

**METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON, D.C. SYNOD OF THE ELCA**  
**SYNOD COUNCIL MEETING – December 13, 2025**  
**St. Matthew’s Lutheran Church, Washington D.C.**

*St. Matthew’s Lutheran is located on the original and ancestral homelands of the Nacotchtank and Piscataway peoples. We give thanks for their presence here since time immemorial. We also wish to recognize and honor all our Indigenous siblings who have and continue to call this land their home.*

**Present:**

Bishop Phil Hirsch  
Patrick Anderson, Vice President  
Mike Gutzler, Treasurer  
Camille Trott, DC – Lay  
Pr. Judith VanOsdol, DC – Rostered  
Breeze Lawless, Fairfax - Lay  
Pr. Kelsey Kresse, Fairfax - Rostered  
Rachad Ya Ntima Esengo, Maryland – Lay  
Pr. Eric T. Randolph, Maryland - Rostered  
Anita Smallin, Montgomery - Lay  
Pr. Kari Parsons, Montgomery – Rostered  
Deborah Tyler, Virginia - Lay  
Edyn Wheeler, At-Large Young Adult  
Ethan B, At-Large Youth  
Pr. Alexander P. Stall, Jr., Potomac – Rostered

**Absent:**

Barbara Bilodeau, Secretary  
Pr. Elijah Mwitanti, Virginia – Rostered

**Synod Staff:**

Pr. Amy Sevimli

**Vacancies:**

Potomac – Lay

**Guests/facilitators:** Tyra Dennis and Sarah Weaver, ELCA Innovation

**Call to Order** Vice President Anderson called the meeting to order at 10:05am. The attendance was verified.

**Greetings and Devotions:** Opened by Bishop Hirsch with Psalm 143; I John 3:16-24. Our work and our wider mission must always be grounded in love and the truth that all our welcome in the body of Christ, and the places and spaces where we gather. We pray for God’s splendor in creation, the relationships and forgiveness into which we enter, and for the wideness of mercy God gives to the world. Concluded in singing together Hark! The Herald Angels Sing.

**Innovation: Summary of discussion**

Theologically grounded and support the people of the entire ELCA. Helping synods to think through and name new priorities, in a way that hears and values the communities we serve. Sometimes – by default -

we make decisions rooted in where we feel comfortable instead of by what is POSSIBLE (i.e. what we know we already can do instead of what we can try).

Conversation around the strength of Lutheran identity/witness (especially in regard to young adults) and the opportunities for connection/conversation between parish and community. Do we have an evolving opportunity to be more intentional and clear in how we support and nurture faith formation?

## **Council Meeting/Business**

**Moved/Seconded/Adopted: SC25.12.46** To approve the minutes of the November 1, 2025 Synod Council Meeting and the November 12, 2025 Electronic Vote.

### **1. Staff and Officer Reports**

- a. Bishop Hirsch
  - i. Roster matters - **Moved/Seconded/Adopted: SC25.12.47** to approve the following change in status:
    - That Deacon Katie Evans be called to serve as the Communications Coordinator with LuMin: Lutheran Campus Ministry Network effective April 22, 2025.
    - That the Rev. Wendy Deebe be placed On Leave from Call effective June 2, 2025.
    - That the Rev. Greg Gaertner be placed on the retired roster effective January 1, 2026.
  - ii. Bishop Hirsch discussed visioning and closer ecumenical work with the local Presbyterian diocese.
- b. Holy Closure status:
  - i. Holy Comforter: meeting is forthcoming
  - ii. Good Samaritan, Lexington Park, MD: written report provided
- c. No verbal additions were made to the written reports provided by the Treasurer, Mobility, and Youth/Family.

### **2. New Business**

- i. 2026 Synod Assembly planning- **Moved/Seconded/Adopted: SC25.12.48** to approve the following actions with regard to the 2026 Synod Assembly:
  - a. \$100 stipends will be available if requested
  - b. fees for BIPOC leaders will be provided to encourage participation
  - c. Retired rostered ministers and ministers on-leave-from-call may have both voice and vote
  - d. Fee structure will be:
    - \$150 for rostered ministers and voting members (\$125 early bird rate)
    - \$140 for voting members aged thirty and younger (\$115 early bird rate)
    - \$140 for rostered ministers who are retired (\$115 early bird rate)
    - \$150 for all visitors and rostered leaders on leave from call (\$125 early bird rate)
    - \$165 for all late and on-site registrations
- i. ByLaws for Lutheran Social Services National Capital Area
  - a. LCMS support has decided to no longer support the inclusive family work of LSSNCA.
  - b. The ELCA alone can't feasibly meet the 60% Board representation.

- c. Action will be tabled until further fact-finding and preparation for an informed vote can take place, either by an electronic vote before/at the January 2026 Council Meeting.

**The meeting adjourned** at 3:11pm

Next Scheduled Meeting: 7pm, January 21, 2026 via Zoom.

Notes for this meeting were recorded by RY Rachad Ya Ntima Esengo, in the absence of Secretary Bilodeau.

Respectfully submitted,  
Barbara A. Bilodeau  
Secretary