

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

Church Council

MINUTES

July 27, 2025

**Prepared by the
Office of the Secretary**

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**EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA
CHURCH COUNCIL**

**MINUTES
July 27, 2025**

The 119th meeting of the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) convened July 27, 2025, at the Sheraton Phoenix Downtown Hotel, in Phoenix, Ariz.

The Executive Committee of the Church Council met on the morning of July 27 at 10:00 a.m. (all times Mountain Standard Time unless otherwise noted). The meeting of the Church Council began with worship with Holy Communion at 1:00 p.m. The Rev. Deborah K. Hutterer, bishop of the Grand Canyon Synod, presided, the Rev. Leroy Cannon preached, Ms. Molly Berry served as assisting minister, and Ms. Andraine Sinaga and Mr. Simon Wong served as lectors.

ORGANIZATION OF THE MEETING

The following people were present for all or part of the meeting:

Voting members

Officers:

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton, presiding bishop
Mr. Imran Siddiqui, vice president
Deacon Sue E. Rothmeyer, secretary
Ms. Lori S. Fedyk, treasurer

Chair of the Conference of Bishops:

The Rev. Yehiel Curry, bishop of the Metropolitan Chicago Synod

Church Council:

The Rev. A. Elizabeth (Lisa) Ahlness
Mr. Kevin Anderson
Ms. Tracey A. Beasley
The Rev. Benjamin B. Bergren
The Rev. Marcus A. Bigott
The Rev. Nicholas M. Billardello III
Ms. Susan Boxberger
The Rev. Heather E. Brown
Ms. Jamie Brueschoff
The Rev. William H. Callister
The Rev. Leroy Cannon
Ms. Divine
The Rev. Joanne E. Engquist
Ms. Kerry A. Fehrman (*excused*)
Ms. Sheena R. Foster
Mr. Hans W. Giller
The Rev. Emily K. Hartner
Ms. Kristy K. Henriksen (*excused*)
The Rev. Pamela J. Hoh (*excused*)
Ms. Cherrish Holland

Mr. Rindra Josoa
The Rev. Gwendolyn S. King
Mr. David M. Lenz
The Rev. Tara R. Lynn
Ms. Olivia L. Martin-Call
Mr. Mitch S. McCartney
Mr. Joel A. Miller
Mr. Ethan G. Miller-Perez
Mr. Keoni Newman
Deacon Kari A. Olsen (*excused*)
Mr. Iván A. Pérez
Ms. Linda C. Rivera (*excused*)
Mr. Noah F. Roux
Ms. Valerie J. Shaw (*excused*)
Ms. Andraine A. Sinaga
Mr. Loren A. Solberg
The Rev. Kjersten L. Sullivan
Ms. Loni Taylor
Ms. Jennifer E. Trom

Representatives of the Conference of Bishops:

Bishop Brenda K. Bos, Region 2
Bishop Amy L. Current, Region 5
Bishop Christopher deForest, Region 7
Bishop Suzanne D. Dillahun, Region 6
Bishop James S. Dunlop, Region 8

Bishop Scott Johnson, Region 4
Bishop Laurie A. Jungling, Region 1
Bishop Craig A. Schweitzer, Region 3
Bishop Kevin L. Strickland, Region 9

Advisory members of the Church Council:

The Rev. Jesse W. Brown Jr., president, African Descent Lutheran Association
The Rev. Joan Conroy, representative, American Indian and Alaska Native Lutheran Association
Ms. Desta Goehner, president, White Lutherans for Racial Justice
The Rev. Alejandro Mejía, president, Asociación de Ministerios Latinos – ELCA
The Rev. Moses P. Penumaka, president, Association of Asians and Pacific Islanders in the ELCA
Ms. Dina Tannous, vice president, Association of Lutherans of Arab and Middle Eastern Heritage
Ms. Aubrey Thonvold, executive director, ReconcilingWorks

Churchwide Staff Resource People:

Office of the Presiding Bishop:

The Rev. M. Wyvetta Bullock, executive for administration
Mr. Aaron Cooper, senior director for strategic communications
Ms. Victoria Flood, senior director for Mission Support
Ms. Kathryn M. Lohre, executive for ecumenical and inter-religious relations and theological discernment
Deacon John E. Weit, executive for worship
Ms. Rachel K. Wind, executive for development

Office of the Secretary:

Mr. Thomas A. Cunniff, general counsel
Mr. Dan F. Eppley, manager for official documentation
The Rev. N. Keith Fry, executive for Office of the Secretary administration
Mr. Paul K. Irwin, associate general counsel
Deacon MaryAnn Schwabe, executive for synod relations
Ms. Jodi L. Slattery, executive for governance

Christian Community and Leadership:

The Rev. Philip C. Hirsch, executive director
The Rev. Sara A. Cutter, senior director for operational effectiveness

Service and Justice:

The Rev. Khader El-Yateem, executive director
The Rev. Barbara Lund, senior director for operations and innovation
Mr. Vance Blackfox, director, Indigenous ministries and tribal relations
Ms. Justice Nichols, Indigenous ministries and tribal relations program coordinator
Ms. Wanda Frenchman, program assistant, Indigenous ministries and tribal relations

Innovation:

Mr. Iain Chester, executive director

Media:

Ms. Candice Hill Buchbinder, public relations manager, strategic communications

Separately Incorporated Ministries:

Mr. Tim Blevins, president and CEO, Augsburg Fortress Publishers (*excused*)
Ms. Jennifer Hockenbery, interim executive director, Women of the ELCA (*excused*)
Mr. Christopher Johnson, president and CEO, Portico Benefit Services (*excused*)
Ms. Eva Roby, president and CEO, Mission Investment Fund
Ms. Annette Shoemaker, interim president and CEO, ELCA Foundation

Sunday, July 27, 2025

PLENARY SESSION I

JOINT SESSION WITH CONFERENCE OF BISHOPS AND ASSOCIATION OF SYNOD VICE PRESIDENTS

CALL TO ORDER AND ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

(Agenda I.A.)

Mr. Imran Siddiqui, vice president of the ELCA and chair of the Church Council, called the meeting to order at 2:37 p.m. The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton, presiding bishop of the ELCA, opened the meeting with prayer. Agenda items were distributed to council members electronically prior to the meeting.

A motion was made to adopt the agenda. There being no discussion, Vice President Siddiqui called for the vote.

VOTED:

CC25.07.25 To adopt the agenda and to permit the chair to call for consideration of agenda items in the order the chair deems most appropriate.

REPORTS OF THE OFFICERS

(Agenda I.B.)

REPORT OF THE PRESIDING BISHOP

(Agenda I.B.1.)

Presiding Bishop Eaton presented an overview of the upcoming Churchwide Assembly.

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY

(Agenda I.B.2.)

Deacon Sue E. Rothmeyer, secretary of the ELCA, provided additional information about the assembly, particularly the role of bishops-elect at the assembly.

REPORT OF THE TREASURER

(Agenda I.B.3.)

Ms. Lori S. Fedyk, treasurer of the ELCA, reported on churchwide organization finances through June 2025. At this time, revenue is approximately \$600,000 below spending, compared to a projected shortfall of about \$5.7 million. The favorability is due to a combination of lower-than-projected spending and higher-than-expected revenues.

Through June, World Hunger revenue exceeds expectation by about 10 percent, while spending is about 93 percent of budget. Lutheran Disaster Response has distributed nearly \$10 million in support of communities impacted by disasters. The treasurer provided updates on development of a portal to facilitate communication between the churchwide organization and synods and on a possible revision of how synod financial audits are handled.

OVERVIEW OF THE CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY

(Agenda I.C.)

Presiding Bishop Eaton and Secretary Rothmeyer provided an overview of Churchwide Assembly business and procedures. Ms. Jennifer E. Trom, chair of the Churchwide Assembly Elections Committee, and Mr. Thomas A. Cunniff, general counsel, instructed attendees on voting processes at the Churchwide Assembly.

CULTURAL COMPETENCY TRAINING—POWWOWS

(Agenda I.D.)

A powwow will be held at the Churchwide Assembly on Tuesday, July 29, from 6:15 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., in the North Ballroom of the Phoenix Convention Center. Mr. Vance Blackfox, director for Indigenous ministries and tribal relations, Ms. Justice Nichols, Indigenous ministries and tribal relations program coordinator, and Ms. Wanda Frenchman, program assistant for Indigenous ministries and tribal relations, presented an educational session on powwows, including discussion of how attendees should enter the space of a powwow, what attendees will experience, history of the term “powwow,” and vocabulary associated with powwows.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Secretary Rothmeyer provided announcements.

RECESS

The first plenary session of the 119th meeting of the Church Council adjourned at 3:33 p.m.

Sunday, July 27, 2025
PLENARY SESSION II

CALL TO ORDER

Vice President Siddiqui called the second plenary session to order at 3:59 p.m.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

(Agenda II.A.)

The 119th meeting of the Church Council of the ELCA entered executive session at 4:00 p.m. for a legal briefing. The council returned to open session at 4:30 p.m.

ITEMS FOR ACTION

(Agenda II.B.)

CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY CITATION IN HONOR OF PRESIDING BISHOP ELIZABETH A. EATON

(Agenda II.B.1.)

The Church Council considered a resolution in honor of Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton. The text of the resolution was shared with council members electronically prior to the meeting.

VOTED:

CC25.07.27 To approve the citation in honor of Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton.

CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY CITATION IN HONOR OF SECRETARY SUE E. ROTHMEYER

(Agenda II.B.2.)

The Church Council considered a resolution in honor of Secretary Sue E. Rothmeyer. The text of the resolution was shared with council members electronically prior to the meeting.

VOTED:

CC25.07.28 To approve the citation in honor of Secretary Sue E. Rothmeyer.

CONSIDERATION OF ITEMS REMOVED FROM *EN BLOC*

(Agenda II.B.3.)

Secretary Rothmeyer reported that the proposed amendment to continuing resolution 19.05.B25. had been removed from *en bloc* for discussion.

ADOPTION OF CONTINUING RESOLUTION 19.05.B25.

The Office of the Secretary recommended amendment of a continuing resolution in the ELCA Constitution which had been discussed with the Executive Committee at a prior meeting.

The process for amending continuing resolutions is specified in chapter 22 of the ELCA Constitution. A two-thirds vote of the Church Council is required for adoption.

VOTED:

TWO-THIRDS VOTE REQUIRED

CC25.07.29 To adopt the following amendment to the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*:

19.05.B25. No member of the Church Council other than the salaried officers may serve on the board of a separately incorporated ministry. No member of the Church Council may serve on the

Nominating Committee, the Committee on Appeals, the Committee on Discipline, or the Committee of Hearing Officers.

EN BLOC APPROVAL OF CERTAIN ITEMS

(Agenda II.B.4.)

The *en bloc* resolution includes agenda items that were judged to be non-controversial in nature, not requiring plenary discussion and a separate vote. As the items were voted on *en bloc*, there was no discussion. The texts of *en bloc* items and associated background information were shared with Church Council members electronically prior to the meeting, and council members were given opportunity to remove items from *en bloc*. Vice President Siddiqui called for the vote.

VOTED:

CC25.07.30 To take action *en bloc* on the items listed in the “*En Bloc* Items” document.

A. 2025 Churchwide Assembly “Rules of Organization and Procedure”

At its April 2025 meeting, the Church Council voted to recommend adoption by the Churchwide Assembly of proposed “Rules of Organization and Procedure” and to authorize the presiding bishop and secretary to make editorial revisions and to report those changes to the Church Council at its July meeting. [CC25.04.24e1 and CC25.04.24e2]

In editorial revision of the document, there was a more substantive change; because of the substantive nature of this revision, it was deemed appropriate to invite Church Council members to recommend the revised proposed “Rules of Organization and Procedure” for adoption by the Churchwide Assembly. The revised proposed “Rules of Organization and Procedure” were shared with Church Council members electronically prior to the meeting.

VOTED:

EN BLOC

CC25.07.30a To recommend adoption of the following proposed action by the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly:
To adopt the “Rules of Organization and Procedure” for the 2025 Churchwide Assembly (exclusive of quoted and highlighted constitutional provisions and bylaws that are already in force).

B. Approval of the Church Council and Executive Committee Minutes

Draft minutes of the Church Council meeting on April 3–6, 2025, were provided to council members electronically prior to the meeting.

The minutes of the council’s Executive Committee meetings on March 18, 2025, April 3–6, 2025, May 6, 2025, and June 10, 2025, were provided to council members electronically prior to the meeting.

Church Council members were asked to provide any notations or typographical errors in the distributed text of the minutes in writing to the Office of the Secretary and proper corrections were entered into the protocol copies of the minutes.

VOTED:

EN BLOC

CC25.07.30b To approve the minutes of the April 3–6, 2025, meeting of the Church Council; and
To ratify actions of the council’s Executive Committee as indicated in the minutes of the March 18, 2025, April 3–6, 2025, May 6, 2025, and June 10, 2025, meetings.

NEW BUSINESS

(Agenda II.B.5.)

Secretary Rothmeyer announced that there was no new business to come before the council.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION

(Agenda II.C.)

UPDATE ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CHURCHWIDE ORGANIZATION AND LUTHERAN MEN IN MISSION

Treasurer Fedyk provided an update on the financial relationship between the churchwide organization and Lutheran Men in Mission. Members and liaison members of the Church Council discussed strategies to address concerns about the financial relationship between the churchwide organization and Lutheran Men in Mission.

VOTED:

Moved;

Second:

To direct the Executive Committee to draft a letter establishing September 30 as the deadline by which the churchwide organization will cut off funding for Lutheran Men in Mission.

A council member introduced a motion to substitute.

Moved;

Second;

Carried

To substitute the following motion for the pending motion:

To direct the Executive Committee to take action immediately to address the financial obligations of Lutheran Men in Mission to the churchwide organization by Sept. 30, 2025.

A council member introduced a motion to amend.

Moved;

Second;

Carried

To amend the pending motion:

To direct the Executive Committee to take action ~~immediately to address by August 1, 2025. This action shall ensure that~~ the financial obligations of Lutheran Men in Mission to the churchwide organization are addressed by Sept. 30, 2025.

Following discussion, Vice President Siddiqui called for the vote.

VOTED:

CC25.07.31

To direct the Executive Committee to take action by Aug. 1, 2025. This action shall ensure that the financial obligations of Lutheran Men in Mission to the churchwide organization are addressed by Sept. 30, 2025.

FEEDBACK FROM THE CLASS OF 2025

(Agenda II.C.1.)

The Board Development Committee invited the outgoing Church Council members to respond to a series of questions reflecting on their service on the council. A report of this feedback was made available to council members electronically prior to the meeting.

The members of the Class of 2025 are Mr. Kevin Anderson, Ms. Tracey A. Beasley, the Rev. Benjamin B. Bergren, the Rev. Marcus A. Bigott, the Rev. Nicholas M. Billardello III, Ms. Susan Boxberger, the Rev. William H. Callister, Ms. Divine, the Rev. Joanne E. Engquist, Ms. Kerry A. Fehrman, the Rev. Emily K. Hartner, the Rev. Pamela J. Hoh, Ms. Cherrish Holland, Mr. David M. Lenz, the Rev. Tara R. Lynn, Mr. Ethan G. Miller-Perez, Mr. Keoni Newman, Mr. Noah F. Roux, Ms. Valerie J. Shaw, Ms. Andraine A. Sinaga, Mr. Loren A. Solberg, and Ms. Loni Taylor. Members of the departing class shared reflections on their service and offered advice to continuing council members.

UPCOMING CHURCH COUNCIL MEETINGS

(Agenda II.C.2.)

Vice President Siddiqui provided an overview of upcoming activities of the Church Council.

- The October 2025 meeting of the Church Council will be held Oct. 2–3, 2025, in Minneapolis, Minn., in conjunction with the installation of the presiding bishop-elect on Saturday, Oct. 4, 2025.
- Orientation for newly elected members of the Church Council will be held Oct. 1, 2025, in Minneapolis. Mentors have been identified for incoming Church Council members.
- The Executive Committee of the Church Council will meet Wednesday, Oct. 1, 2025, in Minneapolis.
- An online Church Council meeting will be held the evening of Wednesday, Nov. 12, 2025.

CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY ORIENTATION

(Agenda II.C.3.)

Ms. Jodi L. Slattery, executive for governance, provided an overview of Church Council responsibilities during the 2025 Churchwide Assembly.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Secretary Rothmeyer shared announcements.

ADJOURNMENT

The 119th meeting of the Church Council of the ELCA adjourned at 5:30 p.m. on July 27, 2025, following prayer.