

Southeastern Synod 2025 Assembly Recap

Theme: *"Shall We Gather at the River: Called, Gathered, Sent"*

Dates: May 29–31, 2025

Location: Columbus, Georgia Convention and Trade Center

Special guests included Lori Fedyk as our churchwide representative; Dr. Lisa Kimball from Virginia Theological Seminary as our keynote speaker; Bishop Felix Malpica from our Companion Synod - La Crosse Area Synod, who offered greetings and the opening worship sermon; retired Bishop Patricia Davenport as our revival preacher; and Rev. C Anderson James as the assembly Parliamentarian.

Election Results

The 2025 Synod Assembly elected the following positions: Bishop, Synod Secretary, Synod Council at-large lay members, Consultation Committee 2 lay persons and 2 rostered ministers and Discipline Committee 3 lay persons and 1 rostered minister.

Bishop Election

The Rev. Dr. Kevin Strickland was re-elected May 29, 2025, to serve a second six-year term as bishop of the Southeastern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). The election took place during the synod assembly's first Plenary. He was elected on the first ballot, with 224 votes. (75% needed of legal votes cast; 213 votes received of 284 legal votes.)

Newly Elected Synod Council Members

We are excited to introduce the newly elected members of the Synod Council who will guide our Synod in the coming years. To view an elected member's biography, visit the [2025 Synod Assembly Materials Page](#), Tab D.

Synod Secretary - Rev. Ruth Hamilton

At-Large Lay - Beth Ford

At-Large Lay - Sarah Stewart

Newly Elected Discipline Committee Members

Four members were elected for a 6-year term: 1 Rostered Minister and 3 Lay members. To view an elected member's biography, visit the [2025 Synod Assembly Materials Page](#), Tab D.

Rostered Minister - Rev. W Tina Trice Culpepper

Lay - Meade Entrekin

Lay - Judy Long

Lay - Roland Bernard Welmaker

Newly Elected Consultation Committee Members

Four members were elected for a 6-year term: 2 Rostered Ministers and 2 Lay members. To view an elected member's biography, visit the [2025 Synod Assembly Materials Page](#), Tab D.

Rostered Minister - Rev. Nyahaley Labor

Rostered Minister - Rev. Ashton Roberts

Lay - Mr. Bob Fuller

Lay - Mr. Robert Manger

Resolutions and Memorials

The 2025 Synod Assembly passed by voice vote Resolutions and Memorials brought forward from the Reference and Counsel Committee Chair, Pastor Matthew Henning. Memorials address broad policy issues; resolutions have a narrower focus, requesting consideration or action by the Synod or individual offices or units at Churchwide or the Church Council.

[Memorial: For an End to the Occupation and Recognition of Palestinian Statehood in the United Nations](#)

[Memorial To Affirm Transgender, Nonbinary, Gender Expansive, Two-Spirit, and Genderqueer People of God](#)

[Resolution of Thanks at the 2025 Assembly of the Southeastern Synod of the ELCA](#)

Synod Budget & Finance

The assembly approved updated compensation guidelines for rostered ministers, approved the 2026 ministry spending plan and launched a capital campaign for AFFIRM (synod youth summer gathering). Links are provided here for details:

[Rostered Ministers Compensation Guidelines →](#)

[2026 Synod Spending Plan →](#)

[AFFIRM 3-Year Capital Campaign →](#)

Assembly Worship Offerings

During our worship services at the 2025 Southeastern Synod Assembly, offerings were collected in support of three vital ministries:

- **AFFIRM Scholarship Fund**
- **Camp in the City and Youth Scholarships**
- **Southeastern Synod Campus Ministry**

Assembly Special Recognitions

The assembly Recognized and Celebrated:

- **Holly Liersch** - 26 Years of faithful service as the synod's office manager (Retiring July 2025)
- **Rev. Morgan Gordy** - Faithful service as Assistant to the Bishop for Disaster Ministry (Retiring April 2026)
- **Robert E. and Jean E. Graetz Advocacy Awards** - Click [HERE](#) to view more information about this award and the 4 recipients at the 2025 Assembly.
 - Ms Jeannie Ingram
 - Rev. Randy Palm
 - Ms. Ethel Wilkins
 - Rev. Morgan Gordy
- **Synod Congregation Anniversaries** (375 years congregational life!)
 - Community of Grace Lutheran, Grayson GA - 25 years
 - Christ Our Shepherd Lutheran, Peachtree City GA - 50 years
 - First United Lutheran, Kennesaw GA - 50 years
 - St. Andrew Lutheran, Franklin TN - 50 years
 - Crowells Chapel Lutheran, Unionville TN - 200 years
- Many Rostered Minister **Ordination Anniversaries** - from 5 years to 65 years (cumulative of 1,885 years of rostered ministry!) **including LCR's Pastor Rich Lesegonich for 25 years of rostered ministry.**
- **Outgoing Deans** - Pastor Cliff Bahlinger, Pastor John Rossing, Pastor Dave Parr, and Pastor Fritz Weise.
- Also recognized were Rostered Ministers who
 - Transferred into our synod
 - Ordained since the 2024 assembly
 - Retired

It was also announced that the 2026 Southeastern Synod Assembly will be returning to the Columbus Georgia Convention and Trade Center on **May 28–30, 2026**.