoice! Rejoice!
Peace,* 

Marsh Luther Drage
Pastor and Executive Director

2024 Program Impact

19,066 immigrants and seafarers directly benefited from SIH services (up from 18,004).

2,225 lodging nights provided to 140 seafarers in Manhattan.

13,556 seafarers were visited and counseled on 1,232 ships, receiving essentials they requested.

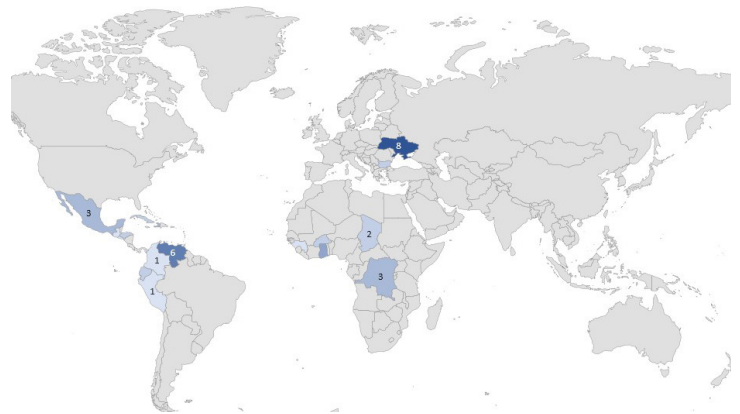
1,830 seafarers were transported to a mall or medical facilities.

3,507 seafarers, regardless of faith, received Christmas-at-Sea satchels filled with warm clothing and holiday greetings prepared by volunteers to recognize their sacrifices. Up from 3,216 last year!


33 asylum seekers received lodging for a total of 1,508 nights. They hailed from Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Chad, Colombia, Cuba, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, El Salvador, Gambia, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Peru, Ukraine, and Venezuela.

Asylee Guests by Country of Origin

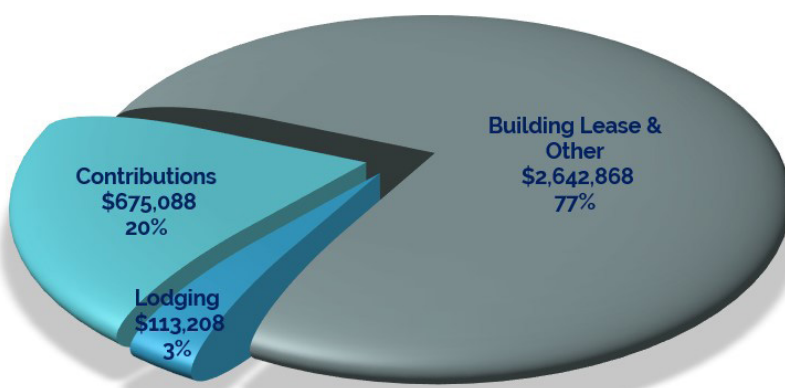
Number of Asylees 1 8



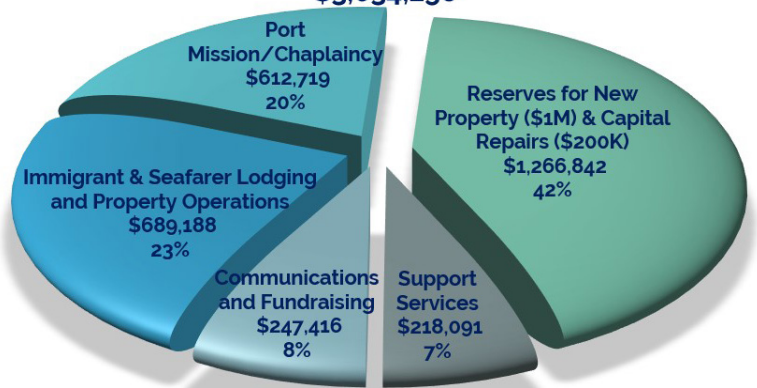
2024 FINANCIAL REPORT

In accordance with our 2024 - 2028 strategic plan, operating gains continue to help to build reserves for a new property (\$1M) with mission-based guest rooms and offices. These gains also allow for capital repairs on the guesthouse (\$200,000), which is leased to Breaking Ground, a NYC-based non-profit which provides transitional housing to the community. Lease revenue provides only a portion of necessary means to support our mission to seafarers and immigrants. Donations remain a vital pillar of income to support our services and future expansion. Program services and reserves accounted for 85% of expenses with only 15% spent on support services and fundraising. These figures reflect *unaudited revenue and expenses and are subject to change*. To request the audited 2024 financial statements please send an email to henryk@sihnyc.org. 

Operating Revenue 2024 (pre-audit)
\$3,431,164



Operating Expenses & Reserves for New Property 2024
(pre-audit)
\$3,034,256



Vitality Team
2024 Bulletin of Reports

The NC Synod Vitality was steered by former Director for Evangelical Mission Pastor Danielle DeNise. In 2024 they used books to help congregations increase their vitality. This gave congregations the ability to apply the suggestions, practices, and theological understandings from Book Studies on the life of their home congregation while cross pollinating with others from across the synod thanks to Zoom.

The Book Studies were as follows:

1. The Agile Church: Spirit-Led Innovation in an Uncertain Age
 - a. April 24 and May 20
2. When the Church Stops Working A Future for Your Congregation Beyond More Money, Programs, and Innovation
 - a. July 24 and August 15
3. Small Church Advantage: Seven Powerful Worship Practices that Work Best in Small Settings
 - a. Cancelled

The team also planned an in-person small congregations retreat called “Small, Scrappy, & Vital Congregations” for September 27 – 29 but it was postponed because of weather. The team led two MissionInsite sessions for leaders.

In Christ’s Service,

Lucille “CeCee” Mills, Assistant to the Bishop, Call Process Coordinator