

Report of the Synod Vice President 2025 Synod Assembly

“May grace and peace be yours in abundance, in the knowledge of God and of
Jesus, our Lord.” (2 Peter 1:2)

After serving as the chair of the Synod Council for 6 years, it has occurred to me that the “work” of the Council doesn’t change much from year to year – and I think that is largely by design. Per the Synod Constitution, the Synod Council is “the interim legislative authority between meetings of the Synod Assembly”. We receive reports from the bishop and senior staff, as well as from the Treasurer at each meeting. Based on requests from Bishop Kreiss, we approve changes to the rosters of ordained leaders. Occasionally, we approve appointments to vacancies on Synod committees and boards. And we review and approve the proposed budget, proposed resolutions and memorials, and other reports before they are sent on to the Synod Assembly. It is important – and often routine – work. A summary of Synod Council actions in the past year is available in your pre-assembly documents. I entrust that document to you.

Though there will always be “routine business” to attend to, what I’d rather focus on in this report is the tone, tenor, and other content of our Council meetings. When I first came to the role of Vice President, there was a perception (entirely my own) that Synod Council meetings were intended to be just long enough for the Council to receive and approve the stuff that needed to be received and approved and to then move to adjourn. My further perception was that the engagement of the Council members was commensurate with the agenda. In recent years, our meetings have changed in several ways:

- Our meetings are conducted under a set of Meeting Principles and Guidelines agreed upon by the Council. They are:
 1. The Synod Constitution requires that all meetings of the Synod Council will be conducted according to Robert’s Rules of Order. Adherence to this policy is up the chair (who will gladly accept advice and correction from those more expert in Robert’s).
 2. All members of the Council will be afforded an opportunity to speak on any topic before the Council. Desire to speak will be indicated by a raised hand. Others will give full attention to the speaker. Once a member has spoken on a topic, others will be given the chance to speak before second opportunities are granted. These guidelines apply equally to those present in the room and those joining remotely.
 3. Interruptions of others will not be tolerated.
 4. Side conversations will not be tolerated.
 5. Domination of the conversation by one or two members will not be tolerated.
 6. Members are strongly encouraged to, as is possible, read all reports prior to the meeting and be prepared with questions and comments.
 7. Speakers will be mindful of the use of exclusive language and the inclusion of “insider jargon”, such as the use of acronyms with which all members may not be familiar.

8. When conducting Council business, members are encouraged to keep in mind – and to give voice to – the Synod Mission Statement: *Our mission is to Rise Up! Build Bridges. Bear Burdens. Break Chains. Bring Hope.*

- All of our meetings begin with devotions prepared and led by one of the Council members. Each one is unique – and often personal.
- After the 2024 Synod Assembly, the Council considered revising our meeting schedule (which had been bi-monthly in the even-numbered months) and voted to move to a schedule of four meetings per year, with meetings in February, April, August, and November. The new schedule optimizes the timing of our work around the Synod Assembly.
- In the new schedule, our meetings are longer – typically from 9 AM – 3 PM. The longer meetings allow time for:
 - o Lunch break and fellowship
 - o A dedicated time of prayer, in which members can share the joys and concerns on their hearts and can pray for and with one another
 - o Presentations by invited speakers – recently focusing on representatives from the Synod’s “funded ministries” – the missional ministry sites which are partially supported by funds from the Fund For Mission
 - o Conversations around strategic planning and visioning for the future ministries of the Synod
- I believe the new schedule and meeting format have helped the Council to be more efficient and has been greeted with a greater level of engagement by the members

I am grateful for the selfless dedication of the members of the Synod Council. They are faithful, thoughtful servants of Jesus Christ and his Church, and I am pleased to be their colleague and sibling. I look forward to another year of service to you, the members of the Synod, to the Synod Council, and to our Lord and Savior Jesus, Christ.

Paul G. Archer,
Synod Vice President

Response to Resolutions from the 2024 Synod Assembly

Among the specific responsibilities of the Synod Council (provision S10.03c of the Synod Constitution) says the Council will “carry out the resolutions of the Synod Assembly”.

The 2024 Synod Assembly voted to adopt Resolution 1, which stated:

Resolution: For Justice and Peace in Palestine and Israel

RESOLVED THAT the Southeast Michigan Synod Assembly directs the Bishop of the Southeast Michigan Synod and the ELCJHL Task Force to make every reasonable effort to secure a meeting with Senator Gary Peters and Senator Debbie Stabenow, and other members of the Michigan Congressional delegation as possible, asking them to

- publicly call for a ceasefire;
- call to fully reinstate funding for the United Nations Relief Works Agency in Palestine (UNRWA) as well as robust and complete funding for the rebuilding of Gaza;
- call for an immediate start of peace talks beginning with a recognition of the Palestinian state, and;
- to make aid to both Israel and Palestine contingent on compliance with international law, U.S. law, and stated U.S. policy
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RESOLVED THAT this assembly encourages congregations and individuals to generously support the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Holy Land, Opportunity Palestine, and Augusta Victoria Hospital.

RESOLVED THAT this assembly recommends the Southeast Michigan Synod to make available and congregations use videos and study guides produced by the ELCA’s [SUMUD](#) initiative in adult forums or potentially for Lent 2025 midweek services, and an adult forum series introducing the Israeli-Palestinian history, the experience of Palestinian Christians in the West Bank, life in Gaza, and opportunities for making a difference (which will be available through ELCJHL Task Force).

Response:

In a year of remarkable political turmoil and uncertainty, Bishop Kreiss and members of the Synod have made repeated attempts to schedule meetings with Michigan's political leaders. As of today (4/2) we have been able to schedule a meeting with a member of Senator Peters' staff for April 22. We are still trying to get onto Senator Slotkin's schedule, and hope that we might schedule a meeting later that same week.

The Synod Council considers the response to this resolution to be complete.