

2019

Bulletin of Reports

Part 1



Photo courtesy of Loretta Ishida (Ascension, Towson)

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Bulletin of Reports

The Bulletin of Reports is being electronically presented in two parts: Part 1 contains all those documents that voting members will need to have in front of them as they conduct the assembly's business, such as the agenda, resolutions and memorials, nominations, the proposed budget, etc. In an effort to go green and be good stewards of the gifts God has given us, the Bulletin of Reports is available on the synod's website, www.demdsynod.org, as of May 1, 2019. Part 2 of the Bulletin of Reports contains important information that the assembly needs for background information and to hold the officers, Synod Council and related ministries accountable. It is not information, however, that the assembly will act upon. If you plan to access information electronically, please know that high speed internet access is available in the assembly hall. We are working hard to make sure to have reliable Wi-Fi access throughout our meeting space. However, we have run into problems in the past and cannot guarantee service.

Welcome to Hunt Valley and to the
32nd Annual Assembly
of the Delaware-Maryland Synod, ELCA

General Information

- The Assembly BOOKSTORE is located outside the plenary hall, in the display area. It will be open throughout the assembly.
- DISPLAYS from various groups, organizations and vendors can be found outside the plenary hall throughout our time together. Check them out!
- There are NO MEAL TICKETS. If you purchased lunch buffet, it will be listed on your nametag. Please bring your nametag to the designated location.
- There is ASSIGNED SEATING in the Assembly Hall again this year. When you enter the Assembly Hall, please consult the seating chart that is displayed at the entrance, then locate the seats reserved for your congregation or organization.
- During registration, you will have an opportunity to sign up for the E-Letter, the synod's weekly electronic newsletter. You may also send an email to Julie Stecker in the synod office, jstecker@demdsynod.org, if you wish to sign up later.

God bless our time together!

Special Guest Introductions

Keynote Speaker



Peter Enns, professor of biblical studies at Eastern University (St. Davids, Pennsylvania), popular blogger and podcast host of *The Bible for Normal People*. He is also the author of a new book, *How the Bible Actually Works*, that argues that there is no one right way to read the Bible. Moving us beyond the damaging idea that “being right” is the most important measure of faith, Enns offers a freeing approach to Bible study that helps us focus on pursuing wisdom and building relationships with God and each other. 2 In his role as a podcast host, he regularly interviews and learns from and with a wide array of scholars, artists, theologians who work at the intersection of the ancient setting of Bible and contemporary Christian faith. He is a frequent contributor to journals and encyclopedias, and has written, edited, and contributed to nearly 20 books, including *The Sin of Certainty: Why God Desires Our Trust More than Our “Correct” Beliefs*; *The Bible Tells Me So: Why Defending Scripture Has Made Us Unable to Read It*, *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament*, and *The Evolution of Adam: What the Bible Does and Doesn’t Say about Human Origins*.

Churchwide Representative



The Rev. Walter May serves the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America as Executive for Synodical Relations in the Office of the Presiding Bishop, as well as serving as an assistant to Presiding Bishop since February 2009. In these roles, Pastor May coordinates the work of the ELCA’s Conference of Bishops and provides support to the staff and councils of the 65 synods of this church. In addition, he oversees the work of the ELCA’s Bureau for Federal Chaplaincy Ministries and serves as the ELCA’s liaison to Thrivent Financial for Lutherans.

Pastor May is a graduate of Marquette University, Milwaukee, and the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (LSTC). He earned a doctorate in pastoral care and counseling in 1996 from LSTC, one of eight seminaries of the ELCA.

Ordained in the former Lutheran Church in America, May served as pastor of Christ the Mediator Lutheran Church, Chicago, and First Lutheran Church, Cedar Rapids, Iowa. From 1996 to 2008 he was an assistant to the bishop of the ELCA Southeastern Iowa Synod, Iowa City. From October 2008 to February 2009 May served ELCA Synodical Relations as director of administration and synod support.

May and his late wife D. Christine May, former Director for Racial Justice Ministries, ELCA Multicultural Ministries, are the parents of five adult children.

Rules of Procedure for the Delaware-Maryland Synod Assembly

1. All mobile devices shall be on vibrate or silent during the assembly.
2. Registered voting members shall be seated within the bar of the assembly.
3. The privilege of voice (on any issue before the Assembly), but not vote shall be granted to:
 - a. The presiding bishop of the ELCA and such other official representatives of this church as may be designated from time to time by the Church Council;
 - b. The chairpersons of synodical mission teams and task forces who are not voting members of the Synod Assembly; and
 - c. The president or president's appointee of the synodical youth, women's and men's organizations, and those additional persons whom the Synod Assembly or the Synod Council shall from time to time designate.
4. **The privilege of voice and vote shall be granted to any leader rostered in a church body with which the ELCA is in full communion and who serves in a Delaware-Maryland Synod congregation or ministry.**
5. In addressing the chair, speakers shall use a microphone and shall identify themselves by name and congregation, agency, or institution.
6. No person shall speak more than twice on the same question, except by consent of the assembly, and only after all others have spoken.
7. **A member who has spoken on the pending question(s) may not move the previous question(s) at the conclusion of his/her speech. A motion to end debate by moving the previous question shall apply only to the immediately preceding motion. A motion to end debate on all matters on the floor or more than the immediately pending question is not in order.**
8. A member may not move previous question until the opportunity is available for five pro and five con points of view to be presented.
9. **When a substitute motion is made, secondary amendments may be offered first to the original motion. After all secondary amendments to the original motion have been disposed of, secondary amendments to the substitute motion may be offered. When all amendments to the substitute motion have been disposed of, the vote shall be taken on whether the substitute motion is to be substituted as the original motion or be rejected.**
10. The question shall be automatically called after thirty (30) minutes of debate unless the assembly consents to an extension of time.
11. In all business meetings, speeches from the floor shall be limited to two minutes.
12. All motions, other than routine ones, shall be written by the mover on forms furnished for that purpose, signed, and sent to the presiding officer, with a copy for the secretary.
13. When there are many pro and con statements on any motion, the chair will

- recognize alternately persons making a pro or con statement. This shall be done by those speaking “for” using the odd-numbered microphone and those speaking “against” using the even-numbered microphone. Those persons proposing a subsidiary motion should wait in que with a red or green card.
14. If three (3) speakers have spoken in favor of a motion with no one speaking against, the chair may proceed to call for the vote on the motion.
 15. Only voting members wearing voting member badges shall receive ballots for voting. Voting members must be seated in the boundaries of the voting member section of the plenary hall.
 16. No motion is before the house until it is stated by the chair, and no discussion shall occur without a motion before the assembly.
 17. For elections other than bishop, additional nominations may be made from the floor for all positions except for conference-cluster based positions on the Synod Council, the youth position on the Synod Council, Mission Team Leaders, and the Dean on Synod Council. Those making such nominations must:
 - a. Obtain the consent of the person being nominated.
 - b. Insure the nomination fulfills the category assigned for that purpose.
 - c. Obtain a nomination form at the Pages table and turn it in to the secretary when the nomination is presented.
 18. Amendments to the budget may not increase total expenditures. Amendments changing one line item must be reflected in an equivalent change in other line item(s) so that total expenditures remain constant. Anyone suggesting an amendment must complete a form which spells out the rationale for the proposed change. The forms can be found at the Pages table.
 19. The minutes of this Synod Assembly shall be referred to the Synod Council for certification.

Robert’s Rules of Order, latest edition, shall be the governing parliamentary procedure of this assembly, except as otherwise provided in the constitution, bylaws, and continuing resolutions of this synod and in these rules of procedure of the Synod Assembly, unless otherwise ordered by the assembly.

Synod Assembly Agenda

THURSDAY, 30 May 2019

- 8.30am-6pm Registration, Bookstore; vendors, displays, exhibits
- 10.30am Holy Communion with the Reading of the Necrology & Opening of the Assembly
Of the Land and Seasons, Creation Care Award
- 11.45am Lunch Break
- 1.30-3.30pm Business Session #1
- Opening Prayer
 - Organization of the Assembly
 - Report of the Committee on Credentials
 - Adoption of Rules of Procedure
 - Adoption of Agenda
 - Introductions and Greetings
 - Report of the Discipleship Team
 - Report of the Nominating Committee
 - Report of the Committee on Elections & First Ballot
 - Report of the Secretary of the Synod
 - Hunger Team Awards & Noisy Offering
 - Report of the Treasurer of the Synod
 - Report of the Generosity Team
 - Report of the Synod Ministry Funding Taskforce
 - Adoption of the Auditor's Report
 - Adoption of the Faith Spending Plan
 - Like a Watered Tree* Launch
 - Announcements
 - Recess
- 3.30-4pm Break – *Forward in Faith Celebration Reception*
- 4-5.15pm Theme Team & Bible Study
- 5.15pm Announcements & Instructions for Evening Activities
- 5.30pm Dinner & Evening Activities
- 9.30pm Spoken Compline

FRIDAY

- 8.30am-6pm Registration, Bookstore; vendors, displays, exhibits
- 7.00-8.15am Breakfast
- 8.00am Spoken Morning Prayer
- 8.30-10.15am Business Session #2
- Opening Prayer
 - Report of Committee on Credentials
 - Report of the Connectedness Team
 - Report of the Committee on Elections & Second Ballot
 - Theme Team & Bible Study
 - Report of Reference & Counsel Committee
 - Announcements
 - Recess

- 10.30am Worship/Installation of Pr. Christopher Otten, Assistant to the ELCA Presiding Bishop
Gospel Worship
- 11.45am Lunch Break
Ministerial Anniversary Recognition Luncheon
- 1.30pm-3pm Business Session #3
 Opening Prayer
 Report of the Committee on Credentials
 Report of the Communication Team
 Report Reference & Counsel Committee
 Report of the Bishop
 Recess
- 3-3.30pm Break
- 3.30-5.30pm Business Session #4
 Opening Prayer
 Report of Committee on Credentials
 Report of the Leadership Team
 Report of the Committee on Elections
 Greetings from the ELCA Church Council
 Theme Team
 Announcements/Directions for Evening Activities
 Recess
- 5.30-7.30pm Dinner
- 7.30-8.30pm Theme Team Keynote – Peter Enns
- 8.30-9.00pm Conversation
- 9.00pm Spoken Compline

SATURDAY

- 8.30am-10am Registration, Bookstore; vendors, displays, exhibits
- 7.00-8.15am Breakfast
- 8.00am Spoken Morning Prayer
- 8.30am Business Session #5
 Opening Prayer
 Report of Committee on Credentials
 Report of the Vice President of the Synod
 Greetings from the Lutheran Youth Organization
 Report of the ELCA Representative
 Report Reference & Counsel Committee
 Unfinished Business
 Recess
- 11.00-12.00pm Closing Worship with Theme Team Commissioning, Welcoming Bishop Claire Burkat
& the Closing of the Assembly
LYO Music Team – Blended Worship

Memorials and Resolutions

Memorial 2019-1: Creating a Task Force to Create a New Document Related to the Expectations of Leaders in this Church

WHEREAS, the Conference of Bishops and Churchwide organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) discerned a pastoral need to address both the deficiencies of *Vision and Expectations* and the ways in which this document has been applied in the life of this Church; and

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is an interdependent church where “each expression of this church—churchwide, synod, and congregation—is held together in a relationship of interdependence that encourages each to respond to its context” (Secretary Wm Chris Boerger, Introduction to Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, August 18, 2016 4-2018, pg. 9);

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Delaware-Maryland Synod Assembly memorialize the 2019 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to call for the creation of a task force comprising members of the Church Council and Conference of Bishops as well as pastors, deacons, and lay members of this Church, with a majority of this task force being persons who self-identify as LGBTQIA+, persons of color, persons with disabilities, and/or persons whose first language is other than English; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Delaware-Maryland Synod Assembly memorialize the 2019 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to charge this taskforce to discern and propose an inclusive process in the creation of a new document regarding the vision and expectations of rostered leaders to replace the current *Vision and Expectations*, reflecting the interdependence of this Church to discern faithful ways forward; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Delaware-Maryland Synod Assembly memorialize the 2019 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to request that the proposed process be reported to the Church Council for review and comment, giving an appropriate amount of time so all voices are heard, and in keeping with the goal of having a new draft document to present to the Church Council in the fall of 2020.

Submitted by:

The Rev. Jason Chesnut
The Rev. Jason R. Churchill
The Rev. Seminarian Tamika Jancewicz
The Rev. Lauren Muratore
The Rev. Lura Groen

Amazing Grace Lutheran Church, Baltimore
St. Stephen’s Lutheran Church, Wilmington
First Evangelical Lutheran Church, Ellicott City
Salem Evangelical Lutheran Church, Baltimore
Grace Lutheran Church, Lutherville

Memorial 2019-2: A Resolution on Gun Violence

WHEREAS deliberate acts to harm or kill innocent people are not God’s intention for human community, as commanded in Exodus 20:13, “You shall not kill.”; and

WHEREAS Jesus teaches us in Matthew 5:38-39 to respond to violence in restorative ways: “If anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other one also...”; and

WHEREAS gun violence in the USA has included recent mass shootings in Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh, Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, First Baptist Church in Southerland Springs, Texas, a music festival in Las Vegas Nevada, Pulse Nightclub in Orlando, Florida, and many other places where the innocent were murdered with assault rifles¹; and

WHEREAS every day, 318 Americans are shot and 96 die from their wounds² with the marginalized population twice as likely to die from gun violence³; and

WHEREAS regarding the Second Amendment, which states that “A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed”, the Supreme Court has declared that “The Court’s opinion should not be taken to cast doubt on longstanding prohibitions on the possession of firearms by felons and the mentally ill, or laws forbidding the carrying of firearms in sensitive places such as schools and government buildings, or laws imposing conditions and qualifications on the commercial sale of arms.”⁴; and

WHEREAS according to Lutheran theology, government is responsible under God to protect its citizens, and as citizens in a democracy, we have the responsibility to hold government accountable for this protection by seeking changes in policies and practices toward these ends⁵; and

WHEREAS in 1993, the ELCA Churchwide Assembly adopted a resolution to “communicate to Congress and the President of the United States the urgent concern of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America regarding the violence associated with the widespread availability of handguns and military assault weapons...to call upon congregations, synods, and appropriate agencies to work for the passage and strict enforcement of local, state, and national

¹ According to Merriam-Webster dictionary, an assault rifle is any of various intermediate-range, magazine fed military rifles (such as the AK-47) that can be set for automatic or semiautomatic fire; also: a rifle that resembles a military assault rifle but is designed to allow only semiautomatic fire.

² Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence. 2018. “Key gun violence statistics.” www.bradycampaign.org.

³ Ferdman, R.A. 2016. “The racial divide in America’s gun violence.” *The Washington Post*.

⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Amendment_to_the_United_States_Constitution#District_of_Columbia

⁵ ELCA Conference of Bishops. 2018. Statement of support for March for Our Lives on March 24. www.elca.org.

legislation as appropriate, that rigidly controls the manufacture, importation, exportation, sale, purchase, transfer, receipt, possession of handguns, assault weapons, and assault-like weapons and their parts, excluding rifles and shotguns used for hunting and sporting purposes, for use other than law enforcement and military purposes.”⁶; and

WHEREAS twenty-five years after the ELCA Churchwide Assembly passed CA93.06.10, more than 30,000 people die and more than 70,000 are injured by guns in the USA annually⁷ as gun violence continues to plague our nation, particularly as it relates to the disproportionate loss of life among those marginalized and the mass murders of our most vulnerable citizens;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Delaware-Maryland Synod of the ELCA advocate with lawmakers on a local and national level to create and pass gun laws that save lives, such as: banning semi-automatic weapons that fire high-velocity rounds, banning accessories that simulate automatic weapons, establishing a database of gun sales and universal background checks, closing gun show and secondhand sales loopholes, raising the firearm purchase age to 21, dedicating more funds to mental health research and professionals, and increasing funding for school security; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Delaware-Maryland Synod of the ELCA request our Synod Bishop to appoint a task force of rostered leaders and lay leaders that will convene to provide resources and guidance to congregations and other ministries on how to address gun violence and assist those who are victims of gun violence; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Delaware-Maryland Synod of the ELCA memorialize the 2019 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to advocate with lawmakers on a local and national level to create and pass gun laws that save lives, such as: banning semi-automatic weapons that fire high-velocity rounds, banning accessories that simulate automatic weapons, establishing a database of gun sales and universal background checks, closing gun show and secondhand sales loopholes, raising the firearm purchase age to 21, dedicating more funds to mental health research and professionals, and increasing funding for school security.

Submitted by:
Hermann Engelhardt,

Christ Lutheran Church, LaVale

⁶ CA93.06.10. 1993. Community Violence—Gun Control. Social Policy Resolution. www.elca.org.

⁷ Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence. 2018. “Key gun violence statistics” www.bradycampaign.org

Memorial 2019-3: Portico Benefits for Churchwide Staff

WHEREAS, healthcare coverage is a necessity in these times; and

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), in cost-cutting measures, took away the insurance coverage of spouses/families of ELCA Churchwide employees and reduced the coverage of ELCA Churchwide employees from gold status to the level of silver status in early 2019; and

WHEREAS, the compensation of ELCA Churchwide employees is adequate but not commensurate with the pay of personnel in the public sector and in similar positions of responsibility there; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA needs to maintain top-notch, high caliber employees for the benefit of the ELCA and continuity among programming directions and needs; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA's treatment of its employees serves as a model for synods and individual congregations and their provision for rostered persons and church workers;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Delaware-Maryland Synod memorialize the ELCA Churchwide Assembly to restore the Portico insurance coverage to the spouses of ELCA Churchwide employees effective immediately; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Delaware-Maryland Synod memorialize the ELCA Churchwide Assembly to restore the Portico coverage to the original gold status level of coverage for Churchwide employees.

Sponsored by the rostered persons in the Westminster Conference, DE-MD Synod, ELCA
11 April 2019.

Reference & Counsel Recommendation: No recommendation.

Resolution 2019-1: Becoming a Reconciling in Christ Synod

WHEREAS, the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* clearly proclaim that “this church, in faithfulness to the Gospel, is committed to be an inclusive church in the midst of division in society,” and that “the congregations, synods, and churchwide units of this church shall seek to exhibit the inclusive unity that is God’s will for the Church” (5.01b); and

WHEREAS, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and in the name of Jesus, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (“the ELCA”) and the Delaware-Maryland Synod (“the synod”) share an ongoing commitment to justice work in the world and communities in which we live; and that ongoing commitment to justice work necessarily includes justice and advocacy work alongside people from historically marginalized communities; and

WHEREAS, in baptism without stipulations or conditions we have been made new; and through communion, the very sacraments that proclaim that same unconditional grace to the world, we find ourselves united as many different members of the one body of Christ; and

WHEREAS, the communities of the synod have experienced the magnificent and outrageous welcome of God and have tasted the free gifts of God's unconditional grace; and God’s outrageous and unconditional welcome has transformed us;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the synod shall, in faithfulness to the continued and pressing need for the church, in all of its varied and faithful expressions, to extend a specific welcome to historically marginalized people and communities, adopt the following as their official statement of welcome as a Reconciled in Christ synod:

“The Delaware-Maryland Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America welcomes all into the fullness of God’s love. This welcome is inclusive of people of every race, national origin, immigration status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, physical or mental ability, sex, political perspective or socio-economic status. Rather than using our differences to divide us, we pledge to use our differences as gifts for our work together;” and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the synod candidacy committee provide seminarians and those going through the candidacy process with accompaniment resources, including referral to Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries’ *The Mysteries of the Ages: a handy guide for LGBTQIA+ people exploring or preparing for rostered ministry in the ELCA*, and that the synod provide workshop-style inclusivity training for synod staff, candidacy committee members, Synod Council members, conference deans, and other rostered and non-rostered leaders who

desire to participate in such training. Newly hired and/or newly called synod staff persons would be expected to participate in such training events when they are next offered. Such trainings should be similar to (but would not be limited to) the *Building an Inclusive Church* training as offered by ReconcilingWorks: Lutherans for Full Participation. Such trainings shall occur at least every four years, or upon the election of a new bishop; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the congregations and other ministry sites of this synod shall be encouraged to become Reconciling in Christ, making use of such appropriate materials for their study and deliberation as are available from ReconcilingWorks: Lutherans for Full Participation. Likewise, a copy of this resolution shall be forwarded by the Office of the Bishop to ReconcilingWorks: Lutherans for Full Participation.

Submitted by:

The Rev. Dr. Nancy Kraft
The Rev. T. Stewart Lucas
The Rev. Chris Schaefer

Ascension Lutheran Church, Towson
Church of the Nativity and Holy Comforter, Baltimore
Divinity Lutheran Church, Towson

Recommendation from Reference & Counsel: Positive

Resolution 2019-2: Global Church Sunday

WHEREAS, as Christians we understand that we are joined together in a holy communion that crosses borders, barriers, and boundaries and extends through space and time to all the people of God, and

WHEREAS, as we are taught in Ephesians “there is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all” (Eph. 4:4-6, NRSV), and

WHEREAS, our synod has Companion Church relationships with the Mara Diocese of Tanzania, the Tampere Diocese of Finland, and the Estonian Lutheran Church, and

WHEREAS, as a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), the Delaware-Maryland Synod is joined in partnership with churches and fellowships around the world, including being a member of the World Council of Churches and the Lutheran World Federation, and

WHEREAS, several congregations throughout the synod have longstanding partnerships with congregations in various countries in addition to our official synodical Companion Churches, and

WHEREAS, we are committed to pray for and support global action and justice through several denominational, ecumenical, and inter-faith agencies;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Delaware-Maryland Synod ELCA Assembly encourages its congregations to set aside congregational time for a Global Church Sunday to be held in 2020 on the last Sunday of January – January 26, 2020 or another time more convenient to the congregation; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a Global Church Sunday bring attention and seek prayer for all of the relationships listed above and may be incorporated in worship, educational opportunities, special speakers, music, or other means that are reasonable at the discretion of the congregation. Members of the Companion Synod Task Forces for Finland & Estonia, and Tanzania would be resources to help plan such a program; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that consideration be given to make a special offering to a ministry that supports the ministry and mission of the church worldwide. Some suggestions might include Young Adults in Global Mission, the ELCA Global

Church Sponsorship program, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service,
Lutheran World Relief, or ELCA World Hunger; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that members of our congregations commit themselves to finding out more about the work of the church around the world, and incorporating that into their ministry and prayer life, recognizing that we share a holy fellowship made possible in Christ, and that is lived out as a global community on this planet Earth.

Submitted by:

The Rev. Joseph Lettrich

The Rev. Charles H. Zang

Carol Lettrich

Dr. Guy Davis

Carole Conors

St. John's Lutheran, Westminster, MD

Chair, Estonia & Finland Task Force

Co-Chair, Tanzania Task Force

St. John Leisters Church, Westminster MD

Salem Lutheran Church, Catonsville, MD

St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Baltimore, MD

Reference & Counsel Recommendation: Positive.

Resolution 2019-3: Concerning Congregational Advocacy

WHEREAS, we are a Church that shares a living, daring confidence in God’s grace; and

WHEREAS, Lutheranism has a long history of active public life; and

WHEREAS, efforts are now underway to rejuvenate the Public Policy offices in Delaware and Maryland; and

WHEREAS, our country’s division on social issues negatively affects the lives of millions of people; and

WHEREAS, we as Christians are called to be peacemakers and a light to the nations; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA constitution states: “Consistent with the faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, every ordained minister shall: speak publicly to the world in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, calling for justice and proclaiming God’s love for the world” (u.31.12.a.7); and

WHEREAS, our voices can make a difference in determining the future policies of Delaware and Maryland, as well as the United States;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that all congregations in the Delaware-Maryland Synod (“the synod”) be encouraged to keep their members informed on current state and national public policy by having at least one, but not limited to one, member to serve as a congregational advocate; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Public Policy Offices shall provide training for these advocates; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Congregation Councils be requested to encourage the members of the Delaware-Maryland Synod to participate fully in public life by voting and by regularly contacting their state & federal representatives and sharing their opinions on pending legislation.

Submitted by:

The Rev. Gordon Simmons
The Rev. Melissa Lemons
The Rev. Jason Churchill

Delaware Lutheran State Public Policy Officer
Unity Church, Wilmington
St. Stephen’s Lutheran Church, Wilmington

Reference & Counsel Recommendation: Positive.

Resolution 2019-4: World Hunger

- WHEREAS, more than 820 million people in our world live in poverty and face constant “food insecurity,* 1.2 billion live in extreme poverty, and 40 million people in the United States live in poverty, which means they have an annual income of less than \$25,094 in a family of four;** and
- WHEREAS, globally, an average of 15,000 children under the age of five years old die each day due to malnutrition; *** and
- WHEREAS, our Lord Jesus Christ teaches that we are to see and serve Him in the lives of those who are the “least of these” (Matthew 25)” until “all are fed,” (an ELCA Hunger Program theme!); and
- WHEREAS, God has gifted our Church with a very effective ministry, the ELCA World Hunger Program, which is committed to combat and help reduce hunger and poverty and which serves Christ and his people in fifty-six countries and throughout forty-three of our fifty states, totaling \$23 million in program funding in 2018; and
- WHEREAS, the ELCA World Hunger Program through its Domestic Hunger Program (DHP) has given several grants in recent years to support hunger ministries throughout our synod, including Lutheran Community Services (Wilmington), the Open Kettle (via St. Peter’s, Ocean City), the Interfaith Food Pantry (Cumberland) Manna House (Baltimore, Md), the Rosedale Food Pantry (via Prince of Peace, Rosedale), the Frederick Rescue Mission, the Light House Shelter (Annapolis), and most recently a three year grant for \$6,000 per year to fund the feeding ministries at Amazing Grace Lutheran Church (Baltimore); and
- WHEREAS, the ELCA World Hunger Program responds to hunger and poverty in the U.S. and globally by providing direct relief addressing root causes through a comprehensive program of education, advocacy, sustainable development, community organizing and networking to help people overcome poverty; and
- WHEREAS, great progress has been made by churches other not-for-profits and governments to help reduce hunger and poverty, such that in 1970 (when Lutheran World Hunger Programs began) 1 in 4 persons world-wide were “food insecure ,” and today that number has been reduced to 1 in 8; and
- WHEREAS, the Delaware-Maryland Synod has been inspired by God to be a strong contributor to the ELCA World Hunger Program (\$300,276 in 2018) and \$1.79 million to local and ELCA Hunger needs during our Forward in Faith Campaign; and

WHEREAS, the synod also is greatly committed to local and regional hunger ministries, including the recent emphasis by the Hunger Task Force to provide matching grants for mass meal assemblies and a mini-grant project with several synod churches and agencies participating, combating hunger in Maryland and Delaware; and

WHEREAS, more and more of our synod churches are participating in supporting the ELCA World Hunger Program, and now approximately 50% of our synod congregations did so in 2018;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the congregations of the Delaware-Maryland Synod prayerfully recommit themselves to support Christ's ministry of mercy and empowerment through the ELCA World Hunger Program; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that our Synod work to increase its congregational support of this ELCA ministry, increasing church participation from 50% to 75% through the Synod Years 2019 and 2020, ending in January, 2021; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Christ the King Sunday in 2019 and 2020 be designated as our synod's ELCA World Hunger Sundays, and that all churches be encouraged to uplift and support this ministry on those days each year (Or select another Sunday).

* Food and Agriculture Org. of the United Nations, 2018

** *U.S. Census Bureau, 2018;*

*** WHO - World Health Organization, 2016

Respectively Submitted:

The Rev. Fred Melton	Chair- Delaware Maryland Synod Hunger Task Force
Dr .Paul Walker, Hunger Task Force	St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Baltimore
Jean Warren, Hunger Task Force	Grace Lutheran Church, Hockessin
The Rev. Tormod Svensson, Hunger Task Force	Christ Lutheran Church, LaVale
Austin Lee, Hunger Task Force	St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Baltimore
LaSonia King, Hunger Task Force	Christ Lutheran Church, Baltimore
Clare Archer	Light of Christ Lutheran Church, New Market
The Rev. Robert Schmitt	St. John & St. Paul Lutheran Churches, Baltimore
The Rev. David Asendorf	Salem Lutheran Church, Catonsville
The Rev. Susan Tjornehoj	Christ Lutheran Church, Baltimore
The Rev. Kathy Ierien	The Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, Wilmington
The Rev. Kati Kluckman-Ault	Rejoice Fellowship, Glen Burnie
The Rev. Patrick Downes	St. Philip's Lutheran Church, Wilmington

The Rev. Kevin Clementson
The Rev. Jason Churchill

The Rev. Matthew Fuhrman

Grace Lutheran Church, Westminster
St. Stephen's Lutheran Church,
Wilmington
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Rosedale

Reference & Counsel Recommendation: No recommendation.

Synod Council

Secretary's Report

Nancy Gordon

The duties of the office of secretary have been performed in accordance with the requirements of the synod's Constitution and Bylaws. All minutes of the synod council and the executive committee, upon approval, are regularly placed into the archives of the synod.

Recommendation: That two copies of the Minutes of the 2018 Synod Assembly of the Delaware-Maryland Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, as certified by the synod council, be approved as the official record of the 2018 Synod Assembly and deposited in the archives of the synod.

Treasurer
2019 Faith Spending Plan

				Proposed Period ending Jan 31, 2021	Approved SY2019
			SY2020		
Line #	Income				
1	Congregation Mission Support		100.0%	\$1,840,000	\$2,000,000
2	ELCA Mission Support		47.0%	\$864,800	\$1,000,000
				-----	-----
3	Synod Portion		53.0%	\$975,200	\$1,000,000
	Other Revenue				
4	Draw on Income from Invested Funds		\$100,000		\$120,000
	Synod Funding Income		\$160,000		\$0
5	ELCA Subsidies and Grants		\$14,000		\$14,000
6	Non-Restricted Funds		\$60,000		\$60,000
7	ELCA Psych Evaluations Reimbursement *		\$4,000		\$4,000
8	Self Supporting Synod Events *		\$15,000		\$15,000
9	Synod Assembly *		\$80,000		\$80,000
10		Total Other Revenue		\$433,000	\$293,000
11				-----	-----
12	Anticipated Draw from General Fund Balance			\$0	\$0
13				-----	-----
14		Available for Ministry		\$1,408,200	\$1,293,000
15	Expenses				
16					
17	Discipleship				
18	Support for New/Renewing Congregations		\$42,500		\$60,000
19	Support for Exploring New Mission Starts		\$25,000		\$0
19	Youth and Family Ministries		\$22,500		\$22,500
20	Program and Operating Expenses		\$2,700		\$2,700
21		Total Discipleship		\$92,700	\$85,200
22	Connectedness				
23	Campus Ministries		\$129,000		\$123,000
24	African Descent Strategy		\$9,000		\$18,000
26	Lutheran Development Alliance		\$10,250		\$10,250

27	Mar-Lu-Ridge Camping and Retreat Center		\$10,350		\$10,350
28	Central Maryland Ecumenical Council		\$3,240		\$3,240
29	Hunger and Mission Force		\$810		\$810
30	Lutheran Community Services		\$450		\$450
31	Hilltop Lutheran Neighborhood Center		\$450		\$450
32	Program and Operating Expenses		\$2,700		\$2,700
33		Total Connectedness		\$166,250	\$169,250
34	Communications				
35	Synod Communications (SynComm)		\$7,750		\$7,750
36	Network Administration		\$10,000		\$10,000
37		Total Communications		\$17,750	\$17,750
38	Leadership				
39	Candidacy/Seminarians/Psych Evals *		\$11,000		\$11,000
40	Leadership Development (combined leadership events) *		\$8,000		\$11,000
41	United Lutheran Seminary (formerly LTGS)		\$72,000		\$72,000
42	Region 8 Office/Archives/First Call		\$12,000		\$5,000
43	Program and Operating Expenses		\$4,000		\$5,000
44	Practice Discipleship Support/Young Adults		\$7,500		\$2,500
45		Total Leadership		\$114,500	\$106,500
46	Staffing				
47	Salaries, Pension, Benefits, All Staff		543,900		\$588,565
48	Social Security & Medicare, All Staff		28,000		\$29,755
49	Staff Continuing Education/Book Allowance		5,000		\$4,500
50		Total Staffing		\$576,900	\$622,820
51	Operations				
52	Office Space		78,000		\$69,000
53	Synod Office (Phone/Supplies/Postage)		40,000		\$24,300
54	Program and Operating Expenses		5,100		\$10,000
55	Synod Worship Action team		1,800		\$1,800
56	Insurance		12,000		\$14,000
57	Audit		13,000		\$10,000
58	Equipment Lease		15,500		\$18,000
59	Travel		57,500		\$49,880
60	Staff Workshops & Retreat		3,500		\$2,700

61	Mutual Ministry Expenses		500		\$450
62	Bank/Credit Card/Payroll Svc Expenses		5,200		\$4,000
63	Synod Council Program and Operating		11,000		\$6,000
64	Conference of Deans Program & Operating Expenses		17,000		\$1,350
	Associate for Donor Relations		100,000		\$0
66	Synod Assembly *		80,000		\$80,000
67		Total Operations		\$440,100	\$291,480
68				-----	-----
69		Proposed Ministry Expenses		\$1,408,200	\$1,293,000
70		Difference Income/Expense		\$0	\$0

2018 Faith Spending Plan

	YEAR ENDING JANUARY 2019					
	Annual Budget	JAN 2019 Monthly Actual	Feb 1 2018 to Jan 31, 2019	2018 YTD Budget	YTD Over/(Under) Budget	2017 YTD Actual
Income						
Congregational Mission Support - ELCA	\$1,000,000	\$109,733	\$920,702	1,000,000	-\$79,298	\$929,937
Draw on Income from Invested Funds	\$100,000	\$8,843	\$110,128	100,000	\$10,128	\$104,506
ELCA Subsidies and Grants	\$10,000	\$1,706	\$5,706	10,000	-\$4,294	\$30,050
Misc Receipts	\$1,000	\$12,871	\$10,231	1,000	\$9,231	\$326,958
ELCA Psych Evaluations and Reimbursements	\$4,000			4,000	-\$4,000	
Capital Campaign Funding of Evaluations	\$7,000			7,000	-\$7,000	
Self Supporting Synod Events	\$22,000	-\$3,040	\$16,897	22,000	-\$5,103	\$16,548
Synod Assembly	\$80,000		\$83,672	80,000	\$3,672	\$81,873
Anticipated Draw from General Fund Balance	\$18,377	\$0	\$0	18,377	-\$18,377	
Total Revenues	\$1,242,377	\$130,113	\$1,147,336	1,242,377	-\$95,041	\$1,489,872

Expenses						
Discipleship						
Support for New/Renewing Congregation	\$54,000	\$7,495	\$50,114	54,000	-\$3,886	
Youth and Family Ministry/Young Adults	\$22,500	\$60	\$671	22,500	-\$21,829	
Program and Operating Expenses	\$2,700		\$0	2,700	-\$2,700	
LEAD Cohort Support		\$0	\$0		\$0	
Total Discipleship	\$79,200	\$7,555	\$50,785	79,200	-\$28,415	\$62,557
Connectedness						
Campus Ministries	\$123,000	\$10,250	\$123,000	123,000	\$0	
African Descent Strategy Coordinator	\$18,000	\$1,500	\$18,000	18,000	\$0	
ReKindle	\$500			500	-\$500	
Lutheran Development Alliance	\$9,000	\$0	\$9,396	9,000	\$396	
Mar-Lu-Ridge Camping and Retreat Center	\$10,350	\$863	\$10,350	10,350	\$0	
Central Maryland Ecumenical Council	\$3,240	\$270	\$3,240	3,240	\$0	
Hunger and Mission Force	\$810			810	-\$810	
Lutheran Community Services	\$450			450	-\$450	
Hilltop Lutheran Neighborhood Center	\$450			450	-\$450	
Program and Operating Expenses	\$2,700			2,700	-\$2,700	
Other			\$450		\$450	
Total Connectedness	\$168,500	\$12,883	\$164,436	168,500	-\$4,064	\$146,645
Communications						
Synod Communications (Syn Comm)	\$6,750			6,750	-\$6,750	
Network Administration	\$9,900	\$0	\$3,655	9,900	-\$6,245	
Total Communications	\$16,650	\$0	\$3,655	16,650	-\$12,995	\$24,932

Leadership						
Candidacy/Seminarians/Psych Evaluations	\$11,000		\$2,524	11,000	-\$8,476	
Leadership Development (comb Ldrship Events)	\$22,000	\$0	\$22,730	22,000	\$730	
Lutheran Theological Seimary at Gettysburg	\$72,000	\$6,000	\$72,000	72,000	\$0	
Region 8 Office/Archives/First Call	\$12,600	\$0	\$8,791	12,600	-\$3,809	
Program and Operating Expenses	\$3,000	\$0	\$847	3,000	-\$2,153	
Total Leadership	\$120,600	\$6,000	\$106,892	120,600	-\$13,708	\$88,351
Staffing						
Staff Salaries	\$419,050	\$42,905	\$513,013	419,050	\$93,963	
Pension & Benefits, All Staff	\$100,267	\$16,223	\$182,046	100,267	\$81,779	
Social Security & Medicare, All Staff	\$14,010	\$2,532	\$32,270	14,010	\$18,260	
Staff Continuing Education/Book Allowance	\$4,500	\$1,500	\$3,101	4,500	-\$1,399	
DEM pass thru		\$0	-\$138,358		-\$138,358	
Total Staffing	\$537,827	\$63,160	\$592,072	537,827	\$54,245	\$622,485
Operations						
Office Space	\$69,000	\$5,625	\$61,409	69,000	-\$7,591	
Synod Office (Phone/Supplies/Postage)	\$24,300	\$4,531	\$44,460	24,300	\$20,160	
Program and Operating Expenses	\$10,000	\$5,617	\$10,550	10,000	\$550	
Synod Worship Action Team	\$1,800			1,800	-\$1,800	
Insurance	\$14,000	\$0	\$10,977	14,000	-\$3,023	
Audit	\$10,000		\$11,500	10,000	\$1,500	
Equipment Lease	\$18,000	\$704	\$15,577	18,000	-\$2,423	
Staff Travel	\$53,000	\$6,345	\$74,379	53,000	\$21,379	
Staff Workshops and Retreat	\$2,700		\$16	2,700	-\$2,684	
Mutual Ministry Expenses	\$450			450	-\$450	

Bank/Credit Card/Payroll Svc Expenses	\$4,000	\$782	\$8,989	4,000	\$4,989	
Synod Council Program and Operating	\$6,000	\$982	\$12,587	6,000	\$6,587	
Conference of Deans Program & Operating	\$1,350	\$159	\$19,545	1,350	\$18,195	
Synod Assembly	\$80,000	\$65	\$82,803	80,000	\$2,803	
Always Being Made New Campaign	\$25,000		\$20,000	25,000	-\$5,000	
Total Operations	\$319,600	\$24,810	\$372,792	319,600	\$53,192	\$444,161
Total Expenses	\$1,242,377	\$114,408	\$1,290,632	1,242,377	\$48,255	\$1,389,131
NET INCOME		\$15,705	-\$143,296			\$100,741
NOTES:						
YEAR TO DATE EXPENSES ARE GREATER THAN REVENUE						
Highlighted Numbers Reflect Overbudget Amounts						
Year to Date Revenue is Under Budget by \$95,041						
Year to Date Expenses are Over Budget by \$48,255						
Monthly and Year to Date Amount includes monthly withdraw of \$8835 to be attributed to Faith Spending Plan Budget per Synod Council						
Comparison 2017 Budget Totals in Categories best matched to 2018 Categories						

2018 Forward in Faith Budget

Forward in Faith Expenses - JANUARY 2019						
Fiscal Year Feb 2018-Jan 2019						
	<u>Annual Budget</u>	<u>January 2019 Monthly Actual</u>	<u>Feb 1 2018 to Jan 31, 2019</u>	<u>2018 YTD Budget</u>	<u>YTD Over/(Under) Budget</u>	<u>Comments</u>
Discipleship						
Support for New/Renewing Congregation	\$72,500		\$102,887	\$72,500	\$30,387	
Youth and Family Ministry/Young Adults	\$17,500		\$0	\$17,500	-\$17,500	
Program and Operating Expenses	\$17,300		\$0	\$17,300	-\$17,300	

LEAD Cohort Support (1)	\$50,000		\$108,129	\$50,000	\$58,129	Income Offset Below
Catalyst Grants	\$50,000		\$12,975	\$50,000	-\$37,025	
Communications Support (Writer/Videographer)	\$10,000		\$7,439	\$10,000	-\$2,561	
Discipleship Forums	\$5,000			\$5,000	-\$5,000	
Total Discipleship	\$222,300	\$0	\$231,430	\$222,300	\$9,130	
<u>Connectedness</u>						
Mar-Lu Ridge	\$0		\$30,000	\$0	\$30,000	
Program and Operating Expenses	\$25,000			\$25,000	-\$25,000	
Total Connectedness	\$25,000	\$0	\$30,000	\$25,000	\$5,000	
<u>Communications</u>						
Worship Technology	\$5,000			\$5,000	-\$5,000	
Website Redesign	\$10,000		\$5,194	\$10,000	-\$4,806	
Total Communications	\$15,000	\$0	\$5,194	\$15,000	-\$9,806	
<u>Leadership</u>						
Candidacy/Seminarians /Psych Evaluations	\$10,000		\$4,500	\$10,000	-\$5,500	
Leadership Development (comb Ldrship Events) (2)	\$10,000		\$4,777	\$10,000	-\$5,223	Income Offset Below
Program and Operating Expenses	\$2,000			\$2,000	-\$2,000	
Practice Discipleship Support	\$5,000		\$3,781	\$5,000	-\$1,219	
Coaches	\$5,000		\$2,928	\$5,000	-\$2,072	
Interim Ministers Support	\$1,000			\$1,000	-\$1,000	
Bishop Leadership Days	\$5,000			\$5,000	-\$5,000	
Lay Ministry Celebration Event	\$3,000			\$3,000	-\$3,000	
Healthy Leaders (Chaplin Support)	\$10,000			\$10,000	-\$10,000	
Leadership Development Director	\$10,000		\$9,067	\$10,000	-\$933	

		10100 · PNC 5565049306 (Checking)	23.84
		10110 · PNC Bishop's Discretionary Fund	9,338.60
		10400 · PNC 5565337375 (Savings)	55,281.53
		Total Checking/Savings	113,704.30
		Total Current Assets	113,704.30
		Fixed Assets	
		15100 · Furniture & Fixtures	
		15110 · Furniture & Fixtures	37,743.60
		Total 15100 · Furniture & Fixtures	37,743.60
		15200 · Equipment	
		15210 · Computer Equipment	35,418.54
		Total 15200 · Equipment	35,418.54
		15300 · Autos	
		15310 · Synod Auto	24,668.63
		Total 15300 · Autos	24,668.63
		15400 · Property	
		15410 · Leasehold Improvements	74,684.35
		Total 15400 · Property	74,684.35
		15900 · Accum Depr - Fixed Assets	-115,949.34
		Total Fixed Assets	56,565.78
		Other Assets	
		17000 · Deferred Expenses - Building	
		17300 · Lord of Life - Edgewood	
		17320 · Lord of Life - Expenses	1,990.05
		Total 17300 · Lord of Life - Edgewood	1,990.05
		17200 · Our Savior - Lansdowne	
		17220 · Our Savior - Expenses	25,780.57
		17210 · Our Savior - Deposits	-570.00
		Total 17200 · Our Savior - Lansdowne	25,210.57
		17100 · Emmanuel	
		17120 · Emmanuel - Expenses	61,859.12
		17110 · Emmanuel - Deposits	-83,716.75
		Total 17100 · Emmanuel	-21,857.63
		Total 17000 · Deferred Expenses - Building	5,342.99
		12000 · Receivables	
		12100 · Loans - Synod Mission Fund	
		12111 · Amazing Grace	7,000.00
		Total 12100 · Loans - Synod Mission Fund	7,000.00

		12200 · Loans - Other		
		12214 · Peoples Demand Note		5,507.50
		Total 12200 · Loans - Other		5,507.50
		Total 12000 · Receivables		12,507.50
		13100 · Deposits & Prepaids		
		13103 · Deposit - Assembly		3,400.00
		13101 · Security Dep - Harbour Ct		10,354.50
		13102 · Prepaid Expenses		13,006.00
		Total 13100 · Deposits & Prepaids		26,760.50
		14000 · Investments		
		14010 · Mission Fund - due 10/19		152,095.89
		14020 · Schwab/Passive Capital		2,199,034.47
		Total 14000 · Investments		2,351,130.36
		Total Other Assets		2,395,741.35
		TOTAL ASSETS		2,566,011.43
		LIABILITIES & EQUITY		
		Liabilities		
		Current Liabilities		
		Other Current Liabilities		
		21000 · Payables		
		21100 · Payroll Liabilities		50.08
		21110 · Portico Liabilities		-293.54
		Total 21000 · Payables		-243.46
		Total Other Current Liabilities		-243.46
		Total Current Liabilities		-243.46
		Total Liabilities		-243.46
		Equity		
		31000 · Unrestricted Funds		
		31100 · General Operating Fund		
		31104 · Creation Care		1,988.24
		31105 · Hunger Project		3,673.19
		31100 · General Operating Fund - Other		274,744.85
		Total 31100 · General Operating Fund		280,406.28
		31204 · Practice Discipleship		415.62
		31206 · Colehower Endowment Fund		453,096.04
		31210 · Frederick Indian F'ship		-2,000.00
		31214 · CLAIM		1,472.05
		31222 · Bishops Emergency Asst Fund		6,282.34

		31224 · Tree of Life	1,601.70
		31228 · The Network (from Our Shepherd)	13,400.25
		31230 · DAART	338.41
		31232 · Racial Justice Ministry Team	14,404.04
		31301 · SLATE	26,863.31
		31501 · Sinclair Lane	88,262.94
		31600 · Mission Fund	1,821,713.90
		Total 31000 · Unrestricted Funds	2,706,256.88
		32000 · Temp Restricted Funds	
		32310 · Cory Stuart Scholarship Fund	6,494.52
		32312 · Seminar'n Support/Scholar'p Fnd	7,030.19
		32313 · Seminarian Support Endowment	555.00
		32314 · Estonia Synod Fund	3,653.73
		32320 · David Bittle Floyd Fund	25,468.51
		32400 · Mara Diocese	
		32401 · Mara Diocese General	18,781.69
		32402 · Mara Diocese Wells	2,510.25
		32400 · Mara Diocese - Other	8,061.46
		Total 32400 · Mara Diocese	29,353.40
		32600 · Forward In Faith	414,020.95
		Total 32000 · Temp Restricted Funds	486,576.30
		Net Income	-626,578.29
		Total Equity	2,566,254.89
		TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	2,566,011.43

Nominations Committee/ Biographies of Nominees

Overview

Synod Council - Vice President
(vote for one)

- John Auger

Synod Council - Youth Representative
(vote for one)

- Annika Jensen
- Anna Leshner

Synod Council - Allegany & Washington
Conference - Lay (vote for one)

- Wendy Upchurch

Consultation Committee - Clergy (vote
for one)

- John Nelson

Synod Council - Frederick County
Conference - Clergy (vote for one)

- Naomi Hartman
- Matthew Beers

Consultation Committee - Lay (vote for
one)

- Jennifer Smith
- Bill Bisbee

Synod Council - Westminster Conference
- Clergy (vote for one)

- Kevin Clementson
- Anke Diebler

Discipline Committee - Clergy (vote for
one)

- Lura Groen
- Mosas Gobah

Synod Council - Representatives of the
Deans (vote for one)

- Kathy Vitalis-Hoffman

Discipline Committee - Lay (vote for
one)

- Sallie Gartside
- Amy Sowers

Biographies

Synod Council - Vice President

John Auger - Grace, Hockessin, DE

Why would you like to serve in this role within our synod (or why do you think others have nominated you for this role within our synod)?

I have had the honor and the privilege to serve God, our Synod and you over the past four years as vice president. During that time I have worked together with the faithful, talented and hardworking leaders that God has provided our Synod. Those include our outstanding Bishop, Synod Council members and Staff. Under the Holy Spirit's guidance and direction we have moved our Synod closer together as we live out the vision of being Called Forward Together to make disciples in Jesus' name. I consider this work to be a calling. It has been the most rewarding and satisfying leadership role I have ever had in over 40 years of leadership. I would be honored to be given the privilege to continue the good work that has been started, as we live out our faith together in this complex and ever changing culture, showing the love of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Positions or experiences you have had that show why you would be good for this role

- Current Vice President
- Church Council President for 12 one-year terms (Grace Hockessin, DE and First Lutheran, Parkersburg, WV)
- 35 years of varied leadership roles of expanding scope and responsibility in a large multinational corporation

Please share any other information relevant to the nominating process

I thank God for providing me this opportunity to serve.

Synod Council - Allegany & Washington Conference - Lay

Wendy Upchurch- St. Luke's, Cumberland, MD

Why would you like to serve in this role within our synod (or why do you think others have nominated you for this role within our synod)?

I have welcomed the opportunity to serve on church council as well as a discernment team for the Lutheran churches in the Cumberland area. Our congregation has had their "eyes opened" with the possibilities to grow: 1) our congregation, 2) joint projects with the area Lutheran churches, and 3) to have an impact in our community. Over the years, Western Maryland and the Eastern Shore have not always been included in decision making -and- made aware of opportunities. I believe our current administration is interested in us - and welcomes our input in matters. It would be wonderful to share all of our ideas and learn about new programs that we could share with our local members, as well as assist in "taking care" of our Synod.

Positions or experiences you have had that show why you would be good for this role

I have been involved with service organizations (Kiwanis International, BPW,) and masonic organizations (O.E.S., I.O.O.R.) on local, district, and state levels. Their projects involved planning, organizing, and implementing them while working with members in a kind, conscientious, and respectful manner. It was amazing what we could learn from each other (our skills, ideas, etc.) and the work that was performed. I have been a licensed mortician since 1980. My husband and I own and operate two funeral homes. We have been blessed to assist families during a very difficult time in their lives. Their trust allows us to take care of their loved one as well as the families. We follow up with our families by providing grief workshops in the community -- many times we meet in my church. We also offer pre-arrangement programs that assist folks in their planning, along with local attorneys to learn about protecting assets in long term care situations. When working with the public, you find no two families are alike

and each one has different needs. One must be able to adapt to each situation and draw on one's experience and knowledge to assist them. Being open to "change" is not always easy to accept. Having served on a discernment team for our area several years ago got all of us thinking about how we could stay sustainable. During our meetings, we outlined our assets, shared our concerns, and brain-stormed on future possibilities. It took us "a while" to be open to new possibilities with our fellow Lutheran churches as well as other neighboring churches. We started thinking "outside of the box" as to how we can move forward in our church lives.

Please share any other information relevant to the nominating process

Educational background: High Point High School, Beltsville, MD - diploma (1974) Goucher College, Towson, MD - B.A. Biology (1978) CCBC, Catonsville, MD - AA. Mortuary Science (1980)
Professional licenses: Mortician, MD Board of Morticians & Funeral Directors (since 1980) Funeral Director/Embalmer, WV Board of Funeral Service Examiners (since 1987) **Memberships:** St. Luke's Lutheran Church since 1983 (Assisting Minister, Church Council [current president], former Sunday School Superintendent and teacher) Maryland State Funeral Directors Association McKinley Chapter #12, O.E.S., Past WM Cumberland Assembly #6, I.O.O.R., Past Board Member Frankfort District Kiwanis Club, Past President **Immediate Family:** Husband, Gary Daughters, Amy (Brian) and Kelly (Kyle) Grandchildren, Peyton and twins Gavin and Maksim

Synod Council - Frederick County Conference - Clergy

Naomi Hartman - Evangelical, Frederick, MD

Why would you like to serve in this role within our synod (or why do you think others have nominated you for this role within our synod)?

As a pastor I believe it is important to serve beyond my congregation, to our synod and churchwide. The connections between our unique faith communities are made stronger by the shared foundation of the DE-MD Synod. Together we can accomplish far more in our local communities, in our nation and globally. Serving on the synod council would allow me to model for my congregation that we are a Church called to serve together at all levels.

I also bring a variety of lived experiences in congregational and synodical ministry with me to the table. Graduating in 2009 from seminary, I have served as a solo pastor in a rural congregation in Nebraska, as a specialized call to be Pastor of Faith Formation in Towson MD, and now as part of a large staff ministry at Evangelical in Frederick MD. My husband is a recent ULS grad and we are learning what it means to be a clergy couple while raising two wonderful children.

I believe my experiences, my support of synodical ministries and my passion for the church will allow me to serve our Synod Council faithfully and joyfully.

Positions or experiences you have had that show why you would be good for this role

I have served as the secretary of the Frederick Conference for the past two years. Previously I served as the secretary for the Baltimore North Conference. I attended ELCA Churchwide Assembly in 2016 as a voting delegate for the DE-MD Synod.

All of these opportunities have allowed me to work collaboratively with other leaders and to seek ways to promote connectedness within our faith communities.

Matthew Beers - Grace, Woodsboro, MD & St. John's, Thurmont, MD

Why would you like to serve in this role within our synod (or why do you think others have nominated you for this role within our synod)?

I serve two small churches in northern Frederick County. I am familiar with the concerns of our small and struggling congregations.

Unfortunately, the voices of small congregations can be drowned out by the our more robust churches. If chosen to serve, I will do my best to give voice to the concerns of those communities that can be too easily ignored.

Positions or experiences you have had that show why you would be good for this role

It is my pleasure to share three experiences or positions I have held that uniquely qualify me to serve on synod council. First, while living in Gettysburg, PA, a few years back, I served on the board of the Gettysburg Community Soup Kitchen. I served for three years as the congregational representative from Christ Lutheran in Gettysburg, PA. In my previous career, I served as vocational counselor at Mosaic Community Services, where I advocated for the vocational rights of individuals living with severe and chronic mental illnesses. This saw me on the ground each and every day speaking with employers to

advocate for this population. Even more, when I left this position to go to seminary full-time, I remained with the organization as a Spiritual Rehabilitation Volunteer. In this role, I worked directly with this population by leading spirituality classes. I also advocated for this population with the executives at Mosaic to implement more suitable spiritual rehabilitation services. In addition, I met with community leaders, including pastors in the area, to raise awareness of the spiritual needs of those living with severe and chronic mental illnesses. All this to say that I have the real world, boots on the ground experiences that uniquely qualify me to serve on the synod council and to give voice to those whose voices are too often ignored or silenced.

Please share any other information relevant to the nominating process

I have learned many things during my tenure serving two small country churches. Of the many things I've learned, one is that the voices of our larger congregations in our synod are well represented and well heard. Unfortunately, the voices of our smaller congregations have been disproportionately quieted throughout the more tense years in our synod. I am interested in serving on the synod council to bring their voices to the table and advocate for them so that the interests, concerns, and struggles of our smaller congregations will be heard loud and clear.

Synod Council - Westminster Conference - Clergy

Anke Diebler - Calvary Lutheran Church, Mount Airy, also Zion Lutheran Church in Baltimore

Why would you like to serve in this role within our synod (or why do you think others have nominated you for this role within our synod)?

I have served on the synod council of my previous synod and found it a rewarding service. Now that my children are in college and beyond, I feel like I have the time and energy to be part of our synod leadership again. Serving both a rural and an inner city congregation might help me be a discerning presence in the council.

Positions or experiences you have had that show why you would be good for this role

Synod Candidacy Committee, Synod Council, Dean of the West Branch Conference, all in Upper Susquehanna Synod, PA

Please share any other information relevant to the nominating process

This year I will celebrate my 25th ordination anniversary. I have served in rural, town, and city congregations and hope to bring my experience to the synod council. The church as a whole is facing the need to adjust to new realities in terms of society, world, and the faith landscape. I offer my voice and service as together, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we ponder our future.

Kevin Clementson - Grace, Westminster, MD

Why would you like to serve in this role within our synod (or why do you think others have nominated you for this role within our synod)?

I have served in ordained ministry for 37 years as a parish pastor, 12 of those years I have served within the Delaware-Maryland Synod. During my time in this synod I have been an active participant within the Westminster Conference and served as Dean for four years. I hope my colleagues view me as a person who listens and respects their perspective and input. I also believe my role on a variety of boards and committees within the Church have help provided me with skills that might be useful to the Synod Council.

Positions or experiences you have had that show why you would be good for this role

I am currently on the Board of Lutheran Social Ministries of Maryland (formerly Carroll Lutheran Village). I served for four years as Dean of the Westminster Conference and served two years on the Board of Trustees for Thiel College before moving to Westminster, MD.

Please share any other information relevant to the nominating process

In our current era the Church in general and our synod in particular are faced with social and economic changes that require church leadership to be able to see things from a variety of perspectives. I have served in a two point parish, orchestrated a successful redevelopment in a changing blue collar community, redeveloped a suburban congregation and currently serve as co-senior pastor of Grace in Westminster. I understand the need for our synod (Bishop, Staff and congregations) to be flexible and versatile to meet the needs of a changing church.

Synod Council - Representatives of the Deans

**Kathy Vitalis Hoffman- Zion, Middleton,
MD**

Synod Council - Youth Representative

**Annika Jensen - Our Shepherd, Severna
Park, MD**

Why would you like to serve in this role within our synod (or why do you think others have nominated you for this role within our synod)?

I wish to serve in the synod council as the youth representative because of my strong passion for making a difference and helping others in the Lutheran community. Although this would be the biggest leadership role I have ever taken on, I am ready to accept the responsibility it requires. Through this position, I would help others. I have always been taught to put others before myself and show that as best as I can through everyday actions. Not only do I put others before myself, but I also have a big heart. I treat everyone with the dignity and respect they deserve no matter their race, religion, gender identification, sexuality, or ethnic background. I have been taught these values through the Lutheran church and aspire to uphold these values every day. By being on the synod council, I will represent youth with dignity and strength, making sure that the voice of the youth is heard. I would not be on the council for myself, rather for the youth who I have not only supported through their faith journey but pushed them to interpret and comprehend the Bible as well as life through Martin Luther's teachings.

Anna Leshner - Grace, Easton, MD

Why would you like to serve in this role within our synod (or why do you think others have nominated you for this role within our synod)?

I applied for, and joyfully joined, the Lutheran Youth Organization (LYO) because I wanted to expand my leadership skills in the church. As a middle schooler at youth retreats, I viewed LYO members as role models. I wanted, and still do want, youth to feel welcomed, the same way I felt welcomed at my first retreat. The best way for me to do this was to help lead the retreat and be a part of that faith-based, loving community.

Positions or experiences you have had that show why you would be good for this role

As a member of the worship team in LYO, I have established a greater understanding of how God and the Holy Spirit plays a role in peoples' lives. On worship team, we follow a strong guide of creating worship spaces not for ourselves but for others. I am able to raise hard questions about the Bible and lead discussions with other youth. Sometimes when praying with people, there are sad things I hear. Whether it is about their church life or family life, I always want to help that person as much as I can, even if that just means praying for them. Earlier this year, at RoadTrip, I had the honor of giving a sermon which raised my strength of public speaking. Through this sermon, I was able to raise problems in the church and how youth can make a difference about these problems. One of the main points in my sermon was about empowering youth. Being on synod council would give me the opportunity to serve my community and make a difference in the church. At school, I am in the Amnesty International club. Throughout the year we fundraise, spread awareness, and do community service for the organization. I am in this organization so I can help others who are facing injustice throughout the international community. I believe being on synod council would allow me to make a difference on a local level and give me another opportunity to serve others.

Please share any other information relevant to the nominating process

Through the Lutheran church, I learned to put others before myself and carry these morals through everyday actions. Because of this passion to help others, I study three other languages besides English, including Spanish, French, and German so one day I can support others at an international level. From my skill with languages I have developed excellent communication skills. I can be in communities that are going through hard times and help them find the best options for their church. This summer I will be taking classes at American University, so I can enforce my goal of helping those around the world. I believe that what I study inside and outside of school will prepare me for a future of serving others. The opportunity of being on synod council will allow me to start serving others at a young age which is an experience that will benefit me not only through my faith journey but my educational journey as well.

Positions or experiences you have had that show why you would be good for this role

Member of LYO Music Team: The music team is responsible, along with the worship team, is responsible for planning and conducting all worship services and large group gatherings at Synod youth retreats.

Co-Founder of the HEART Project: I co-founded and co-lead the HEART Project, a student-led effort to reduce waste in the community. We collect recyclables and turn them into useful, everyday items, then sell the items and donate the profits to charity.

Easton Middle School Advanced Band:

Throughout middle school, as a member of the advanced band, I had the opportunity to be a part of many community events, such as the 9/11 commemoration, Veterans Day ceremonies, and many local parades. During 8th grade, I mentored new band students.

Please share any other information relevant to the nominating process

I attended the 2018 ELCA Youth Gathering in Houston. I felt a sense of unity and inspiration when I saw 31,000 Lutheran Youth gathered together, singing together, and worshipping together. I am proud to be a Lutheran, and look forward to providing my perspective as a youth member of the Synod Council.

Consultation Committee - Clergy

John Nelson - St. Philip's, Wilmington, DE

Why would you like to serve in this role within our synod (or why do you think others have nominated you for this role within our synod)?

A committee such as the Consultation Committee is best served when its members are able to create multiple avenues for dialogue, to suspend any preconceptions that they might have, and make the best decision possible through careful consideration and prayer. In my dealings in both the sacred and secular realms of life, these are traits that I have tried to embody. I feel that I would bring these traits, along with a fresh perspective, to my service on the Consultation Committee.

Positions or experiences you have had that show why you would be good for this role

Graduate School Administrator- Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia
Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia
Presidential Strategic Planning Committee

Consultation Committee - Lay

Jennifer Smith - St. Paul's, Fullerton, MD

Why would you like to serve in this role within our synod (or why do you think others have nominated you for this role within our synod)?

I believe I was nominated because I am in the legal field and have experience with disciplinary situations.

Positions or experiences you have had that show why you would be good for this role

I'm a public interest defense attorney so I have a good bit of experience discerning misdeeds from a place of compassion.

Bill Bisbee - Prince of Peace, Rosedale, MD

Discipline Committee - Clergy

Lura Groen - Grace English Evangelical, Lutherville, MD

Why would you like to serve in this role within our synod (or why do you think others have nominated you for this role within our synod)?

I am passionate about clergy ethics, and deeply desire a healthier church for the sake of God's work in the world. My first call was to a congregation in which many members had been hurt by clergy sexual misconduct, and my current call is interim to a congregation that experienced clergy misconduct in decades past. I have seen the individual and corporate harm done when clergy violate the trust placed in them.

Positions or experiences you have had that show why you would be good for this role

I serve on the synod's Racial Justice Team. I was also a chaplain for the Proclaim community (publicly identified LGBTQIA+ rostered leaders in the ELCA) of Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries.

Please share any other information relevant to the nominating process

I have nominated myself for this position, when after prayer and consultation with others I discerned a call to it.

Moses Gobah - St. John's Evangelical, Edgemere, MD

Why would you like to serve in this role within our synod (or why do you think others have nominated you for this role within our synod)?

I think I was nominated because of my 21 years of pastoral and administrative experience others have seen and believe I have something worth to contribute on this committee.

Positions or experiences you have had that show why you would be good for this role

Number one, before coming into the Delaware-Maryland Synod I served as the Director of the Lutheran Church in Liberia HIV and AIDS Program and senior of the St. Matthew Lutheran Parish, a partner church with the ELCA. Secondly, I'm presently serving as pastor of the St. John's evangelical Lutheran Church, Edgemere and Spiritual/Psychosocial Counselor at the Johns Hopkins University/Hospital in Baltimore.

Please share any other information relevant to the nominating process

Prior to my ministry in the Delaware/Maryland Synod, I was assigned to reopen two parishes closed down. As Director of the Lutheran Church in Liberia Urban Ministry, the program was revamped and expanded. I also served on the strategic planning committee Lutheran World Federation in Geneva. Well traveled globally attending conferences, training and speaking. I was also assigned as interim pastor of the Peoples Community Lutheran Church in Loch Raven Blvd, Baltimore to help rebuilt that ministry. Finally, with my background in Pastoral and social ministries of the church I plan to use God's calling to spread the Gospel and promote health care through a holistic approach by empowering people to use their God given gifts, talents and abilities to positively impact health and improve their quality of life in a multi-cultural, ecumenical, and pluralistic society with compassion, sensitively and respect for diversity.

Discipline Committee - Lay

**Sallie Gartside, OSSD - The Lutheran
Church of the Good Shepherd, Bel Air, MD**

Amy Sowers

Why would you like to serve in this role within our synod (or why do you think others have nominated you for this role within our synod)?

I have served in many roles at the congregational and synod levels and be privy to the inner workings of the church and council at the local level and at large. After witnessing several upheavals at churches I have attended over the years, I've seen outcomes that could be best described as the good, the bad, and the ugly. I feel I could lend my talents to this position to fairly, objectively, and unbiasedly work with anyone in the position of coming before the discipline committee to assure them that they will be heard and treated fairly.

Positions or experiences you have had that show why you would be good for this role

Discipline Committee, OSSD (Order of Saint Stephen Deacon)

Stephen Minister Leader

As a member of the LCGS during which we went through a very turbulent time.

LCGS Church Council

Mentor for kindergarten student at school where I work. Involves daily check-ins, goals settings, administration of discipline as warranted.

Please share any other information relevant to the nominating process

I have been, unfortunately, in the position of Stephen Leader with our Stephen Ministry program where as leader, I had to speak with 1) a potential applicant who needed to be told that they couldn't pursue this ministry because of an active addiction. Next 2) a newly trained Stephen Minister Leader did not adhere to the mission and vision set forth by our church and was lining up their own care receivers on their own. The trainee was dismissed from the program.

Report of the Bishop

The Rev. William (Bill) Gohl Jr., Bishop

Tend the flock of God that is in your charge, exercising oversight, not under compulsion but willingly, as God would have you do it—not for sordid gain but eagerly. Do not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock. – 1 Peter 5:2-3

Beloved,

†SS.12. As this synod’s pastor, the bishop shall:

+Preach, teach, and administer the sacraments in accord with the Confession of Faith of this church.

The greatest privilege of this work is to continue the primary work of being a pastor among pastors, deacons and the whole baptized children of God: Word and Sacrament ministry. In the last year, I have preached well over 100 sermons, presided at the table at least 100 times, baptized six new members of the body and exercised a teaching ministry in about 20 of our congregations and ministries. It is an amazing gift to proclaim the timeless truth of God’s love in Jesus Christ in a fast-changing world and society.

+Have primary responsibility for the ministry of Word and Sacrament in this synod and its congregations, providing pastoral care and leadership for this synod, its congregations, its ministers of Word and Sacrament, and its ministers of Word and Service.

The opportunity and occasion to visit the sick among our roster, the joy of officiating at the gift of marriage and the solemnity of accompanying our siblings in Christ at the conclusion of their baptismal journey is a fairly constant companion to this work and call. Sometimes there’s a misnomer that the bishop is the “pastor of the pastors” – or as one particularly upset Council President suggested, “President of the Pastors’ Union!;” the Constitution and Letter of Call is clearer, the bishop is pastor to the synod. In being a pastor to the rostered ministers, and a pastor to congregations in times of crisis and transition, there is a careful line to tread. I work deliberately to tend that boundary, grateful for pastors and deacons who are faithful to those in their care and kind in sharing this work. It continues to be a privilege to be with congregations in interim times, too, for the sake of our shared pastoral responsibilities. Bearing Christ’s redeeming and reconciling love for rostered ministers, lay leaders, congregations and ministries, is a tremendous reminder that this grace we proclaim is still very amazing,

indeed.

+Exercise solely this church's power to ordain, consecrate and install...

Ordaining pastors, consecrating deacons (and other bishops), and installing rostered ministers to their ministries among us is a particularly sacred privilege. To have some small role in naming, acclaiming and presenting new colleagues to the larger life of the church, our congregations and ministries, and to the world is humbling. I have the joy of presenting the brightest and best of this church and our ecumenical partners for service in our Delaware-Maryland Synod. Our synod, through its candidacy process, is raising up and equipping leaders for the church in a changing world; but all of the signs still point to the faithfulness of God and to a faithful people who respond to that God who calls, "Who will go for me? Whom shall I send?" A special word of thanks, too, for the work of our Assistants to the Bishops who relate to candidacy (the Rev. Dr. Geleta), and mobility (Pastor Simpson-Litton, Pastor Wolinski and the Rev Dr. Campbell) for their extraordinary work. I am grateful for the partnership we share with the Order of St. Stephen Deacon, as well, and the privilege of receiving gifted new members into that order.

+Exercise leadership in the mission of this church...

This area is one of particular joy because it is fully exercised in partnership with lay and rostered leaders. Our synod, through LEAD and cooperative ministry tables, continues to work toward becoming a more discipling culture, that is, keeping the main thing, the main thing: making disciples of Jesus Christ. Our staff are gifted, committed and blessed for and by their work among us. Our Synod Council are among the most capable board members I've ever worked with. Our ministerium challenges and sharpens me in my own ministry. I am especially grateful for the partnership of John Auger, our Synod Vice President, who functions as my colleague in this area of our shared ministry.

+Practice leadership in strengthening the unity of the Church...

To be candid, this area of our ministry is the most challenging for me. On a macro-level, it is the most far-reaching and aspirational part of this call as bishop. Fostering and cultivating unity in the many expressions of being church is a constant exercise in deep listening and careful negotiation. The work of the Conference of Bishops is challenging, even as seismic shifts are happening in those who populate that body. The experience of congregations and ministries from the Eastern Shore to Allegheny County, in our cities and in suburbia, on the farms and in the valleys are so contextually different that "unity" is sometimes quite elusive! Still, with our common call to serve Jesus Christ in our own ELCA circles, with our ecumenical partners and

with the wide ministries that being ELCA Christians connect us to, there are glimpses of the kin-dom of God among us in our campus ministries, in youth and family ministry, in our social ministry organizations, in our “Lutherpalian” congregations, in our faith-based community organizing groups.

Personally, however, the challenge for me is that I see “unity” as a very secondary virtue and I have seen the church turn in on itself over a false sense of unity rather than pursue the truth, a far more important virtue, in my mind. I am grateful to serve among a people who are increasingly more aware of, and unwilling to be complicit, with sacrificing the marginalized of our church and society on a false and idolatrous altar called unity.

Be accountable...

It seems fitting to end my report to you with an expression of deep gratitude for this work is ours and our synod’s achievements are not mine, but belong to all of us.

First, my thanks to the members of our synod council and its four teams. The transformation in the culture of our synod over these last years has been nothing short of amazing. Our Synod is well led by this group of wise, thoughtful, faithful, dedicated people, and I hope you will find an occasion to thank them for their work on your behalf.

Secondly, I can only begin the task of thanking the synod staff alongside of whom I work every day: Pastor Amsalu Geleta, Deacon Julie Stecker, Justina Sergeon, Karen Johnson Kretschmann, Cindy VanVliet, Sheron Campbell, Pastor Robin Simpson Litton, Pastor Bettye Wolinski, Pastor Eric Campbell and Pat Walton, as well as our synod treasurer, San Dee Koons (who is in the office nearly every day!). These colleagues and co-workers are capable, dependable and devoted servants of Jesus Christ and this synod, they are a source of confidence and trust for me, and I hope for all of you, too.

And finally, but not at all least, my thanks to all of you, my beloved Delaware-Maryland Synod. Not every day of this last year has been easy, but whatever the challenges, and when I have surely caused you questions about how I was functioning in this call, you have never ceased to find ways to express your continued prayers, support and encouragement.

A great reward of serving as your bishop is traveling throughout our synod and seeing what you are doing – pastors, deacons, lay leaders, congregations, mission starts,

campus ministries, outdoor ministries, redevelopments, prison ministry, chaplaincy, interims - people of God, all – for the sake of this world God still so loves. You fill my life and ministry with a richness beyond measure simply by being who you are, doing what you do, and bearing well the name of Jesus, day by day.