

**SYNOD COUNCIL OF THE METROPOLITAN NEW YORK SYNOD**  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

MINUTES OF MARCH 21, 2026

**SYNOD COUNCIL MEMBERS (24)**

<b>The Rev. Leticia Alanis</b>	<b>2027</b>
<i>Mr. Devon Brooks</i>	2029
<b>* Ms. Monique Davis</b>	<b>2027</b>
<b>Ms. Mary Downing</b>	<b>2029</b>
<b>* S. Dcn. David Ehlers</b>	<b>2027</b>
<b>* The Rev. Dr. Katrina Foster-Bishop</b>	<b>2031</b>
<b>S. Dcn. Philip Jenks</b>	<b>2027</b>
<b>* Mr. John Litke, Treasurer</b>	<b>2027</b>
<b>The Rev. Sonja Maclary</b>	<b>2029</b>
<b>Ms. Lily Sage Mathias</b>	<b>2029</b>
<b>Ms. Sonja Meberg (Young Adult)</b>	<b>2029</b>
The Rev. Ernie Moss	2029
<b>* The Rev. Kevin O’Hara</b>	<b>2029</b>
<i>The Rev. David Parsons</i>	2029
<b>Ms. Cynthia Roberti</b>	<b>2029</b>
<b>* S. Dcn. Denise Rutherford Gill</b>	<b>2029</b>
<b>* Mr. Thomas Sargent – Secretary</b>	<b>2029</b>
<b>Mr. Cecil (Chip) Spurlock-Shackelton</b>	<b>2027</b>
<b>Ms. Cirah Spurlock-Shackelton (Yth)</b>	<b>2027</b>
<b>The Rev. Arden Strasser</b>	<b>2029</b>
The Rev. Gary Squire	2029
<b>Mr. Peter Teichmann</b>	<b>2029</b>
<b>* Mr. Christopher Vergara, VP</b>	<b>2029</b>
<i>The Rev. Kristin Wuerffel</i>	2029

**Bold = present**

*Italics = excused absence*

Normal print = absent

\* Member of Executive Committee

**STAFF (17)**

Ms. Liz Aaron  
**The Rev. Patricia Avila**  
**The Rev. Dr. J. Elise Brown, PhD**  
**Ms. Regina Daniels**  
Ms. An Doan  
**Mr. Brandon Dupree**  
Ms. Karen Falco  
**S. Dcn. Donna-Mari Fieldsa**  
S. Dcn. George Guinan  
Mr. Mike McGovern  
Ms. Aniah Nieto  
**Mr. Sterling Ortiz**  
Mr. Kevin Ritter-Jung  
**S. Dcn. Gayle Ruege**  
**The Rev. Nicole Schwalbe**  
**Ms. Blessing Tawengwa**  
The Rev. Jonathan Westerlund

**GUESTS**

The meeting was called to order by VP Christopher Vergara. Prayers by Bishop Foster.

**1. CONSENT ITEMS** – the following were all approved:

- A. Agenda for the meeting.
- B. Draft SC minutes 08 January 2026.

**2. NEW BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS**

**A. MNYS Congregations/Committees / Lutheran Partners/Interfaith:**

**a. Congregations**

**i. St. Andrew's, Smithtown conference change Peconic to Western Suffolk conference**

It was expressed that affiliating with the Western Suffolk Conference would more accurately reflect the congregation's geography and its active ministry partnerships.

**ACTION SC26: 03/01**

***“RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan New York Synod Council approves the conference change for St. Andrew's Lutheran Church, Smithtown, from the Peconic Conference to the Western Suffolk Conference, effective March 21, 2026”***

**ADOPTED**

**B. Calls:** none

**C. Property Updates:**

- a. Christ Center at Transfiguration** – Brandon Dupree provided an update: ministry led by Pastor Perucy Butiku with 20-25 participants, but not sustainable.

**ACTION SC26: 03/02**

***“RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan New York Synod Council approves the conclusion of the ministry at Christ Center at Transfiguration. The end date of health benefits for Pastor Butiku will be 30 April 2026. The final service for this ministry will be 26 April 2026.”***

**ADOPTED**

**b. Zion-St. Mark's (next steps)** – now that the congregation is under synod preservation under constitutional provision S13.24 we need to appoint trustees.

**ACTION SC26: 03/03**

***“RESOLVED, that, as of the date hereof, the Trustees appointed to take charge and control of the for the Property to hold, manage, and convey said Property on behalf of MNYS shall now be the following individuals and respective positions, to wit: (i) Christopher Vergara (Synod Council), (ii) Rev. William Kroeze (Dean), and (iii) Karen Falco (Staff), or whomever may succeed to the aforementioned position, upon the retirement, resignation or removal of any Trustee, and RESOLVED, that the signature of any two (2) such Trustees acting to take charge and control of the Property of ZSM to hold, manage and convey said Property on behalf of MNYS shall be binding upon and considered as the act of all of the Trustees. No person or party: (i) acting in reliance of the signature of one such Trustee as binding upon all Trustees shall be charged with notice of any revocation or change of such authority unless he, she or it***

*shall have received actual written notice thereof, and (ii) shall be required to look behind the signature of such; and RESOLVED, that such Trustees be, and each hereby is, specifically authorized and empowered, in the Trustees' sole discretion, and without further action required by the Synod Council, to take all reasonable and necessary actions, upon advice of legal counsel, necessary in order to take charge and control, possession and manage any and all such Property belonging to ZSM prior to the designation pursuant to 13.24 of the MNYS Constitution and 17-C(2) of the RCLNY, including but not limited to: (i) transferring recorded title by filing of a deed from ZSM to the MNYS or an affiliate; (ii) commencing, continuing and/or settling any action or proceeding to obtain or otherwise in furtherance of gaining possession, control or management of said Property before any authority, regulatory entity, governmental agency or any court having jurisdiction; (iii) managing, cancelling, continuing or transferring all accounts, contracts and Property to MNYS or an affiliate, (iv) appointing authorized signatories on behalf of the Trustees and (v) executing and delivering all necessary documents, and directing the payment of any costs and expense fees to carry into effect such charge and control, and the management and conveyance of said Property."*

**ADOPTED**

### **3. REPORT OF THE BISHOP**

#### **A. Pastoral Care/Ecumenical & Interfaith participation**

##### **a. Congregational Visits (ongoing)**

###### **i. Preaching**

Bishop Foster has preached every Sunday beginning January 4, with one exception due to weather. She also preached at a Black History Month program at Lutheran Church of the Epiphany and will return there March 21 for a Women's History Month program. She also preached at Bach Vespers celebrating International Women Day at Holy Trinity, Central Park W.

###### **ii. Tours**

February 5 was Western Nassau Conference churches with Pastor Bob Cederstrom. February 7 was Brooklyn churches with Pastor Devon Gayle.

**b. Lay Leader Lunches** – 1 to date; next are 3/12 and 3/20.

**c. Financial Peace U** – 4 cohorts running for staff, SC, and clergy.

###### **d. Conference Deans Gathering & Interim Pastors Gathering**

Completed on 2/26 with 14 of 18 deans and 3 of 11 interims in attendance. Quadrant Deans meetings begin on 3/19 with the Upper NY quadrant.

###### **e. Black Equity Table (BET) Reparations Tech proposal update**

The proposal was approved by SC in 2022. Funds paid out to St. Peter's, Springfield Gardens and Resurrection, St. Alban's.

## **f. Lutheran/Ecumenical Partners**

### **i. Meetings**

To date include in-person and Zoom with LSS, Koinonia, Wagner College, Camp MaHeTu, Interfaith Center, Riverside Church, Bricks & Mortals, and New York Disaster Interfaith Services. Also visited LuHi, participated in Village Campus trivia night, and attended the installation of Archbishop Hicks.

### **ii. Actions**

Greek Orthodox Prayer Service for Christian Unity, New Sanctuary Coalition Jericho Walk, and on Ash Wednesday the Episcopal Diocese of NY at Federal Plaza.

## **g. Upcoming**

**i. Chrism Mass** – 3/31/26 at St. John's, Mamaroneck at 10:30 AM.

## **B. Congregation/Conference updates**

**a. St. Thomas, Nyack** – final service in July 12, 2026 at 3 PM.

### **b. Quadrant stats**

Meetings council members regarding the transition process, most recently with the Lutheran Church of the Resurrection in Mt. Kisco. Current focus is on four congregations: St. John-St. Matthew-Emanuel, Brooklyn (candidate has been identified), St. Paul's, Williamsburg (shared w/ Pr. Jonathan Westerlund), St. Lydia's, Brooklyn (coverage/stated supply under Pr. Matthew Zemanick), Gustavus Adolphus, Manhattan (coverage by Pr. C. Chanteleu).

**i. Long Island Conferences** – 53 congregations w/ 20 in some sort of transition.

**ii. Tappan Zee, Hudson, Delaware Hudson Conferences** – 37 congregations; 1 in closure process, 1 closed, 12 in some sort of transition.

**iii. City Conferences** – 1 in closure process and 32 of 68 in some sort of transition.

**iv. DEM** – Brandon Dupree continues to focus on mission development and emerging faith communities.

## **4. REPORT OF THE CHIEF OF STAFF**

**A. Legal/Property Updates:** information brought on property and legal updates.

**B. Events** – MNYS Women's event 3/14/26

**C. MNYS and Lutheran Social Ministry Organization** – Koinonia completed their capital improvement campaign. Some staff will serve on the boards of several organizations.

**D. Archives** – moved files from 30 closed congregations.

**E. ELCA Website** – updating closed congregations.

**F. FAITHX Judicatory Assessment** – 40 people identified to complete (pastors, deacons, lay persons, SC, staff).

**G. Staff Updates:**

**a. Staff 6 month position review being done.** Staff Position Descriptions and Organizational Chart have been updated.

**b. New Hires:**

**i. F/T Full Charge Bookkeeper** – Sterling Ortiz started 3/3/26.

**ii. P/T Property Manager** – Mike McGovern.

**c. Open Searches – F/T Development Role**

**5. REPORT OF THE VICE PRESIDENT**

**A. Synod Compensation Guidelines:** looking at a possible committee to credit second-career experience in Synod Compensation Guidelines.

**B. Sensitive Location Update:** current information shared regarding church locations.

**6. REPORT OF THE SECRETARY** – updates given on congregations that have completed the amendments to their constitution.

**7. REPORT OF THE TREASURER**

**A. Mission Support** – Documents included as attachment to these minutes.

**8. CHURCH COUNCIL REPORT** – currently on retreat in Chicago with the theme of “Managing Change”

**9. OBSERVER’S REPORT** – presented by Peter Teichmann. Pastor Kevin O’Hara will serve 5/16/26.

The meeting was closed with prayer led by Bishop Foster.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas M. Sargent – MNYS Secretary