

SYNOD COUNCIL MEMBERS

The Rev. E. Patricia Avila 2027
Mr. Devon Brooks 2029
Ms. Monique Davis 2026
Ms. Mary Downing 2029
***Bishop Paul Egensteiner** 2025
***S.Dcn. David Ehlers** 2027
S.Dcn. Philip Jenks 2027
***Mr. John Litke, Treasurer** 2024
The Rev. Sonja Maclary 2029
Ms. Lily Sage Mathias 2029
The Rev. Ernie Mossl 2029
The Rev. Kevin O'Hara 2029
The Rev. David Parsons 2027
Ms. Cynthia Roberti 2029
***S.Dcn. Denise Rutherford Gill** 2029
***Mr. Thomas Sargent** 2027
***The Rev. Robert Schoepflin, Sect.** 2027
Mr. Cecil (Chip) Spurlock-Shackelton 2027
The Rev. Arden Strasser 2029
The Rev. Gary Squire 2029
Mr. Peter Teichmann 2029
***Mr. Christopher Vergara, VP** 2027
***The Rev. Kristin Wuerffel** 2029
The Rev. Ernie Mossl 2029

STAFF

Ms. Regina Daniels
The Rev. Gladys Diaz
Mr. Branden Dupree
Ms. Karen Falco
S.Dcn. Donna-Mari Fieldsa
Mr. Mark Goodwin
The Rev. Christopher Mietlowski
Ms. Maria Rodas
S.Dcn. Gayle Ruege
S.Dcn. Lori Scaffidi (Ret.)
The Rev. Angela Shannon
Ms. Leticia Silva

GUESTS

Mr. Jason Labate, Goldstein Hall
Ms. Ellen Clemont, Goldstein Hall
Mr. Alex Weis, Matter RE
S.Dcn. George Guinan

Bold = present

Italics = excused absence

*Member of Executive Committee

Opening Devotions: Bishop Egensteiner: Bishop opened meeting with prayer

Observer: Ms. Lily Sage Mathias

Call to Order: VP Vergara at 9:05 am

- 1. Adoption of the Agenda:** adopted as presented
- 2. Adoption of the Synod Council minutes 23 November 2024:** adopted as presented
- 3. New Business**

At this point Items D and E under new business were addressed, and then we returned to the adopted agenda.

A. Bronx Strategy: Proposed Redevelopment / 763 Prospect Avenue, Bronx

The Bronx strategy team and our partners at Goldstein-Hall and Matter RE have made revisions to the proposal that reflect the questions and requests for clarification raised at the November meeting.

Karen Falco shared historic information regarding our synod's work on a Bronx strategy and the Bronx congregations.

Karen introduced the partners from Goldstein Hall and Matter Real Estate

The resolution for the approval of the exploratory phase 1 of the Mission Forward Bronx strategy

Whereas, the Metropolitan New York Synod Council's leadership stance as a Sanctuary Synod in promoting sanctuary for the undocumented immigrant in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America ("ELCA") church spaces by bringing the sanctuary memorial to the floor of the triennial churchwide assembly in Milwaukee, August 5-10, 2019, where the memorial was approved by the 65 synods of ELCA for the entire denomination to become a Sanctuary Church; and

Whereas, the ELCA memorial for Sanctuary provides not only for refugee shelter, but also proactive responses to detentions, deportation, and criminalization of immigrants and refugees, a strategy to fight individual cases of deportation, to advocate for an end to mass detention, and to amplify immigrant voices, a vision for what communities and the world can be, and a moral imperative to take prophetic action of hospitality, rooted in the theology of our Christian faith; and

Whereas, the call of Jesus to welcome the stranger (Mt. 25:35) and of the Hebrew Bible to love the stranger as yourself, that "the alien who resides with you shall be to you as a citizen among you" (Lev. 19:34) such that all are welcome to share in God's bounty among us made so abundant in our communities, for it was given not by us, but by grace.

Therefore be it

Resolved, that the approximate \$4 million in proceeds raised from the sale of fourteen (14) properties of MNYS Bronx congregation properties since 1990 be reserved for and committed to a strategy of reinvestment and development of real property in

The Bronx, initially at the site called “Mission Walk,” located at 763 Prospect Avenue, to create a space of welcome for the new migrant, cultural acclimatization, job training, worship and pastoral care, leadership training for clergy and, eventually, if adequate funds can be raised, housing for undocumented immigrant families (“Our Vision”); and be it further

Resolved, that Our Vision be launched this day by our commitment to the development of the exploratory first phase of Mission Walk to include (i) information gathering for the pre-development work of a non-housing model that would permit housing to be added to higher stories at a future time, (ii) the issuance of requests for proposals (“RFP”s) from developers, architects, and any related engineering or building consultant to provide timing and pricing information for the construction of below grade and above grade space for the non-housing elements of Our Vision; and be it further

Resolved, that consultants Matter Real Estate (“Matter RE”) and legal counsel Goldstein Hall PLLC (“GH”) continue to represent MNYS in implementing Our Vision and guide us forward on the process of gathering RFPs and assessing RFP responses, and providing best practice strategy advice to MNYS on the implementation of Our Vision; and be it further

Resolved, that Christopher Vergara, and one or more other members of our Council, be appointed as members of the Mission Walk working group now composed of MNYS staff members Rev. Gladys Diaz, Karen Falco, and Branden Dupree (or such other staff members as the synod Bishop may appoint from time to time), Matter RE, and GH (the “Bronx Strategy Building Group”).

ACTION SC25:01/03

Resolved, that the approximate \$4 million in proceeds raised from the sale of fourteen (14) properties of MNYS Bronx congregation properties since 1990 be reserved for and committed to a strategy of reinvestment and development of real property in The Bronx, initially at the site called “Mission Walk,” located at 763 Prospect Avenue, to create a space of welcome for the new migrant, cultural acclimatization, job training, worship and pastoral care, leadership training for clergy and, eventually, if adequate funds can be raised, housing for undocumented immigrant families (“Our Vision”); and be it further

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above grade space for the non-housing elements of Our Vision; and be it further

Resolved, that consultants Matter Real Estate (“Matter RE”) and legal counsel Goldstein Hall PLLC (“GH”) continue to represent MNYS in implementing Our Vision and guide us forward on the process of gathering RFPs and assessing RFP responses, and providing best practice strategy advice to MNYS on the implementation of Our Vision; and be it further

Resolved, that Christopher Vergara, and one or more other members of our Council, be appointed as members of the Mission Walk working group now composed of MNYS staff members Rev. Gladys Diaz, Karen Falco, and Branden Dupree (or such other staff members as the synod Bishop may appoint from time to time), Matter RE, and GH (the “Bronx Strategy Building Group”).

ADOPTED (18 in favor, 1 opposed, 0 abstentions)

B. 2025 Synod Assembly

a. MNYS Committee on Reference and Counsel

- *The Rev. Dr. Martha Cruz / Co-Chair (Bronx)*
- *The Rev. Rebecca Pollicino / Co-Chair (W Suffolk)*
- *The Rev. Chryll Crews (SW Nassau)*
- *S.Dcn. Jean Fucci (Delaware-Hudson)*
- *The Rev John Jurik (W Nassau)*
- *S.Dcn. Rob Sinanan (W Queens)*
- *The Rev. Kristin Wuerffel (Tappan Zee)*

ACTION SC25:01/04

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan New York Synod Council appoint the Rev. Dr. Martha Cruz, the Rev. Rebecca Pollicino, the Rev. Chryll Crews, S.Dcn. Jean Fucci, the Rev. John Jurik, S.Dcn. Rob Sinanan, the Rev. Kristin Wuerffel to serve on the 2025 Committee on Reference and Counsel.

ADOPTED

b. MNYS Nominations and Elections Committee

- *The Rev. Kevin O’Hara / Chair*
- *S.Dcn. Jasmine Downer (Brooklyn)*
- *The Rev. Emilce Erato (W Nassau)*
- *Ms. Louise Litke (W Suffolk)*
- *S.Dcn. Karen Nurmi (Tappan Zee)*
- *The Sonja Maclary*

ACTION SC25:01/05

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan New York Synod Council appoint the Rev. Kevin O’Hara, S.Dcn. Jasmine Downer; the Rev. Emilce Erato, Ms. Louise Litke, S.Dcn. Karen Nurmi, and The Rev. Sonja Maclary to serve on the 2025 Elections and Nominations Committee.

ADOPTED

- c. *MNYS Audit Committee***
 - *The Rev. Dawn Morello*
 - *Mr. Andrew Caddell*

ACTION SC25:01/06

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan New York Synod Council elect the Rev. Dawn Morello and Mr. Andrew Caddell to serve on the MNYS Audit Committee for a three-year term effective 1 April 2025 - 31 March 2028.

ADOPTED

C. *MNYS Discernment Process*

Christopher Vergara reported that Rozella Haydee White (RHW Consulting) conducted Listening Sessions in accordance with the contract approved by the SC in November. Listening Sessions with the Synod staff, Synod Council, Vision Team, Conference of Deans, and the Diaconate Council concluded this month.

After review and evaluation of the information gathered in the Listening Sessions, RHW Consulting provided the Bishop’s Election Committee with identified areas of focus and 16 recommended questions for the Pre-identification questionnaire.

The Bishop’s Election Committee distilled the questions and prepared the questionnaire to be used in the pre-identification process. A synod survey will be launched February 10.

- a. *Pre-identification Questionnaire***
- b. *Synod Survey***

ACTION SC25:01/07

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan New York Synod Council approve the pre-identification questionnaire submitted by the Bishop’s Election Committee for use in the 2025 pre-identification process.

ADOPTED

D. *Dobbs Ferry Lutheran Church: sale of property: 30 Henry Court, Dobbs Ferry*

A letter from the congregation council of Dobbs Ferry Church requesting that the Synod Council take no exception to the sale of their parsonage was received.

ACTION SC25:01/01

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan New York Synod Council take no exception to the sale of the property located at 30 Henry Court, Dobbs Ferry by the congregation of Dobbs Ferry Lutheran Church.

ADOPTED (18 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions)

E. MNYS 2025 Housing Allowances

A housing allowance is a portion of clergy income that may be excluded from income for federal income tax purposes (W-2 "Box 1" wages) under Section 107 of the Internal Revenue Code.

ACTION SC25:01/02

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan New York Synod Council approve the 2025 Housing Allowances as presented.

ADOPTED

4. *Report of the Bishop*

A. *Calls*

a. The Rev. Dr. Martha Cruz: Intentional Interim Pastor / First, Throggs Neck

ACTION SC25:01/08

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan New York Synod Council extend a call to the Rev. Dr. Martha Cruz to serve as Intentional Interim pastor for the congregation of First Lutheran Church of Throggs Neck, Bronx.

ADOPTED

b. The Rev. Luis Echandia: Interim Pastor / St. John-St. Matthew-Emmanuel, Brooklyn

ACTION SC25:01/09

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan New York Synod Council extend a call to the Rev. Luis Echandia to serve as Interim pastor for the congregation for the congregation of St. John – St. Matthew – Emmanuel, Brooklyn.

ADOPTED

c. The Rev. Juris Saivars: Pastor / Latvian Church, Melville (invitation to Missionary Service)

ACTION SC25:01/10

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan New York Synod Council extend the Rev. Juris Saivars an Invitation to Missionary Service (five-year term) as the appointed pastor to the Latvian Lutheran Church, Melville, NY effective 25 January 2025 – 24 January 2030.
ADOPTED

d. The Rev. Dr. Richard Hill: Retirement status effective 1 January 2025

ACTION SC25:01/11

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan New York Synod Council grant retirement status to the Rev. Dr. Richard Hill effective January 1, 2025.
ADOPTED

e. The Rev. Alex Raabe: Resignation from the ELCA roster.

ACTION SC:01/12

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan New York Synod Council accept the resignation of Alex Raabe from the ELCA roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament effective December 26, 2024.
ADOPTED

B. Appointments

a. The Rev. Heidi Neumark: Pastor/ Immanuel, Kingston

C. Congregation Updates

a. Zion-St. Mark's, Manhattan

The membership of Zion-St. Mark's has aged and diminished to a point where they have lost the ability to govern themselves or manage their financial responsibilities. Pr. Mietlowski is in consultation with the few remaining members and Dean Danielle Miller to determine next steps for the congregation.

b. Epiphany-Epifania, Hempstead

Pastor Luis Echandia has concluded his term-call to the congregation of Epiphany-Epifania as of Dec 31. A comprehensive property assessment has been conducted and documents have been requested from the congregation leadership to perform a financial review.

D. Legal / Property Updates (Karen Falco)

E. Staff / written reports

5. *Report of the Vice-President*

A. *Bishop Election Committee Report*

The Bishop's Election Committee has met three (3) times since their appointment in November. Twice via zoom and one on-site meeting at the synod office.

Pr. Andy James has provided an updated report that outlines the Committee's work to date and the process to draft the pre-identification form.

B. *March SC meeting*

• ***SA2023 Minutes***

Secretary Schoepflin provided draft minutes that required reports by synod officers be added. The completed minutes will be sent to the SC in February for review and approval at the March meeting

• ***Nominations for Synod Secretary***

The SC will identify two candidates for nomination to the Synod Assembly for Synod Secretary at the March meeting.

• ***SA2025 Agenda and Standing Rules***

The proposed 2025 SA agenda and the standing rules will be presented to the SC in March to recommend to the Synod Assembly.

• ***Budget FY 2026***

The final budget for FY 2026 will be presented to the SC in March for vote to recommend to the Synod Assembly for adoption.

• ***Committee Charter Update***

Committee review will take place in February

6. *Treasurer's Report*

A. *Mission Support (31 December 2024)*

The December 2024, Mission Support offerings totaled \$51,281.57. YTD Mission Support actuals through December 30,2024 are \$629,191.66 which is \$84,302.77 less than YTD December 2023.

January 25, 2025
APPROVED 3/22/25

Synod Council of the Metropolitan New York Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
MINUTES

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- B. Financials (31 December 2024)**
- C. Budget preview: FY Feb 1, 2025 – January 31, 2026**

7. Afterthoughts (as necessary)

- A. Observer for March meeting**

8. Observer's Evaluation

Executive Committee Meeting: March 11, 2025 (via zoom)

Synod Council meeting: March 22, 2025 (via zoom)

Meeting adjourned at 11:36 am.

Respectfully submitted,
Robert Schoepflin, Secretary