

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA  
CHURCH COUNCIL  
April 16, 2026  
Virtual Meeting

AGENDA

**Participants**

**Voting Members**

Pr. Lisa Ahlness	Mr. Moses Kavishe
Mr. Jeffrey Akerson ( <i>nominated</i> )	Pr. Gwendolyn King
Pr. Ryan Anderson	Ms. Olivia Martin-Call
Ms. Denise Beumer ( <i>nominated</i> )	Mr. Mitch McCartney
Pr. Heather Brown	Mr. Joel Miller
Ms. Jamie Brueschoff ( <i>excused</i> )	Pr. CeCee Mills, Secretary
Pr. Leroy Cannon	Pr. Alvaro Nova
Mr. Ben Caseley	Ms. Deb Nyquist
Bp. Yehiel Curry, Presiding Bishop	Deacon Kari Olsen
Pr. Ralph Dunkin	Pr. Moses Penumaka
Ms. Lori Fedyk, Treasurer	Mr. Iván Perez
Ms. Sheena Foster	Ms. Terri Robertson
Mr. Hans Giller	Pr. Barbara Rossing
Ms. Jessi Grieser	Ms. Spencer Sanders
Ms. Pat Harper	Mr. Imran Siddiqui, Vice President
Ms. Deidre Hayes	Mr. Andrew Stevens
Ms. Kristy Henriksen	Ms. Jillian Stierwalt
Mr. Tim Hiller	Ms. Jennifer Trom
Pr. Chad Huebner	Mr. Christopher Vergara
Bp. Deborah Hutterer, Chair, COB	Ms. Emma Witt
Mr. Rindra Josoa	

**Liaison Bishops**

Bp. Meggan Manlove, Region 1	Bp. Suzanne Dillahunt, Region 6
Bp. Jeff Johnson, Region 2	Bp. Nathan Pipho, Region 7
Bp. Craig Schweitzer, Region 3	Bp. Bill Gohl, Region 8
Bp. Scott Johnson, Region 4	Bp. Kevin Strickland, Region 9
Bp. Joy Mortensen-Wiebe, Region 5	

**Resource People**

**Office of the Presiding Bishop**

Pr. Wyvetta Bullock, interim executive for administration  
Aaron Cooper, senior director, strategic communications  
Ryan Cumming, director, theological ethics  
Jennifer DeLeon, director for racial justice  
Bill Gafkjen, interim executive, ecumenical and inter-religious relations  
Mary Streufert, executive, theological discernment  
Deacon John Weit, executive, worship  
Rachel Wind, executive, development  
Andrea Young, interim executive, human resources

**Office of the Secretary**

Thomas Cunniff, general counsel  
Dan Eppley, manager for official documentation  
Pr. Keith Fry, former executive, Office of the Secretary administration

Paul Irwin, associate general counsel  
Deacon Mary Ann Schwabe, executive, synod relations  
Jodi Slattery, executive, governance  
Katharyn Wheeler, executive, Office of the Secretary administration

**Christian Community and Leadership**

Pr. Sara Cutter, interim executive director

**Service and Justice**

Pr. Khader El-Yateem, executive director

**Innovation**

Rahel Mwitula-Williams, interim executive director

**Press**

Candice Hill Buchbinder, public relations manager

**Separately Incorporated Ministries**

Tim Blevins, president and CEO, Augsburg Fortress Publishers  
Andrew DeYoung, president-elect and CEO-elect, Augsburg Fortress Publishers  
Jennifer Hockenbery, interim executive director, Women of the ELCA  
Christopher Johnson, president and CEO, Portico Benefit Services  
Eva Roby, president and CEO, Mission Investment Fund  
Annette Shoemaker, interim president and CEO, ELCA Foundation

**Ecumenical Guest**

Pr. Deborah Jackson, The Episcopal Church

**Advisory Members**

Pr. Alejandro Mejia, president, Latino Ministries Association  
Patterson Yazzie, interim president, American Indian Alaska Native Lutheran Association  
Ryan LaHurd, president, Association of Lutherans of Arab and Middle Eastern Heritage  
Desta Goehner, president, Association of White Lutherans for Racial Justice  
Pr. Bimen Limbong, president, Association of Asian and Pacific Islanders  
Keith Youngblood, vice president, African Descent Lutheran Association  
Aubrey Thonvold, executive director, ReconcilingWorks

6:30 p.m. CDT **Deadline for Removal of Items from *En Bloc*** (send request to [CeCee.Mills@elca.org](mailto:CeCee.Mills@elca.org))  
**Deadline for New Business** (send request to [CeCee.Mills@elca.org](mailto:CeCee.Mills@elca.org))

**PLENARY SESSION ONE**  
[Microsoft Teams Meeting Link](#)  
April 16, 2026  
6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. CDT

Gathering Word and Prayer, led by Jillian Stierwalt

**I.A Call to Order and Adoption of the Agenda**

Agenda items have been distributed electronically. Additional items will be distributed at the meeting to the members of the Church Council and invited resource people. The times noted in the agenda are estimates and provided for information only.

**CC ACTION**

**Recommended:**

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

**I.B Adoption of the Standing Rules**

The Church Council will conduct its business in this virtual meeting using standing rules. The document highlights deadlines for removal from *en bloc* and new business, procedures for speeches, instructions for Church Council members on how to ask a question or make a comment during the meeting, and the process for voting. The standing rules can be found [here](#).

**CC ACTION**

**Recommended:**

**To adopt the standing rules for the April 2026 Church Council meeting.**

**I.C Reports from the Officers and Chair of Conference of Bishops**

- I.C.1 [Presiding Bishop](#)
- I.C.2 [Secretary](#)
- I.C.3 [Vice President](#)
- I.C.4 [Treasurer](#)
- I.C.5 [Chair of Conference of Bishops](#)

**I.D Report of the Executive Committee**

**I.D.1 Elections of Church Council members**

Mr. Matthew Schur [4A] resigned from the Church Council in December 2025 and Secretary Lucille Mills declared a vacancy. The Nebraska Synod Council nominated Mr. Jeffrey Dennis Akerson of Bellevue, Nebraska to fulfill the remainder of the term ending in 2031. The Executive Committee acted at its February meeting to forward the nomination for council's consideration.

Similarly, Ms. Linda Rivera [9E] resigned from the Church Council in February 2026 and Secretary Lucille Mills declared a vacancy. The Florida-Bahamas Synod Council nominated Ms. Denise Beumer of Maitland, Florida to fulfill the remainder of the term ending in 2028. The

Executive Committee acted at its March meeting to forward the nomination for council's consideration.

The biographical information for the nominees is [here](#). The Executive Committee acts as the Nominating Committee for the Church Council.

### **CC ACTION**

#### **Recommended:**

**To elect Mr. Jeffrey Dennis Akerson, Bellevue, Nebraska [4A], to the Church Council for a term ending in August 2031.**

### **CC ACTION**

#### **Recommended:**

**To elect Ms. Denise Beumer, Maitland, Florida [9E], to the Church Council for a term ending in August 2028.**

#### **I.D.2 Election of Executive for Administration (*Executive Session for Church Council members, liaison bishops, interim executive for human resources, interim executive for administration, and minutes team*)**

The Executive for Administration is the chief administrator of the churchwide organization.

According to ELCA 15.12.A25.: "The executive for administration shall be elected by the Church Council upon nomination of the presiding bishop and shall serve coterminous with the term of the presiding bishop."

Presiding Bishop Yehiel Curry will present a candidate for executive of administration to the Executive Committee, which will review the nomination and forward the name to the Church Council.

### **CC ACTION**

#### **Recommended:**

**To elect [*name to be provided in executive session*] as the executive for administration for a term coterminous with the term of the presiding bishop, as provided in churchwide continuing resolution 15.12.A25.**

#### **I.D.3 Update on Task Force on Interdependence and Purpose**

The Task Force on Interdependence and Purpose continues meeting to fulfill its directives identified by both the Church Council [CC25.04.07] and the 2025 Churchwide Assembly [CA25.01.06h, CA25.01.06m, CA25.01.06n]. The Executive Committee receives periodic updates on its work and a brief 10-minute update will be provided to Church Council at this meeting.

#### **I.D.4 Update on Financial Coordinating Task Force**

At its April 2025 meeting, the Church Council authorized the Executive Committee to create a Financial Coordinating Task Force [CC25.04.08]. The Executive Committee will appoint members at its April 14, 2026 meeting.

Guided by the Holy Spirit, the task force was requested to:

- a) review existing resources of the ELCA or educational institutions that support financial management;
- b) explore opportunities where greater collaboration or shared processes/resources among the financial functions of the three expressions of this church may be beneficial;

- c) commit to sharing best practices, resources, and tools related to financial management;
- d) affirm the commitment of the financial separately incorporated ministries (ELCA Foundation, Mission Investment Fund, Portico Benefit Services) to continue collaboration amongst themselves and to identify possible ways to enhance operational efficiencies, to leverage synergies, to align strategic initiatives, and to identify opportunities for cost savings and to receive a report from the financial separately incorporated ministries to the Financial Coordinating Task Force by December 2026

A report on the work of the task force is expected at the Spring 2027 Church Council meeting.

### **I.E Report of the Budget and Finance Committee**

The following report is provided by the Budget and Finance Committee. Any *En Bloc* items will be acted upon later in the meeting. Background information can be located in the [Budget and Finance Committee section](#) of the Public Current Meeting channel in Teams.

*10-minute Recess*

### **I.F Report of the Service and Justice Committee**

The following report is provided by the Service and Justice Committee. Additional items or revised actions may be distributed following the committee's meeting. Any *En Bloc* items will be acted upon later in the meeting. Background information can be located in the [Service and Justice Committee section](#) of the Public Current Meeting channel in Teams.

#### **I.F.1 Terms and Conditions of Support for Long-Term Global Personnel**

The Service and Justice unit is responsible for recommending ELCA global personnel policies to the Church Council for adoption. These policies, which govern long-term global personnel, are shared during missionary orientation and are in the ELCA Service and Justice "Personnel Policies and Expectations" document. The Service and Justice (Global Service) staff implement and support provisions for all personnel and, if changes are recommended, direct them to the ELCA Church Council for approval and adoption. The terms and conditions of support for long-term global personnel document is [here](#) and the action is included in the *En Bloc* resolution.

#### **I.F.2 Asian and Pacific Islander Ministry Strategy of the ELCA**

The Asian and Pacific Islander (API) Ministry Strategy (2026-2030) is being presented for Church Council's affirmation, recognition, support, and solidarity.

In 2024 and 2025, the Asian and Pacific Islander Ministries held listening sessions attended by their diverse community and then gathered feedback on the draft. The API Ministry Strategic Planning Core Listening Team shared stories of the gifts that are celebrated and nurtured, challenges that are courageously faced and addressed, and the hopes that are fervently prayed for in words and actions. These stories captured the essence of this new API Ministry Strategy: A deep love for the church, a hunger for belonging, and a call for change.

The API communities and leaders seek to meet the current needs of ministries that have changed so much, which are no longer captured by the first API Ministry Strategy which was received and approved at the 2001 Churchwide Assembly. As the fastest growing ethnic group in the country in recent years, there are great opportunities for this church to participate in God's reign of healing, belonging, and transformation. The new API Ministry Strategy can be found [here](#).

### CC ACTION

#### **Recommended:**

**To affirm the new Asian and Pacific Islander Ministry Strategy of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America;**

**To express solidarity and deep gratitude for the ministries of the ELCA with the Asian and Pacific Islander community and for the Asians and Pacific Islanders of the ELCA who have enriched and blessed this church with all they generously have given, shared, and cultivated for mission and ministry; and**

**To commend the ELCA to accompany the Asian and Pacific Islander congregations and to utilize this new strategic plan in responding to a changing world and embodying this church's faithful discipleship.**

#### **I.F.3 Plan to address barriers for youth and young adult participation**

At the 2025 Churchwide Assembly, an amendment was made to the ELCA Constitution continuing resolution 5.01.E19. to increase the percentage goal of youth and young adult voting membership of churchwide assembly, Church Council and churchwide boards and committees, as follows:

**5.01.E1925.** *It is the goal of this church that at least **20** ~~40~~ percent of the voting members of the Churchwide Assembly, Church Council, and churchwide boards and committees be youth and young adults. The Church Council shall establish a plan for implementing this goal. For purposes of the Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA, the term "youth" means a voting member of a congregation who has not reached the age of 18 at the time of election or appointment for service. The term "young adult" means a voting member of a congregation between the ages of 18 and 30 at the time of election or appointment for service.*

In addition, the assembly directed the Church Council "to develop and present a plan for implementation of this continuing resolution at its April 2026 meeting that also addresses barriers to youth and young adult participation." (CA25.05.28)

The chair of Service and Justice Committee has gathered a working group to develop a plan. The working group is meeting in early April to begin the work.

### CC ACTION

#### **Recommended:**

**To defer the presentation of a plan that addresses implementation of ELCA continuing resolution 5.01.E25. until the November 2026 Church Council meeting.**

#### **I.G Report of the Legal and Constitutional Review Committee**

The following report is provided by the Legal and Constitutional Review Committee. Additional items or revised actions may be distributed following the committee's meeting. Any *En Bloc* items will be acted upon later in the meeting. Background information is located in the [Legal and Constitutional Review Committee section](#) of the Public Current Meeting channel in Teams.

## **I.H Report of the Christian Community and Leadership Committee**

The following report is provided by the Christian Community and Leadership Committee. Background information is located in the [Christian Community and Leadership section](#) of the Public Current Meeting channel in Teams.

### **I.H.1 Update on Candidacy Process Experiment**

At its April 2025 meeting, Church Council affirmed a one-year experiment with a select number of synods to finalize proposed revisions to the candidacy process (CC25.04.24g).

The [Reimagined Candidacy Process](#) focuses on assessing all candidates in Core Competencies that correlate with their anticipated roster. Whether a candidate follows an education and formation pathway that leads to a master's degree or a Certificate of Study, as is often the case with TEEM (Theological Education for Emerging Ministries) candidates, the expectations for proficiency will be the same. The assessments of the Core Competencies will be completed with the candidate by partners from seminaries, congregations or other ministry sites, candidacy committees, and clinical settings in connection with CPE (clinical pastoral education) requirements.

Throughout the process, candidates will experience an emphasis on ongoing discernment of their call, particularly as it intersects with the mission of the church and the needs of the world. Candidates will engage in annual reviews with representatives from the candidacy committee, as well as participate in annual retreats with the full candidacy committee. When proficiency in all of the Core Competencies has been achieved, the candidates will meet once again with their committee for approval in preparation for First Call.

The launch of the Reimagined Candidacy Process began in February, with a training session facilitated by the candidacy staff in the Christian Community and Leadership unit and members of the Candidacy Leadership Development Working Group. Participants in the launch training are leaders from ten synods and this church's seven ELCA seminaries. The training sessions included both direct instruction on specifics of the new process and opportunities for practice and reflection with small groups.

While the reimagined candidacy process continues to take shape, staff are moving forward with a project in partnership with synods and seminaries. The launch with this smaller group of synods will allow for reflection and adaptation of the process where needed before the full roll-out of the process with all 65 synods by 2029. While this work is still emerging, the expectation is that, through collaboration with this church's seminaries and synods, the process will grow, adapt, and deepen as the reimagined candidacy process unfolds.

## **I.I Report of the Faith, Society, and Innovation Committee**

The following report is provided by the Faith, Society, and Innovation Committee. Any *En Bloc* items will be acted upon later in the meeting. Background information is located in the [Faith, Society, and Innovation Committee section](#) of the Public Current Meeting channel in Teams.

### **I.I.1 World Council of Churches Ecumenical Decade of Climate Justice Action**

On June 21, 2025, the World Council of Churches launched the [Ecumenical Decade of Climate Justice Action](#) (2025-2034). This Decade provides an ecumenical opportunity for “an unprecedented commitment by the global church—a bold and prayerful response to the climate emergency.” The ELCA is a member church of the WCC.

The ELCA social statement, [Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice](#) (1993), acknowledged that everyone faces dangerous global warming and emphasized that action to counter

degradation is essential to future generations. At its April 2023 meeting, the Church Council adopted the "[Message on Earth's Climate Crisis](#)." The social message calls this climate crisis a "kairos moment;" "puts forward convictions to guide discernment and actions toward the challenges posed by the climate kairos;" and challenges all expressions of the ELCA to "join with ecumenical, interfaith, and secular partners working to address the climate crisis."

In the months to come, the Office of the Secretary anticipates receiving resolutions from synod assemblies and synod councils regarding the Decade and additional ways for how this church might respond.

More information about the Ecumenical Decade of Climate Justice Action can be found [here](#), including descriptions for the six pathways to climate justice.

### CC ACTION

#### **Recommended:**

**To affirm the commitment of the ELCA to support the "World Council of Churches Ecumenical Decade of Climate Justice Action" (2025-2034), "answering the prophetic call to care for our common home and stand in solidarity with those who suffer most from climate injustice;" and**

**To urge this church in all its expressions to seek out ways to engage in systemic transformation, including consideration of implementation of the WCC "[pathways to climate justice](#)."**

#### **I.J New Business**

#### **I.K Consideration of Items Removed from *En Bloc***

#### **I.L *En Bloc* Approval of Certain Items**

The *en bloc* resolution includes agenda items judged to be non-controversial, so they may not require separate discussion or votes. Items marked [*En Bloc*] can be removed by members if they wish to discuss them individually; otherwise, they remain in the *en bloc* resolution. Only items requested by the established deadline to be removed will be discussed separately. Those remaining are voted on together as one of the last items of council business.

### CC ACTION [Two-thirds approval required]

#### **Recommended:**

**To adopt the amendment to 14.41.F22, in the *Constitution, Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* as described in "[Proposed Amendments – Continuing Resolutions](#)."**

### CC ACTION

#### **Recommended:**

**To take action *En Bloc* on the remaining items listed in [En Bloc Items](#) and [Responses to Churchwide Assembly Actions](#).**

#### **I.M Legal Briefing** (*executive session for Church Council, Liaison Bishops, Administrative Team, Minutes Team, and Legal Counsel*)

#### **I.N Closing Prayer and Adjournment**